

The Essence of Dialogue: Rules of Engagement

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference
United Church of Christ

1. Use “I” statements, speaking only for oneself. “I believe...” vs. “a faithful UCC person would believe...” or “I understand the Bible to say...” vs. “The Bible says...”
2. Share the floor – don’t interrupt or speak too long.
3. Practice listening – a good listener will want to understand, not necessarily agree.
4. Inquire for deeper meaning: “What did you mean,” or “Tell me more.”
5. Please don’t try to “win,” “prove your point,” or “prove someone else is wrong.”
6. Ask a question to explore a statement further, listen to the answer and ask another question and so on until there is true understanding of your colleague’s belief system.
7. Don’t seek consensus, agreement, or the “correct answer.”
8. Be open to new ideas.
9. Respond through inquiry and sharing. Watch out for being reactive and/or defensive.
10. Disengage if you feel yourself being reactive.
11. Aggression, attack, blame, or accusations are not appropriate for the day.
12. Have fun and approach the dialogue in good spirit.
13. Silence is OK.
14. Maintain confidentiality.
15. Empower the moderator.
16. Do not seek consensus or conclusion.
17. Everyone is responsible for the process.