

The following are examples of group norms of guidelines for enabling conversation

A.

1. We will respect people's integrity as members of this community of faith.
2. We will assume that as people of faith we are all sincere in our beliefs, including our reverence for Holy Scripture.
3. We will assume that there are persons present who are: lesbian, gay, single, married, divorced, re-married, widowed, otherly-abled, sick, dying, sexually abused.
4. We will respect the right of people to "name" themselves and their experiences.
5. We will use language which respects the dignity of others. We will not use language known to be offensive to others.
6. We will give each other time to speak and to be heard without interruption. We will not argue simply for the sake of argument or take away others' opportunity to speak by monopolizing the conversation. We will keep the topic in mind when speaking.
7. We will accept responsibility for our own feelings, beliefs and opinions, and accept the possibility that we may be wrong, or may have misunderstood someone.
8. We will speak in the first person (using "I" statements), from our own experience, and avoid generalizations.
9. We will ask no questions that we are not prepared to answer ourselves. We will respect the privacy of others.
10. We will maintain confidentiality, sharing our own learning, but not what others have said.

Human Sexuality Focus Group Principles for Conversation (cont.)

B.

1. We expect that the full range of issues of human sexuality exists within the church;
2. We acknowledge that gay and lesbian persons (as well as members of other sexual minorities*) are in the Church;
3. We will always assume that gays or lesbians (or representatives of other sexual minorities*) are present;
4. While we disagree on issues we will use language which respects the dignity of others;
5. We will respect the right of people to ‘name’ themselves and their experience.
6. If we ask a question, we will be prepared to respond to it ourselves;
7. We will respect people’s privacy;
8. We will respect people’s integrity as people of faith.

*eg. Singles, seniors, otherly abled, the sick, the dying, sexually abused, etc.

C.

- Speak for yourself. Use “I” statements. Avoid generalizations.
- Don’t argue – but don’t be obstinate either! (Don’t defend a position just for the sake of argument)
- Respect each other’s sincerity
- Discuss the issues. Don’t name people
- Don’t interrupt – don’t monopolize – encourage but don’t force others to speak.
- Use the language of respect

Human Sexuality Focus Group Principles for Conversation (cont.)

D.

Some principles for meeting with people whose beliefs differ from mine.

1. I accept with gratitude the call to live my life in the fellowship of the Christian Church on earth.
2. I will seek to offer a hospitable place in which to welcome those I meet.
3. I will listen first – and so hope to earn the right to be listened to.
4. I accept the possibility that listening to others will change my own beliefs.
5. I will accept the possibility that I may be wrong.
6. I will avoid bad arguments.
7. I accept responsibility for my own beliefs and opinions.
8. I accept responsibility (in so far as I can influence it) for the way I am heard and experienced by others as I offer my beliefs to others.
9. I will argue with the best of my opponent's beliefs and practice, not with the worst.
10. I will not impute disreputable personal motives or characteristics as a way of discrediting those I disagree with.
11. I will not publicly criticise individuals or groups I disagree with unless I am willing to express my views to them personally if love and wisdom required it.
12. I affirm that 'all truth is public truth' (Newbigin)
13. I will not use money as a means of influencing Christian debate.
14. I accept that there will be people and groups with whom I cannot be reconciled and where communication is no longer possible.
15. I understand this to be the way Christ meets us. It is therefore the way of the cross.

David Runcorn. October 2003 - These thoughts have borrowed widely but were inspired initially by the Gareth Moore's briefer statement of principles in his introduction: *A Question of Truth* (Continuum 2002).

Human Sexuality Focus Group Principles for Conversation (cont.)

E.

Group Standards for Enabling Caring Dialogue

1. Our sessions are confidential. We pledge our confidentiality about what is said here; we will not discuss what anyone says, even with those closest to us.
2. We are free to discuss our own comments or feelings with those outside this group, but not the comments and feelings of any other person in this group.
3. We will speak only for ourselves, from our own experience, using “I” statements. We will avoid generalizations.
4. We will give each other time to speak and to be heard without interruption. Differing views will not be argued, but honoured as valid for that person.
5. We will honour each person’s right to express his or her own understanding or belief.
6. We discuss issues. We do not name people.
7. We have the freedom not to speak, *not* to get involved in a particular activity. We are responsible for our own feelings.
8. We will take care that those who choose to reveal their sexual orientation to us are treated with respect and dignity.

Human Sexuality Focus Group Principles for Conversation (cont.)

F.

Covenant for International Anglican Conversations on Human Sexuality

1. We will respect each other's faith journey.
2. We will listen respectfully.
3. We will ask inviting questions.
4. We will have flexible understanding, attempting to understand from the point of view of others.
5. We will seek to learn from all perspectives.
6. We will keep the topic in mind when speaking.
7. We will not speak as individuals for the group.
8. We will not repeat each other's comments after we leave. We are free to share learnings without attribution to individuals. Otherwise, we will respect the confidentiality of the other's statements.
9. We will clarify the nature of our speaking. We will request clarification in good faith.