

## ***Difficult Conversations: A Missional Practice***

**Missional practices:** *cultivating new understandings, ways of being, and living Christ's mission.*

*The cause of Zion is the ongoing call to en flesh the peace of Jesus Christ in all dimensions of life.*

*We are called... to reveal Jesus Christ in the world through finely honed ministries of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit, making the ministries of the Temple manifest through our lives. — Stephen M. Veazey at the 2005 World Conference*

**Purpose:** To be mindful and prayerful about creating safe space for all involved to experience peace, reconciliation and healing of the spirit in difficult conversations around conflict, misunderstandings or hurt feelings.

### **Steps:**

1. Three steps to take before the conversation:
  - First, imagine being in the conversation to think through what happened from your and their perspectives. Sense what your and their feelings, pressures or anxieties are present and how you will handle them. Your “internal” conversation about what happened can reveal how it impacts your and their identity.
  - Second, clarify your purpose and hopes for the conversation. Ask, “How will these promote mutual understanding, well-being and healthy relationships?”
  - Third, decide whether to proceed. Think about how the conversation can turn out. Ask, “Do I sense hope to achieve my purpose? Am I grounded or feel balanced in my own feelings? Is this more about me and my identity story? Whose interest am I serving? Can I achieve my purpose some other way? If I do not proceed, what will likely continue?”
2. If the decision is to proceed plan your approach with these suggestions:
  - Pray the conversation can be a transformative experience—a pathway to Christ's peace.
  - Start the conversation by being open and state your purpose with clarity.
  - Explore their story and yours as a “Learning Conversation” with these skills:
    - Inquire, to learn and understand the other person's story!
    - Paraphrase to check understanding and show you are listening.
    - Acknowledge feelings to show you are trying to understand.
  - Move toward a better future by inviting expressions of hope and shared values or concerns for what each would like to happen going forward.
  - End with specific commitments about the future. If you need further conversation, schedule a committed time and place to meet again.

### **Tips for the Process:**

Approach a difficult conversation as an opportunity for mutual understanding and well-being where Christ's peace can be received, embodied and shared.