

## Resources for Deliberations

We realize that we have an awesome responsibility to deliberate many pertinent issues that affect the work, worship, and the witness of our church family and there may be times when we disagree. It is our highest desire to always seek and heed the will of God and be guided by God's spirit in our decision making. Like the Apostles who deliberated the necessity of Gentile circumcision in Acts 15, we call upon the same six resources that guided them through their divided discerning of the will of God to also guide us in our discerning –

**Active Listening:** The Apostles desired to hear from everyone and practiced silence while others spoke. We commit ourselves to the respectful listening of differing positions and perspectives. We honor the diversity of God's voice in our meetings and as Paul submitted to the communal decision of the council, we too submit to the final authority of the Council, as a whole, as the discerned will of God for us

**Experience:** Peter and Paul both shared their experience of witnessing salvation with the Gentiles as a sign of God's will. Likewise, we believe that our experiences, both individually and collectively, help us discern the will of God and we commit to bringing our full authentic selves and life experiences to our discussions and deliberations. We value the truth of each other's experiences and grant each other the benefit of a pure heart before God that allows us to trust one another.

**Practicality:** The Apostles were guided by a desire to not put a requirement on the Gentiles that was unpractical for who they were and the times in which they lived. Likewise, we seek to always be governed by what is expedient, practical, and proven as best practice. We will not be limited to our own individual experience but will actively seek to witness God's work in other churches similar to our own and throughout the Kingdom.

**Holy Spirit:** Peter spoke from his deepest convictions about God and his belief about the Lord Jesus as he was guided by the Holy Spirit. We likewise seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit through our prayers and commit ourselves to daily time with God. We will invoke the presence of God not simply in our homes or during our devotions but also during our conversations and decision making. We will hold ourselves accountable for measuring our decisions against what the Holy Spirit has spoken to us in prayer and always remain faithful to our deepest convictions about God's grace and love.

**Data:** Paul and Barnabas shared their many stories of salvation from among the Gentiles. We too seek to make decisions informed by evidence and actual data about our church membership and ministries. Rather than relying solely upon feelings and opinions, we search for fact and truth and will let the analysis of data be part of our deliberations.

**Scripture:** James brought scripture to the conversation. We also desire to be guided by the inerrant, infallible, and sufficient Word of God. We commit ourselves to more than experiential, practical, analytical conversations. We will ask, "what does the Bible say" and search for God's will within God's word. We believe that the Word of God is the light unto our path and it will never fail to guide us into the ways of God.