



Dialogue on Homosexuality

Summer 2007

Across the RCA, a variety of “voices” express themselves regarding homosexuality. Sometimes, it has seemed to the steering committee and me that we’re even using different languages as we address the subject. For some, the vocabulary is exegetical and doctrinal. For others, the language of justice predominates. Some see homosexuality primarily as a health concern while others focus on the cohesiveness of their ethnic communities. The Canadians come from a unique perspective, having dealt nationally with their government’s approval of same-sex marriages. There are other voices, as well.

During late 2006 and the first half of 2007, the steering committee and I have been listening to the various voices in the RCA. Every voice that will be affected by the outcome of the dialogue deserves a seat at the dialogue table. And while it’s physically impossible to have all RCAers around the same table at the same time, we hope to have as many of the voices represented as possible.

To that end, I’ve met with a number of groups and have taken note of several advocacy initiatives in our midst. The eight steering committee members have also been listening, primarily in their respective regions of the church. We have conducted an extensive survey on the subject of homosexuality; this was made available on the RCA’s website in November 2006. Printed copies were distributed to every parish in early 2007. We are very near the completion of our analysis of the survey data.

As with the in-person and Internet “listening,” we’re seeking in the survey to identify the various voices in the church, and to clarify the nature of those voices and their respective languages. This

was not a survey designed to learn “*what* RCA people think”; rather, it was to learn “*how* they do their thinking.” I very much appreciate the several thousand pastors and lay members who took the time and care to complete and submit the survey.

The steering committee and I have designed a four-session dialogue program and have field-tested this program during the spring of 2007. In several classes and regions, this series is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2007. The geographic areas which are most eager for the program will be the first to engage in it. Others will follow during the winter and spring of 2007-2008. The stated clerks have been very helpful with guidance on the scheduling.

While the dialogue program seeks to enable RCA members to talk charitably with each other about homosexuality and the ministry of the church, I am also concerned about the institutional life of the church. So, for example, I was delighted to accept Hope College’s invitation this past spring to present the RCA’s position on homosexuality to an interested group of students and faculty. I am currently working with New Brunswick Seminary on a customized dialogue program to serve the seminary community.

Recognizing that there is more eagerness for this dialogue in some areas of the RCA than in others, I would welcome inquiries about the scheduling of the dialogue program. If you wonder when the dialogue will offer an opportunity near you, or if you might be willing to host a dialogue event, please contact me.

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