

Small Group Guide for the 2023 Mission Summit Conversations

Purpose: The Mission Summit Conversations (MSC) are an open opportunity for anyone attending the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit to engage in meaningful dialogue around current topics of mission and ministry.

Viewing the Film: All MSC participants are invited to view the film, “Terror and Hope” in the plenary space. The film tells the story of resilience regarding children and war in Syria. It depicts a past defined by terror and a future defined by hope. The short documentary surfaces several issues of current interest, and possibly future interest, for American Baptists.

Following the Film: Following the viewing of the film, “Terror and Hope” in the plenary space, move to one of the designated rooms for small group Mission Summit Conversations. Notice the tables designated for conversations in Spanish and Burmese.

Small Groups: As you gather, wear your name tag if available. Briefly introduce yourselves to one another. Take turns reading the guidelines below. Assign roles. Begin your conversation.

Guidelines for Conversation: The intent of the MSC is to bring together our diverse American Baptist family for conversation without becoming hurtful or polarizing. To maintain a safe space for conversation, remember your ABC’S:

A: Acknowledge differing perspectives. American Baptists come from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds, possess a diverse set of customs, and speak many languages. Dialogue depends upon the recognition of differences.

B: Be a good listener. Focus upon listening rather than speaking. Many MSC participants have expressed great gratitude in being able to listen to others during these conversations. Listen with curiosity rather than to persuade or correct one another and remember to share air time.

C: Confidentiality is important. Do not repeat personal stories or those of congregations and institutions. When reporting what happened, be careful not to attribute what was said to specific individuals.

S: Speak honestly and responsibly. Try to use “I” statements and own what you are saying.

Roles for the Small Groups

1. Select a discussion leader, timekeeper, and reporter for your discussion. Each group will be given 30 seconds for a report out.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your initial response to the film?
2. What did you see, hear, and feel as you watched the film?
3. Select an issue that was raised in the film for deeper discussion. You may select from the list below or choose one of your own topics. Address multiple issues as time allows.

Possible topics for dialogue:

- a. Recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria
 - b. Wars in Ukraine, Myanmar, and other countries
 - c. Mental health crisis in the U.S.
 - d. Lingering effects of toxic stress
 - e. Healing from race-based trauma
 - f. Long term effects of the global pandemic
 - g. Generational effects of slavery and boarding schools
 - h. Political divide in the U.S.
4. How can you, like those in the film, be a “real hero” on the ground by trying to improve the lives of others who are experiencing stress?
 5. The film named “tools for helping” others. What tools do you need to address these issues?
 6. Where is God in this story? Where could God be in your story?
 7. What can you, your local church, or American Baptists do to alleviate the causes of traumatic stress?

Reporting Out: Each group will be given 30 seconds to name a single topic for future discussion by American Baptists. Topics raised could surface at the Mission Table or as an “Everyday ABC Conversation.”

Follow-up: If there are those who would like to continue this conversation after the Biennial Mission Summit, voluntarily share contact information with one another.

Online resources page: Prior to the MSC, several articles and links related to the topics raised by today’s film were posted on the ABCUSA website. For further reading, go to www.abc-usa.org.