

05-01-14

## SHARING OUR STORIES

Two 90 minutes meetings were used to share with each other our experiences which shape the way we think and feel about a loving response to persons who are LGB. The meetings were planned to include worship, prayer, and opportunity for silent reflection.

In order to use the time well, participants were asked that the sharing consist of persons taking turns reading their statement, having written them out ahead of time. Statements were limited to a maximum of seven minutes. The work of writing out the statements was meant to encourage everyone to share, including those who hesitate to speak up in a group. If a person could not think of experiences that have helped shape the way they think and feel, they were encouraged to simply write that for their statement.

If someone wanted another person to read their statement to the group, that was permitted if the writer was present. The written statements were then gathered in a notebook and made available for reading by persons who were not able to attend the scheduled meetings. To maintain confidentiality, persons wanting to access the notebook needed to make an appointment with one of the pastors and read it at the church. For persons who may have been hindered by the writing requirement, we offered the option of recording statements which would be then transcribed for including in the notebook.

The plan for the meetings included time at the end for silent reflection on what we had been hearing. Journaling thoughts was encouraged.

An important practice during the meetings was using the following unison response after each statement was read: "Lord, we thank you for the gift of \_\_(name)\_\_, and the gift of his/her story."