

**'Tis a Pleasant Thing to See:  
Congregational Conversations  
about Homosexuality and the Church**



**Leaders Guide to the Video Series**

**Preparations**

*There are four videos in this series. The ideal scenario is one in which you can devote about an hour to an hour and a half for each session – about 35 minutes to watch the video, a five-minute covenant and prayer, and 20-30 minutes of conversation. If you do not have that much time, then watch the video, and discuss it in the next session. In that case, you may want to invite your participants to watch it again on their home computers before coming back to discuss it – be sure to hand out slips of paper with the link to the video.*

*These conversations are best held in groups of 6 to 8 people, so that everyone has a chance to speak and everyone can be heard by the others in their group. Depending upon your setup, you may have everyone in a larger group to watch the video and then move to smaller groups; or you may be able to set them up in their groups and still have everyone able to see the video. Plan how you will do this before the gathering, so that your process is easy and smooth for the participants.*

*This is very important: Before you call the group to order and welcome everyone, be sure the technology is ready and working well. “Cue up” the video on the computer/screen so that all you have to do is click the “play” button, so that people don’t have to wait for the video to begin.*

*Also very important: it’s a good idea not to give them copies of the handout before they watch the video. You don’t want them to be reading it or preparing their answers to the questions during the video! If you will discuss it in a later gathering, don’t give out the handout until that later gathering.*

*Follow-up: After you’ve had your gatherings and conversations, the Steering Committee would very much appreciate hearing about it, as we prepare our report to the Provincial Elders’ Conference and Synod! What group(s) used the videos? What were their reactions? How many people participated? What can we all learn from your experience? Please email or write Nola Knouse, [nrknouse@triad.rr.com](mailto:nrknouse@triad.rr.com); 4281 Bower Lane, Winston-Salem, NC 27104, with your responses.*

**The Gathering Itself**

*To begin your program, first welcome everyone and invite them to find a seat. You may choose to read the Daily Text and/or have an opening hymn or prayer. Then read aloud the following introduction:*

Southern Province Synod Resolution 12 called for the province to “provide leadership, resources, and a process for a conversation about homosexuality in the church that includes diverse viewpoints, and opportunities for open and honest discussion, study and discernment. This process of dialogue and discernment should take into account similar efforts made, and decisions that have been or may be reached by our sister provinces within the Unity, as well as any actions of the 2014 Unity Board and 2016 Unity Synod.” Fulfilling that mandate of Synod, the Provincial Elders Conference appointed a Steering Committee in the summer of 2014, which has been studying, praying, and working actively ever since. As part of this process, the committee has produced four videos to help us engage in these conversations together.

*If you are watching the video AND discussion it today, continue by reading this aloud:*

Today we will watch a video, which lasts about 35 minutes, and then talk together. It's important for us all to remember that this is not a debate with "winners" and "losers", but rather we are here as Christian brothers and sisters talking together about a topic that has been difficult for many of us to grapple with. After we watch the video, we will begin our conversation with a prayer and a covenant. So let's get comfortable, be sure everyone can see the screen, and watch.

*If you watched the video in a prior session and are discussing it today, read this aloud instead:*

As we talk today about the video we watched last time, it's important for us all to remember that this is not a debate with "winners" and "losers", but rather we are here as Christian brothers and sisters talking together about a topic that has been difficult for many of us to grapple with.

Guidelines for the conversation:

- ❖ *Allow about 5 minutes for them to introduce themselves to each other in their small groups – even if they are members of the same church, don't assume everyone knows everyone! If you know they do, invite them to answer a question to each other, just to get them speaking to each other. Some examples:*
  - *What would you be doing if you weren't here at this gathering?*
  - *What's the best thing that happened to you this week (in one minute or less)?*
  - *Name a favorite song or hymn and why you like it.*
  - *(or some other such conversation-starter)*
- ❖ *Then – and not sooner! – pass out copies of the handout for this session. Be sure to share in the Covenant for Christian Conversation on the handout. You as the "leader" will read the regular-type words; everyone reads the bold-face type.*
- ❖ *Now invite them to begin discussing the questions. Ask them to be sure everyone in the group has a chance to speak, but assure them that no one should feel pressured to speak. Silence is absolutely OK!*
- ❖ *As leader, you should wander around and listen a little to each group. If you sense that someone is monopolizing the conversation in a group, step in and ask him/her if he/she might hold that thought for a few minutes, to see if someone else would like to say anything.*
- ❖ *Keep a close watch on the time so that the groups have a chance to address every question. For instance, if you've allowed 20 minutes for conversation, and there are 4 questions, then "cue" the groups to move on to the next question after about 3½ or 4 minutes (give them time to finish their sentence before having to move on!). Don't let the groups get "hung" on any one of the questions. The point is not to come to any conclusions or consensus, but simply to listen and speak as brothers and sisters.*
- ❖ *After your allotted time, invite them to share the Right Hand of Fellowship with those in their group. Then, with everyone standing, pray the Lord's Prayer together, and depart in peace.*