

FOUR Approaches for Studying Quality and Inequality in Marriage

respectfully submitted to Maine Conference
of United Church of Christ
For the Annual Conference 2006
September 22-24, Sunday River
by Lori H. Whittemore

models may/should be adapted by you for the needs of your own association and/or congregation. For more information or an electronic copy of this document, please contact Lori Whittemore at loriwhit@maine.rr.com

Model 1

Adapted from the Oxford Association Meeting format from May 7, 2006 referred to hereafter as Oxford Union Model

- A. setting
 - 1. 3-5 hour gathering
 - 2. congregational meeting style
 - 3. a reporting out of discussion
 - 1. ACE
 - 2. UCC website
 - 3. possible common sermon written in collaboration for participating congregations
- B. attendees
 - 1. mixed congregations
 - 2. works well for an association wide or at least multi-church meeting
 - 3. offers different situations to be brought up and discussed
 - 4. creates network of dialogue partners
- C. content
 - 1. ground rules
 - 2. hymns
 - 3. scripture
 - 4. worship
 - 5. facilitated overview
 - 6. break out discussion groups
 - 7. reporting back to main session
 - 8. wrap up
 - 9. common meal
- D. Reporting out-(ADDED FEATURE from Oxford Union meeting)
 - 1. ACE
 - 2. UCC website (Maine)
 - 3. annual meeting
 - 4. newsletter
 - 5. Common Sermon-collaborative sermon by participating pastors to be given to congregations on the same Sunday
- E. Needs for Meeting
 - 1. Ground Rules, see appendix A
 - 2. *Homosexuality and the Bible*. Walter Wink, available through conference office
 - 3. topic experts, see appendix B1

Model 2

Adult Education Model

designed using *A Lifelong Call to Learn*, Reber and Roberts editors.

intended as a facilitated several week program-

- A. setting
 - after church-fellowship hall or other appropriate comfortable setting
- B. format
 - 1. 5 classes, 3 hours each
 - 2. 2 facilitators and possible topic expert
 - 3. readings (will be available through Maine Conference resource center)

Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality. Jack Rogers
Marriage Under Fire. James Dobson
notebook of resource material

- a. Copy of Opening the Conversation from UCC website
- b. Copy of current resolution for study of quality and in equality of marriage
- c. *Homosexuality and the Bible.* Walter Wink
- d. Chapter 7 of *Confronting the the Controversies.* by Adam Hamilton
- e. *What the Bible Says and Doesn't Say about Homosexuality.* www.soulforce.org
- f. *God Hates Fags.* www.Godhatesfags.com
- g. *Is Marriage in Jeopardy.* Focus on Family pamphlet
- h. ground rules-see Appendix A.
- i. questions for book discussions-see Appendix B2
- j. blank paper
- k. one envelope

Adult Ed program, page 2

Class 1-Covenanting

blessing
introductions
notebooks
statement of purpose-Opening the Conversation read out loud
reading of ground rules out loud-
letter to self (Prepare letter to self on current thoughts on issue and
reason for participating in group...seal it in envelope)
UCC Polity overview
congregational polity overview
assignment of dialogue partners
assignment for next class
closing

Class 2-the Biblical story

reading for class- *readings to be done prior to class*
What the Bible Says and Doesn't Say about Homosexuality.

www.soulforce.org

blessing
topic expert on homosexuality and the Bible, (see topic experts,
Appendix B1)
assignment of dialogue partners
closing

Class 3-the different *ideas*

reading for class
Homosexuality and the Bible. Walter Wink
Confronting the Controversies, chapter 7. Adam Hamilton

Blessing
reading of rules for dialogue
break into discussion groups to address questions
for each reading
report out from the groups
assignment of dialogue partners
closing

Adult ed program, page 3

Class 4- why UCC takes this position

reading for class

God Hates Fags. www.godhatesfags.com

Focus on Family pamphlet, Is Marriage in Jeopardy

Marriage Under Fire. James Dobson

Matthew 22:34-39

Opening

overview of the institution of marriage

discussion of the controversies in church history

the call to justice on this issue

quaker dialogue

group sits in circle. facilitator starts dialogue by asking for a volunteer to share their thoughts on the issue. when the person has concluded sharing their comments, they say, "done". The person on the left then offers their comments and upon conclusion, so indicates by stating, "done". No one may interrupt while a person is talking. A person may choose not to participate by saying, "pass". When the circle has been completed, facilitator thanks all for sharing and asks a blessing upon the gathering.

assignment of dialogue partners

closing

Class 5-where are we now????

reading for class

Jesus the Bible and Homosexuality. Jack Rogers

Opening

class facilitated discussion of book/questions-(see Appendix B2)

overview of class and sessions

prayer and meditation-

each to write reflection on class

1-3 pages on where they are now

what effect the process/class had on them

whether they felt the readings helped

opening of envelopes

voluntary sharing of journey in group

next steps

closing and blessing

Model 3-

Book Group Model

long term committed group featuring deeper study into DIFFERING POSITIONS

- A. setting-
after church-fellowship hall or other appropriate comfortable setting

- B. format
 1. 9 sessions including 4 books supporting and 4 books opposing
 2. roughly once a month meeting schedule
 3. Introductory Class would go over handouts, book list
 4. letter to self (Prepare letter to self on current thoughts on issue and reason for participating in group...seal it in envelope)
 5. see Appendix C for basic format for classes 2-9

- C. requirements for class:
 1. 8 -15 parishioners
 2. commitment to attend each session
 3. commitment to read each book
 4. commitment to ground rules for dialogue

- D. handouts/resources for class
 1. Ground Rules for discussion, see APPENDIX A.
 2. Opening the Conversation material from UCC website
 3. *Homosexuality and the Bible*. Walter Wink
 4. *What the Bible Says and Doesn't Say about Homosexuality*.
www.soulforce.org
 5. *God Hates Fags*. www.Godhatesfags.com

- E. Book List in order of assignment
 1. *Why Marriage Matters*, Glenn T. Stanton.
 2. *What is Marriage For?* E.J. Graff
 3. *Marriage on Trial*. Glenn T. Stanton
 4. *What God Has Joined Together*, David Myers and Letha Scanzoni
 5. *Marriage Under Fire*, James Dobson
 6. *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality*. Daniel Helminiak
 7. *Confronting the Controversies: Biblical Perspectives on Tough Issues*. Chapter 7. Adam Hamilton.
 8. *Homosexuality and Christian Faith*, Walter Wink.

Model 4-

Parish Read Model

A. Format

1. entire parish selects book to read over a 6-8 week period
2. Church purchases 10 copies of book to lend
3. pastor preaches sermons relating to content of book
4. CE committee sets up 3-5 different activities relating to book/topic
 - a. discussion group
 - b. topic expert to discuss book
 - c. movie night relating to book
 - d. field trip relating to book/topic
 - e. book author to speak about book

B. Topic/Book-

1. Jack Rogers, Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality.
2. Pastor preaches about conference resolution and polity
3. several educational activities offered
 - a. discussion group
 - b. panel discussion involving gay and lesbian and parents of
 - c. New Testament Scholar speaking about Biblical aspects
 - d. invite author to speak to congregation

C. Celebration

1. someone writes up what has occurred and publishes it in newsletter
2. on website
3. in ACE

APPENDIX A

Ground Rules for Dialogue Among Christians

1. Keep the conversation civil and respectful of one another. This is not a debate or an argument.
2. Be succinct and brief. Think about what you want to say before speaking. You want to share the floor with others, and wait for everyone to have the opportunity to speak before you speak again.
3. Don't interrupt others when they are speaking!
4. Speak only for yourself. Don't generalize about everyone. Use "I" statements.
5. Be a good listener. Seek to understand...not argue.
6. Don't try to "win" or "prove someone else is wrong".
7. In order to get to deeper meanings and clearer understandings of a person's viewpoint, ask clarifying questions.
8. Be open to new ideas and information.
9. Respond by sharing and inquiring, not by defending or proclaiming. If you find yourself becoming defensive or reactive, stop and disengage.
10. NEVER APPLAUD or show signs of agreement or disagreement when someone is speaking.
11. ENJOY THIS DIALOGUE and remember we are faithful brothers and sisters in Christ seeking understanding.

APPENDIX B1. Possible Topic Experts or contacts for facilitated presentation or discussion

1. Maine Conference/UCC
Rev. David Gaewski, Conference Minister
Rev. June Boutwell, Interim Associate Conference Minister
2. Bangor Theological Seminary
President Bill Imes
Seminary Faculty
3. Reverend Dawn Berry
Falmouth Congregational Church
4. Reverend Dan Johnson
Second Congregational Church, Norway, Maine

APPENDIX B2. C-COMMON QUESTIONS FOR Adult Education Model and Book Group

1. What religion, faith tradition or perspective does author represent?
2. What is the author's bias on this issue?
3. Attempt a one line summary of the book.
4. What sources of evidence does the author use to make the case?
5. Are the sources given or outlined?
6. Are they credible?
7. Does the author use a reasoned approach?
8. Did this book give you any information that you were previously unaware of?
9. What style did the author use to present the case?
10. How has reading this book enriched your perspective on the issue?

APPENDIX C, format for book group meetings, 2 - 9

opening prayer

reading of ground rules

member facilitator gives overview of book

facilitates common questions (see APPENDIX B2)

facilitates their own questions

quaker dialogue on book

group sits in circle. facilitator starts dialogue by asking for a volunteer to share their thoughts on the issue. when the person has concluded sharing their comments, they say, "done". The person on the left then offers their comments and upon conclusion, so indicates by stating, "done". No one may interrupt while a person is talking. A person may choose not to participate by saying, "pass". When the circle has been completed, facilitator thanks all for sharing and asks a blessing upon the gathering.

closing devotional

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