

Before we begin our engagement of faith and science issues in our community, we set forth the following principles that will frame our conversations on these topics:

- 1. We are called to pursue truth by engaging difficult problems.** Christian faith leads us to believe that truth exists and is to be valued more than comfort, winning points over others, or any false sense of unity achieved by ignoring or silencing divergent opinions. The truth is not fragile or in need of our protection, and it will survive our realizations that we have been mistaken. We need not fear new information, but can trust that allowing the expression of different perspectives within a framework of shared faith can bring to us a deepened understanding. Because the truth matters, our conversations will be worth having, even if we don't end up arriving at solutions or resolving our differences immediately.
- 2. We are called to practice loving God and neighbor.** Arriving at correct answers without love leaves us as clashing gongs and resounding cymbals. Having conversations with people who hold different views is a spiritual practice that provides the opportunity for the community to develop Christian virtues such as humility, patience, forbearance, courage, and love. A conversation not marked by these virtues will, in the end, not be a Christian conversation. Conversations about difficult issues are to be seen as opportunities to grow into being the kind of people Jesus wants us to be.
- 3. We are called to bear witness together as the body of Christ.** Statements of truth achieved at the expense of hostility toward other members of the body of Christ harm Christian witness. We are called to seek truth together, and that means that while finding true answers matters, the ways in which we grow or fail to grow, and how we treat one another along the way, also matter. This does not mean that we may not disagree. Disagreements can be seen as a gift to help strengthen unity as we seek to find fellowship amid our disagreements. We can discuss difficult issues and disagreements with one another, because we already belong to one another in faith.