



Suggested Covenantal Dialogue Guidelines

The Orthodox Congregational
Church of Mansfield
A United Church of Christ

We recognize that what joins and separates us from each other is how we communicate with one another. It is natural for there to be differences in perspectives as we are all unique children of God walking on our own faith paths. When we speak with one another, it is a point where our faith paths meet. In a spirit of faithful trust and Christian love, we promise each other that we will:

- Use **"I" statements**, "owning" our own perspective.
- **Focus on ideas and suggestions** instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence, or integrity, refraining from name calling or labeling others prior to, during, or following the discussion.
- Understand that when an idea is presented, that **idea becomes the property of the group**, not the individual presenting.
- **Share our concerns respectfully and directly** (face-to-face), in a spirit of love and respect, with individuals and groups with whom we have disagreements, in keeping with Jesus' teachings.
- **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, always willing to remain open to the vision God holds for all of us. When there appears to be a difference of a perspective, we have found it a useful strategy to seek a deeper clarification by:

- Listening deeply to the other person and paraphrase what you have heard.
- Stating 2 or 3 aspects of the idea that you genuinely appreciate.
- Noting your differences in order to seek a solution not to bolster a debate.
- Differentiating between the "person" and the "problem." Let the "problem" be the "enemy" not the person. Join forces with the person in order to attack the problem together.
- Continuing to "deeply listen" to one another as you exchange ideas, feelings and thoughts about the problem.
- **Seek to stay in community** with each other, though the discussion may be rigorous and full of tension, always being ready to forgive and to be forgiven.
- Agree that during a meeting, the **chair of the meeting will recognize an individual** requesting to speak.
- **Use email carefully** to communicate factual information, not for a dialogue. A face-to-face meeting is best. A telephone conversation is second best.
- **Be held mutually accountable** if a violation of this Covenant occurs.

Faithfully submitted by the members
of the Parish Relations Team



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