

the conversation project

Conversation Sabbath Fact Sheet

WHAT: The Conversation Project's mission is to ensure that everyone's care wishes through the end of life are expressed and respected. Reaching out to people where they live, work, learn, pray and gather, the nonprofit promotes having values led conversations about a topic that touches every human life: how we want to live towards the end of our lives. The Conversation Project encourages clergy to host Conversation Sabbath as a way to bring its mission and message to faith communities across the country. Conversation Sabbath is an open invitation to clergy to preach or teach on the vital importance of having conversations.

WHY: The faith community is a powerful voice for change. Clergy see too often how avoiding conversations about care wishes through the end of life can leave family members in the dark. Confusion about the wishes of those important to you (e.g., a loved one) can result in strife at the bedside, increased grief and depression for caregivers, and can cause lasting damage in the relationships between families members. Engaging in these intimate and vital conversations before a health crisis can help preserve a person's voice in the event they cannot speak for themselves in a medical crisis. These conversations (and then designating a health care proxy) is a way to plan ahead and have a trusted advocate be prepared to share what matters to the person with the health care team, if needed. Preaching and teaching are ways clergy can help congregants to ground conversations about the kind of care we want in values and faith. Talking about a topic that touches us all--the reality of our mortality—is a pathway to a mature spiritual practice.

WHEN: Conversation Sabbath happens whenever is best for you! While we used to specify certain dates in late October/early November, we now encourage you to celebrate whenever will create the most buzz or is most appropriate in your community. Perhaps, like many other community groups, you rally around [National Healthcare Decisions Day](#) and host a local Conversation Sabbath to encourage collective action around the weekends before and after April 16th.

WHO: Any faith community may take part in Conversation Sabbath, sharing each faith's teachings on this critical topic and supporting members in having the conversation in familiar settings, and not during a medical crisis in the ICU. Cities across the country have participated, including those from California, Texas, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, New York, and Massachusetts.

HOW: All faiths are welcome. There is no fee to participate. We encourage faith leaders and clergy to download our free resources: [Getting Started Guide for Congregations](#) and [The Conversation Starter Guide](#) (also in Spanish and Chinese)—an easy to use, step-by-step guide that helps people have conversations about their care preferences through the end of life—with their members. [Click here to register](#) for our monthly Community Engagement newsletter.

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For more information about Conversation Sabbath contact: ConversationProject@ihi.org