

Pilgrims Consensus Model

Understandings

1. Respect for the moving of God in others, possibly contrary to your own conviction, is essential.
2. Every person's voice is welcomed. Vocal people will limit their speech, so others have a chance to share wisdom. Those who find it more difficult to speak are encouraged, and are responsible, to make the effort to share the wisdom they are given.
3. One speaks to her/his own conviction and not to critique or debate others.
4. Listening is crucial. There is no need to convince anyone else to share your opinion, since you alone can block a decision that you believe is in error. It is important to avoid being judgmental of others during the listening period.
5. Affirmation of the points of another should be very brief, so as not to use speaking time that could be used to share new insights.
6. Silence is good. Introspective times of prayer and reflection are needed.
7. Groups respond more easily to proposals than to creating solutions from scratch.
8. A consensus process requires time, trust, and clear procedure.

Procedures for making major decisions

1. A listening process will be called early in the process of any major decision.
2. A proposed decision-making process will be put in writing and distributed to the church at the start of any major decision. Decision processes will typically include reporting, open information sharing, discussion, prayer and quiet reflection, evaluation, and then decision making. Surveys, straw polls, etc., may be used along the way to help clarify directions.
3. At the start of every meeting or discussion, the convener will clarify purpose, listening/sharing rules, and decision procedure.
4. The convener will call for a consensus check at her/his discretion, during meetings in which decision-making is a stated purpose.
5. All consensus checks will include a verbal summary by the convener of the sense of the group or of a specific proposal. The convener will ask for a showing of:
 - Affirmation
 - Standing aside
 - Non-affirmation (blocking)
6. If anyone stood aside, the convener will ask if they have anything additional to say. If appropriate, time may also be given for the community to respond.
7. If anyone blocked the decision, the convener will call for a listening period where those who did not affirm can speak.
8. Following listening periods of minority opinion, the convener may open the floor for full group discussion if needed/appropriate.
9. The convener may call for a second consensus check at her/his discretion, or may postpone the decision until the next meeting, to allow more time for reflection.
10. If consensus cannot be reached:
 - A period of silent reflection and prayer may be called;
 - Decision-making may be postponed until the next meeting;
 - An ad hoc group may be appointed with key people from opposing positions to continue dialogue and bring a new proposal to the church.

-Adopted 10/23/94