

HEART AT PEACE

By Kim Shockley, Church Vitality Strategist

Those of us who have been attending and paying attention to the work of the Commission on the Way Forward have been hearing about the book – [An Anatomy of Peace](#), published by the Arbinger Institute with several editions between 2006 – 2015. The main purpose is to define the difference between a heart at peace and a heart at war so that we can negotiate toward peace. The Commission studied this book in order to develop a heart of peace because their personal viewpoints spanned the spectrum of ideas and opinions on the LGBTQ+ conversation. This Commission needed a solid foundation from which to do their work. The following Covenant came out of their study of this book:

- We will carefully listen to one another.
- We will be careful not to judge one another.
- We are not here to change one another's positions. (speak to be understood, not to convince)
- We will ask questions.
- We will speak our truth in love.
- We will assume trust not suspicion.
- We will protect the confidentiality of the conversation.
- Let everyone participate, no one dominate, allow every voice to be heard.

[The Anatomy of Peace](#) defines a heart at peace as one who sees others as people. The people appear just as real for me as I do to myself, and their concerns, life experiences, and cares matter the same to me as my own – as much as possible. I actively respond to their humanity. A heart at war sees others as objects (sometimes as obstacles to me getting my own way). They are less real than myself, and their concerns, life experiences, and cares matter less than my own. I actively resist their humanity.

One of the questions asked at the latest listening session was – “What can my local church be doing now as we wait for the General Conference of February 2019?” I would like to propose that some conversation around the “heart of peace” would be helpful now in order to prepare us for the conversations and decisions that might be possible at the local church level in the months to come. It may be necessary for each person to recognize that working toward having a heart of peace provides a healthier place to have hard conversations.

One solution would be to offer a short term study of the book – a study guide is available at <http://ws.arbinger.com/aop/>.

Another is to empower the leadership team of your congregation to be familiar with the concepts of a heart at peace so that they can help remind the congregation that we strive to see each other as persons, with valuable concerns and cares. Trying to change each other's minds generally leads us to hearts at war. Our opinions and points of view come from the ways we interpret Scripture, our live experiences, traditions, and ability to reason. Each are valuable unless they are doing harm to another person.

Consider posting a series of questions for individuals to consider in their own discipleship work:

What thoughts do you have when you interact with another person who has different opinions?

What part does a fearful attitude play when you interact with people who are not like you? Are those fears real (person poses a real threat to your safety) or are they perceived (what might happen if I interact with another)?

It might also be helpful to have a discussion about where your fears originate. Are they imagined in your own thinking? Is someone else influencing you to be fearful? What feeds your sense of fear and how can you minimize this? Ultimately we cannot be faithful and fearful at the same time!

A discussion of priorities for your congregation may also be helpful. What is more important? The ability to agree on everything or the sense of calling and purpose that God has planted in your hearts? Who is more important to you? The people with whom you interact and have built relationships with as a community of faith or those who feed your fears and cause you to lean into a heart at war?

Ultimately, what do you need to do today to have a heart at peace?

I know these are hard questions, but as disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to follow His example! Did Jesus have a heart at peace or a heart at war?

Who will you follow?