

Theological Affirmations

From *Dispute Resolution Policy Handbook* (The United Church of Canada, October 2008).

As Christians, we believe that all people are created in the image of God, are of intrinsic value, and are worthy of respect and love.

We believe that we are called to a common vision. The biblical vision of shalom as God's intention for creation is characterized by right relationships with God and with one another that result in harmony, wholeness, peace, well-being, joy, and justice.

Injustice and oppression on either the personal or social level are contrary to the vision of shalom.

We believe that diversity in creation and in humankind is a gift from God to challenge and enrich us. Celebrating our common vision and our diversity, we are called into community. Community is the crucible in which we learn to dialogue, to embrace diversity, and to seek to define the ethic of an active love.

We believe that conflict is a normal part of life and is, in fact, necessary for personal and social development. Conflict is a spiritual issue. When it is addressed constructively, conflict can provide opportunities for growth, new understanding, and transformation.

We believe that conflict becomes destructive when, through attitudes, words, and actions, it leads to exclusion, wounded self-esteem, broken relationships, loss of a sense of well-being, alienation, distrust, undue stress, misunderstanding, abuse, and violation.

We believe that harm and violation are contrary to God's will.

We believe that the biblical concept of justice (*sedeqah*) and the teachings of Jesus are primarily concerned with the restoration of right relationships between God and people, and between people and each other, enabling the movement toward shalom. Often this means not a return to the status quo, but an improvement that addresses existing injustices and promotes growth, new understanding, and transformation.

We believe that we are called to look to God's action in Christ as normative. Through covenantal renewal and grace, God moves beyond wrath to the restoration of relationships. God's love for us continues even when our behaviour must be denounced.

We believe we are called to restore broken relationships wherever they occur, and to practise ministries of healing and reconciliation. We believe that conflict can and

should, whenever possible, be resolved in ways that are non-adversarial, and that emphasize accountability, inclusivity, understanding, reparation, tolerance, safety, respect for human dignity, and forgiveness. Healing may not mean agreement.

We believe that conflict resolution through “winning” reflects an ethic of domination and control rather than the Christian ideal of love. To love one another is the ultimate challenge for Christians and for humankind, particularly in the midst of conflict. The church is called to be a transforming presence, to promote right relationships within its midst and in the world.

We believe in the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst, reminding us that we can trust that the conflict and pain need not be the end, but part of the spiritual journey that can lead to places of wholeness and health for the people and congregations involved.

We believe that our response to conflict is a theological statement.