

Discernment Circles

[\[Audio Link\]](#)

Katherine: My name is Katherine Wojtan and I'm with the Minnesota Peace Team. And this exercise, I'm going to describe is used as a wrap up at the end of a peace team training, and really focuses on raising any issues people have had that they haven't voiced or any concerns. And also, helping them discern how they want to participate in a peace team going forward.

This is a physical exercise in that people get to walk around and stand up. Basically, we take the large space on the floor and make large pie slices out of it with blue tape. And then we put down a word on a piece of paper in each of the pie slices. And as a wrap up to or of discernment at the end of a peace team training I use words like, "Nonviolence, non-partisanship, risk-taking, commitment to consensus, decision-making, affinity team field work." And I always leave an extra space that says, "Others." So, people can bring up whatever they need to bring up during this exercise.

I then ask people to stand in the slice of the pie that they feel, for instance, most comfortable with. And based on how people are spread out in the pie, you know, I often go to the most populated slice first because I know somebody will have something concrete to say. And ask them, "Well, why are you guys standing in this slice?" And they'll respond with their answers." The ones that have fewer people, you know, I'll ask them the same question. And they'll come up with different answers because they have a different reason for being in that slice.

After I go through that question, I'll ask another question. I'll probably do about three questions. One question I always use is, "Which piece do you feel least committed to or most perplexed about?" And if somebody comes up with and stands in consensus slice, for instance, I know as the facilitator, and they know that is a core piece of being on an affinity team out in the field for the peace team, and that if they have trouble with that, that maybe they need to rethink it. Maybe they need more practice with that. Or perhaps there's another role on the peace team that they can take.

And during this piece of the exercise, we also – or during this concluding piece of the training, we also, for sure, talk about the various roles people can take on a peace time that might not be affinity field team roles so that people feel like they have an option. If they're committed to this work of nonviolence but don't fit quite into the field team role, there is a space for them in the peace team.

I found this exercise really – it's kind of a collection point at the end of the training so that whatever isn't spoken, people have a space to say it. And it's really a very interesting conversation and people really always enjoy it.

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