

Seeking to be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement

Adopted by the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), published by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, PC(USA), 1993.

*In a spirit of trust and love,
we promise we will . . .*

"Give them a hearing . . . listen before we answer" (John 7:51 and Proverbs 18:13).

1. Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ;
 - we will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange,
 - we will not ask questions or make statements in a way which will intimidate or judge others.
2. Learn about various positions on the topic of disagreement.
3. State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.

"Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).
4. Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teaching.
5. Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity;
 - we will not engage in name-calling or labeling of others prior to, during, or following the discussion.

6. Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.

"Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3)

7. Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.
8. Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension;
 - we will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.
9. Follow these additional Guidelines when we meet in decision-making bodies:
 - urge persons of various points of view to speak and promise to listen to these positions seriously;
 - seek conclusions informed by our points of agreement;
 - be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;
 - abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways which are consistent with these Guidelines.
10. Include our disagreements in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.