

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. – Respectful Communication Guidelines

Saint Timothy's is a welcoming, vital, culturally diverse and growing faith community. Along with growth comes the need for exploration and education of who we are and who God is calling us to become. This process often leads to questions such as: How are we to behave as we worship God and do church together? The Book of Common Prayer Baptismal Covenant (page 305) Asks: *Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being?* Answer: *I will with God's help.*

How we communicate with one another; at coffee hour, during meetings, at social gatherings or through our electronic device is an important and vital way to respect the dignity of every human being. The Rev. Eric Law, Episcopal Priest, consultant, and presenter of "Holy Currencies" at October's Diocesan Convention writes, "If we are to express the essence of God's inclusiveness, we need to agree to behave differently when we are attempting to build a more inclusive community. The Respectful Communication Guidelines provide a foundation to uphold the well-being of the community."

R = RESPONSIBILITY. Take Responsibility for what you say and feel without blaming others. This means using "I" statements such as "I think," "I feel," or "I believe," instead of using "You" statements such as "You make me feel," or "You said this."

E = EMPATHY. Use Empathetic listening. Listen not just to words; listen to the whole person. Try and feel and see the world as the person who is speaking/writing sees and feels.

S = SENSITIVE. Be Sensitive to differences in communication styles. Remember when people communicate in different styles; do not simply interpret another's behavior from your own assumptions. Ask clarifying questions such as, "I wonder," or "I noticed".

P = PONDER. Ponder what you hear and how you feel before you speak or respond directly or electronically. Consider what you are going to say before you say it.

E = EXAMINE. Examine your own assumptions and perceptions. This involves asking, "What caused me to think or feel a certain way now?" "Were there personal experiences that I need to explore further before I speak?"

C = CONFIDENTIALITY. Keep Confidentiality. Keeping confidentiality differs from keeping secrets. Secrets are kept to hold power or protect the interests of those who know. Keeping confidentiality upholds the well being of the faith community that is being formed.

T = TRUST. Trust ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong. In a multicultural faith community there will inevitable be differences of experience, understanding, and opinion. There will be ambiguity.

Respectful Communication Guidelines
Based on Matthew 18:15 – 19

Matthew 18:15-20 New Revised Standard Version

15 'If another member of the church* sins against you,* go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.* 16But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.

18Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

- If you have a problem with me, come to me (privately).
- If I have a problem with you, I'll come to you (privately).
- If someone has a problem with me and comes to you, send them to me. (I'll do the same for you).
- If someone consistently will not come to me, say, "Let's go see her/him together. I am sure he/she will see us about this." (I will do the same for you).
- Please do not interpret me, I would rather you ask me what I meant.
- I will not interpret you and if I am unclear, I will ask you what you meant.
- If it is confidential, don't tell me.
- If it is confidential, don't ask me to tell you.
- I do not read unsigned letters, notes, emails or texts.
- I do not respond to unnamed complaints, some of which begin with, "I have heard several people saying..."
- Please do not hint to me, hoping I will understand your need or know what you intend for me to hear – I prefer you try and say exactly what you mean.
- I will not hint at you, hoping you will understand my need or know what I meant for you to hear – I will try to say exactly what I mean.
- Parking lot, hallway, or electronic communication griping is poisonous. If you need to complain, please do it only with the intention of healing it, and even then, tell only the one who can do something about it. (I will do the same.)
- When in doubt, just say it. The only dumb question is the one that doesn't get asked.

Psalms 19:14 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.