

# Being Touchstones

## *Intentional Practices for Courageous Conversations within Foothills Presbytery*



- ❖ **Practicing Being Present:** Be here. Be present as fully as you are able. Be here with your doubts, fears, and failings as well as your convictions, joys, and successes.
- ❖ **Practicing Welcome:** Receive welcome and extend welcome. People learn best in welcoming spaces. We support each other's learning by giving and receiving welcome.
- ❖ **Practicing Listening with Authenticity and Depth:** In the ecumenical tradition of the PC(USA) and therefore, with honor and respect of others, we strive to listen with the ear of the heart. We seek to listen for the truth and wisdom of others and in each of our own spiritual journeys to listen and discern Christ's guidance through the Holy Spirit. Listen deeply with respect. Help to "hear each other into deeper speech".
- ❖ **Practicing Speaking with Intention:** Speak your T(t)ruth in ways that honor the T(t)ruths of others.
- ❖ **Practicing Exploration: Breathe. Everything is an invitation.** It is not share or die. Simultaneously, everyone's voice matters and contributes to creating a picture of the issues in the moment as it helps us to understand our present reality and identify our work.
- ❖ **Practicing Trust:** No fixing, saving or advising. Respecting that the inner teacher is present in and guiding each of us while we learn in community grounded in Christ.
- ❖ **Practicing Confidentiality:** Safety is built when we can trust that our words and stories will remain with the people with whom we choose to share and are not repeated to others without our permission. Stories stay, lessons go.
- ❖ **Practicing Living the Questions:** Let go of right answers. When it's hard, turn to wonder. If you feel judgmental, or defensive, ask yourself, "I wonder what brought her/him/them to this belief?" "I wonder what feelings are arising for him/her/them?" and perhaps most important "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?"
- ❖ **Practicing Pausing:** Offer space and time to ponder. Be open to pausing, silence, and listening to understand before speaking and to hearing from our inner teacher as well as from each other.
- ❖ **Practicing Grace and Reflection:** Honor that we are all learning together. Embrace missteps as an opportunity to learn -- about ourselves, about others and about how we are socialized. Be open to the cycles of ownership, responsibility, regret, grace, reflection, redemption, and forgiveness.
- ❖ **Practicing Hope:** Believe that it's possible to emerge from this work with what you need, what the community needs, and with more energy, openness, and perspective, so that our community can hold greater capacity for transformation, healing and wholeness.

*As of May 7, 2025, Being Touchstones have been adapted by the Courageous Conversations Curriculum Team of Foothills Presbytery and represent an evolution from numerous practitioners, including the following: **The Theory of Being: Practices for Transforming Self and Communities Across Difference** Published 2022, University of Iowa; Multicultural Initiatives (MCI) Research Team pgs. 217-218 Appendix B.*

*Being Touchstones were adapted by Sherry K. Watt, University of Iowa, Multicultural Initiatives Team from [Circle of Trust Touchstones](#), Center for Courage & Renewal (CCR), founded by Parker J. Palmer (With author's gratitude to Veta Goler and Sally Z. Hare. Each is a facilitator Trained by the CCR.) Being Touchstones have also been adapted by Nancy Edmundson and Winton Boyd with gratitude to Barbara Hummel, all who are also facilitators trained by the CCR. Joseph Gaston, a member of the Courageous Conversations Curriculum Team of Foothills Presbytery, is also a facilitator trained by the CCR.*