



# The Amazing Grace Club

***“What God is  
creating in the  
world is organic,  
natural, and full  
of grace.”***

We are called through the creative design of God to “grow up” in Christ. (Ephesians 4:15) *Amazing Grace Clubs* seek to provide an intentional place within the life of our congregation where youth and adults join on a common journey of exploration of faith toward greater maturity. We do this intergenerationally because we believe that the questions and stories that mark our different life stages are designed to promote growth for all of us as the body of Christ. May the Grace of God and the guiding hand of Jesus Christ lead us toward holiness together.

Created by Curt Weaver  
curtbw@msn.com

**What God is creating in the world  
is organic, natural and full of grace.**

## **Welcome to... “The Amazing Grace Club”**

### **Statement of purpose:**

We are called through the creative design of God to grow up in Christ. **Paul summarizes this call in Ephesians 4:15 when he says “...grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”** Michael Quoist writes that “We are not God. We are simply the image of God and our task is gradually to discover that image and set it free.” Our ecclesiology calls us to embrace this human task of discovery through community worship and mission.

Eugene Peterson claims in *Like Dew Your Youth; Growing Up with Your Teenager*, that adolescence is a gift to the community of faith. He reminds us that there is a “strong Christian conviction, substantiated by centuries of devout thinking and faithful living, that everything given to us in our bodies and in our world is the raw material for holiness.” God’s creative energy in the world is an act that naturally pulls everything toward maturity. Nature in all its forms is brought to maturity by grace and only by grace. **It is within this hope that Paul says to the Ephesians, “And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified.” (Acts 20:32)**

With this as our foundation, we will seek as adults in this congregation to join our youth in this common task of “growing up” in Christ and into our inheritance of faith. While the primary force behind this task for our youth may be their biology, we adults will join them on a shared journey knowing that their journey comes to us as a gift and that it holds the potential for our own growth into the fullness of Christ. May the Grace of God and the guiding hand of Jesus Christ lead us toward holiness together.

### **Worship, Community and Mission**

The *Amazing Grace Club* will seek to provide an intentional place within the life of our congregation where youth and adults join on a common journey of exploration of faith.

**Worship within the forming weekend of the *Amazing Grace Club* will consist of the use of storytelling** by members of the Club who will seek to remember and retell their experiences of

God. By telling our stories communally, we open ourselves to the discernment of the body that may ask us to reorient our experience or may assign new meaning to our experiences. While many of the *traditional elements* of worship are left out of this setting, the essential element of engagement with the Divine through the presence and voices of the faith community remains.

**The setting in which *The Amazing Grace Club* takes place is designed to produce community and hopefully friendships.** Participants will spend an evening, an overnight, and most of a second day living, playing and eating together. Meal times will serve as times of dialogue and will take place in the context of our everyday experience. (see outline) The movement of getting into cars to go eat in restaurants together is meant to reduce the feeling of being sequestered away from our lives and is designed rather to instill a sense of journey into life with “new friends.” The variety of settings, the travel time in cars, and the “normal” dialogue of life that these experiences invoke is meant to both make the experience enjoyable but also have a sense of being sustainable. Our ecclesiology states that we are on a shared journey of faith but we are not always honest about how difficult it remains to really be bonded to others in our congregation in our everyday lives. Hopefully the idea of getting the club together for dinner in the future is modeled within the context of the forming event.

**Mission, in the context of the Club, is viewed as an experiment in which participants of all ages are called to internalize faith and to see their entire lives as mission.** This is a process of growth and maturation and is at the heart of the purpose for *Amazing Grace Clubs*. The sending question that participants will discern for one another is to dream with them about what God is calling them into next. This is a missional question. What are my gifts? What are my passions? How can I be useful in what God is doing in the world? To put it another way, *Amazing Grace Clubs* serve as one of the seedbeds of mission in the congregation.

Through *engagement* with stories that reorient us to the meaning and presence of God in our lives we are *empowered* to live forward into God’s unfinished story. As a church we do this *engaged* with each other in a community of faith.

### **Spiritual Formation**

Jane Hooper Peifer and John Stahl-Wert describe “stages of initiation” in their project titled *Welcoming New Christians*. (see hand out attached) The particular outline that follows is

designed to combine into one event a “space” for *all* stages of spiritual formation to interact with each other. While the stages that Peifer and Stahl-Wert describe are useful in helping us define the growth that we hope for in spiritual formation, the premise of *Amazing Grace Clubs* is that these “stages,” *along with mature Christian spirituality*, need to be seen together as an organic, natural process that need each other for mutual growth. Our very growth often returns us to experience in new ways the stages of invitation, exploration, and recommitment even as we discover moments of mature grace and wisdom.

### **What is the Amazing Grace Club?**

Approximately every six months our congregation will invite three youth to join an *Amazing Grace Club*. A matching number of adults from the congregation will also be invited to join the club. A venue will be chosen such as the home or cabin of a congregational member which can accommodate up to 8 persons. Meals will be eaten in local restaurants, the cost of which, will be covered by the congregational budget. Participants will gather on a Friday evening at the church and will begin their time by eating supper in route to the chosen location. This “forming” club experience will continue until Saturday evening, at which time participants will return to the church. All participants are expected to have no other engagements during the course of these two days.

### **Who should participate in an Amazing Grace Club?**

Up to three youth will be asked to participate in the forming of each club. These youth will be identified by the discernment of a youth advocacy committee.\* Special consideration should be given to youth who are in discernment about baptism as well as youth who appear ready for a deeper conversation about Christian spirituality and belief.

Up to three adults will also be asked to participate in the forming of each Club. These adults will also be chosen by the youth advocacy committee. An attempt will be made to invite adults who have some relationship with the youth who have been chosen.

---

*\*A youth advocacy committee is a standing committee of the church that meets monthly. It is made up of pastoral staff, parents or representatives of all youth in the congregation, congregational youth leaders, and the youth age Sunday school teachers. This committee exists primarily to pay attention to the needs and concerns of every youth in the congregation as well as offer a network of support for the primary adult relationships the youth have within the congregation.*

Two “pastors” will be asked to serve as guides for the forming event. If the group is of mixed gender then the guides should be a male and a female. These guides will facilitate the common sessions, an orientation meeting, and agree to be available for follow-up issues after the event. These individuals should be chosen by the pastoral team of the church for their spiritual maturity and gifts in the arena of spiritual formation.

During the event participants will spend meals eating in triads. These triads will always be intergenerational, the balance in the triad will sometimes be two adults and a youth and sometimes two youth and an adult. The pastors will each join a grouping during meals primarily as listeners.

An orientation about the purpose of *Amazing Grace Clubs* will be scheduled in which all potential participants are informed of its shared journey philosophy. Potential participants will have one week to decide whether they wish to participate. A covenant (see attachment) that states the importance of respect, honesty, and confidentiality will be posted in the pastor’s study and all members will be expected to sign it before being formally invited to join the club.

### **Setting and visual elements**

The home or cabin that is chosen as a venue should have a common space where all participants can comfortably sit in a circle. In the spirit of creating a sacred space, it is suggested that a single large candle sit in a shallow bowl of sand on a low coffee table in the center of the room. Each participant will be asked to bring their own unique candle to place in the sand surrounding the central candle. All common meetings will begin with the lighting of the central “Christ” candle from which each participant will light their own candle. The venue should have adequate space to sleep all participants with separate areas for men and women.

### **What participants should bring**

- Participants should bring their own bedding and toiletries
- Objects, images, or writings that holds special meaning
- A medium sized taper candle
- Bible and journal
- Some participants will need to agree to provide transportation for the group

### **Needs list for Pastors**

- Large candle, flat bowl or tray, sand
- News print and markers
- Games
- Snacks
- Cell phone
- Medical release forms for youth under 18
- Journals with contact information of group participants inside (parting gift)

# OUTLINE for Amazing Grace Club weekend event

## Gathering

Friday

6:00 pm

Gather at the church to load luggage into cars.

Before departure gather the group in a circle.

*Place the Christ candle on the ground in the middle of the group. Offer each participant a sheet of paper and invite them to list any fears or reservations they have about the next 48 hours. Talk briefly about the covenant that they have all signed. Emphasize that this is designed to be a safe circle of mutual discipleship. Ask them to fold the paper and carry it with them. Acknowledge that what they have agreed to do together is not easy.*

*Then offer each member a slip of paper with two names on it. Tell the group that these persons will be their dining partners for the evening meal. Their task is to get to know them as well as possible over dinner. (Make sure the triads are intergenerational.) Tell them that one thing they will need to know about these other two people is when they were passionate about something in their life and what it was.*

6:30 pm

Leave for local restaurant

## Evening gathering

*(This will depend on arrival and settling in. Try to keep things structured so that people can be free to go to bed by 10:30 if they wish. Running things too late is counterproductive.)*

Gather, light the Christ Candle, and invite everyone to light their individual candles.

*Explain that The Amazing Grace Club is not designed to be a retreat that is guided or programmed. It is rather a “space” to know each other more deeply and to share our journeys and questions with one another. With that... invite the group to introduce each other. As you go around the circle you invite the other two members of that person’s triad to tell the group about that person. At some point with each person you ask, “When were they passionate about something and what was it?” Others in the group are free to ask follow-up questions but the pastors should tend to the time so that everyone has a chance to be introduced.*

*End the evening by inviting each person to take the candle of someone in their triad and spend a few minutes praying for them. When they are finished they should blow out the candle and replace it in the sand.*

**Decide on a wakeup time and departure time for breakfast. Say goodnight.**

*Provide games and snacks for those who want them.*

## OUTLINE continued

Saturday

### **Breakfast**

Gather the group.

Hand out new names that place participants in new triads for eating together. Ask the participants to discuss at breakfast the following question:

*What is something about the Christian faith that you don't understand or have doubts about?*

Leave for breakfast

### **Morning Gathering**

Gather the group

Light the Christ Candle and invite participants to light their candles. Invite participants to share the doubts and ambiguity that they heard from one another over breakfast. *Remind them that this process of doubt and questions is deeply rooted in Christian spirituality. By looking at this side of faith together we might open up new ways of knowing and holding faith.*

Record what is shared on newsprint and post it in the common room.

### **Decide on a time to leave for lunch**

Gather the group and invite them to enter a period of silence for the next few hours. Briefly talk about what they feel about this suggestion. Invite them to use the silence for a time of thinking, and praying about the other members of the club. Ask them to make themselves a note that helps them remember the passions and the doubts of each member. Ask them to be aware of what stories or experiences in their own lives are conjured up as they meditate on what they have learned about each other.

### **Lunch**

Drive to a mall or someplace where they can get a sandwich and find a place to eat by themselves. Establish a meeting time to return to the cars or van. Ask that they remain in silence until they gather later in the afternoon.

### **Afternoon Gathering**

(around 2:30 pm)

Gather the group.

Light the Christ Candle. Do not light the participant's candles at this time.

*Explain that the next little while is reserved for storytelling. The only request is that every story begin with "When I thought about (other participant's) doubts/questions/passion it reminded me of..." As they begin telling the story ask them to take the person's candle who they have mentioned and light it. Explain that the stories can be serious or funny but should connect in some way to the sharing of someone else in the*

## OUTLINE continued

*group. Other members should feel free to ask questions of clarification of the storyteller. Explain as pastors that you will only interrupt if you sense a story shift from experience to analysis that is separated from the experience. Encourage the group not to take on the responsibility to fix anything or anyone in the group. Explain that there may be blocks of silence where no one speaks.*

*During the storytelling pastors should serve as hosts and compassionate listeners. Take care of the conversation. Help people hear each other well. Serve coffee and snacks. If energy seems to wane, suggest taking a quick break. If someone in the group has not had a story told connected to their sharing, point this out to the group. Ask the group to talk about why this might not have sparked a story. As this occurs make sure that everyone's candle is lit.*

*Invite the group to cup their hands. Offer a short prayer to close the time together. Example: God, We hold the stories we have heard here with as much love and compassion as we are able. Some stories fill us with joy and thanksgiving and some are heavy. We ask your help as we bear one another's burdens, because in doing so, we seek to fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2-2) Amen.*

### **Set a time to leave for dinner and the church**

*Pack up*

**Leave for Dinner**      *Gather the group and tell them to choose a grouping of other people they have not had a meal with. Tell them their discussion at dinner will be for the purpose of evaluating their experience. If they want to split up as youth and adults for this part you may want to let them, but allow this to be their own decision.*

**Dinner**              *Ask them to ask each other the following questions: What has been the most meaningful thing about this experience? What part of the experience was hard or painful? What are your hopes and/or concerns for staying or becoming friends with this group of people?*

*Each pastor serves as a listener to this conversation and compiles comments for further review for future Club formations.*

**Return to the Church**

*Gather together in the sanctuary or another appropriate space. Sit in a circle and light the Christ candle.*

Take each member's candle in turn and light it from the Christ Candle. *Say the persons name and tell them "Joe, you are a beloved child of God" Hand the candle to someone in the circle and ask them to also repeat the statement you just said. Then, while holding the person's candle, ask them to try to finish this sentence. "What I can imagine God using you for next in your life is..."*  
Pass each person's candle around the circle in the same manner.

### **Closing Prayer**

*Read Acts 20:32 as a closing prayer: "And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. Amen."*

### **Parting Gift**

Offer each participant a blank journal with the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of each member on the first page. *Suggest to them that they reflect on the list of fears that they wrote down the first night as a starting point for their first journal entry.*

Say WELCOME TO THE AMAZING GRACE CLUB!

*Dismiss the group.*

---

## **Some Comments about our goals...**

### **Why do we tell stories about passion?**

Young people by nature are often passionate about things. Kenda Creasy Dean, in her book *Practicing Passion* suggests that spiritual formation should connect the passion of Christ with our own passion. By learning about the "stuff" that makes us come alive we see glimpses of God's creative energy in the world. For some, these are stories that reflect the kataphatic side of Christian spirituality, times when God was known in very real ways. By looking at the life of Christ we measure and realign our passions toward the countercultural path that participating with God's energy brings. The communal sharing of passions allows us to see the gifts within each other and opens the way for us to further shape these gifts God-ward.

### **Why do we ask questions and confess doubt?**

There are many reasons to do this together. The simplest answer as to why we should talk about our questions and doubts is because we have them. The moments of "not knowing" or apophatic spirituality, are normative in the tradition of Christian spirituality. Located where we are in the modern world we have suffered from our expectations of certainty on matters of faith. In *Amazing Grace Clubs* we seek to model together the natural breathing of knowing God's presence sometimes and knowing only mystery at other times. This is a natural, organic rhythm within our tradition which needs to be reclaimed.

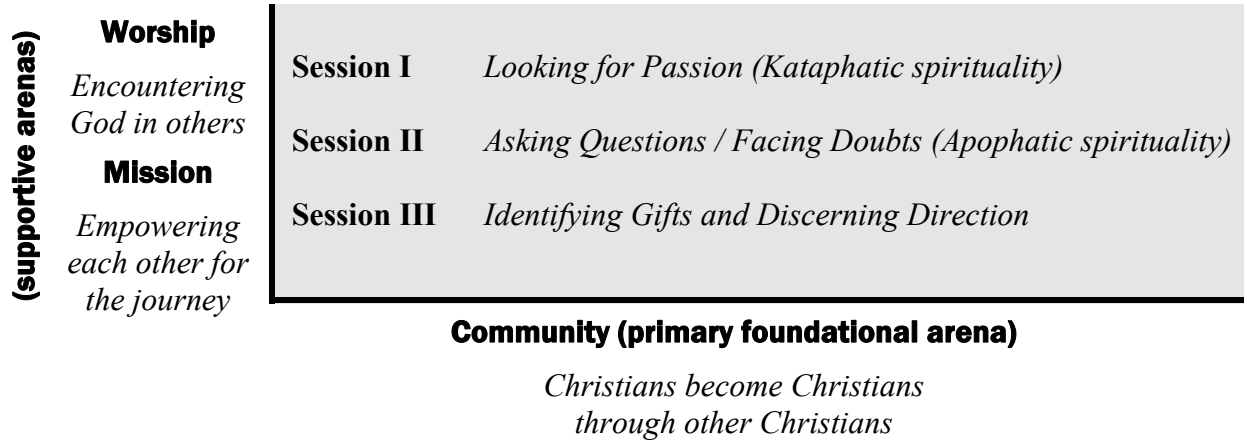
**Why do we connect our stories?**

By telling our stories communally, we open ourselves to the discernment of the body that may ask us to reorient our experience or may assign new meaning to our experiences. We look for ways to connect our stories because in doing so we weave our journeys together. Some of us have been at common places, some us have arrived where others are going, and some of us simply need others to know where we come from in order to help us discern where we should go next. Most importantly, as Christians we always tell our story against the back drop of God’s story.

**Why do we imagine each others future?**

Discernment is an ongoing task of any vibrant Christian community. When we tell each other in the context of an *Amazing Grace Club* how we imagine God using one another’s gifts we are breathing life into each other. We are in essence saying “I see a way for you to be useful to the kingdom, a way toward life.” God’s will comes to us as a bouquet of next steps, connected to our gifts and conscious of how the broken pieces of our life can be redeemed toward holiness. This simple practice, which comes at the end of the forming experience, is a model for how to live in spiritual friendship with others throughout our lives.

**How is the Congregational Discipling model active in this outline?**



*I understand that I am not God. I am simply the image of God and my task is gradually to discover that image and set it free. I acknowledge that I need others in my faith community to help me in this task and I invite the other members of the Amazing Grace Club to become this community at this time in my life. I covenant with the other members of the Amazing Grace club to offer them respect, to listen to them well, and to be as honest as I can. I understand that I will be honoring the relationships I make within the club if I hold their stories and sharing as confidential.*

NAMES:

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

**Half page bulletin insert** (this insert assumes a verbal explanation of the philosophy and theological foundation of the clubs will be offered during an announcement.) The project cover image could serve as a poster describing the purpose and intent of the clubs in the life of the congregation.



# The Amazing Grace club

This coming weekend  
(Congregation's name) will once  
again be forming a new *Amazing  
Grace Club*. We are grateful for  
the gift that our young people are  
to us. They help us to grow and to  
imagine our world in brand new  
ways. Please pray for this group  
as they enter a shared journey of  
spiritual growth together.

*names*

*names*

*names*

*names*

*names*

*names*

*names (pastor)*

*names (pastor)*

# Annotated Bibliography

## (Highly recommended as follow-up resource for youth participants)

Bass, Dorothy C. and Don C. Richter. *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Kids*. Abingdon Press, 2002.

*Eighteen teens and adults tackle the question "Is there a way to live that will keep me involved with what God is doing within me and within the world around me?" Drawing spiritual resources from across the span of Christian history, Bass offers disciples of Christ of all ages a path to follow that makes living the Christian life become real.*

Dean, Kenda Creasy and Ron Foster. *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending in Youth Ministry*. Upper Room Books, 1998.

*Dean and Foster reminds those in youth ministry what their true vocation is: to be "God-bearers" to the youth whose lives we enter. This book is not about methods, how to grow a youth groups, or how to impress the rest of your church. This book is about realizing that at the core, youth ministry exists in order that we can form authentic relationships with young people.*

Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*. Eerdmans, 2004.

*Dean places youth ministry practice firmly in theology, rather than methods of education or through the sole use of developmental theory. She outlines an approach to youth ministry that intertwines the passion found in adolescence with the Passion of Jesus Christ.*

Devries, Mark. *Family-Based Youth Ministry*. 2nd ed. IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

*Devries makes a compelling and simple argument that the purpose of youth ministry is to produce adult disciples. He argues that youth ministry needs to go beyond where most congregations go with programs and Christian education to focus on what matters, the quality of the teen's relationship with one or more mature Christian adults.*

Hershberger, Michele. *God's Story, Our Story*. Faith and Life Resources, 2003.

*This is an introduction to the Christian faith from an Anabaptist perspective. It is designed for people considering baptism, or for people who are mulling over faith questions.*

Nishioka, Rodger. "Breaking in, Breaking out: Disruption as a Theological Practice in Youth Ministry." Princeton Theological Seminary Lecture Series. Princeton, NJ. 1997.

*Rodger makes a compelling argument for the role adolescents play in the continual spiritual growth of a given faith community. Among other points, he points to the dynamic of disruption as the gift teenagers bring in the ever spiraling cycle of orientation, disorientation and reorientation that makes up the journey toward mature Christian spirituality. (See attached copy)*

## (Highly recommended as advanced reading for adult participants)

Peterson, Eugene H. *Like Dew Your Youth: Growing Up with Your Teenager*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

*Peterson, better than most, captures the dynamic that youth add to family and congregational spiritual growth. His conviction that adolescence spirituality is a gift to adult spirituality is the central premise that guides this practical and valuable resource.*

Yaconelli, Mike. "Disciple Abuse." Youth Worker Journal Sept. / Oct. 2003.

*(See attached copy)*

# Disciple Abuse

by Mike Yaconelli

*Youth Worker Journal* Sept. / Oct. 2003.

Suppose I took a group of dedicated high school football players and said to them, "If you're really committed, if you're serious about football, if you genuinely want to be the best, then I'm taking you to an NFL training camp so you can be a professional football player."

You would look at me like I was crazy. These young people, passionate and dedicated as they are, would be slaughtered on that football field. They'd be destroyed physically and mentally. And I, as a coach, would be arrested for child abuse.

Then why do we say to junior high and high school students who sincerely want to follow Jesus and give their lives to God, "You need discipleship class. If you're really committed and dedicated, then attend a discipleship class where you can become even more dedicated and committed. We're going to make you a disciple." If we do this, we're guilty of disciple abuse.

## **I don't believe in student discipleship.**

I believe in encouragement, affirmation, education, service, and study. I believe in relationship, community, and fellowship. I believe in training, beginning, starting, and learning. I believe in praying together, playing together, talking together, hanging together, and living life together, but I don't believe in "pouring my life into a student." I believe in showing my life to a student and living my life in front of a student; I don't believe in discipling young people.

## **"Too...young"**

Young people are too...well...young to be disciples.

Apprentices? Of course. Beginners? Sure. Trainees? Interns? Absolutely. But not disciples.

We've convinced adults and parents that we have a program that can produce disciples. We perpetuate the illusion that we can take 13-year-olds and make disciples out of them. We actually act as though we can transform a group of inconsistent, uncommitted adolescents into mature, committed disciples by spending an extra hour or two a week with them.

Not possible.

Are students capable of heroic acts? Absolutely! Can a 13-year-old be committed to Jesus? Yes, as long as we understand what we mean by committed. Can young people make a difference in the world? Of course they can, but we're still not talking about disciples.

## **"Discipleship requires..."**

Discipleship isn't about coming to more meetings than non-disciples. It's not about leadership or getting involved in service projects. Discipleship isn't about filling out a booklet. It's a way of living; it's the process of figuring out what it means to believe in Jesus in the everydayness of my life.

Because most students in our youth groups have been protected from suffering (Remember all the parents who showed up for your Mexico orientation concerned about whether or not the trip would be safe? And you lied and said it would be?), because most students have been continually rescued by mom and dad, and because most students haven't been prepared for the real world, they're not prepared for the complicatedness of life.

Discipleship requires maturity, experience, and depth. Discipleship requires extensive time. Discipleship requires intensity, isolation, and independence. Discipleship requires spending time with Jesus, not with you and me. Discipleship requires a lifetime of figuring out what it means to follow Jesus.

## **"Ruin their lives..."**

Before the mail starts, by all means, spend time with young people, study with them, pray with them, introduce them to Jesus, affirm them, encourage them, challenge them, attract them, motivate them, suffer with them, cry with them, and push them. Ruin their lives by introducing them to the compelling, attractive, demanding, frightening Jesus.

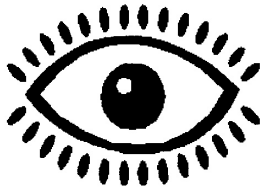
Most of all, love them. Believe in them. Trust them. Be an example for them. Stick it out with them over the long haul. And some day, when they're older, when they've weathered a few storms, when they've been beaten up by life a bit, they may actually start looking like a disciple—not because you disciplined them, but because you refused to give up on them.

---

*The Dangerous Wonder* column is a regular feature in *Youthworker*, the contemporary journal of youth ministry—produced by *Youth Specialties*; published by *CCM Communications*.

Copyright 2003 CCM Communications, Inc.

## Stages and Worship Services of the Adult Christian Initiation Cycle



### STAGE ONE:

**INVITATION.** The church is a body of believers who go into the world to live and share God's good news and invite people to "come and see" the good news experienced in Christ and the church (Matthew 28:19; John 1:35-42). The gospel invitation is extended through a variety of relationships, events, and interactions: friendship, worship, service and peace-making in the local or extended community, social occasions, sports and recreation, clubs, media advertising, etc. During this time, evangelism

gifts are called forth within the community of faith, and members are equipped for the ministry of evangelism. As people respond to the invitation and become seekers, they are presented to the congregation and welcomed to explore the possibility of baptism and church membership.

**Service of Welcome.** In this service, the congregation acknowledges and celebrates the work of God in seekers' lives, welcomes them into the life of the faith community, and promises to walk alongside them as they explore the meaning of faith in Jesus Christ and commitment to the church.



### STAGE TWO:

**INQUIRY AND EXPLORATION.** During this time, curious seekers become thoughtful inquirers. In relationships and study with church leaders and members, inquirers become familiar with God's story, the Anabaptist-Mennonite story, and what it means to be Christian within this community of faith. The process is designed to nurture an awareness of God's presence and call forth a personal response to God's grace and the call to follow Jesus Christ. As this stage comes to a conclusion, inquirers are invited to make a personal decision concerning baptism and church membership.

**Service of Decision.** In this service, the church announces and celebrates the decision of seekers to be baptized into Christ's church and promises to accept and support them as they prepare for baptism and church membership. A mentor/spiritual guide is named to accompany each new Christian during the next stages of the journey.



### STAGE THREE:

**PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM.** During this intense time of spiritual formation, new Christians come to understand and prepare for their participation in the public ceremony of baptism. Having committed themselves to follow Jesus Christ, they now explore the meaning of making a lifelong covenant with Christ and the church. New Christians meet regularly with a mentor or small group and begin to practice spiritual disciplines.

**Service of Baptism.** In this service, the church baptizes those who have chosen to follow Jesus Christ, prays for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, receives them with joy as full members of the Christian community, renews their own baptismal vows, and celebrates Christ's presence in a communion service.



### STAGE FOUR:

**POST-BAPTISM.** In recognition that new Christians need ongoing support and guidance for living the baptismal life, the church provides a structure of relationships and events for at least a year to nurture their faith and integration into the congregation. Some possibilities include ongoing mentoring relationships, involvement in congregational education, practice in spiritual disciplines, study of the Scriptures, gift discernment, guidance for vocational choices, opportunities for participation in the ministries of the church, and a celebrative event at the end of the year to renew their baptismal vows and bless them on their way.

## Goals

### Why do we tell stories about passion?

Young people by nature are often passionate about things. Kenda Creasy Dean, in her book *Practicing Passion* suggests that spiritual formation should connect the passion of Christ with our own passion. By learning about the “stuff” that makes us come alive we see glimpses of God’s creative energy in the world. For some, these are stories that reflect the kataphatic side of Christian spirituality, times when God was known in very real ways. By looking at the life of Christ we measure and realign our passions toward the countercultural path that participating with God’s energy brings. The communal sharing of passions allows us to see the gifts within each other and opens the way for us to further shape these gifts God-ward.

### Why do we ask questions and confess doubt?

There are many reasons to do this together. The simplest answer as to why we should talk about our questions and doubts is because we have them. The moments of “not knowing” or apophatic spirituality, are normative in the tradition of Christian spirituality. Located where we are in the modern world, we have suffered from our expectations of certainty on matters of faith. In *Amazing Grace Clubs* we seek to model together the natural breathing of knowing God’s presence sometimes and knowing only mystery at other times. This is a natural, organic rhythm within our tradition which needs to be reclaimed.

### Why do we connect our stories?

By telling our stories communally, we open ourselves to the discernment of the body that may ask us to reorient our experience or may assign new meaning to our experiences. We look for ways to connect our stories because in doing so we weave our journeys together. Some of us have been at common places, some us have arrived where others are going, and some of us simply need others to know where we come from in order to help us discern where we should go next. Most importantly, as Christians we always tell our story against the backdrop of God’s story.

### Why do we imagine each others future?

Discernment is an ongoing task of any vibrant Christian community. When we tell each other in the context of an *Amazing Grace Club* how we imagine God using one another’s gifts we are breathing life into each other. We are in essence saying “I see a way for you to be useful to the kingdom, a way toward life.” God’s will comes to us as a bouquet of next steps, connected to our gifts and conscious of how the broken pieces of our life can be redeemed toward holiness. This simple practice, which comes at the end of the forming experience, is a model for how to live in spiritual friendship with others throughout our lives.

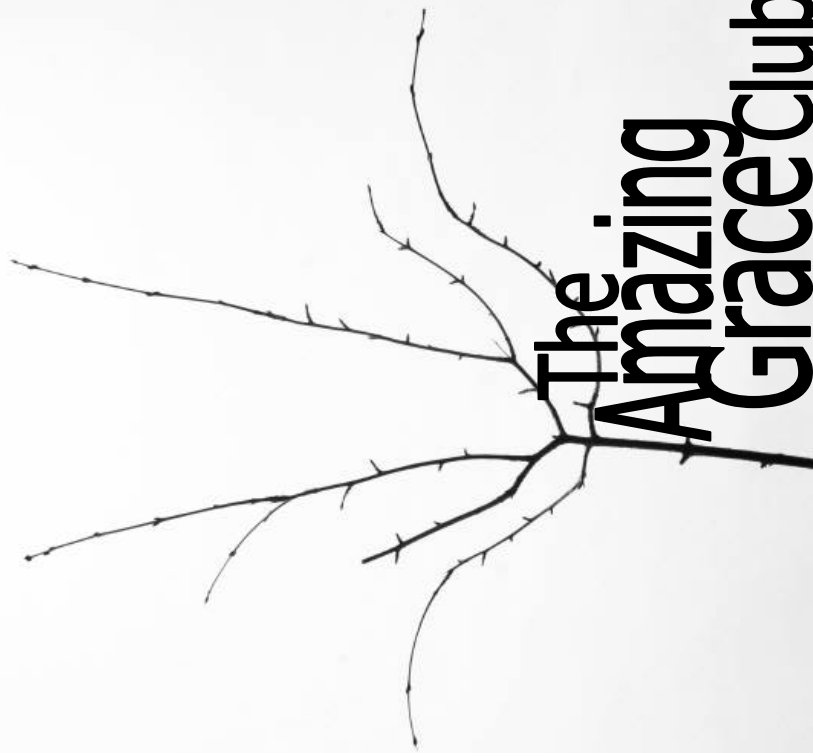
### How is the Congregational Discipling model active in this outline?

**(supportive arenas)**  
**Worship**  
*Encountering God in others*  
**Mission**  
*Empowering each other for the journey*

**Session I** *Looking for Passion (Kataphatic spirituality)*  
**Session II** *Asking Questions / Facing Doubts (Apophatic spirituality)*  
**Session III** *Identifying Gifts and Discerning Direction*

### Community (primary foundational arena)

*Christians become Christians through other Christians*



# The Amazing Graceclub

We are called through the creative design of God to “grow up” in Christ. (Ephesians 4:15) *Amazing Grace Clubs* seek to provide an intentional place within the life of our congregation where youth and adults join on a common journey of exploration of faith toward greater maturity. We do this intergenerationally because we believe that the questions and stories that mark our different life stages are designed to promote growth for all of us as the body of Christ. May the Grace of God and the guiding hand of Jesus Christ lead us toward holiness together.

**“What God is creating in the world is organic, and natural, and full of grace.”**