

SAFE PLACES, SAFE PEOPLE, SAFE CONVERSATIONS

In our church, every opinion has a right to be heard.

Whilst accepting there can be healthy debate all steps will be taken to protect the wellbeing of all concerned.

We will hold in tension what an individual may feel they need *with* what the group as a whole needs. Therefore, there may be times when we make a decision for the good of the group that may not suit the individual.

We will endeavor to speak well of one another and protect each other's reputation even if we disagree with them.

While we may have special relationships with those whom we have common interest, we will not accept antagonistic and divisive behavior toward other groups.¹

When can disagreeing become divisive:

1. When it is no longer about the issue, but rather the other person(s) becomes the problem.
2. When the issues begin to multiply.
3. When the language changes (accusatory, stereotypical etc).
4. When talk with like-minded people increases. (*MD: Such that the larger group starts to break down into smaller opposing groups.*)
5. When the middle ground disappears. In other words, people feel pressure to be on one side or the other.²

¹ This list was compiled by Mick & Ruby.

² John Paul Lederach, *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians* (Virginia: Herald Press, 1999) 147-150.