**Called by Conscience**

**Supportive Communities Network Guiding Principles**

As we seek to be faithful to our Brethren history, tradition, and values, we desire to be people who are known by the manner of our living, people who are guided by the example and teachings of Jesus.

We believe this means that we must all pay careful attention to the dynamics of power and privilege within our church, and first commit ourselves to striving to act always in the Spirit and in the way of Christ.

We must be clear about appropriate and inappropriate uses of power: We cannot pit marginalized groups against each other in order to preserve the status quo. We cannot use the coercive power of threats of punishment as a means for working toward uniformity. We cannot make decisions about persons or groups of persons and their place within the church without those persons central to the conversation and the decision-making processes.

Instead, we seek a path that is Christ-bearing and Christ-witnessing:

***We are committed to openness to the Spirit and new light***

*“Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” (Jn. 13:7-8)*

Our commitment of openness to the Spirit and new light means that we must practice the humility of listening openly and of interpreting and re-interpreting our convictions in the gathered body of the church. As Brethren, we have historically practiced this through holding no creed but the New Testament. Together we are continually discerning how to live and grow in faithfulness to Christ. Slim majorities, enforced legalism, and manipulation of process are not consistent with this commitment. Any solution to our disagreements must allow for the movement of the Spirit.

***We hold respect for conscience***

*“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.” (Jn. 16:13)*

There is in our tradition a commitment to no force in religion. There are many issues upon which we differ. Holding respect for conscience means that we approach decisions of the Annual Conference with respect, but we also recognize that congregations and individuals must ultimately discern and follow the call of Christ for their lives.

***We desire to live the love of Christ***

*“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn. 13:34-35)*

Living the love of Christ means living in a spirit of love of neighbor, of inclusion, and welcome. We see these as the gospel values of Christ’s love for us and Christ’s call for us to love each other.

***We honor the blessing of God’s creation***

*“All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.” (Jn. 17:10)*

We seek to extend respect and dignity to all. We recognize and proclaim the inherent goodness of LGBTQ identity. Therefore, we will not tolerate or participate in scapegoating, nor conversations that are abusive or bullying.

***We keep courage in faithfulness***

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.” (Jn. 14:1)*

Radical discipleship begins with the courage to follow Christ, and in its season, bears good fruit. It means we are willing to say, “Here I stand,” and “I count the cost.” We seek to be people faithful to the ways of Jesus.

SCN Steering Committee

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All scripture quotations *NRSV*