

Conferring well when living with contradictory convictions

Aim

Learning how to live well with one another when we hold contradictory convictions, particularly regarding same-sex marriage.

Objectives

- *Seeing living with a range of contradictory convictions through spiritual and Biblical lenses*
- *Understanding Methodist conferring and decisions made*
- *Space to share our own experiences (testimony)*
- *Verbalising our own understanding of same-sex marriage through the lenses of scripture, what the Church tells us, what my own and others' stories tell us, what our reasoning tells us*
- *Expressing the missional and pastoral impacts of living well with contradictory convictions.*

Methods

- *Reinforce good listening skills*
- *Agreeing how we will work together*
- *Engaging with the Bible*
- *Verbalising our own understanding*
- *Action planning*

When to, and not to, use this material

- *When you know there are contradictory convictions in the congregation and you want to provide a starting point to learn to live with these differences*
- *This is not material to decide anything as a church, there is also [A step-by-step session outline](#) for church council decision on whether or not to register premises (England and Wales) for same-sex weddings*

Ways to use this material

- *You might want to use elements of this outline, or all of them. If you use them all as laid out then there is a flow to them with integrated prayer and it could take two and half hours*
- *You might want to add breaks at times that suit the group.*
- *You might decide to share a meal together and use these ideas before or after.*

What else?

- *Roots material for worship on Living with Contradictory convictions has enough material for a few weeks for all ages*
www.methodist.org.uk/media/2108/roots_methodistchurch_challenging_conversations.pdf
- [Background reading and resources for facilitators](#)
- *The Work of God in this Place* www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/WGP0118/the-work-of-god-in-this-place

Element	Method	Purpose	Timings
Prayer	<i>The Work of God in this Place</i> page 36: 'In times of conflict'	Prayer	10 mins
Listening well	<p>In pairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One person speaks about a time they felt listened to. The speaker should try to use "I" to speak about their own thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and try to avoid generalisations or assumptions about others. ○ Example: I felt listened to when I went to the GP because she asked me some questions to clarify what I was trying to describe. I was relieved to find out that there are some options ○ Listener: summarise what you heard the speaker saying. If you are not sure, ask them if you heard that correctly. ○ Swap roles 	Good practice – groundwork	10 mins
Working Agreement	<p>Taken from Growing Through Change and Conflict;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confidentiality (clarify what we mean by this) ○ Be careful how much or little you are speaking ○ Speaking to understand rather than agree or change someone else ○ One voice at a time ○ Use of phones (decide) ○ No electronic recordings ○ Start and finish on time ○ Speak for yourself: "I think..." <p>OR</p> <p>Invite the group to add Practical examples to the model statement on living with contradictory convictions: www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships/archive-marriage-and-relationships-2019/managing-group-conversations-around-marriage-and-relationships/a-model-statement-on-living-with-contradictory-convictions/</p>	Good practice - groundwork	15 mins
Spirituality of conflict	<p>Play this video (you can choose to play with subtitles by pressing the button to the left of the Settings cog): www.youtube.com/watch?v=fx8H_Fns9VI&t=135s</p> <p>In pairs, share your response to the idea that "conflict itself can be something enlivening"</p>	Christian context.	10 mins
Scripture	<p>Group to find Biblical reasons for and against slavery and war</p> <p>If the members of the group do not know their Bibles well, come prepared with some key passages cut out.</p>	To see that the Bible does not have one clear voice on a number of areas of life.	25 mins

	<p>Invite people to take one passage (or think of one), and find the person with a passage that says something very different.</p> <p>Those people join as a group and share what they think the passage they have means.</p>		
Conference	<p>Methodist Conference papers and votes on human relationships and marriage</p> <p>There are Speaker notes with PowerPoint with links to key papers and some clarification.</p> <p>Input – PPT available</p>	So everyone has the same basic facts.	5 mins
Experience	<p>What is your own experience of love and marriage?</p> <p>Individually: What impact or role, if any, did the church and your Christian faith have on your own experience of love, marriage, singleness, cohabitation?</p> <p>Think, or write, or talk in pairs (no feeding back to the whole group)</p>	To place ourselves in the church's story.	10 mins
Prayer	<i>The Work of God in this Place</i> page 36: 'In times of conflict'		10 mins
Quadrilateral	<p>Four voices of reflection; Scripture, what the Church (this is wider than the Methodist Church) has said and does say, our own experience and what my reason tells me (my mind)</p> <p>Individually, write down your responses to the question: 'what do we believe about same-sex weddings in church?' using these four prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What the Bible tells us ○ What the Church tells us ○ What my own/others' stories tell us ○ What our reasoning tells us. <p>Try to use as few words as possible for each response. It is helpful if we can articulate what we believe to one another, and equally helpful if we can listen to what others believe.</p> <p>In threes, share what you have written down. One person shares, the others listen. The other two then respond, sharing what they heard that stood out to them. (If you are stuck, you could ask whether there is any overlap between the four voices, or did they say different things?</p> <p>Was there a common theme or a word used a lot?</p>	All of these things speak with multiple voices and we are all called, together, to the difficult task of interpretation, and to the likelihood of our continuing disagreement.	30 mins

	<p>Did the speaker seem more emotional when speaking about one of the four voices?)</p> <p>The original speaker responds to the comments from the other two, including clarifying any new understanding, questions you now have or anything that has been reinforced for you.</p> <p>Repeat so that you all get to share your words.</p> <p>When you have all shared, either pray for one another or share the words from Make me a channel of your peace (StF 707)</p>		
<p>Living with differences well; the missional and pastoral impacts</p>	<p>We can be Methodists and hold contradictory convictions. How we live with these differences of opinion is part of how we love one another and witness to the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything we want to do as a congregation to strengthen the bonds between us? • Is there anything we would like to offer to circuits to strengthen the bonds between us? • Is there anything we would like to offer to the wider community, pastorally or in terms of service and mission, which can help people to live with contradictory views? <p>Invite people to be creative. Possibly people could pick which of the three ideas to work on and in groups come up with three exciting ideas to share with the whole group. Help people come up with creative ideas such as snowball consensus, wishing (or hope) tree, sharing circle, graffiti wall and much more.</p> <p><i>If good ideas come, then commit to taking these to church council (or the relevant place).</i></p>	<p>We can be Methodists and hold contradictory convictions. How we live with these differences of opinion is part of how we love one another and witness to the community.</p>	<p>20 mins</p>
<p>Prayer</p>	<p><i>The Work of God in this Place</i> page 36: 'In times of conflict'</p>		<p>10 mins</p>