

A Safe Place Covenant

Believing that love is the ultimate moral value because Jesus calls us to love God and one another above all else, we agree to ask ourselves and each other one core question: “Does this contribute to love?”

We agree to measure our thoughts, feelings, words, and actions by this one question, with the help of God’s Spirit. As much as possible, we will not speak or act until we have reviewed ourselves in this way. And if the group challenges our words or actions by this question, we will allow them to help us examine again what we said or did.

We agree that the practices of compassion, grace, and generosity are primary evidence of love, and we commit ourselves to engage each other in conversation and relationship by following these practices to the best of our understanding.

We agree to seek to live together in love by being faithful to these guidelines for our attitudes and behaviors:

- Honor each person as one created in the image of God and loved by God.
- Ask God’s blessing for each person and for ourselves as we seek to see and hear as God does.
- Listen prayerfully, attentively, and without judgment to each person, being generous in our interpretation of what we hear and assuming a good motivation for what was said.
- Speak for ourselves and not for others, using “I” rather than “You” as we tell our stories.
- Ask for more clarification to ensure better understanding before responding, especially when what was said seems unclear or inappropriate.
- Give each person appropriate time to finish his/her story or thought before anyone responds.
- Agree to one exception – when something that is said feels hurtful or harmful, others in the group may interrupt to say, “Ouch! That hurts; that didn’t feel good...,” and may ask the person to say it a different way or to ask for clarification of what was said.
- Invite full disclosure of a person’s story, feelings, and ideas, granting complete confidentiality – that nothing said will be repeated in another place without that person’s permission.
- Allow for silence after each sharing of a story.
- Grant permission for anyone to ask for a time of silence and/or prayer, suspending the flow of conversation temporarily.
- Agree as a group to act with loving responsibility to provide emotional safety if any member of the group feels distressed or anyone becomes verbally or physically threatening or abusive.