

Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love



Commitments for Unity Congregations in Times of Disagreement

“Endeavoring to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), as both individual members and as a spiritual community, we pledge that we shall:

Adapted with permission
Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

IN THOUGHT

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Accept Conflict | 1. Acknowledge that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. <i>Romans 14:1-8, 10 – 12, 17 – 19, 15:1-7.</i> |
| Affirm the Truth | 2. Endeavor to see conflict as symptomatic of what’s missing in our intention to create authentic community. Peacemaking is creating a pathway to God. <i>Matthew 5:9.</i> |
| Commit to prayer | 3. Examine where we are coming from and release our need to be right. Acknowledge all parties have needs and to pray for win / win solution (no prayers for my success or for the other to change). <i>James 5:16.</i> |

IN ACTION

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Go to the other | 4. Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism. Refrain from engaging in “parking lot” conversations. <i>Matthew 5:23 – 24; 18: 15 – 20.</i> |
| In the spirit of humility | 5. Go in gentleness, patience, and humility. Own our part in the conflict instead of blaming others and acting as if the others are responsible for how we are. <i>Galatians 6: 1 – 5.</i> |
| Be quick to listen | 6. Listen carefully, summarize and check out what is heard before responding. Seek as much to understand as to be understood. <i>James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13.</i> |
| Be slow to judge | 7. Suspend judgments, end enrolling others in our position, discard threats, and act in a non-defensive and non-reactive way. <i>Romans 2:1 – 4; Galatians 5:22 – 26.</i> |
| Be willing to negotiate | 8. Work through the disagreement constructively. Acts 15; Philippians 2:1 – 11. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify issues, interests, and needs of both (rather than take positions).• Generate a variety of options for meeting both parties’ needs (rather than defending one’s own way).• Evaluate options by how they meet the needs and satisfy the interests of all sides (not just one side’s values).• Collaborate in working out a joint solution (so both sides gain, both grow and win).• Cooperate with the emerging agreement (accept the possible, not demand your ideal).• Reward each other for each step forward, toward agreement (celebrate mutuality). |

IN LIFE

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Be steadfast in love | 9. Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be steadfast in acting out of Principle (do the right thing); be hard on issues, soft on people. <i>Colossians 3:12 – 15.</i> |
| Be open to peacemaking | 10. Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in peacemaking. <i>Philippians 4:1 – 3.</i> |
| Trust the community | 11. Trust the wisdom of the community and if we cannot reach agreement or experience reconciliation, we will turn the decision over to the congregation or seek assistance from the Ministry for Peacemaking. <i>Acts 15.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.• In congregational disputes, this may mean implementing constitutional decision-making processes (membership vote) when peacemaking assistance is unable to facilitate reconciliation. |
| Be the expression of Christ | 12. Be committed to peacemaking and the demonstration of Principle, rather than resort to courts of law. <i>1 Corinthians 6:1 – 6.</i> |