



Some Ways to Create Sufficiently Safe Spaces

Intentionally creating a sufficiently safe space or environment in which to hold difficult or controversial conversations is not something one person or facilitator/ moderator/ convenor/ in a group can do alone. Rather, it is something participants have to commit to doing together. We all make intentional choices every time we gather and every time we speak to help make the space, we create together honest and also gracious and respectful. To accomplish this important environment, we agree to live within certain boundaries for how we will be with and to each other.

Covenanting together, we create a time and place where people can be heard, feeling confident that they will not be criticized or exposed to discrimination, harassment, recrimination and belittlement by the speakers or listeners. This spirit of goodwill creates an environment that will allow for the empathetic and graceful expression of differing views.

We understand that God created all people in God's image and that the church has said that homosexual orientation is not a sin.

Additionally, we have always to assume that members of sexual minorities are present in any and every church gathering and that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer peoples and others are full and faithful members of the church.

In the church and in this time of listening, we use language which demonstrates care and that respects the dignity and worth of others; even as we do not all agree all the time on all matters.

In the church and in this time of listening, we respect the right of people to 'name' themselves and their experience. For example, if someone experiences themselves as gay or lesbian or bisexual or transgender etc., we respect that as an integral part of who they are.

In the church and in this time of listening, we respect the integrity of others as people of faith and followers of Jesus regardless of how we feel about their views.

In the church and in this time of listening, we speak in ways that reflect the Gospel mandate and the reconciling good news of the Gospel, the call of Christ to love and serve, and in ways that rely upon the virtues in Paul's letters to the early church. Also, we recall the statements of the church about homosexuality, including the Letter of Repentance issued in February 2018 by the Moderator at the direction of the 2017 General Assembly.

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