

To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter in support of a curriculum formulated by Otis Gaddis and Sylvia Rhue to promote dialogue and learning around the issue of homosexuality, and by extension human sexuality in the black church. I had opportunity to hear an over-view of the curriculum at the Religious Summit of the National Black Justice Coalition held in Baltimore this past April.

As a pastor of a predominantly African-American congregation in Atlanta-Stone Mountain, GA. I found the curriculum valuable for several reasons. Firstly, within the context of the African American Church, it is vital to ground any and all theological discussions in the authority of Scripture. In many progressive churches, this does not mean that Scripture is understood as an infallible authority, but it is necessary in helping parishioners connect intellectual/scientific inquiry and personal/contextual experience with the biblical rudiment of their faith tradition. An understanding of the Bible as authoritative places the discussion of sexuality within the respected paradigms of scriptural interpretation. No matter how scientifically or intellectually enlightened a perspective of sexuality may be, that perspective is not likely to go very far among the majority of black Christians without a definite connectedness to their understanding of God's Word in Scripture.

Secondly, I found the curriculum valuable because it does not presume nor postulate the Scripture's indifference to the issue of homosexuality. It does not purport that Jesus and the Scriptures simply had little or nothing to say about God's plan for the recognition and respect of diversity in human sexuality. The aim of the curriculum, as I understood it, is to clearly say that the church is mandated, by the Gospel of Jesus, to love, respect and embrace every child of God, regardless of one's sexual orientation or sexual identity. In this vein, the curriculum serves as a positive motivator for a broader, more inclusive understanding of the "Beloved Community."

I did communicate to Otis Gaddis my concern that any curriculum designed for use in the church should be subject to review and input from critically discerning pastors. All of the revelation and information incorporated into the curriculum must be presented out of an abiding concern for souls bound together in a faith community that only pastors can accurately comprehend. While this curriculum is one of, if not the most useful I've encountered for the reasons already stated, I think that it could be enhanced even more by pastoral collaboration and input.

As a pastor who is desperately aware of the paucity of resources useful to move the church forward in its understanding human sexuality, I heartily endorse this project.

Sincerely,

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