

Pacific InterChristian Community Core Commitments

PIC agrees together on ways to cultivate the spiritual maturity we need for compassionate living and service.* The following core commitments represent the intentions of PIC.

Commitments to Spiritual Growth

As friends of Christ, we celebrate creative freedom:

- To experience God's unconditional loving presence and acceptance
- To grow in spiritual awareness and knowledge of Christ, and in the capacity for practical caring that flows from this relationship
- To live out the implications of trusting in holy love
- To extend to others the healing hospitality of Jesus
- To build God's new creation with those whom God sends
- To express passions, develop gifts and use them in service
- To explore and discover life's meaning and purpose
- To be willing to give our selves to bring about transformation
- To risk change at the urging of the Spirit
- To engage in self reflection and make adult choices
- To face failure and constructive challenge with hope and trust in God
- To feel safe among people who help to sustain each other's spirits

**While intentions are deeply rooted, written agreements are living documents that are open to development and revision.*

Commitments to Creation

As friends of Christ, we seek to live as partners (not rulers) to sustain a thriving, balanced earth community. We are moving toward sustainability in our homes and religious buildings, our neighbourhoods, our transportation and our spirituality by:

Honouring creation as an interconnection of living things that have intrinsic worth and purpose, and are dependent on each other for life

Broadening our understanding of economic wealth and growth, to include the well-being of creation

Improving the efficiency of the ways we use resources

Shifting to clean, low-impact and renewable sources of energy

Reducing, re-using and recycling to minimize pollution and waste.

Protecting and conserving water

Producing healthy food in ways that protect land, biodiversity, and water

Conserving, protecting and restoring nature's ecosystems

Developing sustainable cities, to protect farm land and wild places

Promoting and contributing to global sustainability, and

Being a "fair trade" community that participates in local, national and global campaigns for ecological renewal and justice.

▪ *(Adapted from "Sustainability in a Generation" by David Suzuki.9.04, 10.06, 2.09)*

Commitments to Diversity

PIC believes that all people are created in the image of God:

We celebrate persons of all ages, genders, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, abilities and economic circumstances, and honour the gifts of each one.

Acknowledging that the Christian Church has not always been safe or welcoming, we pray for God's healing Spirit as we reconcile brokenness, seek justice and become a sanctuary for all.

In worship, it is our practice to use inclusive language and balance male and female images of the divine.

We welcome and affirm persons whose sexual orientation may result in exclusion elsewhere. We are pleased to make the rites of sacred covenant blessing available to same-gender or different-gender life-partners. *(9.11.04, revised 10.06, 2.09)*

Commitments to Human Community

As friends of Christ, we conduct ourselves in loving, trustworthy ways. We strive to:

Care for each other in every phase of the life cycle

Base our interactions on a desire for truth and understanding, an assumption of good will, a willingness to be aware and informed, and an attitude and promise of respect

Honour agreed practices of creative conflict and mature dissent (please see box below)

Know who we are and what we believe, and live out our convictions with integrity

Bless others with the freedom to know and be true to self

Encourage conscious responsibility for choices and actions

Provide positive options and establish healthy limits

Cultivate attitudes of non-judgmental acceptance

Strengthen skills and virtues for continuous, creative dialogue

Keep promises faithfully

Love and pray for adversaries as well as for friends, and

Support mutual concern for the common good.

Creative Conflict and Mature Dissent

In the presence of differences, we take the steps described in the gospel of Matthew (18:15-17). When we have a complaint against another, we care for the relationship by going first to the person alone. If the two of us cannot reconcile, we arrange to meet with him or her in the company of two or three witnesses. If we still cannot reconcile, we bring the matter before the whole community and abide by the decision reached by the larger group. If another person brings to us a complaint or criticism against another, we direct that person to take these steps as described in Matthew 18. When desired, we are willing to go with that person as a witness. We refuse to entertain any criticism of persons who are not present and able to defend themselves.

(9.19.04, 10.06, 2.09)

Commitments to Inter- cultural Community

Each group within the Pacific InterChristian Community – whether linked by age or background, common experiences or heritage – is both distinctive and part of the whole. Our shared commitment is to unity in the Spirit of God, and to God's continuing work in the world. To this end,

We will uphold a Spirit of peacemaking and focus on what unites us.

We will celebrate the diversity among us, in creation and in God's work through the Spirit.

We will honour agreed-upon limits to minimize unnecessary conflicts.

We will safeguard mutual respect by direct communication through agreed upon channels.

Building camaraderie for the greater good, the community will make space for each group to establish identity and routines for stability, with security that there is room to grow and change.

All will share responsibility for maintaining safe, clean and secure places for community life and work, while also remaining focused first on people.

Each group will be willing to embrace the wisdom of Jesus in sacrifice and sharing, to further justice, peace and sustainability through PIC.

We will persistently seek to encourage and support each other, and to live together in a spirit of solidarity. *(4.03, revised 10.06, 2.09)*

Commitments to Children (and those who care for them)

We seek to live and share the “wisdom way” of Jesus through shared learning and loving relationships. We cultivate an environment where children experience welcome, affirming relationships, trust, dignity and self-respect by:

- Nurturing loving, forgiving attitudes
- Speaking so kids can hear, and listening so kids will talk
- Preserving physical and emotional safety (where frictions, anxieties and fears are supportively acknowledged)
- Being 100% committed to mutual respect
- Being 100% committed to bestowing dignity upon each person
- Encouraging inner discipline (mutual concern and respect for others)
- Offering experiences appropriate to age and ability
- Providing clarity so a child can understand
- Upholding guidelines for behaviour that all can count on, and
- Maintaining a supportive pattern (with creative exceptions!)

We anticipate the presence of young prophets and mystics by:

- Modeling life-giving attitudes and actions
- Fostering an ambiance where beauty and love are revealed
- Connecting concrete experiences with God in real life
- Developing ability to pray and deepen relationship with God
- Enriching spiritual lives in practical ways
- Nurturing ability to interpret the biblical story in our own lives
- Experiencing God in creation
- Educating the inner self through learning and play
- Connecting with God and others through music
- Enhancing imagination, and
- Nurturing soul through meditation – kid style!

(From “What’s Important” discernment, 8..04, 2.09)

Commitments to Peace, Justice and Reconciliation

As friends of Christ, we commit to:

- Proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with authentic spirituality or religion
- Condemning every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion
- Doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism
- Educating people to mutual respect and esteem, to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions
- Fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples
- Supporting the right of everyone to live a decent life without harm to any, and to form freely a family of his/her own
- Participating in frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider differences as insurmountable barriers, and recognizing that encounters with diversity can become opportunities for greater reciprocal understanding
- Forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices
- Working effectively to empower the vulnerable and to give voice to those whose voices are silenced
- Honouring the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil
- Making every effort possible to offer people of our time real hope for justice and peace
- Encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, recognizing that in the absence of mutual solidarity technological progress exposes the world to growing risk of destruction and death.
- Urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, nationally and internationally, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

(adapted 9.04, 2.09, from the Assisi Decalogue for Peace)

Commitments to Discernment

To facilitate prayerful discernment on key directions and policies, the Pacific InterChristian Community will gather at least quarterly. Between discernment gatherings, small groups and teams freely plan and implement initiatives within the values, purposes and goals of PIC, and communicate through the Prayer and Care Small-group Network and the Ministry Coordinator.

PIC is on a journey to a way of being that enables us to make significant decisions through contemplative discernment. Discernment is the process of aligning our choices with God's yearning for our lives and the world. In learning how to discern together, we benefit by the experience and wisdom of The Society of Friends (known as Quakers) who are led through collective prayer into unity in aligning with Holy Spirit. Quakers admit that discernment is vulnerable to abuse, since those who do not enter the process in a right spirit can seriously jeopardize the gathering. PIC is committed to cultivating and taking the time that is required to acquire the spiritual disciplines that are needed.

The Disciplines of Discernment

As friends of Christ in intentional community, we regularly seek divine guidance together. We seek collective discernment of the leading of the Holy Spirit, and not just the consensus or collected wisdom of the people present.

Discernment is conducted in a spirit of prayer and expectant waiting. All participants are equally capable of being used by the Holy Spirit, and leaders serve the gathering discernment. As spiritual momentum grows and movement of the Spirit is felt, the community experiences the sense of unity with Christ and solidarity with one another, and becomes of one shared heart and mind. In this unity we discover what God wants for us, as opposed to what we thought we wanted.

We seek the leading of the Spirit through prayer, the life and teaching of Jesus, the insights of sacred writings and scriptures, the knowing inner light, the emergence of needs and timely opportunities, heightened spiritual sensitivities, the deep resolve of an educated conscience, the counsel of good and wise people, and the experience of church and global community. *(9.04, 10.06, 2.09)*

Elements of Guidance on Discernment in Meetings

- Attitude toward God

We enter the discernment process with hearts and minds open to being led by the Spirit. We renew our commitment to divine authority in our lives, and our belief that the living Spirit of Christ is present to teach us and lead us. We seek to lay before God our own desires and strong feelings. We release attachment to particular outcomes.

- Attitude toward other members

We place high value on the strength of the beloved community. Unity and solidarity are only achieved when those participating respect and care for one another. We seek a humble and loving spirit, assuming purity of motive among all participants and offering our highest selves in

return. We seek to create a safe space for sharing. We pray that we might listen carefully, respectfully and lovingly. We listen always for the presence of God through what someone is saying, knowing that each of us is endowed with some measure of Holy Light.

- o Attitude toward the process

We value the spirit of the process even more than the outcome, respecting each other's thoughts, feelings and insights more than expedient action. We understand that the loving process of reaching decision is as crucial as the decisions themselves. Through the experience of solidarity, we are rightly prepared for faithful action in spiritual community and in the world.

- o Attitude toward potential outcomes

We know that none of us enters the discernment process with a fully formed understanding of God's intentions. We expect that a new way will emerge through the course of the discernment.

- o Commitment to the authority of the Community Meeting

All authority ultimately rests in God. Once the Community has discerned divine intention as best it can at that moment in time, the decision of that Meeting is vested with a measure of divine authority. Decisions are not re-visited by staff, leaders, groups or committees. Those who were not present uphold the decision of the Community. Since discernment is never perfect or fully complete, the Community as a whole can agree to revisit decisions in a subsequent Meeting and new light may be found.

- o The role of human leadership

Lay leadership roles are widely shared among the membership. Leaders have no formal authority of their own and they cannot speak for the gathering. Their task is to focus and enable discernment by laying matters before the Community in an orderly way, managing the pace and the discipline of discussion, listening for unity to emerge, re-stating unity in clear language and asking for approval, and ensuring decisions are accurately recorded. Leaders develop the agenda and discern whether an issue is ripe for consideration or needs further development by a smaller group. Leaders are responsible for judging the weight of each comment by discerning the movement of the Spirit in the gathering, rather than developing a tally of opinions pro and con. Leaders are servants of the process, rather than participants in the discussion. When a leader finds that he or she must speak to an issue, a replacement must be found to fill the leadership role until that item is concluded.

- o The role of written records

A leader makes sure the Community Meeting understands what is being approved by stating it in clear language which is written down, read back, discussed and approved by the Meeting at the time when the decision is made. The record, once approved, becomes authoritative; it is kept and referred to indefinitely. Records are therefore crucial to the process of discernment, and record keeping is seen as an important spiritual practice, rather than a clerical function.

- o Preparing items for discernment

Generally, the Community Meeting benefits from having items developed beforehand by a small group. The small group usually brings the item with a recommendation, but even if it does not, it should have done some work in preparing the item and anticipating various questions and concerns.

- o Personal conduct

Participants usually only speak once to each item, and only when recognized. Messages arise through the movement of the Spirit and prayers for guidance as to whether and how we are being led to speak. Participants may affirm their comfort with messages already offered, but need not repeat redundant messages since unity is not a tally of opinions. Participants pray continuously, and often find the Meeting to be a humbling and awe-inspiring experience, where people let go of their personal agendas. Participants refrain from argumentative comments, debate or attempts to convince, and speak only for their selves to express personal experience of the leading of the Spirit in this matter. Members listen thoughtfully and respectfully to one another, observing a pause between messages for deeper listening. Each person present has a responsibility to participate and not hold back if they are led to speak. Every member has the responsibility to participate in the discernment process, to the extent that he or she is able.

- o On dissent

The Community Meeting should be especially sensitive to sincere expression of difference from the growing unity. These may indicate that the gathering has not fully listened to divine prompting among us. The presence of dissent and discord is always an occasion for prayer and conversion by the whole Meeting.

- o On time

Discernment takes time and cannot be hurried. A sense of urgency or pressure can quickly erode a process of deep seeking. If unity is not reached, the matter is held for a subsequent Community Meeting.

- o On not finding unity

Normally, no action is taken until there is unity.

What happens when we differ in discernment? When someone feels that he or she must “stand in the way” of unity, the meeting will patiently labour together in hopes of attuning more closely to divine will. However, individuals do not hold a power of veto, and should be ready to recognize the validity of collective leadings of the Spirit, and to submit to them if conscience allows, being recorded in the minutes as “standing aside”. *(Adapted 9.19.04, revised 10.06, 2.09, from “An Introduction to Quaker Business Practice” by Eden Grace, a submission to The World Council of Churches)*