



CANADIAN BAPTISTS  
of Ontario and Quebec

# COMMUNITY Resources

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TRANSFORMING



RESOURCING



NETWORKING



PLANTING



# COMMUNITY

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As churches we aim to develop a common life in the way of Christ. Various metaphors are used to describe the church – scripture refers to the church as a “bride” reminding us of our relationship with God. Scripture also describes the church as a body with different parts and giftings. We sometimes refer to the church as a family or a community. Deep Christian community requires something of us. There is a common relational pattern – the deeper we go in relationship the more we open ourselves for pain and hurt. That is why as the early church was forming so many of the apostles instructions were for the fellowship to “love one another.”

Anything that starts with the word “Rules” may catch us off guard or make us defensive. Call them rules, guidelines, covenants, or whatever, we all gather around various principles. Families have their own ways of doing things. Most families don’t write out their rules, but if you went a meal at someone’s house you would quickly experience the way they function as a family. Many churches have found it helpful to intentionally identify and articulate their church’s “family rules.” Below you will find some resources and ideas that may help you may find helpful in creating an ethos of love and deepening commitment to God and to each other.

These ideas and resources are meant to be simple, usable and adaptable for your own setting. If you find a posture of the heart or practice that you think might be helpful try it out. Use it and adapt it taking into consideration your own church culture and context.

Introducing  
-“RULES OF DIALOGUE”  
-A DISCERNMENT MODEL

Usable &  
Adaptable

The degree to which you are able to include others in the process of planning, preparations and facilitation of worship gatherings will be the degree to which people are able to utilize their giftings, callings and talents for the honour of God and the blessing of the church community. One way to spark new life into your worship gathering is to include.

**Collaborative**

If you find something here that works for you find a way to share it with another church or association and allow it to be a blessing to them.

**Share**

# DISCERNMENT

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adapted from *Pursuing God's Will Together* by Ruth Haley Barton

## GATHERING

Gathering as a team to be personally transformed through this collective discernment process. Collectively affirm the churches mission, vision and values. Take the time to define the question that is being brought forward. If the question has previously been decided, take the time to make sure that everyone knows what is being asked at not asked.

- Personal Transformation
- Group Values and Commitments
- Defining the Question

## PREPARING THE HEART

One of the differences between a spiritual discernment process and one that might happen in a corporate or different setting is the high responsibility of seeking God's direction. This includes praying for indifference on our part and even testing our desire to be indifferent to anything other than God's leading including praying for wisdom and trust.

- Prayer of Indifference
- Test for Indifference
- Prayer for Wisdom
- Prayer for Trust

## GATHERING INFORMATION

It may be valuable to gather and provide the pertinent facts and information before assembling together and to brainstorm others whose voice from the community may provide insight. It is valuable to discern how this decision connects with the direction and tradition of the church, the Life of Christ, the Fruit of the Spirit and the love and unity of the community. One of the powerful insights of this process is naming the consolations and desolations that people are experiencing through the process.

- Pertinent Facts & Information
- Voices from the Community
- Direction & Calling
- Life of Christ
- Fruit of the Spirit
- Consolation & Desolation
- Tradition
- Love & Unity

## DISCERNING COLLECTIVELY

Moving from gathering information to collective discernment includes listening intently and deliberately. Often by this part of the process selecting the options, weighing them and agreeing together flows easier because of the preparation work done earlier. Often the process will require some kind of formal decision and follow-up.

- Listening in Silence
- Selecting an Option
- Weighing the Options
- Agree Together
- Seek Inner Confirmation in Peace
- Make a Formal Decision

<b>Gathering</b>	<b>Personal Transformation</b>	▶ Devotional or Listening to Scripture or Time of Silence
	<b>Group Values &amp; Commitments</b>	▶ Re-affirm the church's mission, vision or values statements by going around the room having each person read one statement
	<b>Defining the Question</b>	▶ What is it that is being asked? (Plan for this to take some time)
<b>Preparing Hearts to Hear from God</b>	<b>Prayer of Indifference</b>	▶ Pray that God will set aside preconceived agendas and anything blocking us from God's leading. "God may I be indifferent to anything but your will."
	<b>Test for Indifference</b>	▶ "What needs to die in me in for God's will to come forth in my life?"
	<b>Prayer for Wisdom</b>	▶ Have one person pray for wisdom for the group
	<b>Prayer for Trust</b>	▶ Have someone pray for trust and take time for people to pray for quiet trust that God's Spirit will lead
<b>Gathering Information</b>	<b>Pertinent Facts &amp; Information</b>	▶ What can we learn using human wisdom: history, financial reports, research and statics, etc.
	<b>Voices from the Community</b>	▶ Seek the opinions of those affected by the decision, those with particular expertise or experience
	<b>Direction &amp; Calling</b>	▶ Does the decision line up with our values and goals?
	<b>Scripture</b>	▶ Is God bringing to mind Scripture that has direct bearing on what we are discussing?
		▶ Do the larger themes of Scripture provide a context for this decision?
	<b>The Life of Christ</b>	▶ Does this decision reflect the mind of Christ as described in Phil. 2?
<b>Fruit of the Spirit</b>	▶ Would the choice nurture the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26) in the church community?	

- Consolation & Desolation** ➤ Does a decision carry either a sense of life and peace or distress and confusion with it? What is the source of these feelings?
  - Tradition** ➤ Has the church developed spiritual or missional authority in a certain area that would provide a foundation for the decision?
  - Love & Unity** ➤ Since our ability to love one another and to join in unity is Jesus' desire for us and glorifies him, which alternative fosters the greatest unity among us?
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**Discerning  
Collectively**

- Listening in Silence** ➤ After all information has been gathered and discussed, provide time for the Spirit to speak into the decision
- Weighing the Options** ➤ Consider the options using the criteria above, especially consolation & desolation
- Agree Together** ➤ A decision does not have to be unanimous but it should allow for unity to continue
- Seek Inner Confirmation in Peace** ➤ Take the time to “walk around” with each side of the decision before committing to a final answer
- Make a Formal Decision**
  - Formally affirm decision and record in minutes
  - Take more time to discern
  - Appoint a subgroup for more work
  - Name areas of agreement
  - Identify issues to deal with later
  - Vote by majority vote
  - Drop the matter

# RULES OF DIALOGUE

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As family of Canadian Baptist Churches we value and use discussion in the way we teach and organize ourselves. We ask questions, have questions asked to us and wrestle with the text or topic out loud. In doing this we've learned a lot about public discourse. Here are the guidelines that we acknowledge as a community for our discussion.

## UMBRELLA OF MERCY

No matter what you say you won't get mocked or judged for the idea you are sharing. We want the dialogue to be a safe place where we can see value in everything and even if the idea isn't accepted, it is still given a level of mercy and grace.

## PERSONAL STORIES

Stories are always better than analogies. Tie in the topic with your life. Tell your story to get the point across. Be transparent and honest and share how the topic relates to your life personally.

## TEACHER | STUDENT & STUDENT | TEACHER

There is no teacher who is not a student. We are all constantly learning and we all need each other to learn and seek truth more fully. We all have a capacity to teach and we all have a capacity to learn. Always default to learning.

## GROW THE CONVERSATION

"Never" and "always" are words we use to try to forcefully prove our points but don't really help. Be generous and graceful. Point out that it's from your experience that you usually experience something in a certain way.

## STAY ON TOPIC

Refer back to the original topic/question. If your comment doesn't directly relate to the conversation and/or especially the question, then write it down and bring it up some other time.

## LISTEN THEN TALK

It's very easy to get so caught up in what you want to say that you forget to listen to the rest of the conversation that is happening. Listen to everyone and everything that is happening in the room. Engage at thought that you listened to and pondered, don't feel the need to offer a new thought every time.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT PENALTY

All questions, about anything are fair game. There is no out of bounds. Even if it makes us squirm in our seat, you can ask the hard questions. We want to always be asking open, honest questions.

## TRUST THE OTHER

Dialogue can only happen when you trust the other person in the dialogue. If you are skeptical, are constantly criticizing and rolling your eyes, then you will never be in the true dialogue. Dialogue will only take place when you can trust and engage the other in on their level, not just your own.

## GRACE TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

If we are going to be honest in dialogue, we will always come up to a point where we can either keep fighting when we know we are wrong or suck up our pride, admit where we were wrong and then keep the discussion going. We want to make it as easy as possible for people to follow what they believe is right, not force them to have to put up walls just to hold face. One tip when wrong might be to say... “Cheerfully withdrawn.”

*Used & adapted with permission from The Story – Sarnia, Ontario*

# 10 COMMANDMENTS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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## 1 Commit to Owning the Value

Teach and model Matthew 18:15-17 often and through many different voices so that it becomes part of the very fabric of the church before relational discord occurs.

## 2 Monitor Yourself

Timothy 4:16 says, “Watch your life closely.” Learn to discern which offenses you can let be covered by sheer grace and which get rooted in your spirit and must be addressed.

## 3 Redirect Others

Resist the temptation to listen when someone discusses a conflict he or she is having with another person in the church, and instead, redirect that person to honour Matthew 18:15-17 by talking to the offending party directly. We should strive to not only model this protocol, we will also be actively involved in leading others to do this as well. Example, when person A comes to you and says “person B is not . . .” the appropriate response is, “Have you spoken with B about this?” If the answer is “No” then encourage that person to speak to them right away. If the answer is “Yes” then determine the outcome of that meeting.

## 4 Know How to Confront

Resolving conflict is not about winning or losing an argument but rather it is about preserving the Bride of Christ. Pray first, then exercise verbal discipline, remembering that affirming words reduce defensiveness and a “gentle answer turns away wrath.”

## 5 Narrow the Issue

Although you may be tempted to expand a conflict to include more than the original offense, narrow the issue to address only the offense.

## 6 Be Solution-Oriented

The goal is reconciliation; focus on understanding what went wrong, why it went wrong, and how it can be prevented in the future.

## 7 Use the Mirror Technique

Very often we don't hear each other clearly. Repeat back to each other what you hear, asking, “I understand you to be saying . . . Is that right?” “If I understand you correctly you ....”

## 8 Be open to Agreeing to Disagree

Sometimes conflict can be resolved by understanding each other, and then “agreeing to disagree agreeably.”

## 9 Be Committed to Follow-up

Some relational conflicts cut deeply. Be intentional about investing time rebuilding the relationship once a conflict has been resolved.

## 10 When Others Confront You

Allow others to respectfully ventilate and express their frustrations, and do not switch the discussion from the issue they have with you to an issue you have with them.

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## Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV)

<sup>15</sup> “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. <sup>16</sup> But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’

<sup>17</sup> If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

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# “I” STATEMENTS WE CAN LIVE WITH

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The way we gather as a church community reflects our understanding of the nature of God and our respect for others. The following expectations may help provide a welcoming space for respectful conversation by aspiring to these ideals.

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| will try to listen well, providing each person with a welcoming space to express her or his perspective on the issue at hand.

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| will seek to empathetically understand the reasons another person has for his or her perspective.

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| will express my perspective, and my reasons for holding that perspective, with commitment and conviction, but with a non-coercive style that invites conversation with a person who disagrees with me.

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| will seek to explore common ground that can further the conversation when conversing with someone who disagrees with me.

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| will also aspire to be characterized by humility, courage, patience and love in all conversations.

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| will demonstrate respect for the other and concern for her or his well-being when we cannot find common ground.

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# “I” STATEMENTS WE CAN LIVE WITH

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The way we gather as a church community reflects our understanding of the nature of God and our respect for others. In each of the spaces below, write an “I” statement about the way you want to approach conversations and relationships within your church community and beyond. The following expectations may help provide a welcoming space for respectful conversation by aspiring to these ideals.

I

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I

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I

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I

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I

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I

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# ORTHOparadoxy

## *rightly held difference*

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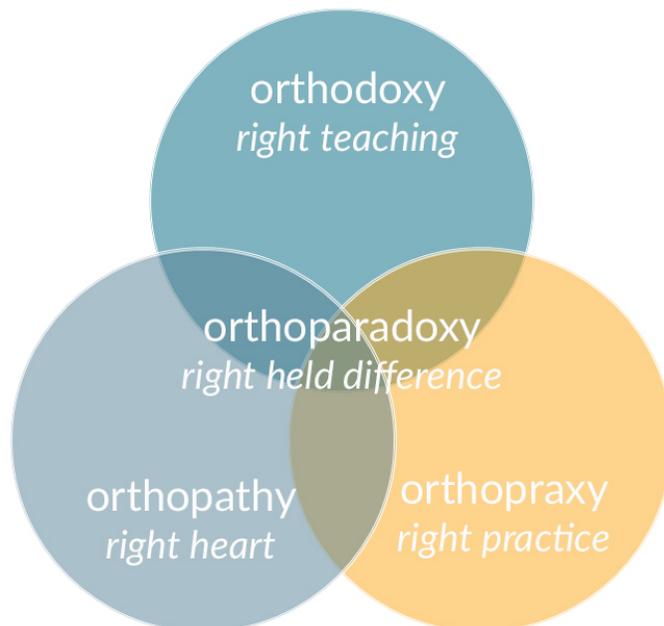
In the Trinity we have, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Three in One and One in Three. In scripture, we have the authoritative, Divine Word of God written by the hands of very fallible humans. Jesus Christ is fully Divine and fully human. Most of the heresies throughout church history began when a person or group of people took one aspect of the Trinity, nature of Christ or Scripture and emphasized one part of it without rightly holding the other part of it. The Christian faith requires that we embrace:

- ▶ **orthodoxy** – *right teaching*
- ▶ **orthopraxy** – *right practices and action*
- ▶ **orthopathy** – *right heart or emotion*

Christians that emphasize:

- ▶ **orthodoxy** over all else run the temptation of being hears of the word and not doers (James 1:22)
- ▶ **orthopraxis** over all else run into the temptation of offering great service without great news.
- ▶ **orthopathy** over all else run into the temptation of offering acceptance without transformation.

**The challenge of Christian faith is rightly holding these differences.**



# 6 Paradoxes

## That every church needs to navigate

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As the people of your church seek to incarnate the Good News of the Gospel, there will continually be challenges of how to innovate and collaborate with others. In order for churches to be communities of health and mission they will need to navigate **6 paradoxes**.

Churches may choose to...

- pray through these paradoxes seeking God's Spirit to lead them in discernment and wisdom
- strategically "unleash" or "harness" their people at times
- seek to hold the paradox in tension
- or look for a third way

### UNLEASH

### HARNESS

Individual		Collective
Support		Confrontation
Learning & Development		Performance
Improvisation		Structure
Patience		Urgency
Bottom Up		Top Down

Taken from *Collective Genius: The Art and Practice of Leading Innovation*

by Linda A Hill, Greg Brandeau, Emily Trulove & Kent Lineback. Pg 41

**MORE**

## 8 Paradoxes

# That every church needs to navigate

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pray through these paradoxes seeking God’s Spirit to lead them in discernment and wisdom

strategically “unleash” or “harness” their people at times

seek to hold the paradox in tension

or look for a third way

<b>Tradition</b>		<b>Innovation</b>
<b>Spiritual Health</b>		<b>Institutional Health</b>
<b>Management</b>		<b>Leadership</b>
<b>Strong Clergy Leadership</b>		<b>Strong Lay Leadership</b>
<b>Inreach</b>		<b>Outreach</b>
<b>Nurture</b>		<b>Transformation</b>
<b>Call</b>		<b>Duty</b>

Taken from *Managing Polarities in Congregations*

by Roy M Oswald and Barry Johnson. Pg vii

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# RESOURCES

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## CBOQ

- ◆ **LOOKING: Transforming your church by discerning and participating in the Mission of God**  
Contact Congregational Development, [cgouveia@baptist.ca](mailto:cgouveia@baptist.ca) | 416-620-2949

## BOOKS

- ◆ Barton, Ruth Haley. *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- ◆ Palmer, Parker. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

## ONLINE

[Biblical and Theological Perspective on Spiritual Transformation: An Interactive Process for Groups \(PDF\)](#) by **The Transforming Center**

[Movements in Corporate Leadership Discernment Chart \(PDF\)](#) by **The Transforming Center**

[The Clearness Committee: A Communal Approach to Discernment \(PDF\)](#) by **Parker Palmer**

[Indifference: The Key to Christian Leadership](#) (Blog Post) by **Peter Scazzero**

[The Pursuit of God: The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing](#) (YouTube Video) by **A.W. Tozer**

[The Meaning of Detachment](#) (Blog Post) by **Ignition Spirituality**

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