

## Communication Guidelines and Consensus Levels

The following are tools and reminders of how to communicate as we seek Consensus together

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### **RESPECT Guidelines**

- **R** - take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel without blaming others
- **E** - use EMPATHETIC listening
- **S** - be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles
- **P** - PONDER on what you hear and feel before you speak
- **E** - EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions
- **C** - keep CONFIDENTIALITY - share CONSTRUCTIVELY for the benefit of the COMMUNITY
- **T** - TRUST ambiguity because we are NOT here to debate who is right or wrong.

### **Mutual Invitation**

In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will proceed in the following way:

The leader or a designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share. Who you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share. If you do not wish to say anything, simply say "pass" and proceed to invite another to share. We will do this until everyone has been invited. We invite you to listen and not to respond to someone's sharing immediately. There will be time to respond and ask clarifying questions after everyone has had opportunity to share.

### **The Goal of Consensus**

The Goal of Consensus is to achieve a decisions that everyone is willing to both agree to and to support. In faith based settings, it is important to consider that we are actually seeking the will of God for our community as we make decisions together.

*"We reach consensus when all of us are ready to live with the decision we are making.*

*We do not all have to endorse it wholeheartedly, but we must all be ready to agree not to work or speak against the decision once it is made. Until we come to that point, our tasks are to share our ideas respectfully, listen to each other with open hearts, and find together what God wants us to do."*<sup>1</sup>

### **Levels of Consensus**

- 1 - In full agreement with the proposal, entirely behind it.
- 2 - Minor concerns with the proposal, but not enough to prevent it from going forward.
- 3 - Major concerns with the proposal, but will let it proceed if everyone else is in agreement.
- 4 - Major concerns with the proposal, and cannot proceed with it. Will articulate their concerns or questions so that they can be addressed
- 5 - Standing aside or abstaining - either due to conflict of interest or willingness to trust the group.

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<sup>1</sup> Patton, Marcia J. And Nora Percival, *Sacred Decisions: Consensus in Faith Communities*, Judson Press (Valley Forge, PA), 2021