



## **HOLY MANNERS FOR GROUP PROCESS<sup>1</sup>**

- 1. First and foremost we acknowledge that we come together as brothers and sisters, each made in the image of the Divine:** When we remember that God is in our midst, and within each of us, it is easier to behave in ways we know that our Creator expects of us—with compassion, openness and love.
- 2. Confidentiality:** What's said in the group stays in the group unless there is full agreement and permission to share a piece of information. There may be things shared or learned that might help a broader audience. If so, obtain consensus for ways this information might be shared without violating the safety or privacy of any group member.
- 3. Respect:** "Disagree without being disagreeable." Acknowledge the other person's point of view. Confirm that you heard correctly before responding. Listen without interrupting. Avoid sarcasm and hurtful comments and tones of voice.
- 4. Truly Listen:** Sometimes the hardest thing to do is simply to listen to a person without already thinking of what you are going to say back before they even finish. Rather than get into a "discussion," or "fixing," or giving advice, or judging, just simply receive the person's sharing and give only a response of affirmation or understanding.
- 5. Be more committed to being in relationship than to "winning" or being "right":** It is hard to have true dialogue with people whose whole goal is to prove their point or win their agenda. Practice "holy listening" to each other, and be respectful. Be willing to share as you are able. Be mindful of how often and how long you speak in discussions, to ensure that others get to have their say too. Stay open in your sharing and receiving.

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<sup>1</sup> Congregations in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) began using a version of these "Holy Manners" some years ago, after encountering these guidelines for group process among Presbyterian and other congregations. *Progressive Christians Uniting* has mildly edited "Holy Manners."

**6. Destructive behavior is not acceptable under any circumstances:** When destructive behavior is discovered, bring the awareness of such behavior to the person (keeping in mind the above guidelines), and find ways to help him or her cease or change such behavior. Support and help should be offered as appropriate. A person who persists in disrupting the group or not honoring holy manners needs to be asked, with grace, to leave the group.

**7. Be committed to attending each group and really "show up":** When we are busy or stressed, it is easy to find reasons not to come to a group meeting, or to physically show up, but mentally or emotionally be elsewhere. Make the commitment not only to physically attend the group meetings, but also to be fully present to each other while you are together.