

Marks of Discernment

As we engage in addressing the issues and concerns before us, let us...

- ❖ Pray constantly, letting God touch us and speak to us.
- ❖ Seek clarity about the question we are being asked to consider.
- ❖ Seek to understand an issue's historical and contemporary contexts, what biblical texts and faith traditions may relate to it, and our feelings about it.
- ❖ Listen carefully to what is being said by one another and respond thoughtfully and compassionately.
- ❖ Be open to other viewpoints and to alternative responses to an issue which may emerge.
- ❖ Consider seriously the character of the membership of the church and the needs of the world in which we live.
- ❖ Be humbly bold.
- ❖ Speak the truth in love.

Prayer of Discernment

Oh God, Eternal Spirit, you have called us from east and west and north and south. You have made us one people in this place. We gather mindful of many others not present who are a part of your Body through the earth. We thank you for this opportunity to deepen our relationships and to discover new partners in the work of your church. As we prepare to reason together about the concerns before us, grant us hearts open to the leading of your spirit and to one another. Give us ears to hear the deeply felt yearnings of those gathered here. Call forth from us a compassionate Spirit that sees one another's good as our own. Give us the mind of Christ in whose name we gather and in whose Body we are one.

Behavioral Covenant Making: *Creating Safe Space*

Individual Reflection

Take a moment to think about what you, personally, need to feel safe?

- ▶ What behaviors in others make you pull within yourself, or make you feel uncomfortable in sharing candidly and calmly?

- ▶ What kind of interactions best encourage you to stay open-minded and interested in hearing what others have to say?

- ▶ What environment must be in place for you to comfortably experiment with new skills and be willing to risk being vulnerable as you learn?

Group Discussion

- I. Divide into groups of 4-5 people.
2. One person will agree to be the facilitator of the group.
3. One person will agree to be the scribe.
4. Discuss what covenant behaviors, based upon your individual reflections, that you might adopt as a group in order to create safe space for **you in a group setting**. (Examples: **When someone is speaking, we agree to listen without interruption until the person is finished. We agree that everyone has the right to speak and be heard within the confines of the meeting, and that we will not move on until everyone feels comfortable with the decision making process.**)
5. Scribes should **record each individual suggestion on a separate 3x5 card** and be prepared to share the cards with the entire group.

Our Behavioral Covenant

Because we acknowledge that God has called us in Christ to be the Church, that God has made us a new Creation and that we have this ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:16-21), we will endeavor to live and work together in Christ following the command to love God, one another and ourselves.

Specifically, in our meetings we will promote and encourage the full participation of all those present in the following ways:

- *God*
- *Others Around the Table*
- *Those Not Present*
- *The Church*
- *The Agenda*
- *Ourselves*