

Running a Listening Meeting on the Church of England's Fossil Fuel Investments: Background Info, Script & Meeting Agenda

What is a Listening Meeting?

In a Listening Meeting, people come together to discuss an issue of mutual concern.

In this campaign, we're inviting people to gather in groups of 6-12 to hold listening meetings (either in-person or on Zoom) about the Church of England's fossil fuel investments. The purpose of any Listening Meeting is to explore a particular issue, to hear how people feel about the issue, to share stories about how the issue impacts people's lives, and to explore what, if anything, people want to do about the issue.

Listening meetings help campaigns identify new leaders, empower people to take action on the things that matter to them, and help bring to the surface compelling stories that can be used to speak truth to power and ultimately bring about change.

Ideally, Listening Meetings last exactly one hour and keep closely to time, with a timekeeper, an agenda and an allotted time for each section and question. In a Listening Meeting, everyone gets a chance to speak and ideally gets equal time; however, in this Listening Meeting, because there is a 12-minute presentation, the leader will speak for a longer period of time than she/he would otherwise.

Things for the Leader to Consider Before and During a Meeting:

- Before the meeting, designate someone to be the timekeeper as well as someone to keep notes.
- The timekeeper will play an important part in the meeting to ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to be heard, and will likely use a phone-alarm to signal when someone has used her/his allotted time or when a section of the meeting is finished. Keeping to time is important as it keeps the energy up and makes people think carefully about what they want to say.
- During the meeting, it's a good idea, if possible, to give people questions in advance so they have time to prepare and think. It's also helpful if the leader of the meeting answers the question first, to model how it's done, or chooses someone to answer who is familiar with how a Listening Meeting is run.
- In a Listening Meeting, we're primarily focused on personal feelings and stories rather than opinions. How is the climate crisis *impacting people in the room*? Why do the Church's fossil fuel investments *matter to them personally*?

Meeting Agenda and Script

(Meeting Begins)

Leader: Welcome to our Listening Meeting about the Church of England's investments in fossil fuels. I've invited each of you here today because I know you either have an interest in this exact topic, are curious to know what more the Church might do to tackle climate change or are interested in climate issues more generally.

Today's meeting will last exactly 1 hour, and I've asked (X) to be our timekeeper.

Each part of today's meeting is timed, and to ensure that everyone gets an equal amount of time to speak, we're even going to put a time-limit on our answers. If you go over time, (X's) alarm will sound; if you hear the alarm, just finish what you're saying. X will also buzz me if I take too long on a given section or go on a bit!

We're going to begin in a minute with an opening 'rounds question', and we'll have (30 or 60 seconds; 30 seconds if there are 9+ people in the meeting, 60 seconds if 8 people or fewer) to answer. For the 'rounds question', I want each of you to give your name, your church affiliation (if applicable) and what your interest is in today's topic.

Today's meeting follows a pre-set agenda. We'll begin with the rounds question I just mentioned. Then there will be a 12-minute presentation where I'll take us through a PowerPoint that gives us some background on our topic. After the PowerPoint, we'll come to the longest section of our meeting: a 25-minute discussion where I'll ask another 'rounds question' related to the presentation, after which, we'll have a more free-flowing discussion. To finish, we'll have two final 'rounds questions' where I'll ask if you want to do anything about what you've heard today, and/or meet again.

Let's begin with our Opening 'rounds question'

- 1. Opening 'Rounds' (10 minutes):** Each person present should give her/his name, church affiliation (if any) and why she/he wanted to participate in this listening meeting today – 'what is your personal interest in this topic?'

Leader should answer these questions first to model what we're looking for.

(30 seconds if 9+ people; if 8 people or less, 60 seconds per person)

"I'm going to go through a presentation now on the Church of England's fossil fuel investments. As I go through this, I want you to be thinking about how this makes you feel and also how the church's investments impact you or people you know"

- 2. Presentation (10-12 minutes):** Fossil fuel companies and the Church of England's investment in them (PowerPoint and notes provided by Operation Noah – while many of the slides are self-explanatory, there are also notes under certain slides that the leader can read out and use as a script if helpful. The PowerPoint is available to download at brightnow.org.uk/resources)

- 3. 'Rounds' Question for Discussion (20 minutes):** After hearing what you just did about fossil fuel companies and the Church of England's fossil fuel investments, **how do you feel? Also: In what ways, if any, does the church's decision to invest in fossil fuels affect you and/or your friends/family?**

(We're really looking for personal stories, as well as trying to identify potential leaders for the campaign. Each person should initially have 2 minutes to speak; the timekeeper should make sure each person gets her/his two minutes, and that everyone gets to speak - and, then once everyone has spoken, open the conversation up for people to speak more freely).

- 4. Final 'Rounds' Question (10-12 minutes):** Do you want to help build power to create change? What do you want to do? (1 minute per person).
- 5. Possible Next Steps/Next Meeting? (3 minutes)** Do people want to meet again, and if so, when? Put this question to the group as an open discussion.
- 6. Meeting Ends and Leader Fills out a Feedback Form** that will help us record what was discussed, if any new leaders/ stories were identified and what ideas surfaced. Link to the form can be found on the Resources page of the Bright Now website (brightnow.org.uk/resources)