Making Difficult Decisions

APCE 2021 Diversity Workshop B-3

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**Together vs separate**

* Two forces at work in all living systems
* Built into the fabric of life – even at the cellular level
* Individual cells / humans strive to be connected with others
* Once individual elements group together in a system, the forces of togetherness often become stronger than the forces for individuation (differentiation)
* The system (culture, organization, church, family) will try to maintain the status quo (homeostasis) and draw individuals back in when they begin to separate

**Healthy systems**

Allow individuals/groups to be themselves – who they truly are – while at the same time maintaining relationships with the rest of the system

**Separating from the System**

**Self-differentiation**

* Individuals or groups claiming an identity or taking a stand
* Being an “I” when everyone/everything is saying “We”
* Begins with clarity about one’s own (individual or group) values, principles, and beliefs
* Increases integrity and wholeness as our identity and actions are aligned with our values, principles, and beliefs
* Yet, risks alienation from others

**It takes great courage and endurance to be separate *AND* together**

A Path to Wholeness

* Clarify your mission – your personal/group values, principles, and beliefs leading to action
* Stay connected – seek intentionally to remain in relationship with others in your system
* Stay calm – work to reduce your own anxiety and reactiveness
* Stay the course – anticipate and prepare for the inevitable sabotage (the forces that will try to make your “I” conform to the “We”)

Necessary Conditions

* A **safe place** to nurture the emerging “I”
* For groups
* commit to a process that ensures a safe environment where everyone is respected and valued
* For individuals
* Seek out and be open to someone who can serve as an ally or mentor
* **Continuing nurture**
* Affiliate with a supportive community locally, nationally
* Help others as you have been helped
* Become an advocate/activist

**Recommendations**

* Processes for institutional and group decisions
* [***Seeking to be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians in Times of Disagreement***](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/seeking-to-be-faithful-together-guidelines-for-presbyterians-in-times-of-disagreement/) ***PCUSA***
* [***Respectful Communication Guidelines & Mutual Invitation***](https://www.kscopeinstitute.org/free-resources) ***Kaleidoscope Institute (work of Eric Law)***
* Organizations
* [**Covenant Network of Presbyterians**](https://covnetpres.org/) **– a broad-based, national group of clergy and lay leaders working for a church that is simultaneously faithful, just, and whole**
* [**More Light Presbyterians**](https://mlp.org/) **-- empowering and equipping individuals and congregations to live into their welcome for LGBTQIA+ people**
* [**That All May Freely Serve**](http://tamfs.org/) **– *(Note: Completed its work in December 2020 after almost three decades of ministry)* in solidarity in making the connections with those disenfranchised by racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, ablebodyism, gender identity oppression, eco-exploitation, militarism, and all other structures of exploitation and oppression through the lens of our social location**