



House Meeting Agenda for 2018 Listening Sessions

Annotated for Leaders for 60 minute Session



I. Welcome, Overview, Reflection, Ground Rules (10 minutes total)

Overview

3 minutes

Currently OTOC member institutions and allies are holding House Meetings (small group listening sessions) throughout the City over a period of 4 weeks. We want to hear personal stories about the pressures facing families and individuals in our community and congregations. These stories help us identify issues that are of common concern to many families and individuals and to identify people who would be willing to work with others through Action Teams to develop solutions. These house meetings are the very foundation of how OTOC leaders identify issues we want to work on together.

On September 17, OTOC members and supporters will meet with candidates for US Congress and OPPD and on Monday, October 22nd with candidates for the Nebraska Unicameral. At both of those candidate accountability sessions, OTOC leaders will to ask the candidates to work with us on issues that have surfaced from these or previous house meetings and through our Action Teams. After we have heard from you about the pressures facing families, we will also ask you to briefly review the current focus of the OTOC Action Teams and share any stories or reactions you may have to the issues they are working on.

Let's begin tonight with a Scripture reading.

Opening Reflection: A Reading from the Book of Jeremiah (29:4-8) 1 minute

“Thus says God...Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take spouses and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons and husbands for your daughters, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there and do not decrease. **But seek the welfare of the city where you find yourself, pray to God on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.**”

Explain ground rules for tonight's discussion 2 minutes

- *Everyone is asked to be respectful of the opinions and ideas of others.*
- *Disagreement, as long as it is respectful, is welcome in these conversations.*
- *Tonight, we are **not** trying to solve problems that individuals might identify, so please refrain from offering advice or solutions that you think another person needs to know.*
- *Everyone's thoughts are welcome and we need to share the limited time we have. So I ask that each person limit their initial comments during introductions to just 30 seconds.*
- *And lastly, your table facilitators ask your permission to interrupt in order to ensure everyone speaks, and to keep the meeting on time and focused on the agenda. Do they have your permission to do this?*

II. Rounds/Introductions: 4 minutes

Pass the sign-in sheet, begin the Rounds, modeling with their own answer.

Ask each person to **briefly (in 30 seconds)** give their name, how long in the congregation, and one sentence about any particular interest or concern they might have. We will expand on these later in the mtg.

III. Stories and Discussion (40 minutes total for two questions)

You will lead a process helping everyone have the opportunity to participate. State the question and seek out people's answers. You keep people focused on the question at hand, not griping in general. Probe for stories and examples that clarify what is at issue for that person. Create an environment where participants feel free to open up, ask questions and build connections with one another. Facilitate and guide a meaningful conversation among the participants. Look for common themes that emerge as the conversation goes on.

- 1. General Question (about 25 min):** *Tell us in about 2 minutes, "What are the pressures that are faced by families in your community and congregation? Tell us a brief story or give an example from your own family (or from people you know) that will help us understand the pressures facing families or individuals.*

After about 20 minutes of stories and discussion, leader and note taker **briefly** review and summarize with the group the main themes that they have discussed in the house meeting.

So from our shared stories and discussion, it sounds like to me that the most common concerns we heard today/tonight are about _____, _____, and _____. Does this sound like an accurate short summary? We will be sharing our summary with others holding house meetings from across the organization to get a sense of the broader concerns facing families.

- 2. Question about OTOC Action Agenda (about 15 min):**

OTOC currently has 6 groups of leaders who work together as Action Teams to develop solutions to concerns which first surfaced through house meetings in previous years. Take a look at the short summary of the current work of these 6 Action Team on the yellow sheet?

The Sheet will summarize current focus of these teams:

- Housing
- Immigration and Refugees
- Environmental Sustainability
- Predatory Lending
- Medicaid Expansion
- Access to Mental Health Care

Do you have a story or experience you can share related to any of those issues? Does the focus of the work make sense to you? Do you have any Reactions or questions?

IV. Closing OTOC/Community Business (10 minutes total)

Next Step: Invite people to sign up for the OTOC Candidates Accountability Session on September 17 and October 22 and to consider participating in an Action Team that will find solutions for the issues of common concern.

Thank you for participating. This conversation can lead to positive change. Issues that have surfaced in our Listening Sessions and your feedback on the focus of OTOC Action Teams is invaluable to our planning over the next few weeks. I will pass around the sign in sheet again. Put a check on the sign-in sheet under the Sept 17 and Oct 22 column to mean you will attend either or both of the Accountability Sessions if possible—and we will call to remind you. The more people attending, the more impact on candidates and how much they find it in their interest to work with us on the issues we have raised. To learn more about an issue, or to consider being part of an Action Team to find solutions, write the name of that issue in the last column on the page and we will follow up with you.

VI. Brief Closing and Prayer 3 minutes

God of Justice and Mercy, Give us the joy and the courage to express your goodness within us and to listen for it in one another. Help us to appreciate the differences with which you bless us that we might grow and act together in wisdom and love. Enable us to use our collective gifts to heal divisions, to build bridges, to care for the most abandoned, and to work together toward a society that reflects a strong commitment to the common good. Amen *Thank you again for coming, and we are adjourned.*