

Conversations on Community: Can We Talk?

Is it just me or is it becoming harder to talk about important issues? The old saying that you should never discuss religion or politics reminds us that there have always been controversial subjects. However, in recent years it seems to me that the number of controversial issues has been increasing and at the same time our society's ability to talk about them constructively is in decline. Arguments on Facebook, rants on Twitter, once close friends now separated by disagreements about some current issue (lots to choose from: abortion, gender, immigration, presidential politics, or race, to name a few): the tide of anger and division seems to be rising. What can we do?

Our vision as a church is to be a community united around the gospel of Jesus Christ. How can we stay unified in divisive times? How can we preserve deep relationships and not end up with an ever-increasing number of "no-fly zones," those topics we simply avoid discussing? How can the church be a lighthouse of hope where people can love each other and labor together and worship together for the glory of God, even if they have different ideas about politics and social issues? How can our faith inform our values and ideas, even if we draw conclusions that differ significantly from the people sitting next to us when we experience community in worship?

The elders at RGC believe we must work together to promote charitable, constructive dialogue about current issues that can be controversial. We believe that before we can talk about the issues themselves, we need to talk about how we talk with one another. We need to talk about talking. We can ask, for example, *Why is it so hard to talk about these things? What gets in the way of having productive conversations? What makes for a good listener? What do we do when someone close to us has a different opinion about something we are passionate about?*

A modest proposal: The elders would like to continue our "Conversations on Community" and get together with anyone interested for lunch after church on Sunday, August 12, to talk about talking. We desire to promote charitable, constructive conversations guided by truths like these:

- Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger... (James 1:19)
- Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)
- By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)

Plan: We'll meet after church in the basement auditorium after church. Lunch will be provided for a small donation and will be served at 12:00. The discussion will begin at 12:30 and end at 2:00. We hope you'll join us!

Mark Mullery on behalf of the Elders