



# Covenant Commitments for Christians in Times of Tension

*"Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3)*

As both individual members of this church and as the body of Christ, we commit that we shall:

## In our thinking

- Accept conflict** Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our lives. It arises from different needs, values, interests and viewpoints. It is healthy if handled well. *Romans 14:1-8, 10-12, 17-19; 15:1-7*
- Affirm hope** Affirm that, as God walks with us in conflict, we can work through to a place where we can continue together and grow through the experience. *Matt 18:15-20, Ephesians 4:15-16*
- Commit to reflection** Be willing to engage in thoughtful reflection about our own attitudes, the part we are playing in this conflict and the unhelpful expectations we may be carrying. *Matthew 7:3*
- Commit to prayer** Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory outcome for all involved (i.e. we do not pray for our success or for the other to change, but for a joint way forward) *James 5:16*

## In our actions

- Go to the other...** Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoiding behind-the-back criticism, waiting the other person out, or playing games about who should 'go first' *Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20*
- ...in a spirit of humility** Go in gentleness, patience and humility. Be prepared to own our part in the conflict instead of pointing out others' wrongdoing. We will be prepared to share our needs, interests and values *Eph 4:25, Gal 6:1-5*
- ...to seek and to offer forgiveness** We will be prepared to offer an apology for any hurts we have caused the other and to seek their forgiveness. We will be prepared to receive an apology, and before God, will seek to offer forgiveness as it is requested of us. *Ephesians 4:32*
- Be quick to listen** Listen carefully, ensuring we understand what is being said and why, before responding. We will seek as much to understand as to be understood. *James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13*
- Be slow to judge** We will suspend judgments and will avoid making assumptions of others' motives. *Matt 7:1, Romans 2:1-4; Galatians 5:22-26, Romans 14:13*
- Guard our tongues** We will avoid sharp, barbed comments or replies which are hurtful. We will take great care to guard against 'labeling', threats, or words that carry a negative connotation. *James 3:5, Ephesians 4:29*
- Be willing to talk and work through differences** We will work through the disagreements constructively. We will grant space for all to reflect and think with compassion. We will find ways to honour each other's interests, needs, values and concerns. We will agree to a fair and reasonable process of how the outcome will be determined. We will engage in co-operative discussion about the options and consider each fully. We will accept the emerging outcome and working with it, not against it. *Acts 15; Philippians 2:1-11*

## In our lives

- Be steadfast in love** Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual outcome; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. *Colossians 3:12-15*
- Be open to mediation** Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use others with gifts and training in mediation, consultation, facilitation and negotiation. *Philippians 4:1-3*
- Trust the community** 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/denomination or from the broader church community. *Acts 15*
- Be the Body of Christ** 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*