

The Tip of the Iceberg retreat (TIR) could be best summed up as a brief stop on the journey of understanding the relationship between spirituality and sexuality.

For many, this could include everything from beginning a conversation with their child or youth about the unquestioned connection and relationship between spirituality and sexuality, adding to conversations that have already taken place pertaining to the same relationship, and all those places in between.

Since the foundation of this retreat, the most important goal of the planning team has been to be a link in the chain of numerous and frequent conversations for all those who love and care for children and youth, and want to see them continue in their journey as followers of Christ. Our intention is NOT to be the final conversation on this subject.

Furthermore, the planning team has responded out of necessity, seeing the rate at which children and youth are bombarded by messages and images from sources every day. These sources present them with a one-sided biased view of sexuality which repeatedly does not present or consider the imperative relationship that spirituality brings to this vital part of who we are as followers of Christ.

In addition to this, we are continuing this conversation around the following...

We know, experience, and follow God who has created us and loves us. As One in Three - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God lives and reigns together in community. As beloved children of God, we live in community as well. Living in community we know that our actions do not occur in a vacuum, they have effects on those who live around us.

As beloved children of God, we are a part of God's entire creation - a creation that God calls good. In our birth and first breathing, while we are still being knit in our mother's womb, we are being loved, cared for, and called good by our Creator. It is this goodness that we affirm together.

God is love. We know and experience God's love through Jesus Christ, God's only Son. As Christ laid down his life for us, we know the fullness of God's love and grace. As God's beloved children, we are to then share that love we have experienced with others. In the communities we find ourselves in, as well as with all of God's creation, we are first and foremost called to love.

While there are many specific questions that relate to this retreat and its definite programming it is important to remember again that TIR is not designed to complete any and all conversations, rather to be part of ongoing conversations and listening between all the valued people, institutions and relationships that children and youth have. In the hope and prayer that Christ and the Holy Spirit will be present in all those conversations and will add to one's understanding.

We will be presenting some of the issues, challenges and directions people take in their life as it pertains to sexuality, in the context of spirituality. We will not be providing answers, but offering up the strong connection between choices and directions as we make them. We will show that what we choose relationally or sexually determines a lot about our spiritual make up, health and relationship with Jesus Christ. In addition to this, we will use statements and documents published by our denomination (PCUSA) to guide the entire retreat, from curriculum to workshops and keynote sessions.

The planning team for TIR has a purpose of serving our churches, its members, children and youth, and ultimately followers of Christ in many ways... and this is one way in which we hope and pray we can do that.