

How to use materials to support conversations

Conferring well when living with contradictory convictions

When this material might be helpful

- *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*
- *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*

Church council decision about whether or not to register make available premises for same-sex marriage

Aim, objectives and ethos for the conversation

Aim: Church council to decide if at this time, we do or do not want to register/ make available premises for same-sex marriage.

Objectives:

- Hear one another's voices
- Make a decision
- Have an action plan about how we will respond, whatever decision we make

Ways to use this material

This suggested session plan, if followed fully gives three options depending on an indicative vote.

- *If indicative vote is to register/make available premises for same-sex weddings, this session will take between 75 minutes and two hours*
- *If indicative vote is not to register/make available premises for same-sex weddings, this session will take between 75 minutes and two hours.*
- *If indicative vote does not show strong agreement in any direction, the session can take 75 minutes, with a decision to meet again to continue the process, which will take an additional two hours.*

Alternatively, if there is no strong agreement, you may decide to step back from decision-making to focus on living with contradictory convictions, or to continue the process to explore the decision more deeply, and to agree to regather to make a decision another time.

If you realise midway through the meeting that there is a need to step back from a decision-making process and step in to more listening to one another, have the confidence to end the meeting, and suggest reconvening to engage in how to live with contrary convictions.

The reason there are so many options, and so many opportunities to step back, is to enable the church council to confer well and not feel under too much pressure to make a decision in short space of time.

Other resources

- *If you know there are strong and different views and it would be of benefit to have a broader conversation **before** voting as a church council about whether or not to register premises for same-sex weddings, you could use the ideas in 'Conferring well when living with contradictory convictions' [here](#) first*
- *Wider reading for the facilitator of this meeting [here](#)*
- *Legal guidance for those who do vote to register/make available premises [here](#)*