



UB KINGDOM CONVERSATIONS

DIALOGUE SKILLS FOR BRIDGING DIFFERENCES AND BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

A 2-day Training Opportunity for Boston-Based Congregations and Non-Profits

Applications Due March 18

This year, our national discourse has become increasingly polarized: on racial (in)justice, immigration, “red-blue” divides, and public health crises. Too often we find ourselves either avoiding difficult conversations or remaining in our own silos and echo chambers, where we charge “the other side” of being immoral or even evil. Yet, as Christians, we are called to live in unity, honoring diverse perspectives and unique gifts within the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-26) and loving our enemies (Mt. 5:44). In fact, conflict around our deepest differences can become an opportunity for discipleship, resilience, and strengthening the bonds within - not a disruption. In doing so, congregations can uphold a “deep unity” that honors diverse viewpoints and models God’s call for reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18).

Join us to experience the transforming power of dialogue through a 2-day “kingdom conversation” training. Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD) is a model for conversation across deep divides to grow in our practice of loving God and neighbor, bridging differences, and building resilient communities. RSD addresses the dynamics of dysfunctional patterns of conversation and is now used across the US and in more than 25 other countries. RSD has enabled people to engage issues as broad as theological and political differences in a church to exploring specific ways that combatants and victims in civil wars in Liberia and Burundi can live together in peace.

Participants will experience and practice the tools and techniques of RSD in the workshop and between-session application in their own communities. They will also participate in a pre-workshop preparatory process, create plans for post-workshop application of their learning in their congregations/institutions and receive written and online resources for creating conversations in their communities.

The workshop will be taught by [Bob Stains](#) and Shelton Oakley Hersey. Bob has been equipping clergy and lay leaders with the skill-sets and mind-sets of RSD for the past 26 years in the US,

Europe and Asia, having trained more than 30,000 people world-wide. His workshops are highly rated by participants in both religious and secular settings and he continues to see their learning bear fruit in their communities of faith over many years. Shelton serves as a Spiritual Director with Nuos Formation, companioning churches, businesses, non-profits, and individuals in various ways to help them experience greater intimacy with God and to live out of their values and into their fullest and healthiest potential. This includes designing and facilitating conversation and training spaces called [Kingdom Conversations](#), a spiritual formation tool to help churches, individual Christians and communities to engage in harder conversations with greater courage, equity, healing, and fruitfulness.

Structured dialogue can help when differences threaten to become - or have become - divisive and ongoing relationships and work are threatened. This workshop is specifically designed to engage Boston-based Christian leaders from congregations and non-profits to help equip them to engage in differences about:

- Cultural, racial, and political ideologies
- Budget issues, especially in the case of shortfalls/cutbacks or expansions into new programming in churches and non-profits
- Worship issues, especially around traditional/contemporary music
- Calling a new clergy person or dealing with divisions when clergy depart
- Mission and vision in churches and non-profits
- Theology and its application to daily life of congregants in churches
- Identity and theological interpretation (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) especially in terms of who is welcome to participate and who is invited/authorized to lead in churches and non-profits
- The integration of traditions in blended / multicultural / merging churches
- And more...

Due to a generous grant by the Ministry in the City Hub, we are able to provide this 2-day training at minimal cost (\$100 per participant; scholarships are available). **The training dates will be April 17 and May 1st (Time TBA)**, and we will be providing this training opportunity to 12 to 20 Christian leaders who are based in the Greater Boston-area. Priority will be given to participants who apply in teams from their congregation or Christian non-profit.

There have always been and will always be differences of opinion and perspectives. Yet we are called to love and respect in the midst of disagreements. Join us to channel divisive issues into formative experiences of discipleship and spiritual growth that will build resilience within your congregation or non-profit.

[Click here to apply to be part of our
“Kingdom Conversations” Dialogue Training.](#)
Applications are due March 18.

Questions? Email Rev. Kelly Fassett, kelly@uniteboston.com

More Information

For more information on Reflective Structured Dialogue, read "[Cultivating Courageous Communities through the Practice and Power of Dialogue](#)." We also want to thank [Kingdom Conversations](#) for their guided conversation model and spiritual formation tool to help churches, individual Christians and communities to engage in harder conversations with greater courage, equity, healing, and fruitfulness, growing in deeper intimacy with God and unity as the Church Body.

Leadership

Bob Stains: Bob has been equipping clergy and lay leaders with the skill-sets and mind-sets of Reflective Structured Dialogue for the past 26 years in the US, Europe and Asia, having trained more than 30,000 people worldwide. His workshops are highly rated by participants in both religious and secular settings and he continues to see their learning bear fruit in their communities of faith over many years. Bob has taught dialogue to ministers in training at Boston University and Harvard Divinity School and consulted to the Harvard Negotiation Project for 15 years. He also brings 10 years of conversation design and facilitation work with the Episcopal Church of the USA and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Bob is also a Visiting Researcher at the Boston University School of Theology Tom Porter Program on Religion and Conflict Transformation. Bob has worked with many Christian and Jewish communities, small and large throughout his career as a consulting family therapist and as a dialogue practitioner. He lives in Danvers and is a member of All Saints Episcopal Church of the North Shore.



Shelton Oakley Hersey - Shelton has sought out, participated, and facilitated spaces working toward holistic development of people and systems over the past decade. She has experience in diverse contexts, from low income neighborhoods of Los Angeles and Fuller Theological Seminary, where Shelton obtained a Masters in Intercultural Studies, to South Africa townships, and the multi-ethnic church of America. She also serves as a Spiritual Director with Nuos Formation, companioning churches, businesses, non-profits, and individuals in various ways to help them experience greater intimacy with God and to live out of their values and into their fullest and healthiest potential. This includes designing and facilitating conversation and training spaces called [Kingdom Conversations](#), for which the fruit of the Spirit provide a structured and guided way of engaging healthily, equitably, and fruitfully in harder conversations. Shelton lives in Jamaica Plain with her husband Scott and daughter Amma.

