

The following is a workshop summary from the “MAKING ROOM FOR ALL” CONFERENCE, held in Grand Rapids October 29-31, 2009

Christian Education and Youth Ministry that is Welcoming and Affirming

Presenter: Rev. Adriene Thorne

Reporter: Raymond Gomez

Rev. Adriene Thorne’s is an Associate Pastor at Middle Collegiate Church, New York City.

This session was designed to explore the ways in which youth workers may tailor youth activities to be more welcoming and affirming. Tips and ideas for leaders and teachers were given, as well as a list of resources to assist youth leaders in their preparation of activities for youth gatherings. These Ideas are designed to foster in youth a sense of being in a welcoming and affirming place to fully be who they were created to be. Rev. Thorne’s background in movement and dance flows through her ideas and methods of reaching young people. Movement is important to allow students to experience being fully in tune with themselves.

The workshop was related to Step 1, 2 and 3 of the “Building an Inclusive Church” strategies presented at the plenary session. We must remember when we are in the planning stages to include GLBT adults and young people in the process. As leaders we are always teaching. The explicit, the implicit and the null and void are all areas to bear in mind as we lead, plan and implement. What we say or don’t say, what materials are we using or not using, what we are praying or not praying and who we quote all speak to others.

Key Points of the presentation:

1. It is always better to begin from the very first gathering to be welcome and affirming, and to include activities that may include movement, centering, art, and other activities that cause young people to be open to speaking and being.
2. Are the words “welcoming and affirming” appropriate words to use in youth ministry?
3. Our welcome must be genuine. A genuine welcome is a stated welcome, an educated welcome, and a transforming welcome. Source: *Ministry among God’s Queer Folk: LGBT Pastoral Care*.
4. As leaders we are always teaching the explicit, the implicit and the null and void. What we say or don’t say, what materials are we using or not using, what we are praying or not praying, who is involved in the ministries of the community and who we quote all speak to others.
5. The human body is more than sexuality. It is movement, intellect, relationship and more.

Rev. Thorne presents 7 tips for leaders and educators. These are: Know thyself, education is risking oneself, try to detach, your body is an asset, value human experience, be learners together with your students, change the set agenda if it is not working.

Resources:

The Lord is my Shepherd and He knows I'm Gay by Rev. Troy Perry (out of print)

Stranger at the Gate by Mel White

Ministry among God's Queer Folk: LGBT Pastoral Care by David J. Kundtz and Bernard S. Schlager

Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice to Freedom by Bell Hooks

Coming Out Young and Faithful by Leanne McCall and Timothy Brown