Holy Conversations

A reflection by Associate Regional Minister
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Early in my ministry I recall attending a potluck luncheon after worship on the first Sunday I began as a student minister. Sitting around the table, one person began to make a joke about a local political figure when another person at the table loudly interrupted, "David, there's one thing we don't talk about around here. We don't talk about religion and we don't talk about politics!"

I think the rest of the table witnessed my stunned expression. In my mind I was thinking, "First of all, those are two topics you don't talk about, not just one big topic." And secondly, "This is a church. Why in the world would you not talk about religion?"

Many of us have grown up in churches with certain taboos; subjects or topics no one talks about. Often, these are unspoken taboos kept in power by side-eye glances or contorted facial expressions. Also often, these taboos give birth to innuendo, secret-keeping, and distrust among the membership. No one wants any sort of conflict so let's not discuss anything controversial!

The problem for the church is that we developed an institutional amnesia that prevents us from having holy conversations. All are welcome at the table, not with the caveat of a wink and a nod that says, "I know how you *really* feel or what you *really* think" that so many of us are now accustomed to. Holy conversations allow us to express what we feel and think, and challenge us to respect and listen to others who feel and think the same or even differently. In short, we've sacrificed conversation in order to avoid conflict. The sad reality is that if we had been communicating all along we would have, more than likely, avoided conflict.

"All are welcome at the table, and all means all!" This extends to the covenant table, the conversation table, the minority-views table. As Disciples, nothing should be off the conversation table. Maybe bringing wholeness to a fragmented world needs to begin there.