

# **The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations**

## **Civil Discourse Five Week Curriculum**



**OFFICE OF  
GOVERNMENT  
RELATIONS**

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# WEEK I: CIVIL DISCOURSE IN CONTEXT: AN INTRODUCTION

## PARTICIPANT HAND OUT

### Opening Prayer:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is discord, union;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

(Prayer attributed to St. Francis, BCP p. 833)

### Reflection:

Civil discourse is engagement in conversation intended to enhance understanding.

Rabbi Steve Gutow, speaking at the Episcopal Church's event [Civil Discourse in America](#), remarked that, "civility is simply demonstrating respect for the dignity of our fellow humans—even those humans with whom we have sharp disagreement. Civility is allowing others to speak, and having the humility to admit that we may have something to learn. Civility favors truth over cheap gain, and patience over knee-jerk judgment."

### Role Reflection

Office of Government Relations:

- Builds relationships with elected officials and represents the policy positions of the Episcopal Church as passed by General Convention and Executive Council with the goal of influencing federal policies.
- Brings experiences and expertise of Episcopalians and Anglicans into the decision-making processes in our government.
- Listens to government officials to learn their position and to collaborate with them in the development of legislation and policy.

As individual Episcopalians, civil discourse is important as we seek to understand our increasingly complicated world and make the best decisions possible when participating in the democratic process through voting, petitioning, and advocating. We must maintain a thirst to talk with each other respectfully, even in disagreement and even in debate. That thirst will continue to challenge us, expose us to new ideas, and bring us closer together as we continue the pursuit of justice and peace.

**Reflect:**

Following the lead of the Office of Government Relations, how can we do similar things in our own settings? How do we:

- build relationships
- bring what we know to the conversations
- listen and learn

Take notes as you reflect on this for yourself and your community.

**Closing Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, who traveled with the disciples on the road to Emmaus:

Be with us on the way,

that we may know you in the scriptures,

in the breaking of bread,

and in the hearts of all whom we meet. Amen.

([Saint Augustine's Prayer Book](#), Forward Movement)