THE VALUE OF DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Rev. Laura Sumner Truax
Senior Pastor, LaSalle Street Church
“Good communities are spaces where people love one another enough that they’re not afraid of disagreements.”

- Stanley Hauerwas
QUALITIES OF NEW TESTAMENT COMMUNITIES

Jesus’ communities were...

confused  diverse
devoted  argumentative
honest
forgiving  questioning
angry
unexpected  holy
“For to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine.”

1st Cor. 11:18, 19
Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second.

Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*
PREREQUISITES FOR REAL CONVERSATION

- Show empathy
- Self-analyze
- Model humility
MODELS OF CONVERSATION

Rabbinical Framework

- Admit that sometimes you need a break.
- Respect the basic dignity of everyone.
- Exercise radical empathy.
- Determine how each person remains our teacher.
- Acknowledge the consequences.
- Have personal accountability.
- Relationships always matter more than ideas.

Brad Hirschfield, You Don't Have to Be Wrong for Me to be Right: Finding Faith without Fanaticism
Conversations must be eucharistic.

Conversations should be open.

Silence is just as important as speaking.

Conversation is slow church.

C. Christopher Smith, *The Virtue of Dialogue*
LaSalle’s Conversation on Sexuality

- All participants must “suspend” their assumptions.
- All participants must regard one another as colleagues.
- There must be a facilitator who “holds the context” of dialogue.