From “Troubling the Waters” study on white privilege

Group Guidelines (10 minutes)

Have the following guidelines pre-printed on newsprint. Read through the six guidelines as significant points to constantly keep in mind. Add brief words of explanation for each, using the following explanations as examples. Leave the guidelines posted during the sessions.

• Listen to each other’s stories.

Give each person full attention as they speak, listening as much with your heart as with your ears.

• Respect each person’s journey.

Understand that we all have different prior experiences and learnings. We are all at different places on the journey of understanding ourselves as White people and our place within a larger race-based society. Emphasize that all of us are on a continual journey of growth and that we can respect each person even when our places on that journey differ. When we disagree with one another or challenge one another, we do it with respect, and not as an attack.

• No one can speak a third time until everyone has a chance to speak once.

We use this as a guideline to keep us mindful of the need to hear everyone in the group and to give time and space for everyone to speak. Some need more time to think and process before speaking; we lift up this rule to help us self-monitor. We will also monitor ourselves as a group if some begin to dominate the conversation.

• Be willing to share and grow.

This is essential for the process. Growth is not always easy. We usually grow the most through those times in which we have been most uncomfortable. We may need to challenge old understandings and even find some of our belief systems shaken. But we are in the journey together. We will grow most as a group if each of us individually is open to the process, sharing our doubts, questions, and vulnerabilities.

• Speak only for yourself.

Share your own experiences and feelings and be aware of the tendency to generalize or speak for others.

• Respect confidentiality.

This is very important for us to build trust with one another and to feel safe within this group. During our time together we will be sharing some of our life stories and experiences and we need to hold those stories as sacred among us. In sharing with others outside this group, we may talk about how we have changed or grown, but it is important not to share another person’s story unless they have given permission. It is important for all of us to know that what is shared in confidence with this group will be held in confidence. Ask for any questions or clarifications. Also ask for any additional guidelines that anyone would like to add and be prepared to add those to the list. Ask for an indication of agreement from each person around the circle