
Week 1: Introduction to Amazing Grace

Before the Session:

Email a link to the Church Times 3 July 2020 'Is the Church of England racist?' article by Chine McDonald (and another more recent relevant article to the group if appropriate). Request that the group read it before the first session.

Flow of Session:

- Opening Prayer (3 to 5 minutes)
- Welcome (3 to 5 minutes)
- Establish Group Covenant (10 minutes)
- Lectio Divina (5 minutes to explain the first time + 10 minutes to do lectio)
- Biblical Reflection Video No. 1 - Revelation 7.9 (about 8 minutes)
- Moment of Silence
- Reactions to Biblical Reflection Video (5 minutes)
- 'Lived Experiences' Jacqueline Stober Video (about 12 minutes)
- Small group discussion followed by plenary (15 minutes)
- Confession and Anti-Racism Liturgy (5 minutes)
- Close and Prayer (2 minutes)

What you will need:

- A Candle (and matches)
- Bibles (or biblical verses printed to give participants) for **Revelation 7.9**
- The Collect for this week (the one from last Sunday)
- The Prayer for Courage from the Corrymeela Community by Pádraig Ó Tuama (Buy the book. It is excellent!)
- Rosalyn Murphy Biblical Reflection Video No.1 (Download from website)
- Jacqueline Stober 'Lived Experiences' Video (Download from website)
- Confession and Anti-Racism Liturgy PowerPoint (Download from website)

The Session:

1. Opening Prayer

Please note: Feel free to use this short liturgy or open with extemporary prayer - or a combination of both. (Whatever works best for you and your tradition).

Light a candle in the centre of the group

Keep a moment of silence

Leader: Let us start by bringing our focus onto God and recognise God's presence among us.
May the love and desire for justice of Jesus Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

Leader: We put aside of stresses and preoccupations of the day, we acknowledge our hopes, fears, and anxieties as we start this session.
We ask you to be with us, Lord.
Help us to be open and vulnerable to your presence and the learning you have for us today.
We pray in Jesus' name.

All: **Amen.**

Leader may read the collect for this week

Leader: We gather together our thoughts and prayers using the prayer that Jesus taught us:

All: **Our Father...**

All: All pray 'The Prayer for Courage' from the Corrymeela Community by Pádraig Ó Tuama to close.

2. Welcome

Today is an introduction taster session. We're very pleased that you are joining us for this journey. (If you wish, you could share a bit of the history of the Amazing Grace course found in the introduction with the group.)

Outline the Principles of Learning Community:

- We're here to learn
- No experts
- Be challenged by the gospel
- Be challenged by the stories and experiences of others
- Will prioritise the voices of UKME / Global Majority Christians
- We acknowledge the leading of the Holy Spirit

Explain the flow of this session (it would help to put this on PowerPoint or a White Board as well).

3. Establish Group Covenant

Create the group covenant however you wish (either giving them a completed list or building it from scratch with suggestions from the group - or somewhere in between). That said, we would recommend that the following are included:

- Turn mobiles off
- Actively participate (knowing that 'active participation' is different for introverts and extroverts)
- Have consideration for other's time (so that one person does not dominate the conversation)
- Not speaking over people or interrupting
- Speak from the 'I' perspective, not claiming to speak on behalf of others
- Respect different perspectives & be gentle in questioning or challenging
- Complete confidentiality (unless a safeguarding issue arises)

4. Lectio Divina - Revelation 7.9

What is 'Lectio Divina?':

As you probably know, it literally translates as 'Divine Reading,' and is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word.

It does not treat Scripture as a text to be studied, but as the Living Word of God. So, it is not about getting the one 'correct' deep theological or accurate historical answer, but about what it says to you at this exact moment.

May we suggest people get into groups of 3 or 4 with those near them. Make sure everyone has a bible or a copy of the passage. There are many variations on how to do Lectio Divina. Here's a variation that we will use today:

Listening for God in the Word:

- i. One person reads aloud the passage of scripture. Listen for a word or short phrase that strikes you.
- ii. **Keep silence for a moment.** Then, another person reads the same piece of scripture aloud (preferably a different gender or age or accent with a different translation of the bible).
- iii. **Keep silence** for 2 minutes. Each person silently repeats the word or phrase that attracts them during that time.
- iv. Then, when given the cue to share, share aloud that one word or phrase that has attracted each person. Please be sure to keep it a simple statement of one or a few words with no elaboration.

Then... How God speaks to ME and what I am invited to DO:

- i. Now, a third reading of the same passage by another person (again, preferably with a different gender or age or accent or translation of the bible).
- ii. **Keep silence** for 2 minutes. Each person reflects on: 'God invites me to do/be/become today/this week.'
- iii. When given the cue that the 2 minutes are up, share aloud the results of each person's reflection. **Something brief** like: 'I hear, I see, or God invites me to...'

Please note that anyone may "pass" at any time. If a person prefers to pray silently instead of sharing with the group, then simply state this aloud and conclude your silent prayer with Amen.

Watch

5. Biblical Reflection - Revelation 7.9

We are blessed to have the Revd Canon Dr Rosalyn Murphy's biblical reflections every week. These have been a core feature of both the online courses which ran in Coventry and Derby. She is a biblical scholar, with masters and doctoral degrees from Durham. She is currently a vicar and Chair of the Racial Equality Action Group in the Diocese of Coventry.



6. A moment of silence

7. Reactions to Biblical reflection video

Opportunity to share observations or reflections in partners. If time, bring some of that back to the larger group.

Watch

8. Lived Experiences: Jacqueline Stober.

Part of the Amazing Grace Learning Community experience is to listen to the experiences and wisdom of those who identify as UKME or of Global Majority Christians. The Revd Jacqueline Stober is a vicar and area dean, as well as being BAME Champion available to discuss matters relating to BAME, UKME, BIPoC or Global Christian Majority concerns in the Diocese of Derby.



9. Small Group Discussion

In groups of 3 or 4, here are some questions to consider:

- What is your reaction to the videos you just watched?
- What is your reaction to the Church Times newspaper article that you might have had the chance to read before you came to the session?
- What are your hopes or anxieties for joining this community?

Prepare to Feedback: What are the key challenges and opportunities for our church, our communities and the world as we engage in this learning process together?

10. Confession and Anti-Racism Liturgy

11. Next week's focus: White Fragility and Racial Diversity Audit

Let the group know that you will email them with further material in the next couple of days to consider during the week. We know people have varying degrees of time, so we will share everything from a book to read to short videos / articles and podcasts. This is not intended to be a book group or to require you to do hours of homework between each session. There is no guilt or pressure to engage with everything, but people are encouraged to engage with at least something (and all are invited to include this learning community in their prayers) before we meet again next week.

12. Prayer to Close

Say a prayer to close, committing our actions to God, inviting the Holy Spirit to enable our continued learning with courage throughout the week. Thank everyone for joining us on this learning community journey.

13. Blow out the candle

Email tomorrow for next week's session:

Most importantly, thank them for joining you on this Amazing Grace Learning Community journey and please be sure to encourage the group to pray for each other throughout the week.

Book:

For our next meeting, we are looking at a brilliant (and challenging) short book by Robin DiAngelo entitled 'White Fragility'. They may like to get hold of a copy of her book and read it in advance, but the intent is that this is not a book group. There is no expectation that they will read this - it is only an additional recommendation for those who might find it useful.

Other Online Resources:

There are three excellent short video clips. They approach whiteness and white privilege from different angles and range from engaging and encouraging to really quite challenging. Here are links:

1. BBC Bitesize: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zrvkbqt>
2. **Robin DiAngelo Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvIO2GU8yTU>
3. Leicester Diocese Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vn1UtjXQpzM>

To make the best use of group time, people might want to reflect on some of these questions before we meet:

- Which video did I find most helpful and why?
- What did I learn that left me thinking "That's helpful - I can try that!"
- What left me thinking "That's challenging - but I haven't a clue what to do about that!"
- Which video would I recommend to a friend or family member, to my PCC/board, to my colleagues, etc.?
- Make a note of any other thoughts that come to mind

**Please note that in the Robin DiAngelo video, she uses People of Colour which is a common term used in the USA. The Windrush Group in the CofE advise against this term in the UK as it implies that white is normal / neutral / not a colour and then there is everyone else - the people of colour! The Windrush Group's suggestion is that we use Global Majority People/Christians when talking about this group or UKME which means UK Minority Ethnic - both terms reminding us that actually whiteness is a minority in global terms. Again, you might want to spend a little time thinking about language and your response to some of these terms.