

Peaceful Practices and Conversation on Human Sexuality Fall 2022

Introduction

In 2016, Laurel Street Mennonite Church explored healthy human sexuality and how we relate with the LGBTQ community. We freely shared questions, understandings, and interpretations of scripture without judgment. We strived to accept, love, listen, and learn from one another rather than pressure, threaten, or alienate others who believe and think differently. Through exploring our differences and remaining connected, we enriched one another and grew in our love for God and one another.

At the end of 13 weeks of courageous conversation, our desire was to embrace and care for the whole family including the LGBTQ community. It was not something written down on paper as much as written in our hearts, something that happened dynamically within us and to us, an expression of love and hospitality to one another as we realized we can choose to love and accept one another despite our differences. It became a lived statement of how we worship and live together amidst diversity.

Purpose of Conversation this Fall

Our congregation has a lot of new people since 2016 and the Leadership Team has discerned now is a good time to reflect on how we are living into our 2016 conversation and to bring further clarity by developing a written shared understanding.

A planning team was commissioned by the Leadership Team to plan conversation this fall around peaceful practices, sexuality, and LGBTQ. On September 11, the Planning Team (Ashley Howard, Elizabeth Soto, Brian Hackman, Mike Shook, Lil Worley, and Pastor Ron) will share more.

The Adult Sunday school class this fall will use the *Peaceful Practices* curriculum which provides healthy ways of conversation and dialogue. Three of the adult classes will focus on LGBTQ conversations. There will also be opportunity for conversation in small groups in October. The *Seeking Justice Together* theme for the Sunday morning worship services will also supplement the conversations. We look forward to everyone's active participation in both Sunday school & worship this fall.

MOVEMENTS	Dates	SUNDAY SCHOOL	Teacher/Facilitator
BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION Commitment to listen and learn Our questions, fears, hopes, hearts	Sep 11	Making Peace a Practice Gen 32:22-32,33:1-10	Ron Zook Elizabeth Soto
	Sep 18	Curiosity (Act 2:1-13) Be curious, inviting diversity of ideas & opinions	Eric Kennel
	Sep 25	LGBTQ Discussion led by Mike and Rhonda	Mike & Rhonda
WHO ARE WE as a community of diverse and inclusive people?	Oct 9	Engagement (1 Cor 12:12-31) Invite the best in yourself and others.	Ed Good
	Oct 16	Dialogue (John 4:3-26) Listen together for insights & deeper questions	Janelle Bitikofer
	Oct 23	LGBTQ Discussion led by Mike and Rhonda	Mike & Rhonda
WHAT HAVE WE DISCOVERED? HOW SHALL WE NOW LIVE AS COMMUNITY?	Oct 30	Authenticity (Luke 6:37-45) Speak from heart, from your own experience	Karen Sensenig
	Nov 13	Dignity (Mark 11:15-19) Consider power dynamics.	Linda Witmer
	Nov 20	Discussion led by Mike and Rhonda	Mike & Rhonda