

APPENDIX ONE

Graceful Engagement Worksheet

We recommend that one of your first gatherings as a Core Team should be spent completing this worksheet. We suggest you take between thirty minutes and an hour to complete it together before you go further in the Welcoming Process.

Opening Meditation

We invite you to begin in silence and prayer. Sit together for two or three minutes in silence, breathing deeply and inviting God's presence to be fully felt by all in the room. Then, invite each person to reflect upon what it means or how it feels to be filled with GRACE....

Invite folks to call out the words that come to them and let these resonate in the air. Then, close the time with a spoken prayer led by one person.

Exercise

After the opening meditation, invite the team to collectively complete this phrase:

GRACE is....

If folks are having difficulty, some words that other Core Teams have used include: loving, powerful, hopeful, centered, peaceful, free, content, calm, whole, open, forgiving, grounded, holy, loved, spiritual. (Put these on a flip chart or project them on a screen.)

Scriptural Reflection

With these understandings on a flip chart or screen, take some time to read aloud and discuss several of the following Scriptural passages: the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), the Woman at the Well (John 4:4-26), the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:35-40), Peter cutting off the ear of Malchus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:51-52), and Jesus on the Cross (Luke 23:34).

In each of these contexts, Jesus models a radical form of discipleship. Each person with whom he interacts—those who genuinely seek him out as a teacher and those who seek to destroy him—Jesus treats as a beloved child of God. He engages them filled with Grace. And we, who would call ourselves his followers, are challenged to do likewise.

Defining Graceful Engagement

After you've created your list of words associated with Grace and reflected on examples of Jesus' ministry, put these definitions on a flip chart or screen:

Graceful Engagement IS:

- Living together in relationship and compassion
- Fully valuing other people and their beliefs, even when they differ from our own
- Listening more than speaking
- Meeting people where they are, not where we want them to be

Graceful Engagement IS NOT:

- Debate
- Forcing our opinions on others through argument
- Exclusion or outright condemning those with whom we do not agree
- Leaving the church to find a place “where everyone agrees”

Making It Personal

Although we may wish to always be models of Graceful Engagement, it can be a challenge to maintain this perspective. You may need the support of your Core Team in the days to come. Knowing our own “triggers” (those things that we know are likely to pull us away from being able to Gracefully Engage) can help us be ready when those situations arise. Lead a discussion about situations or conversations that might come up that may be difficult for each member of the Core Team. You might want to role-play specific scenarios to prepare possible responses. Remember that sometimes the most graceful option is to end a conversation rather than listening to abusive or hurtful comments. After pondering potential challenges, have each member share a time when they most clearly experienced Grace. Remembering these Grace-filled moments can also help in the more difficult times.

Closing Meditation

Return to silence for two or three minutes, breathing deeply and pondering the stories of Grace that were shared. Close the time with spoken prayer. Invite each Core Team member to share their prayer for this Welcoming Process.