

Let's Talk About...Allies

So this month, to kick things off, let's talk about allies. Allies are folks who are not part of a particular marginalized group of people, but who put in work to make sure those voices are lifted up. Because each of us has a lot of different layers to our identities, often we can be members of one marginalized group and allies for many others. For example, I'm a woman and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, but I try to be an ally for people of color, people experiencing homelessness, and transgender folk.

I say I only try to be an ally. That's because being a good ally requires a lot of work, and sometimes I know I haven't done all the homework I ought to do! Because we're trying to help people who experience life differently from us, allies don't grow up just knowing all the things that members of a marginalized group would have to know, and so being a good ally means taking the time to research and listen and learn about not only the problems the marginalized people in question face every day, but also their unique culture and the joys they find in life.

Allies work hard to seek out members of the communities for which they advocate, and they try to listen and find out how people would like them to help. A good ally is like a megaphone for the people they seek to help, creating opportunities for people to advocate for their own rights. But allies also go into spaces where the people they seek to help would not be safe or heard.

Our "Let's Talk About..." column is one place where we can help one another learn how to be better allies for all our neighbors. If you have a question you'd like answered, or if there are things you wish others in our congregation better understood about your own marginalized identities or those for whom you are already a strong ally, please submit suggestions to <https://forms.gle/E9eRqZJGLqVagbDZ9> or email me directly at virginiag@smokyhillumc.org.