

Talking About Sexuality:

***How Your Congregation Can Have the Conversation
while Building Community***

Lin Carter
Minister of Education and Outreach
FBC Raleigh

Assumptions:

- ▶ Sexuality is part of God's creation and therefore good
- ▶ The church is already talking about it informally
- ▶ Church members are going to disagree about it
- ▶ Each church should tailor the conversation to its needs
- ▶ Churches can discuss difficult topics without making decisions or causing harm
- ▶ We don't have all the answers
- ▶ The church doesn't have to take a public, monolithic stand
- ▶ Homosexuality is the hottest of the hot topics but should be discussed in the larger context of sexuality

Goals and Cautions:

- ▶ We seek to educate and facilitate growth- not indoctrinate
- ▶ We seek to hear- not to speak only
- ▶ We seek to build community- not cause divisiveness
- ▶ We seek to be compassionate- not condescending
- ▶ We seek to grow and change ourselves- not just to change others' minds

Content:

- ▶ Dr. Chris Chapman, senior pastor, presented first
- ▶ Videos of Dr. Coleman Fannin of Baylor University and Dr. Melissa Browning of Loyola University on *Ancient and Contemporary Voices* at the A [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, 2012
- ▶ Dr. Diane Lipsett of Salem College on *Sexuality and the Church: From Scripture to Ethical Practice*
- ▶ Video of LeDayne Polaski of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America on *How Congregations Might Lead the Way* at A [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, 2012

Format part 1:

- ▶ Based on *A [Baptist] Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, 2012*
- ▶ www.thefellowship.info/conference
- ▶ Four consecutive Sunday evenings with dinner and childcare
- ▶ Plenary sessions with presentation but no large group discussion
- ▶ Small group discussion facilitated by trained facilitators
- ▶ Groups were carefully assigned by the education minister
- ▶ Groups size ranged from six to ten
- ▶ We listened and discussed. No votes. No planning. No collective decisions.
- ▶ Cost to attend covered dinner. Other costs covered by education budget.

Format part 2:

- ▶ Nightly schedule:
 - ▶ 4:45 Child care begins
 - ▶ 5:00-6:00 Plenary session with presenter in fellowship hall
 - ▶ 6:00-6:30 Dinner in fellowship hall
 - ▶ 6:40-7:30 Facilitated small group discussion in classrooms
 - ▶ The fourth night we shortened each element and ended with worship

Results:

- ▶ Excitement over getting to know fellow church members better
- ▶ Requests for similar events in the future
- ▶ Emotional, personal sharing in small groups
- ▶ Follow-up discussion with ministers
- ▶ New learning about sexuality
- ▶ Suspicion from both left and right
- ▶ New perspective on the views of our church as a whole
- ▶ Sense of accomplishment that difficult topics can be discussed in a civil, productive manner
- ▶ Interest from around the country
- ▶ This workshop