Tips for Faithful and Respectful Discussion on the Issues

- Realize that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the conversation and has given each participant a part of the truth you are seeking to discern.

- Follow the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" – even when you disagree with them.

- Listen respectfully and carefully to others.

- State what you think you heard someone say and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to make sure to understand each other.

- Speak honestly about your thoughts and feelings. Share personal experiences to help others more fully understand your concerns and perspectives on the issues. Conversations can be passionate and still be respectful, civil and constructive.

- Speak for yourself, rather than as a member of a group. Use “I” statements rather than “You” statements.

- Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people’s motives, intelligence or integrity.

- Look for and lift up points of agreement as well as disagreement.

- Create space for everyone’s concerns to be spoken, even when they disagree.

- Seek to stay in community with each other even though the discussion may be vigorous and perhaps tense.

- Keep an open mind and heart. You may not hear if you judge too quickly.

- Pray for God’s grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly and to remain open to the vision God holds for all of us.

Adapted from "Ground Rules for Conversation" (Evangelical Lutheran Church Department for Communication) and "Seeking to be Faithful Together" (adopted by the 204th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA)

Links to Additional Resources on Civility

- UCC General Synod Resource: http://tinyurl.com/ow8lqc3