



## Conversation Values and Norms

At Trinity Episcopal Church, we believe that every person is a beloved child of God. We strive to love one another as Jesus loved us (John 15:12). We strive to only speak "...what is useful for building up." (Ephesians 4:29). We resolve conflicts following Matthew 18:15-17. We try to become a community of love, as described by St. Paul:

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

**Take time to listen.** Do not interrupt! Be present with one another and God. Seek not just what is said but also what it means. Mirror and ask clarifying questions. Don't think about your response while another is speaking, but take care to note their main points.

**Allow silence and ensure others are heard.** Pause between speakers. God may enter the pause. Allow space for someone who has not spoken before speaking again.

**Speak for yourself.** Use "I" language, and avoid "you" language. Don't say, "You do X," try, "When X happens, I feel Y." Do not try to speak for someone else, but speak to your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

**Do not challenge.** Seek understanding, and offer alternatives, not just criticism.

**Be attuned to one another.** Listen for what the whole group is saying. All persons have God-given dignity, and therefore all people are empowered to speak. All persons are ALSO empowered and encouraged to speak up if a conversation is not healthy.

**Hold opinions and convictions LIGHTLY.** Be open to changing your mind.

**Presume good intent.** Do not make assumptions about someone else's intent or motives, but instead ask clarifying questions, even if what they say seems to you to reflect poor values, motives, or intent. Ask clarifying questions, e.g., "It sounds like you meant X, did you mean that?"

**Assume confidentiality.** Be discreet in talking about what happens here outside this group. Ask up front if what is to be discussed will be confidential or not, and to whom. When in doubt, keep everything in strict confidence.

**Avoid unhealthy behaviors.** Don't triangulate, gossip, attempt to build coalitions, etc.

**When you make a mistake:** Remember, you're a beloved child of God no matter what. Apologize and seek reconciliation. And remember, we all sin, so be forgiving.