

Covenant for Christian Communication

As people called to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we acknowledge His teaching in Matthew 18:15-17, 21-22 and the Holy Spirit's leadership in Ephesians 4:15 concerning communication. As a Christian congregation in covenant with Christ as the Head of the Church, we accept responsibility to make God's teaching our watchwords.

Scripture Regarding Communication

Matthew 18:15-17, 21-22

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ..."

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times."

Ephesians 4:15

Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into Him Who is the Head, into Christ.

Guidelines Concerning Communication

1. When we hear something that raises concerns for us, we shall first make every effort to speak directly, one-to-one with the person involved. A deacon or the pastor(s) may be asked to coach us in advance, or to be present to witness communication as Jesus specifies at step two of the Matthew 18 process. If talking one-to-one or with one or two others fails, then concerns may be referred to the relevant group in the church or as a last resort to the whole congregation.
2. In order to speak truth in love, we shall speak for ourselves using "I" statements, not claim to represent others or use accusatory "you" statements.
3. When difficult subjects need to be named, we shall pray for all concerned and seek guidance of the diaconate and/or pastor(s) for help in speaking truth in love.
4. We accept that understanding and respecting each other does *not* necessarily mean agreeing with each other.
5. We affirm that the Holy Spirit may speak through any of us, so that all of us deserve a respectful hearing, even though congregational decisions are made by majority vote.
6. While all people are welcome in Christian communities, behavior that is unchristian (for example: threatening, taunting, demeaning harassing or attacking) conflicts with Christ's teaching and will not be tolerated.