

My Covenant for Pursuing Unity with Other Christians

*In light of John 17:20-23,
I will pray for and live towards unity with other Christians.*

*In light of Matthew 7:3-5,
I will acknowledge the prejudices, excesses and failings of my own convictions
before I attempt to correct, criticize, or argue against the convictions of others.*

*In light of Romans 12:10 and 18,
I will trust that the intentions of those with whom I disagree are honorable,
and speak the best of what I see in their efforts to serve Jesus Christ.*

*In light of Proverbs 12:16 and 19:11,
I will seek not to take offense at the conscientiously held convictions of others.*

*In light of 1 Peter 3:15,
I will contend for my convictions with gentleness and respect out of reverence for Jesus Christ.*

A former pastor of mine, Charlie Drew, recently wrote the following appeal for Christian unity in a time of political division:

Yes, we must speak up for what is just and true. Yes, we must wrestle with each other over how best to love our neighbors as ourselves. But that is not enough. We must be, in how we conduct ourselves with each other, a living alternative to contempt. We must be sociologically inexplicable, and for that reason, a winsome invitation to our angry and cynical neighbors to take a serious look at the person we call Lord.

Notice one quality in the harmony for which Jesus prays. He wants us to all “to be one, as [he and the Father] are one.” Think of how the Father, Son, and Spirit continually defer to and honor one another. Now imagine an election campaign, or an international summit on peace in Syria, or a church family, in which all the parties do likewise: in which people “outdo one another in showing honor” (Romans 12:10)—in which the only “competition” is over who can listen more carefully, who can speak more graciously to and about the other, and who can better promote the legitimate interests of the other. No flattery, no manipulation, no sneering; simply, and always, good will. This is how the Trinity “does” community. It is how Jesus prays we will, even when we despise each other’s politics—all so that our neighbors will savor in us a foretaste of heaven.