

At the heart of our fourth pillar is the challenge to fulfill a mission. Our mission is to participate with God in the renewal of the San Francisco Peninsula. We have titled our fourth pillar, Cultural Engagement.

Part 1-A Deeper Dive into the meaning of Cultural Engagement

Definition: Cultural Engagement is our thoughtful and gracious participation in society, as both individuals and as a church community, so that people encounter God through our words and our actions.

As you read this definition carefully, you will notice some word pairings that help us understand the meaning of Cultural Engagement.

1. What thoughts come to your mind by using the words “thoughtful” and “gracious” to describe the quality of our participation in society? Why do “thoughtful” and “gracious” apply to helping people encounter God on the Peninsula?

2. Why is it significant that we are called to engage both as individuals and as a church community? What does it look like for you to engage both personally and as a member of a church community?

3. Why do both our words and our actions matter to help people encounter God? Where have you seen this understanding work? Where have you seen this lack of understanding, not work?

4. The short version of our vision of CPC is that we are “Transformed People, Transforming the Peninsula.” Why do you think the Cultural Engagement pillar is critical to fulfilling the vision of CPC?

Part 2 - Sermon Based Questions

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." John 20: 19-23

1. How would you describe Jesus' mission given to Him by His Father? What about Jesus' mission aligns with our mission given to us by Jesus?

2. The motive of our mission that Jesus passes on to us is love. (see John 3:16; Romans 5:8) What happens if our Cultural Engagement is motivated by something other than love? How might we evaluate our motivations for Cultural Engagement? What are ways we can increase our love for those who want nothing to do with God, Jesus, or what we call the Good News?

3. The following quote is hard to hear. How does it resonate when you think of people that you interact with outside the church?

"Do not be too quick to assume that your enemy is an enemy of God just because he is your enemy. Perhaps he is your enemy precisely because he can find nothing in you that gives glory to God. Perhaps he fears you because he can find nothing in you of God's love and God's kindness and God's patience and mercy and understanding of the weakness of men. Do not be too quick to condemn the man who no longer believes in God. For it is perhaps your own coldness and avarice and mediocrity and materialism and sensuality and selfishness that have killed his faith." Thomas Merton

4. The purpose of our mission that Jesus passes on to us is to bring peace. How did what Jesus did on the cross bring us the opportunity to have peace with God? What insight does Jesus' appearance in his resurrected body give us about what God will do one day to bring peace and renewal to all creation? Why is it essential that we engage with individuals and engage with all of society to prepare for the coming Kingdom of God?

5. The method of our mission that Jesus passes on to us is servanthood. As Jesus embodied God when he came to earth, so we embody His message and methods. (Mark 20:28; Luke 22:27). What does it look like to serve as Jesus served by investing in people's lives? Why does serving through relationships make all the difference? Have someone read John 15.1-8 out loud. In this text, Jesus uses the metaphor of branches attached to a vine, and it is through this connection to the vine that the branches are able to produce fruit. The metaphor has two particular moments; the gardener pruning the branches (15.1) and the branches and the vine remaining and abiding in one another. Let's look at each moment in turn.

6. The power behind our mission that Jesus passes on to us is the Holy Spirit. How does the fact that the Holy Spirit is the power behind us affect our outlook on our Cultural Engagement Mission?

7. How has this study helped sharpen your understanding and obedience to the mission Jesus has called you to fulfill? What is one practical next step you can make to grow in your understanding and obedience?

Part 3–Homework

1. **Personal Faith Story:** Have everyone write their own 2-3 minute Personal Faith Story. Take a few minutes on the front end and allow each member of your Community Group to share their own story as your opening icebreaker. This exercise helps us get familiar with our own stories so we can share short and long versions with those who yet to know Jesus as the opportunity arises. It's a challenge. It's a challenge to keep it short!! Here is a faith story template to help you. Ask your leader if you have questions. Have one or two people share per meeting or plan a one-off event and have everyone share. Don't forget to allow the group to ask them questions about the story they just heard. Enjoy getting to know each other better.

Faith Story Framework

Some Guidelines:

This exercise is about succinctly telling our personal stories (2-3 minutes). Be familiar with key scriptures to insert or make reference (some examples: John 1:12; John 3:16; Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23, 5:8, Romans 10: 9-10, 13; 1 John 5:13). Consider a Scripture story that is especially meaningful to your personal faith story

Your faith story will align with a change in your life. Maybe a changed relationship, a new found purpose, or a movement from fear to faith.

Some Writing Tips:

- Use ordinary and natural language, write with words that reflect how you talk Highlight God's presence and power
- Present before and after pictures
- Let joy shine through and communicate with humility
- Share that Jesus is the source of life transformation

Questions Your Faith Story Should Answer:

1. What truth about God or yourself struck you most when you started your relationship and/or understanding of God?
2. How did your faith story start? Who, what, where, when?
3. What changes have begun in your life? (attitudes, perspectives, actions)
4. What are you learning or doing differently as a result of your growing relationship with God through Jesus Christ?

2. **Group Prayer List:** Begin praying together for non-Christians in your life. Have everyone contribute a name to your group prayer list. Commit to praying for the people on that list that they might come to put their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. And pray for opportunities to share Jesus with them.