



A COVENANT FOR DIALOGUE AND DEBATE IN THE CHURCH

As followers of Jesus Christ, learning 'the way', we first and foremost commit ourselves to the way of love as shown in Christ. We recognise that it is through earnest Christlike love for one another that our faith is witnessed and affirmed (John 13:34-35; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 4:7-12).

Practically speaking, that may look like:

- **Considering others better than ourselves**
(Luke 6:41-41; Philippians 2:1-4; Romans 12:3)
- **Speaking that builds others up rather than tears them down**
(Ephesians 4:29-32; Romans 14)
- **Listening before speaking**
(James 1:19)
- **Avoiding arrogant, bitter or divisive talk**
(Galatians 5:19-23; 1 Corinthians 13:4-5)
- **Restraining our tongue when necessary**
(James 1:26 & 4:11)
- **Treating those who are hostile towards us with generosity**
(Matt 5:43-48; 1 Peter 2:18-23)
- **Leaving grievances in God's hands rather than retaliating**
(Matt 5:38-42; James 4:10; 1 Peter 2:23)
- **Seeking forgiveness and reconciliation wherever possible**
(Colossians 3:12-13; Matt 5:23-24)

We accept that this list is not exhaustive but merely provides some substance and expression to Jesus' command to love each other; we will endeavour to conduct ourselves in dialogue and debate in such a way that our love for God and our love for each other will be evidenced in our attitudes, words and actions – especially the command to love others as we love ourselves and to treat others in the way that we would like to be treated (Matt 22:36-40 & 7:12).

We also accept that because we are pilgrims learning the way of Jesus, we will at times stray from the way of love. So, we commit ourselves to a humble willingness to hear and receive loving rebuke when it is appropriately offered (cf. Matt 18:15-20).

Ultimately, in all our dialogue and debate we are seeking to discern God's truth in love – for the glory of God and the wellbeing of others. We therefore affirm our need for a prayerful seeking of the Spirit's guidance (cf. John 16:12-13; Acts 15), whilst acknowledging that our sisters and brothers in Christ can come to differences in understanding and conscience (Romans 14). Where there is disagreement, we will seek to respect each other and protect the unity and harmony that is rooted in our love for Jesus and one another.

***By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit,
we covenant with each other to live out this Christian ethic.***

