



Emmanuel Lutheran Church's



Seven Principles

For Civil Discourse and Spiritual Discernment¹

We practice . . .

1. **Respect** - Respect each person and take time to truly consider what they are saying. Respond, don't react. No blaming, shaming or attacking another person. Also do not be the one who knows everything.
2. **Listening** - Listen deeply to what the other person is saying. Focus on the ideas and issues presented, not people. No side conversations as they distract from listening. Do not interrupt while others are speaking. Don't dominate the conversation. Share talk time.
3. **Speaking for ourselves** - Use "I" statements when commenting or responding. Share your personal experience. Don't universalize critique or assume group attitudes about any topic. Don't speak for others.
4. **Understand other viewpoints** - Try to understand the thoughts and ideas of others. You don't have to agree, but you should be able to understand. Ask questions for clarification. Disagree, yes, but don't debate. This isn't about who is right or wrong at the end of the day, but about listening and learning together.
5. **Gratitude** - If someone has shared and enriched the conversation or if someone has helped you personally, say "thank you." We value participation. We encourage communal dialogue and discernment. We acknowledge valuable contributions.
6. **Forgiveness** - We learn from trying out ideas publicly and trying to express ourselves succinctly. This is good. But sometimes we make mistakes. Or we use unhelpful language. So pay attention to your feelings, thoughts, and words. Be generous to others - and to yourself. Seek to forgive and to be forgiven as we learn together. Practice forgiveness even when others haven't requested it.
7. **The 8th Commandment** - We extend positive motives and good will to each person and to their comments. We do not speak poorly about "our neighbor". Lastly, we speak well of them and interpret all comments in the best possible light - even the comments with which we disagree.

¹ Adapted from the "Defining Civil Discourse" section of the Episcopal Church's website.