



## Year of Discipleship and Justice – Survey Open Responses (as of 8/30/2021)

<i>Respond-ent</i>	<b>Number of events attended</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>For the Year, we adopted and followed a set of Core Values and Family Rules:</b></p> <p><b><u>Core Values</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We're here to learn and grow together as a church family</li> <li>• Because God cares about justice, we care about justice</li> <li>• Godly discipleship produces repentance, obedience, and fruitfulness, *not* shame</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Family Rules</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We only speak for ourselves, and don't presume to speak for others (we use our "I" voice)</li> <li>• We listen to understand what our brothers and sisters are trying to communicate</li> <li>• We ask "What is Jesus calling *me* to do?"</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Optional. Please use this space to share more about why the Core Values and/or Family Rules may have been helpful or not helpful for you</i></p>
<b>2</b>	5	Specifically calling out how discipleship should not lead to shame was liberating--it is so easy to feel shameful when discussing these topics
<b>3</b>	3	It was helpful to have these laid out at the first session, and repeated throughout the year. It led to a clear understanding of expectations and communication through such a sensitive topic.
<b>5</b>	2	A nice safe space from being attacked for not being woke enough but still wanting to grow.
<b>8</b>	3	Creating space for the church to have conversations about justice and race with intentionality and commitment to honesty, understanding, growth, and repentance has been a great encouragement.
<b>11</b>	5	helpful to ground us as we begin our time together
<b>15</b>	6	I thought about the family rules a lot when I would talk with my groups (and still use them in my workplace as great guiding principles)
<b>16</b>	1	This helped me feel safe as these "values and rules" were communicated at each event. I felt safe to learn and learn from others experience.
<b>17</b>	4	Thanks for grounding us in these each meeting! Very helpful
<b>22</b>	4	Reiteration was good at every point: beginning of each session; beginning of each breakout. It may have seemed repetitive but I think it was absolutely necessary.
<b>26</b>	6	I think the Core Values and Family Rules are necessary. I know Little Lights race literacy courses also use a similar framework. Kudos!
<b>28</b>	4	I found both very helpful and appreciated that we went over them at the beginning of each session. The reminder to use your "I" voice was particularly helping to me, and I think it created a more open-minded and graceful environment.
<b>31</b>	6	I think having these values and rules stated upfront allowed for everyone to have the same expectations and liberty to speak.
<b>33</b>	4	I liked both the Core Values and Family Rules because they clarified the purpose of the series and how to have a fruitful discussions on tough topics.
<b>37</b>	4	The Core Values were a helpful framing for me to understand where Grace Downtown was coming from in holding this Year of Discipleship and Justice, especially as someone newer to the church. The Family Rules were helpful for me to be reminded of at the start of each session because I was reminded to only speak for myself (which sometimes can be hard in conversations related to justice and race). I loved the question about what Jesus is calling each one of us to do because I think it's a vital one that we should continually be asking ourselves as believers (about justice, but also generally in life).



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Respond-ent	Number of events attended	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>In each of our six D&amp;J events we chose to develop a specific theme that together formed a narrative arc for the Year:</b></p> <p><b>1 Just Mercy</b> – <i>Establish that there can be a problem of systemic injustice</i></p> <p><b>2 Color of Law</b> – <i>Acknowledge the specific problem of systematic injustice in our country (and its long-term consequences)</i></p> <p><b>3 Positive View of Justice</b> – <i>Bring this brokenness to God through lament, and reaffirm his trustworthiness + Session Q&amp;A</i></p> <p><b>4 Cost of Discipleship</b> – <i>Establish the active requirements of a true disciple (obedience)</i></p> <p><b>5 Jesus and the Disinherited</b> – <i>Understand our identity as children of God that enables us to do extraordinary things (endure injustice and be obedient against injustice)</i></p> <p><b>6 Positive View of Repentance and Repair</b> – <i>Commit to restoration that reflects God's character and the coming Kingdom</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Optional. Please share more in your own words about how you generally experienced the individual events and full Year as structured</i></p>
<b>1</b>	--	I especially enjoyed the events that did not require much preparation. Reading the books was rewarding but time consuming, and depending on all of my other life responsibilities I don't often have time to read.
<b>3</b>	3	I particularly appreciated the focus on distinguishing between systemic racism and systematic racism. It was helpful to have a context where these terms were defined and discussed.
<b>5</b>	2	Thanks for the effort here.
<b>8</b>	3	I appreciate the level of thoughtfulness put into the topics and their progression and the genre range of the books selected for discussion.
<b>10</b>	3	I didn't actually read any of the books in total. But I liked the teachings and learning from others.
<b>11</b>	5	Appreciated having the time of teaching, discussion and prayer
<b>12</b>	6	I enjoyed the books and the events. I was pleasantly surprised by how the events challenged me to think about my own engagement with restoration. As a minority in a majority white church my attitude towards these kinds of events (prior to D&J) has often been one of cynicism. Previously, I found it hard to engage in meaningful ways b/c the discussion groups lacked the basis of trust and I am reluctant to be vulnerable without that established trust. What was different about D&J was the continuity over the course of a year. Knowing that most of the people participating were also committed to a journey not just a one time event allowed me to open up more and engage in ways that felt challenging yet safe.
<b>15</b>	6	The arc of the year *really* clicked for me internally at event 3 and I could see how building context and shared knowledge created opportunities for growth as disciples. The themes were really helpful for me as a D&J facilitator too because I could refer to them as I prepped and knew what to emphasize in the conversations.
<b>17</b>	4	I wasn't able to attend all events, but I so appreciated the ones I did join! The word for me this year was "integration." I feel I grew in my understanding of justice and racial equity as it pertains to scripture and the heart of God... which then gives new life and meaning to my conversations with colleagues and friends about the "issues." I feel better equipped! But also feel personally convicted and like the work of discipleship is a long-game of repentance and sanctification and growth.



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<b>21</b>	5	Having a safe and structured environment to guide me through the themes and reads allowed me to be challenged, and not discouraged.
<b>26</b>	6	I appreciated having a combination of book discussions and “positive view” sessions. Book discussions were great because books provide much more depth and context than any podcast, hour-long documentary, or movie could provide. If I may pick out a specific book, I personally had hard time following Cost of Discipleship so I might suggest substituting that with a book that’s easier to understand (perhaps something from a more modern time or something with a better, clearer translation), but in the end I am glad I had a chance to read the book. For all of the books, I found the reading plans and the pre-discussion overview/teachings helpful!
<b>28</b>	4	<p>I was only able to go to the book club events, so I can only speak to those, but I found each book discussion really helpful and meaningful in its own way. Despite the obvious disadvantages of using Zoom, I found the flow of the events were well-structured and didn’t feel like a drag.</p> <p>I will say I felt like I got more out of some breakout sessions than others, the Cost of the Discipleship breakout session I was in (led by Meg Montee) definitely stood out. There was another session that felt a little more awkward for me because we had several talkers and I was hesitant to jump in. There’s so many well-educated, thoughtful members of our church, and especially when the conversation is happening more on an intellectual (vs. emotional) level, it can be intimidating for a younger, less-educated person like me to engage. I hope that makes sense!</p> <p>I think maybe in future book club series, being able to stay in the same breakout group and get to know people would be helpful. But overall, I thought the events were really well-structured and I’m so grateful for the leadership of everyone who put so much time and energy into them; it definitely showed!</p>
<b>31</b>	6	It was encouraging to see others from church show up and participate in these events, to know that we are seeking to learn, understand, and change collectively. I also appreciated the different speakers who gave a summary of the book or put things in a historical context for the group. It was very interesting. Having an event that lasts for a couple of hours on a Saturday could seem long, but I think there was a good balance of breakout rooms, individual speakers, prayer, etc.
<b>36</b>	4	For each event, I was grateful for the initial question of what struck you/ moved you from the book.
<b>37</b>	4	I really enjoyed the events of the year and the fact that there was not a singular justice event that could be easily forgotten. It was good to reflect on this issue as a church over the course of a whole year. Unfortunately I could not make it to events 3 or 6 so I missed those discussions (and haven't had a chance to watch the recording for event 6 yet), but I imagine they were critical events that connected the previous teachings and discussions to our theological understandings of justice. I was quite bummed that I couldn't make it to those events. I really liked the structure of the individual events - it was great to be in the same breakout group throughout the whole event and there was a good balance of time spent on background/context and Bible verses shared in the larger group. The other thing that was helpful for me was guidance on what chapters to focus on if you didn't have enough time to read the entire book. This helped me for the events where I couldn't finish the book but I still wanted to attend the event. Another perk of participating in the full discipleship and justice year was that it was good to get to know more people from the church through it, even if the events were virtual.



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<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Number of events attended</i>	<p><b>Our modest vision for the Year was to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a space where our church family could get used to talking about justice in a Christian setting</li> <li>• Reinforce the truth that we can address injustice without shame and instead with hope</li> <li>• Grow a body of just people, where justice is an integrated part of who we are as disciples of Christ</li> </ul> <p style="color: blue; font-style: italic;">Optional. Please share more in your own words about how you may have grown (or not grown) in relation to these goals during this Year. Your context helps us understand and serve our congregation better.</p>
<b>3</b>	3	The breakout groups were the best way to digest what we had just heard in the group session time. The leaders had a good way of including everyone, and encouraging all the group members to share what they thought. I appreciated meeting other members of the church, too, and hearing about their perspectives and life experiences.
<b>5</b>	2	I didn't know the Thurman book existed. It is fantastic.
<b>8</b>	3	The readings this year gave me a deeper understanding and entry point for further reading, and the discussions were good practice for having similar conversations outside this structured setting.
<b>10</b>	3	I didn't feel shame in the small groups but did feel that there wasn't enough time or the relationship with everyone in my groups to be able to share beyond a more intellectual understanding of the material.
<b>11</b>	5	It was helpful to hear how others were processing things and to know I wasn't alone and I could follow up with them about these big topics
<b>13</b>	2	I have grown in integrating the theology of justice and its implications in my daily life, especially as it relates to my conversations with those in and outside of the church. I become more confident expressing a biblical framework for understanding justice and its practical implications in everyday life.
<b>15</b>	6	I think I grew tremendously this past year-- in understanding of context and history; in my ability to explain how we can think about justice as followers of Christ; in my own personal practices of daily justice; in seeing issues that are outside of my own experiences and knowledge; in my ability to talk directly and openly about justice (racial or otherwise) and my willingness to be bold; in how I pray for our church and our city; in how I respond to racial justice issues in my work. D&J was HUGE for my spiritual growth and I see fruit of it in my daily life.
<b>16</b>	1	As a teacher in DC, I think through racial and justice issues on a daily basis. Not just in theory but in concrete relational way with students/families I come in contact with. I was very encouraged to know that our church was spending a year digging deeper into this topic. There is much to learn and understand but I am also hopeful because of Christ and His commitment to this work through His church.
<b>20</b>	2	I was so grateful to have these discussions in a church setting. They helped me frame my understanding of certain justice-related topics and goals within the context of the gospel, and created space for thoughtful discussions with people I look up to.
<b>21</b>	5	I feel more comfortable talking about it, especially taking care to hear others, acknowledge their views, and speak for myself ("I" statements). I think that the subtext of how to respond situations could be made more granular. Yes, pay attention to City Council meetings, know your biases and work at standing for the dignity and equality of your neighbor; but also, how do you love and react to a person in need? In the street? A stranger in the pew?
<b>23</b>	3	<i>Response redacted at request of respondent.</i>



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<b>26</b>	6	The three points in the vision truly resonate with me. Church is in fact the best setting for talking about justice and processing it and growing in that aspect of our Christian calling, so it was not only effective and great but also necessary that our church at the leadership level proactively created this opportunity and took the lead. Random thought: Perhaps next time we could also incorporate books/articles written by a majority culture Christian person on this topic (like White Awake) in the hope that it offers more directly applicable insight into battling shame and practically pursuing justice and reconciliation.
<b>28</b>	4	As a white Christian, I've often really struggled to talk about justice issues to other white Christians who've, like me, have had very sheltered, comfortable experiences in predominantly white communities. Those conversations only grew harder over the past year, and I still have so much learning and growing to do. But God really did use this Year to give me a foundation for how to have those conversations and engage in justice issues in my community.
<b>31</b>	6	I think I had already begun this journey so taking part in these events helped to reinforce/strengthen what had already been started.
<b>37</b>	4	This year helped me to grow in my understanding of justice from a biblically-based context. I was particularly interested in doing this because I have spent many years thinking about issues of justice, but not always from an in-depth perspective of the Church and Christianity. I feel that I still have more to learn in terms of what the Bible says about justice, but I'm grateful to have grown through this year. In terms of the books, Just Mercy and The Color of Law were not new to me, but I had never heard of Jesus and the Disinherited or The Cost of Discipleship. Both of the latter two books helped me to think about my calling to justice as a Christian in new ways. Lastly, the year of events was a good follow up/complement to the sermon series on Amos, which also helped me think about God's vision of social justice.



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<i>Respond-ent</i>	<b>Number of events attended</b>	<b>Optional. What was most helpful for you this Year, if anything at all?</b>
<b>2</b>	5	Being asked to lead a breakout group was great as a growth experience--selfishly, it really helped me engage with the material! I think including a broad group of folks as facilitators, etc. in future events like this could help drive engagement.
<b>3</b>	3	I appreciated stepping into the tension of difficult racial discussions with other believers. It was also refreshing when Glenn (during the last session) talked about moving forward/healing as a place where we can practice creativity - and listen to ways the Holy Spirit might be moving in each of us. This broad approach helped me feel like there is no "one size fits all" for healing, and that it is a process that can take on many forms.
<b>5</b>	2	Quality of the books
<b>6</b>	6	The discussion sessions
<b>7</b>	4	Seeing that our church cares about issues of justice
<b>8</b>	3	Knowing the church was committed to addressing the reality of systemic racial injustice as sin and understanding the Church's role in that system and participating in communal prayer and repentance.
<b>10</b>	3	The structure and content.
<b>11</b>	5	Going through these topics and having conversations with our church community - learning more about one another and how we were coming into the conversations too
<b>12</b>	6	The discussion groups
<b>13</b>	2	I loved the Jesus & The Disinherited discussions and talk
<b>14</b>	5	The breakout sessions
<b>15</b>	6	I loved the Q&A with the session--that stood out to me as full of really rich points and relevant discussion. I also loved the sense of community at the events.
<b>16</b>	1	I enjoyed the small group time and hearing from others.
<b>17</b>	4	See comment above about "integration"
<b>18</b>	3	Really appreciated the Color of Law
<b>19</b>	6	The range of personal and spiritual applications of justice from having a majority white audience engage on the issues.
<b>21</b>	5	The structure and themes
<b>22</b>	4	The multi-pronged approach: learning (from books and leaders); listening (to one another); lamenting (in prayer)
<b>23</b>	3	<i>Response redacted at request of respondent.</i>
<b>24</b>	1	Dedicated space to talk about what the gospel says about race and justice
<b>26</b>	6	The very existence of D&J and a community that is willing to engage in it
<b>27</b>	5	The breakout groups, to process together.
<b>28</b>	4	Having read Just Mercy previously and been generally aware of the issues in the Color of Law, I really appreciated the latter half of the Year when we went through Cost of Discipleship and Jesus and the Disinherited and could dive deep into the spiritual application. I've recommended Jesus and the Disinherited to other Christians since, and that book in particular has really stuck with me.
<b>31</b>	6	Being able to have conversations with others from church through these events.
<b>32</b>	4	The breadth of the reading list
<b>33</b>	4	I really liked how each session was organized and the selection of books. I most appreciated the teaching aspect of each session. I knew about systemic and systematic



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		injustice generally, but the books really opened my eyes to the depth of both types of injustice.
<b>36</b>	4	Starting with Just Mercy. Having the encouragement to still come even if we hadn't read the materials in full. Have adjusted reading amounts closer to the event.
<b>37</b>	4	The background and context provided at the start of the D&J events. It was good to hear more about the book authors or to review biblical passages or definitions/terms for justice in the Bible.



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<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Number of events attended</i>	<i>Optional. What are areas if any that you would want more guidance on or equipping for going forward?</i>
5	2	More viewpoints from minority church members on how we can better understand their perspective and care for them better.
6	6	How to have these kinds of conversations with others outside of structured events
7	4	Navigating issues of injustice that are supported (silently or loudly) by the denomination and reflecting on our own system to identify colonial/white supremacist values that continue to be upheld
8	3	I think it will be helpful for the church to keep making intentional space for these kinds of conversations.
10	3	How does this apply more personally? What does discipleship in these areas look like day to day.
11	5	Continuing the conversations, almost like a 2.0 version for people who want to keep having these conversations
12	6	I would love more books or recommended reading/resource lists
13	2	What specific justice issues would we as a church focus on in our city?
14	5	It was a great experience
17	4	More practice talking about racial justice. I hope we can continue these type of sessions in some way!
18	3	Discipleship pairings could be helpful.
19	6	How to maintain the level of intimate engagement on such issues with people who find them difficult.
21	5	Practical steps on making justice and love part of who we are as a congregation
23	3	<i>Response redacted at request of respondent.</i>
26	6	How to apply all of this to life in DC today (e.g., how to think about gentrification, what to do about it as a transplant in DC); how to understand activism in light of what the Bible says about submission to authorities.
28	4	I will say that having these conversations in more conservative churches like Grace DC is more important than ever, as all the discourse around “critical race theory” continues to heighten.
31	6	Knowing more about practical next steps for change. (I realize this is different for everyone though.) To learn more about Grace DC Downtown might be a stumbling block to outsiders and what we could do to make changes so that everyone feels welcomed.
32	4	Effective local action in DC for our neighborhoods and families
33	4	how we as Christians can be advocates for justice and healing.
36	4	Experiences learning from extensively from people from particular cultural backgrounds sharing their lives (various asian people groups)
37	4	Being gracious and compassionate in interactions with others who may not be as far along in their understanding of justice and what God has called us to do (this can apply to within Grace or outside it).  It might also be nice for people to receive recommendations on what other resources they can pursue to learn more about the topic of discipleship, Christianity, and justice.
<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Number of events attended</i>	<i>Optional. Please share here anything else at all that may be on your mind, or that you think would be helpful for us to know. We would be glad to hear about your thoughts on and experiences of the Year.</i>





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<b>3</b>	3	Thank you so much for organizing this! It was wonderful to participate in such a well thought-out discussion series. Thank you for being willing to directly engage with a challenging hot-button topic and for doing your best to focus on communicating in loving ways. It was a blessing.
<b>5</b>	2	It is very important for white church members to understand the perspective of minority church members. This has to come from the heart and cannot be the result of shame or peer pressure.
<b>13</b>	2	I'm grateful for the partnership between the diaconate and elders
<b>17</b>	4	Some dear friends and community group members had a hard time with our study this year. I will say, that none of these folks attended any of the sessions even after many invitations, so in my opinion their criticism breaks down pretty quickly. However, one thought I had in terms of communication that could have been even more winsome: for me, this whole year began with biblical teaching last summer about the book of Amos and God's heart for justice. Scripture was the starting point through and thorough. Then, we read other topical books, lamented, grew as disciples, and more. I think some falsely assumed that issues/ hot cultural and political topics were the starting place, but that's not true at all! Perhaps drawing attention even more to the arc of the year beginning with the book of Amos' teaching, and scripture being the ultimate foundation, could have been helpful. (Not saying this didn't happen! Just wondering if even more attention here could have been beneficial.)
<b>20</b>	2	I really enjoyed the small breakout groups, and think it could be helpful to occasionally suggest that community groups focus in on these issues more often together. I felt the conversations were so insightful among people who didn't know each other very well, which makes me think they could be even more productive among groups that have established trust and friendship.
<b>23</b>	3	<i>Response redacted at request of respondent.</i>
<b>26</b>	6	<p>Thank you for having D&amp;J! Such a blessing! Please definitely continue the leadership-level engagement (e.g., church-wide promotion, pastors and elders actively participating and leading parts of the sessions).</p> <p>Some remaining questions for me: how do we PRACTICALLY INTEGRATE our understanding of Biblical justice into life as disciples of Jesus (in addition to growing in awareness, having discussions, and lamenting); how does our church view GENTRIFICATION and what should/can we (individually and as a church community) do about its unjust aspects, as transplants in DC; how do we (especially white brothers and sisters) work out feelings of GUILT, SHAME, and INADEQUACY while continuing to learn about the systemic scale and deep roots of injustice and grow a sense of ownership and empathy; what does justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion look like in OUR OWN CHURCH CONTEXT, including how we might apply the great insights from Irwin's "A Beautiful Community." Perhaps we might also include a DC-SPECIFIC SESSION that specifically focuses on the history, current challenges, and opportunities to learn/serve/engage related to race and racism in DC.</p> <p>D&amp;J has been an important part of our growth this year. We appreciate that it has provided a safe, constructive, empathetic, nonjudgmental, nonpartisan forum in which to discuss justice with other brothers and sisters with common values. Praying together was also so important and good. Hope we do something like this again! Thank you, Yan and team!!</p>
<b>28</b>	4	I don't have much left to say, except that my love for our church has really grown through these events, and I look forward to future events like these where we can continue growing together!



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<b>29</b>	1	It would be helpful to broaden the discussion of justice to additional areas, even ones that are also controversial (such as abortion, marriage, trafficking in persons, religious freedom, international justice).
<b>32</b>	4	Thank you for all the effort here!
<b>34</b>	1	<i>Response redacted at request of respondent.</i>
<b>36</b>	4	A major thank you for pressing through the entire year. It feels good to start and end together as a community. Thank you for follow up invitations, explanations, and overall abundant communication, Yan and all!
<b>37</b>	4	<p>Thanks for all your hard work and intentionality in planning, coordinating, and executing each of these events!</p> <p>One thing to mention about my experience at the events - it was interesting for me to participate in them as someone new to the church because I didn't really have any context or awareness of how far along the church is in its discussions of justice and/or the backgrounds of the people in my group in terms of their views of this subject. This didn't stop me from participating in the discussions; it was mainly a personal point of curiosity.</p>