

**Discussion Group Notes – from the Prayer in America Event  
at WGTE 6/17/08**

**Prayer and the Constitution**

**Discussion Questions:**

- **How can we protect religious activity without promoting a particular faith?**
- **In what way should prayer be included in an interfaith or multifaith celebration?**

**Guidelines for Interfaith Discussion:**

- **Speak from your own tradition and experience. Do not presume to speak for another faith tradition.**
- **Listen. Let everyone have a chance to contribute to the discussion.**
- **Seek to learn from others and grow from this experience.**

**Group One:**

If we all thought as Buddhists do, we would all be accepting at heart. We are all one humanity with no walls. We would get to know each other as human beings. The spiritual acceptance is key – oneness, family. Not losing who you are but respecting one another, because respect for one another protects. We interact on a personal level only. Others are a person first. We go to war because we don't break bread together. The universe in us should always show.

A moment of silence for all to pray (may protect religious activity without promoting a particular religion). Keep it private and personal, so it doesn't become meaningless. Use an opening line that encompasses all faiths – the "Creator," or "God." All hold hands in a circle and pray and still be united. Is meditation the key?

**Group Three:**

Look at the areas where protection is required – work, courts, schools. Students can pray in voluntary groups. Protect against those who feel the strongest that they must convert others to their beliefs.

Protect against beliefs that threaten your well-being. Protect against damage done to houses of worship. (Protection should be granted) as long as beliefs do not contradict with laws of state and country,

Protect an individual's right to pray.

There is a problem with renting school property for religious groups. Should we not allow any promotion of religion in schools? Is it worth the money that schools make by renting their school property for religious services?

Schools have let in different religions and there should be that freedom. Holidays are celebrated in the public schools.

Things to consider:

- Prayer book with multi-faith prayers.
- Unity prayers.
- Prayer for human well-being.
- Peace on earth.
- Diverse society, sensitivity of offending others in any way.
- Sensitivity of food being served.
- Choose to join in or not to join in when other prayer is said.
- Be respectful of other faith's prayers, traditions.
- Change in times from reading psalms in school to today where promoting religion in schools is controversial.

Group Four:

There is a great deal of diversity in Toledo. Residents have attended colleges both in the East and West. In India, there are a variety of prayers and those prayers are inclusive. In America, we see a moment of silence and meditation.

There is a water blessing. There is a difference between creation and the creator. Without communication there is a great deal of misunderstanding. Most people have a deep faith and a sense of stewardship, but are afraid of what's different.

Group Five:

Have respect for diversity. Generic prayers should have religious character and cultural sensitivity since we live in a multicultural society. Religion is personal, not collective. Politics and schools have religion.

Why should prayer be done at all in a multi-cultural setting? Is an extremely secular state desirable? Prayer is an individual expression of religious belief.

Group Six:

Religious activities could be a non-activity (just being). America need to learn how to trust people and settle on how to respect those of other faiths – God is the same to all, but with different names. We can say that we have a wound that needs healing; we need to live and let live with no violence. When others of a different faith tradition invite you to share their faith activity, you should respect what happens, and learn about their tradition. You should ask yourself, “Is this a good way to think?” It is difficult to have a politically correct prayer. Many prayers are inspirational, and they are thoughts from a particular tradition. Perhaps better is a silent prayer, where people can make a personal choice.

Prayer is the anchor that leads us toward the light. It’s not just a particular set of words. People may fear learning about other religions. Oppressed groups seem to have more difficulty with discussing religion with outside groups.

The Report-Out: Major tidbits from each of the groups:

- Prayer is an anchor to go toward the light.
- Dialog and sharing without fear leads to peace.
- Prayer is an individual expression of faith.
- Those who do not understand, fear.
- A moment of silence includes all.
- It’s important that each faith has equal time in public dialogue.
- In a circle, each person praying their own prayer can feel unity.