



Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love

Covenant Commitments for Christians in Times of Disagreement

"Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge that we shall:

In our thoughts

- Accept conflict** 1. Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our lives in church and organisations. *Romans 14:1-8, 10-12, 17-19; 15:1-7*
- Affirm hope** 2. Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict we can work through to a place where we can continue together and growth through the experience. *Ephesians 4:15-16*
- Commit to prayer** 3. Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory solution (no prayers for my success or for the other to change but to find a joint way). *James 5:16*

In our actions

- Go to the other...** 4. Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism. *Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20*
- ...In the spirit of humility** 5. Go in gentleness, patience and humility. Be prepared to own our part in the conflict instead of pointing out the others'. *Galatians 6:1-5*
- 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. *James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13*
- Be slow to judge** 7. Suspend judgments, avoid labeling, end name-calling, discard threats, and act in a non-defensive, non-reactive way. *Romans 2:1-4; Galatians 5:22-26*
- Be willing to negotiate** 8. Work through the disagreements constructively. *Acts 15; Philippians 2:1-11*
- 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 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).
 - Give thanks for each step forward, toward agreement (celebrate mutuality).

In our lives

- Be steadfast in love** 9. Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. *Colossians 3:12-15*
- Be open to mediation** 10. Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use others with gifts and training in mediation. *Philippians 4:1-3*
- Trust the community** 11. We will trust the community and if we cannot reach agreement or experience reconciliation, we will turn the decision over to others in the congregation or from the broader church community. *Acts 15*
- In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.
 - In congregational or organizational disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate or implement constitutional decision-making processes, insuring that they are done in the spirit of these guidelines, and abiding by whatever decision is made.
- Be the Body of Christ** 12. Believe in and rely on the solidarity of the Body of Christ and its commitment to peace and justice, rather than resort to the courts of law. *I Corinthians 6:1-6*