

## **Space for Grace: Core Principles and Practices**

### **The Biblical Vision**

"Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (Genesis 12:1-3)

"In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel." (Ephesians 3:5-6)

"After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages... They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the lamb!'" (Revelation 7:9-10)

### **The Basis of Union**

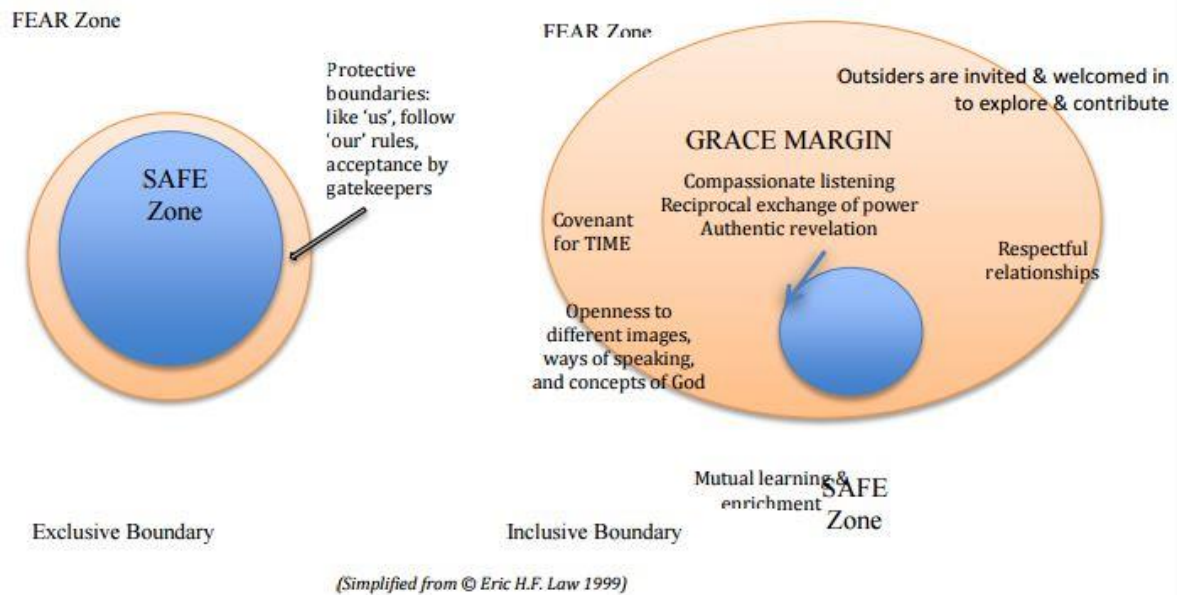
"God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself. The Church lives between the time of Christ's death and resurrection and the final consummation of all things which Christ will bring; the Church is a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal; here the Church does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come. On the way Christ feeds the Church with Word and Sacraments, and it has the gift of the Spirit in order that it may not lose the way." (Basis of Union, paragraph 3)

### **Core Principles and Practices**

On this journey there will be difficult moments as people who are very different from each other and divided from each other are drawn into the reconciling mission of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. But these difficult moments are also opportunities for reconciliation and renewal. The Uniting Church commits itself to accept these opportunities in order to be a foretaste, sign and instrument of that "reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation."

We call that commitment "space for grace".

## Space for Grace



Instead of having "protective boundaries" the body of Christ ensures it remains healthy by maintaining a wide "grace margin" or "space for grace". This "space for grace" is that set of biblical principles and practices (e.g. 1 Cor 13:4-7, Gal 5:22-26, Rom 12:14-18, Rom 14:1-13, Eph 4:1-3 and 25-32) that enable people who might be very different from each other, or even enemies, to be together and talk together about important things safely, truthfully and fruitfully.

So, when we gather to talk about something difficult, we remember especially the faithful marks of a multicultural church affirmed in *One Body, Many Members - Living Faith and Life Cross-culturally* (<https://assembly.uca.org.au/obmm>).

We choose a place to meet where everyone will feel safe and free to say what is on their hearts and to listen to others who may have a very different experiences or perspectives. In planning the meeting we focus on chapter one of the *Manual for Meetings* (<https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/MfM2015.pdf>), which explains how to build a community for deep conversation and discernment.

We listen to each other's stories, taking all the time we need, knowing we'll have to pay careful attention to all the words and all the silences.

And we pray - not to have our own point of view endorsed, but that we will hear together what our Lord Jesus Christ is saying to us in this rich, difficult moment.