

The Tip of the iceberg retreat: discussions on spirituality and sexuality could be best summed up as a brief stop on the journey of understanding the relationship between spirituality and sexuality.

For many this could include everything from even beginning a conversation with their child or youth about the unquestioned connection and relationship between spirituality and sexuality through to adding to conversations that have already taken place in a variety of settings pertaining to the same relationship and all those place in-between.

Since the foundation of this retreat the strongest goal on the planning team has not been to replace and be the final conversation on this subject. However be a link in the chain, and cog in the wheel of numerous, multiple, frequent and abundant exchanges between all those who love and care for children and youth and want to see them continue in their journey as followers of Christ.

Furthermore as a planning team we have responded out of almost exasperation at the vacuum in which children and youth are bombarded by messages and images from literally thousands of sources everyday whereby they are presented with a one sided bias view of sexuality which repeatedly does not even present or consider the imperative relationship that spirituality brings to this vital part of who we even are as followers of Christ.

In addition to this we are continuing this conversation around the following...

We know, experience, and follow God who has created us and loves us. As One in Three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God lives and reigns together in community. As beloved children of God we live in community as well. Living in community we know that our actions do not occur in a vacuum, they have effects on those who live around us.

As beloved children of God, we are a part of God's entire creation; a creation that God calls good. In our birth and first breathing, while we are still being knit in our mother's womb, we are being loved, cared for, and called good by our Creator. It is this goodness that we affirm together.

God is love. We know and experience God's love through Jesus Christ, God's only Son. As Christ laid down his life for us, we know the fullness of God's love and grace. As God's beloved children, called good, we are to then share that love we have experienced with others. In the communities we find ourselves in, as well as with all of God's creation, we are first and foremost called to love.

While there are many specific questions that relate to this retreat and it definite programming it is important to remember again that TIR is not designed to complete any and all conversations however be part of on-going conversation and listening between all the valued people, institutions and relationships that child and youth have. In the hope and prayer that Christ and the Holy Spirit will be present in all those conversations and will add to ones understanding.

We will be presenting all the issues, challenges and directions people take in their life as it pertains to sexuality, nonetheless the connection will be made to spirituality. We will not be providing answers but

offering up the strong connection between choices and directions as we make them and that what we choose relationally or sexually determines a lot about our spiritual make up, health and relationship with Jesus Christ. In addition to this we will use statements and documents published by our denomination (PCUSA) to guide the entire retreat, from curriculum to workshops and keynote sessions.

The planning TIR has a purpose of serving our churches, its members, children and youth and ultimately followers of Christ in many ways... and this is one way in which we hope and pray we can do that.