

# Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love

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## *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 THOUGHT

#### **Accept conflict**

1. Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. *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 growth. *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 ACTION

#### **Go to the other . . .**

4. Go directly and face-to-face to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism and confrontational letters or emails. *Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20*

#### **. . . In a spirit of humility**

5. Go in gentleness, patience and humility. Place the problem between us at neither doorstep and 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 nondefensive, nonreactive 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).
- 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 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 those with gifts and training in mediation, either from the congregation or the broader church. *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 neutral persons from the broader church. *Acts 15*

- In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.
- In congregational, judicatory or denominational disputes, this may mean allowing other to arbitrate or implementing 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. *1 Corinthians 6:1-6*

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