Best Practices for GLBTQI inclusion within a congregation/faith community

Listed are welcoming guidelines that various religious communities have embraced as best practices. This is not an exhausted list, but is to be used as a guide for making your community more inclusive of all people.

Community uses the term "beloved community" or something similar. This refers to a fully integrated community rather than an "us" and "them" – "them" needing to be integrated into "us".

There are established and integrated opportunities in community life for various members and new-comers to share their personal stories without being judged. As desired by the teller, these stories are shared with the entire community.

Leadership is female or out self-identified queer male, intersex, bisexual, transgender, transitioned. This includes clergy, board members, and recognized lay leaders. Statistically, congregations with leadership in one or more of these categories are much more welcoming/inclusive/integrated and supportive of sharing personal stories.

A statement about being an inclusive/beloved/welcoming congregation is included in all publicity material; clearly posted at congregational sites, events; in newsletters.

Restrooms are clearly marked as non-gendered. Rather than images, use words such as "restroom", "unisex," "for all genders", etc.

Language used in liturgy, publicity materials, educational materials, etc. recognizes that sexual orientation and identity can be fluid and is non-binary.

The congregation represents the wide diversity of family life, including not only LGBTQI but also interfaith, intercultural, interracial, etc. as this is very much part of the LGBTQI world. This is established in children's and adult educational programming and materials; in lifecycle events; in ritual life; in liturgy and sermons; in holiday celebrations/observances; and on paperwork for religious schools, membership forms, etc. Forms have "parent A", "parent B" and "parent C" or "guardian A, B or C" etc. LGBTQI families receive family prices, are listed publicly as families, etc.

Fees for membership and related services reflect the financial realities of LGBTQI families and individuals.

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LGBTQI resources are visible on-site, including at least one designated staff and/or clergy person who is particularly trained and knowledgeable. These would include but are not limited to books, movies, discussion groups, classes, crisis information, etc.

The congregation is involved with social justice / public witness activities, including LGBTQI civil rights, etc.

A regularly scheduled internal review process for the congregation's leadership and for the community – are these checklist items still being accomplished? If not, what needs to happen to return to this status? If they are, what further steps does the community want to take and how will they accomplish this?

Sources

Resources used to create this list are:

- *With Open Arms: Gay Affirming Ministries in Bay Area Faith Communities* (A publication of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry)
- Jewish Mosaic
- Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation
- Kulanu Resource Guide from the Union for Reform Judaism
- TransTorah
- The UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns
- The Religious Institute: Faithful Voices on Sexuality and Religion
- Lutherans Concerned/North America
- More Light Presbyterians
- Unitarian Universalists Association: Welcoming Congregation Program
- Institute for Welcoming Resources
- Transforming Your House: A Guide to Creating LGBTQ Ritual, Spiritual, and Pastoral Homes
- Canadian Unitarian Council: Interweave Continental
- Bisexual Resource Center
- Reconciling Ministries Network
- Bay Area Jewish Healing Center
- Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
- Personal communication with LGBTQI pastoral care providers

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- Articles and personal communication with variety of conservative and traditional clergy and community members
- Keshet
- Articles by and personal communication with members of Mormon community, Hindu community, Buddhist community

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