

Ideas for This Dialogue

Ask members of your congregation what they want this reflection/dialogue to look like - an informal discussion after church, on the agenda of an already scheduled meeting, a panel discussion with various points of view represented; a lecture format; reading information prior to the meeting and then discussion of the material at a meeting

At the meeting, ask people to write down on an index card what their concerns are - pass them to the next person to read or each person can talk about their own.

Many times we stereotype groups. Recognize that no one person can speak for all Christians, all gays or all United Methodists. Stereotyping can be avoided by using this exercise - when you're going to ask a question or make a statement, such as "All gays are good interior decorators" replace *gays* with another word for a different group, such as *ball players*, or *car dealers*.

The California Pacific Conference found that Two Friends in a Dialogue worked the best for them because the two people talking were friends even though they had different points of view with respect to sexual orientation. Their goal was to provide another way for Christians to dialogue in a way that affirms each other's faith at the same time that it allows for strong differences of opinion. The two people would go to different congregations and talk. Their agreement was:

- 1) we are friends who know, respect and care for one another,
- 2) we seek to relate the gospel and scripture to the leading of the Spirit on these issues of sexuality,
- 3) we are willing to share our own personal journeys and experiences as we have struggled with these matters,
- 4) we are committed to making the way we dialogue with each other as important as the *content* of what we say,
- 5) we acknowledge we need to really listen to one another,
- 6) but most of all, we know we need to listen to the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

If the discussion becomes heated, please remind everyone of the Rules of Discussion

Take a break Sing a song Engage in prayer Continually seek God's presence

"You have to apply the test of love. There is no Christian answer to anything that comes out of an unloving foundation. If what you're hearing seems motivated by hate and divisiveness, then it probably isn't truly Christian, Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist, or whatever your faith is. The foundation of right, the foundation of good, is always love. That's the test." J. Philip Wogaman, former president of the Interfaith Alliance