

Can we talk...?
Christian Conversations About Homosexuality
EcuFilm Item #6191

DVD #1
DVD #2
CD Rom

This DVD/CD Rom resource contains video and printed materials gathered over six years by the Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (GCCUIC) as it focused on the unity of The United Methodist Church and the stresses put on that unity by the various, diverse positions on homosexuality held by United Methodists.

Selections from over seven hours of video, plus downloadable documents on a CD Rom, can be adapted to provide opportunities for dialogue in various settings. These study guides provide the format and suggested content for

- 1) Four one-hour sessions
- 2) Eight one-hour sessions
- 3) A Saturday study of 6 hours
- 4) A weekend retreat of 12 hours

As GCCUIC designed and facilitated dialogues across the church and as it developed this resource, great care was taken to provide settings that were as open and as safe as possible and content that was as balanced and diverse as possible. We urge leaders and facilitators using this resource to continue this commitment to diversity and balance.

As you prepare

- Be in prayer for The United Methodist Church, this study, yourself, and the persons who will be in your sessions.
- Familiarize yourself with the contents of both DVDs and the CD-Rom.
- Study the sections in How to Talk on DVD #2. Make sure you understand your role as a facilitator/guide.
- Choose stories and perspectives that show diverse, balanced positions. Refrain from advocating your own position as you facilitate the sessions.

- Read the written presentations by William J. Abraham and Donald E. Messer.
- Choose the printed materials your group will use; download them; make copies.
- Use “Guideline for Civility in The United Methodist Course” with each format as a way to build community. Go over this with the group and ask their cooperation in observing these principles as they go through the sessions.
- Decide what equipment you will need. Arrange to have it in the room.
- Test the equipment before the session begins and cue the DVD.

Can we talk...?

Christian Conversations About Homosexuality

Four One-Hour Sessions

Leader's Preparation

In addition to the general preparation steps for all settings:

- Study materials the participants are asked to read. Make notes that would help in leading discussion times.
- Review the following DVD sections:
 - Introduction, DVD #1
 - Historical Overview, DVD #1
 - Biblical Insights, DVD, DVD #2
 - Nature of the Church, DVD #2
 - What Dialogue Is and Is Not, DVD #2
 - Principles for Planning and Conducting Dialogue, DVD #2
 - Worship services and sermons, CD-Rom
 - Choose from the personal stories on DVD #1 the ones you will use for the sessions
- Make copies of *Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church* and *A Prayer from a worship service at the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1998*, CD-Rom for the participants
- Request the equipment you will need in plenty of time

Equipment Needed

- DVD player
- Monitor or DVD projector
- Flip chart and markers
- Name tags

Session #1

Gathering/Welcome/Introductions 10 min.

Be sure to pass out *Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church*. Review and ask participants to agree to abide by these principles during the dialogue.

Opening Prayer 10 min.

Use Prayer of Thanksgiving, *In Search of Unity*, for 11/20/97, p. 30. Suggested scripture, John 17. Close with the Lord's Prayer.

View Introduction and Historical Overview, DVD #1 30 min.

Organization and Assignment 5 min.

Ask for volunteers for a 10 minute opening prayer and meditation and a closing prayer for the next three sessions.

Ask all participants to reflect upon the following question in preparation for the next session: *When did you first meet a homosexual person or become aware that someone you knew was homosexual?*

Closing Prayer and Adjournment 5 min.

Session #2

Opening Prayer and Meditation 10 min.

Exploring Personal Experience 10 min.

Invite anyone who wants to share to tell of hers or his experience of first learning about homosexual persons.

Personal Stories, Individuals and Families 35 min.

1. View Why Hearing Stories is Important, DVD #1
2. Choose a variety of stories, balanced and diverse, to view at this time, DVD #1

Closing Prayer

Session #3

Opening Prayer and Meditation

10 min.

The Church's Position and Responses to It

20 min.

View On the Church's Position and Responses, DVD #1

Discussion

25 min.

Ask the participants to discuss the following questions: *Did one of these positions reflect your position? Did a different position from yours help you understand that person better? Is it possible for the church to have unity with integrity with so diverse opinions and perspectives?*

Closing Prayer

Session #4

Opening Prayer and Meditation

10 min.

Biblical Insights, DVD #2

20 min.

Discussion

15 min.

Question: *Which biblical perspective did you find most helpful? Can faithful persons disagree on biblical interpretation?*

Closing Prayer and Meditation

15 min.

Observe a time of silent reflection. Ask God to help you discern how you, your small group and your local congregation can be in faithful ministry at this time.

Close with the *Prayer from a worship service at the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1998.*

Can we talk...?

Christian Conversations About Homosexuality

Eight One-Hour Sessions

Leader's Preparation

In addition to the general preparation steps for all settings:

- Study materials the participants are asked to read. Make notes that would help in leading discussion times.
- Review the following DVD sections:
 - Introduction, DVD #1
 - Historical Overview, DVD #1
 - Biblical Insights, DVD, DVD #2
 - Nature of the Church, DVD #2
 - Some Ministry Options, DVD #2
 - What Dialogue Is and Is Not, DVD #2
 - Principles for Planning and Conducting Dialogue, DVD #2
 - Models of Dialogues, Table Format, DVD #2
 - Worship services and sermons, CD-Rom
 - Choose from the personal stories on both DVD disks the ones you will use for the sessions
 - Review biographical information on the Six Witnesses for Session #3
- Make copies of materials below for the participants
- Request the equipment you will need in plenty of time

Participants' Preparation

Make copies of the following and distribute to participants at appropriate times:

- *The Church's Teaching on Homosexuality: A Defense of The United Methodist Discipline on Homosexuality*, William J. Abraham, CD-Rom
- *Homosexuality and Ecclesiology*, Donald E. Messer, CD-Rom
- *In Search of Unity, Sections I-IV*, CD-Rom
- *Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church*, CD-Rom
- *A Presentation to the General Council on Ministries*, Mark Horst, CD-Rom

- *A Presentation to the General Council on Ministries*, Marilyn Meeker Williams
- Prayer from a worship service at the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1998

Equipment Needed

- DVD player
- Monitor or DVD projector
- Flip chart and markers
- Name tags

Session #1

Gathering/Welcome/Introductions 10 min.

Be sure to pass out *Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church*. Review and ask participants to agree to abide by these principles during the dialogue.

Opening Prayer 10 min.

Use Prayer of Thanksgiving, *In Search of Unity*, for 11/20/97, p. 30. Suggested scripture, John 17. Close with the Lord's Prayer.

View Introduction and Historical Overview, DVD #1 30 min.

Organization and Assignment 5 min.

Ask for volunteers for a 10 minute opening prayer and meditation and a closing prayer for the next seven sessions.

Ask participants to reflect upon the following question in preparation for the next session: *When did you first meet a homosexual person or become aware that someone you knew was homosexual?*

Closing Prayer and Adjournment 5 min.

Session #2

Opening Prayer and Meditation 10 min.

Exploring Personal Experience 10 min.

Invite anyone who wants to share to tell of hers or his experience of first learning about homosexual persons.

Personal Stories, Individuals and Families 35 min.

1. View Why Hearing Stories is Important, DVD #1
2. Choose a variety of stories, balanced and diverse, to view at this time, DVD #1

Closing Prayer

Session #3

Opening Prayer and Meditation

10 min.

View *Six Witnesses* Stories, DVD # 1

21 min.

Use Wyolene, Ruth and John's stories

Discussion

20 min.

Questions: *Why did these "witnesses" leave the UMC? What is their testimony saying to us? How can the church minister with/to these individuals?*

Closing Prayer

Session #4

Opening Prayer

10 min.

View *Six Witnesses* Stories

25 min.

Use Linda, James, and Phil's stories

Discussion

30 min.

Questions: *Why did these "witnesses" stay in the UMC? How are they in ministry? How can the UMC minister with/to these individuals?*

Closing Prayer

Session #5

Opening Prayer and Meditation 10 min.

The Church's Position and Responses to It 20 min.
View On the Church's Position and Responses, DVD #1

Discussion 25 min.

Ask the participants to discuss the following questions: *Did one of these positions reflect your position? Did a different position from yours help you understand that person better? Is it possible for the church to have unity with integrity with so diverse opinions and perspectives?*

Assignment

Distribute the Abraham and Messer papers from the CD-Rom. Ask participants to read and reflect upon them before the next session.

Closing Prayer

Session #6

Opening Prayer and Meditation 10 min.

Review and Discuss the Messer and Abraham Papers 30 min.

View The Nature of the Church, DVD #2 15 min.

Assignment

Distribute copies of *In Search of Unity, Sections I-IV*
Ask participants to read and reflect upon the unity of The United Methodist Church for next session.

Closing Prayer

Session #7

Opening Prayer and Meditation

10 min.

Report on Reflections

20 min.

Record on flip chart the responses to the questions: *What unites us as a denomination? What issues around homosexuality place stress on the unity of the church?*

Discussion

20 min.

Questions: *What is your hope and prayer for The United Methodist Church? For yourself?*

Assignment

Distribute copies of Mark Horst's and Marilyn Meeker-Williams' presentations to the General Council on Ministries. Ask participants to read them before the next session.

Closing Prayer

Session #8

Opening Prayer and Meditation

10 min.

Biblical Insights, DVD #2

20 min.

Discussion

15 min.

Question: *Which biblical perspective did you find most helpful? Can faithful persons disagree on biblical interpretation?*

Closing Prayer and Meditation

15 min.

Ask God to help you discern how you, your small group and your local congregation can be in faithful ministry at this time.

Close with the *Prayer from a worship service at the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1998.*

Can we talk...?

Christian Conversations About Homosexuality

A Saturday Study (6 hours)

Leader's Preparation

In addition to the general preparation steps for all settings:

- Review the following DVD sections:
 - Introduction, DVD #1
 - Historical Overview, DVD #1
 - Biblical Insights, DVD, DVD #2
 - Nature of the Church, DVD #2
 - Some Ministry Options, DVD #2
 - What Dialogue Is and Is Not, DVD #2
 - Principles for Planning and Conducting Dialogue, DVD #2
 - Models of Dialogues, Table Format, DVD #2
 - Worship services and sermons, CD-Rom
 - Choose from the personal stories on both DVDs the ones you will use for the sessions
- Make copies of materials below for the participants
- Request the equipment you will need in plenty of time

Documents to Copy

In addition to the documents above, make copies of the following to distribute during the retreat:

- *Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church*, CD-Rom

Equipment Needed

- DVD player
- Monitor or DVD projector
- Flip chart and markers
- Name tags

Morning Session

Gathering/Welcome/Introductions

25 min.

Be sure to pass out *Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church*. Review and ask participants to agree to abide by these principles during the dialogue.

Opening Worship

30 min.

Use Preparation for Praise and Prayer in *In Search of Unity, for 02/19/98, p. 36, CD-Rom*

View sermon excerpts from Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Radar or Gil Caldwell, DVD, #2

Prayer of Thanksgiving, *In Search of Unity, p. 36*

View Introduction section, DVD #1, and Explore Personal Experience

45 min.

Questions: *When did you first meet a homosexual person or become aware that someone you knew was homosexual? What did you think? What did you feel?* Ask participants to give a very brief response, if they wish.

Participants should feel free to decline.

View *Why Hearing Stories is Important*, DVD #1

Personal Stories, Individuals and Families

30 min.

Choose a variety of stories, balanced and diverse, to view at this time, DVD #1.

Break

20 min.

Discussion (Table Format)

60 min.

Explain how to have a discussion in the one table format, sometimes called “fishbowl.” Begin with asking the following questions or others that you think will be appropriate and will stimulate dialogue. Remind participants of the principles in “Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church.”

Questions: *Whose story touched you the most? Why? What ministry is the church doing now, or can do, to address the needs of those whose stories you heard?*

Lunch

Afternoon Session

The Church's Position and Responses to It 20 min.

View On the Church's Position and Responses, DVD #1

Choose a diverse and balanced selection to view from Cultural Understandings/Global Church and On Ordination, DVD #1

Discussion in Table Format 30 min.

Go back into the table format. Ask the participants to discuss the following questions: *Which perspective did you find most helpful? Do you see a way for United Methodists to be in faithful ministry while holding such differing positions on the issues surrounding homosexuality? Explain.*

Break 15 min.

Biblical Insights 25 min.

View Biblical Insights, DVD #2

Discussion in Table Format 20 min.

Question: *How does scripture inform your position? How can it help us understand other's positions? Which biblical perspective did you find most helpful? Can faithful persons disagree on different scriptural interpretations?*

The Nature of the Church 20 min.

View Historical Overview, DVD #1

View The Nature of the Church, DVD #2

Discussion in Table Format 30 min.

Questions: *Where are we as a church? What perspectives are helpful to you as you think about issues around homosexuality and the church? What are the limits of diversity? Can the unity of The United Methodist Church be maintained with integrity?* Allow participants to express their opinions, but do not try to resolve issues or reach consensus at this time.

Sending Forth 20 min.

Use the Sending Forth in *In Search of Unity for 11/21/1997*, p. 35. For the "witness" section, play a sermon excerpt from DVD #2.

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Christian Conversations About Homosexuality

Weekend Retreat

Leader's Preparation

In addition to the general preparation steps for all settings:

- Study materials the participants are asked to read. Make notes that would help in leading discussion times.
- Review the following DVD sections:
 - Introduction, DVD #1
 - Historical Overview, DVD #1
 - Biblical Insights, DVD, DVD #2
 - Nature of the Church, DVD #2
 - Some Ministry Options, DVD #2
 - What Dialogue Is and Is Not, DVD #2
 - Principles for Planning and Conducting Dialogue, DVD #2
 - Models of Dialogues, Table Format, DVD #2
 - Worship services and sermons, CD-Rom
 - Choose from the personal stories on both DVD disks the ones you will use for the sessions
- Make copies of materials below for the participants
- Request the equipment you will need in plenty of time

Participants' Preparation

Make copies of the following and distribute to participants in time for them to read before coming to the retreat location:

- *The Church's Teaching on Homosexuality: A Defense of The United Methodist Discipline on Homosexuality*, William J. Abraham, CD-Rom
- *Homosexuality and Ecclesiology*, Donald E. Messer, CD-Rom
- *In Search of Unity, Sections I-IV*, CD-Rom

Additional Documents to Copy

In addition to the documents above, make copies of the following to distribute during the retreat:

- *Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church*, CD-Rom
- *A Presentation to the General Council on Ministries*, Mark Horst, CD-Rom

- *A Presentation to the General Council on Ministries*, Marilyn Meeker Williams

Equipment Needed

- DVD player
- Monitor or DVD projector
- Flip charts and markers
- Name tags
- Sticky notes, a few for each participants

Weekend Retreat Agenda

Friday Evening

Gathering/Welcome/Introductions 20 min.

Be sure to pass out *Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church*. Review and ask participants to agree to abide by these principles during the dialogue.

View Introduction, DVD #1, and Explore Personal Experience 50 min.

Questions: *When did you first meet a homosexual person or become aware that someone you knew was homosexual? What did you think? What did you feel?*

Group Expectations 20 min.

Question: *What do you hope to take away from this retreat?*

Record answers on flip chart. (As alternative, ask participants to write a brief statement of what they expect at registration and then review them at this time.)

Vespers 30 min.

Use the Evening Praise and Prayer service in *In Search of Unity*, for 02/19/98, found on p. 38, CD-Rom

As an “overnight assignment,” ask participants to think and pray about what unites us as a denomination.

Saturday Morning

Worship 30 min.

Use Preparation for Praise and Prayer in *In Search of Unity*, for 02/19/98, p. 36, CD-Rom

View sermon excerpts from Gil Caldwell or Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Radar, DVD, #2

Prayer of Thanksgiving, *In Search of Unity*, p. 36

Personal Stories, Individuals and Families

45 min.

1. View Why Hearing Stories is Important, DVD #1
2. Choose a variety of stories, balanced and diverse, to view at this time, DVD #1

Break

30 min.

Discussion (Table Format)

60 min.

Explain how to have a discussion in the one table format, sometimes called “fishbowl.” Begin with asking the following questions or others that you think will be appropriate and will stimulate dialogue. Remind participants of the principles in “Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church.”

Questions: *Whose story touched you the most? Why? What ministry is the church doing now, or can do, to address the needs of those whose story you heard?*

Lunch

Saturday Afternoon

The Church’s Position and Responses to It

20 min.

View on the Church’s Position and Responses, DVD #1

Choose a diverse and balanced selection to view from Cultural Understandings/Global Church and On Ordination, DVD #1

Discussion in Table Format

45 min.

Go back into the table format. Ask the participants to discuss the following questions: *What perspective did you find most helpful? How do the Messer and Abraham papers that you read add to the discussion? Do you see a way for United Methodists to be in faithful ministry while holding such differing positions on the issues surrounding homosexuality? Explain.*

Break

30 min.

Discussion in Small Groups

50 min.

Ask participants to form into groups of four to six to discuss, *What unites us as a denomination?* After 20 min., ask groups to report and record results on a flip chart. Ask them then to discuss, *What issues around homosexuality place stress on the unity of the church?* After 20 min., record results on a flip chart.

The Nature of the Church

30 min.

View Historical Overview, DVD #1

View The Nature of the Church, DVD #2

Review points from the Abraham and Messer papers

Discussion in Plenary Session

20 min.

Questions: *Where are we as a church? Where do we go from here? What perspectives are helpful to you as you think about issues around homosexuality and the church? What are the limits of diversity? Can the unity of The United Methodist Church be maintained with integrity?* Allow participants to express their opinions, but do not try to resolve issues or reach consensus at this time.

Dinner

Saturday Evening

Biblical Insights

30 min.

View Biblical Insights, DVD #2

Discussion

30 min.

Question: *How does scripture inform your position? How can it help us understand others' positions? Which biblical perspective did you find most helpful? Can faithful persons disagree on this subject?*

Closing Prayer

Ask participants to offer prayers for themselves, the United Methodist Church, and the Church Universal as it wrestles with the issues discussed today.

Overnight "assignment"

Distribute the presentations by Mark Horst and Marilyn Meeker-Williams.

Ask participants to read and reflect on these ministries. Ask them to pray for

discernment of what God is asking them to do at this time as a faithful United Methodist.

Sunday Morning

Evaluation

15 min.

Review flip chart list of responses to question, *What do you hope to take away from this retreat?*” Ask for brief statements evaluating this experience so far. Record answers. (If you wish to share these responses with GCCUIC, they would be glad to receive them at 212.749.3553 or GCCUIC-UMC, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1300, New York, NY 10115)

Harvesting reflections, responses, insights

60 min.

Review responses to questions about the nature of the church and ministry options from yesterday. Review the presentations by Horst and Meeker-Williams that participants were asked to read.

Have flip charts set up at three or four points around the room. Give each participant some sticky notes. Ask them to write responses to your questions and silently post them on the flip charts without signing their name.

Questions:

1. To what form of ministry with and for gay and lesbian persons is God calling you?
2. To what ministry is God calling your local congregation?
3. Have you been changed by this weekend? If so, in what way?

Invite participants to walk around and read the posted responses and reflect upon them. Do not make evaluative statements about the posted notes nor ask for comments from participants. As the participants reassemble ask them to be in an attitude of prayer and worship.

Closing Worship

45 min.

Use the Sending Forth in *In Search of Unity for 11/21/1997*, p. 35. For the “witness” section, you may want to play one of the sermon excerpts from DVD #2. Include an invitation for each person to dedicate what they have experienced in the workshop to God’s purpose.