

An Expansive Welcome

A Resource for LGBTQI+ Affirming Communities Engaging in Intersectional Work



Center for
LGBTQ and Gender Studies
in Religion (CLGS)

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Introduction

This guide is designed for congregations that welcome and affirm lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer people (LGBTQI+). The desire and theology that led you to declare yourself as a community that welcomes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities is still working among you. This resource is meant to spark your imagination about ways to expand your ministries to include other marginalized groups and to express your affirmation for LGBTQI+ people through strong and effective advocacy. We suggest several areas in which you might take action; you alone know what specifically you and your congregation are called to do. We hope, however, that these ideas will generate ideas and conversations about that.

Each section includes a brief discussion of why this topic is critical for the well-being of LGBTQI+ people and has wider implications for justice. We then include some questions to ask yourselves about getting involved in this work as you begin your explorations. Experts in each area helped us develop a list of best practices to guide you. Finally, we include a highlight of a person or congregation who is effectively doing work related to that topic to inspire you. This is not just a theoretical guide, but one grounded in the realities of social justice advocacy and ministry. This resource is also not meant to be comprehensive of all initiatives in these areas, but simply to help you begin your explorations.

This resource was made possible through a generous grant from the Atkinson Foundation in San Mateo County, in Northern California. Accordingly, our examples are all local. However, if you are in other parts of the country, please don't dismiss these ideas as being possible only in California. Despite the stereotypes, parts of our region are deeply conservative; we are also racially diverse and represent a wide range of cultures. While Northern California has some of the wealthiest parts of our country, it also experiences deep poverty. In other words, we aren't as different as you might imagine. The bottom line is that what makes these ministries possible is not where they are located but the passion and energy of the congregations and individuals that enact them. At the end of the day, it really is human caring and a commitment to a more just world that brings all of this about.

Our process began with a survey of congregations in the seven county Bay Area that had formally indicated that they welcomed LGBTQI+ people (for example Welcoming Congregations in the Unitarian Universalist church, the United Church of Christ's Open & Affirming churches, and synagogues affiliated with denominations which are welcoming). We identified Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Unitarian Universalist, and Pagan groups among the respondents. We then selected the topics that were of the greatest interest to these communities for further exploration. The fact that some issues that might seem obvious—reproductive justice, for example—are not included here reflects this process. We wanted to be as practical as possible in meeting the expressed needs and vocations of congregations, and empowering them to action, rather than imposing our goals on them. We hope that other groups will take up the topics that you may feel we left out here.

There was a strong interest among the surveyed congregations in racial and gender justice. We felt that these issues were so foundational that we choose to incorporate these two topics within the scope of the other areas. In other words, we felt that every issue needed to address the racist and sexist dimensions of the work.

Our hope is that this resource inspires and guides you in new directions in ministry or affirms the work that you are already doing. We believe passionately in our abilities to work together to create a world of ever expanding welcome and increasing justice. We are delighted to be your partners in this effort.



Principles

Moving a congregation from adopting a statement of welcome for LGBTQI+ persons to embodying that welcome more deeply in its community life and its mission is an exciting challenge. There is no right or wrong way for a congregation to live out its welcoming stance more fully. It involves lots of conversation and listening to persons in your congregation—their concerns, their fears and their passions. It also involves asking some tough questions that might help persons move outside of their comfort zone. This will take some time—be patient. Think of the steps that will gradually move the congregation forward.

The movement toward becoming more deeply and authentically welcoming can be seen in two primary spheres of activity:

1. What are the best practices for including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and questioning individuals in your spiritual communities? This touches on many aspects of the community life: a) design and use of the building; b) language that is used in oral and written communications; c) invitations that are extended for persons to participate in programs and activities; and/or d) the ordering of ritual and program activities.
2. How does the community engage in “sacred activism”, which involves taking its spiritual convictions for LGBTQI+ inclusion and for social justice outside the walls of the meeting space into public witness? This could involve: a) having persons sign on to a public statement—one developed by another group or by your congregation; b) persons investing time in a community ministry/ service that manifests justice for the oppressed and/or welcoming the stranger; c) joining a coalition of congregations or community groups taking a justice stance on a social concern; or d) engaging in conversation with elected officials about policies that put love and justice into practice. This sacred activism understands that a commitment to justice for LGBTQI+ persons naturally flows into commitment to justice for all persons.

Here are some examples of ways that other congregations have taken steps to become more fully welcoming. As you read these over, think of whether and how a particular practice might be realized in your own congregation.

1. The community uses the term “beloved community” or something similar when talking about the congregation. Such language affirms the unique and sacred worth of every single person in the community and avoids thinking in terms of “us” and “them.” This language recognizes that each person is a valued child of God in his/her current incarnation and not that some persons need to be integrated, i.e., changed to be fully welcome. There is no “them” needing to be more like “us.”
2. There are established and integrated opportunities in the life of the congregation for all members and new-comers to share their personal stories, their joys and their struggles, without being judged. These stories are received gracefully and held in confidence when requested. When allowed by the person, these stories are shared and celebrated with the entire community.
3. Leadership includes persons not usually seen in positions of power: women or out self-identified queer male, intersex, bisexual, transgender, and transitioned people. 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.
4. The congregation is bold in proclaiming its identity to the larger community. A statement about being an inclusive/beloved/welcoming congregation is included in all publicity materials; clearly posted at congregational sites, events; in newsletters; website and social media. Outdoor signage will reflect this either in words or with a rainbow.
5. Restrooms are clearly marked as non-gendered. Rather than images, words such as “unisex,” “for all genders,” etc. are used.
6. Language used in liturgy, publicity materials, educational materials, etc., recognizes that sexual orientation and identity can be fluid and non-binary. Avoid binary terms such as “men and women,” “brothers and sisters,” “husband and wife.” Honor the freedom for persons to self-identify as they choose.
7. 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. Honor the many diverse ways that persons choose to identify in family groups.

8. Fees for membership and related services reflect the financial realities of LGBTQI+ families and individuals and other persons of modest or low-income financial means. Activities for which fees need to be charged can allow contributions on a sliding scale or “give as you are able.” You will discover that persons with more financial means will be generous and you will often receive more revenue than if you tried charging everyone a set fee.
9. LGBTQI+ resources are visible onsite and on the website and/or Facebook page, including at least one designated staff and/or clergy person who is particularly trained and knowledgeable about LGBTQI+ cultures. These would include but are not limited to books, movies, discussion groups, classes, crisis information, etc.
10. The congregation engages in social justice and public witness activities, including LGBTQI+ civil rights, but also in other related justice areas. The sections that follow offers examples of different, concrete ways that congregations live out their sacred advocacy, rooted in their intention to be fully welcoming of LGBTQI+ persons and all other persons who may be on the margins.

Build in regular opportunities (at least once or twice a year) for the congregation to review and reflect on how it is living out its welcoming stance. This may be done by the staff, by the official lay leadership body and/or by a special task force concerned with welcoming ministries. Seek input from LGBTQI+ persons and other persons who may be seen as living on the margins. Where and how is the congregation fulfilling its commitment to be fully and authentically welcoming? Where have there been blocks or stumbles on the road to being more fully welcoming? What further steps does the community want to take and how will they accomplish this?



Chapter 1: Gender Identity

Transgender people are seeking a welcome in our communities and need the advocacy that faith communities can provide. One way to begin expanding your welcome is to consider whether your congregation truly embraces the entire LGBTQI+ spectrum, including transgender people. Many communities made the decision to welcome lesbian, gay and bisexual people before there was much awareness of the specific needs of transgender and intersex people, so you may need to do some continuing education to be sure that people are aware and welcoming. You may wish to revisit your denomination's materials about welcoming LGBTQI+ people and engage any new material that has been added since you first considered the topic.

Transgender people in our society face significant challenges because of discrimination and unaccepting attitudes. All of these are compounded by the racism experienced by transgender people of color.¹ The US Trans Survey demonstrates the extremely high levels of unemployment, homelessness and housing insecurity, among other issues.² Transgender people are also subjected to violence at alarming rates, with transgender women of color experiencing the worst of it. Approximately 40% of transgender people have attempted suicide at some point in their life, a rate significantly higher than other communities. Advocates believe that this is a response to the overwhelming levels of harassment and discrimination that people face.

The data shows that family acceptance plays a key role in the wellbeing of transgender people, lowering the incidents of homelessness, suicidality, substance use and more. Encouraging families to support their transgender loved ones can make a significant difference, as can being a welcoming community of faith. According to the US Trans Survey, "Nineteen percent (19%) of respondents who had ever been part of a spiritual or religious community left due to rejection. Forty-two percent (42%) of those who left later found a welcoming spiritual or religious community."³

Transgender people are increasingly being singled out for discriminatory legislation and ballot measures, such as those which would bar people from using a public restroom or other facility that matches their gender identity. Often these bills are promoted on religious grounds or are based on myths that transgender women pose a threat to other women and girls.⁴ People of faith can play a critical role in standing up for transgender people and encouraging equal access to public facilities for all people.

Questions for Discussion

Has your congregation specifically considered how to welcome transgender people? Will transgender people experience genuine hospitality in your community, both in terms of being greeted and welcomed, and by being able to use an appropriate restroom? What are the specific challenges that transgender people are facing in your community?

Best Practices and Suggestions

- **Curriculum:** Integrate Faith-based Trans* awareness and education into existing programs. These resources will help you delve further into welcoming transgender people, including children and youth, into your community of faith:
 - Transitioning to Inclusion: Embracing LGBTQI+ Youth in Faith Communities: <https://clgs.org/multimedia-archive/transitioningyouthresource/>
 - You Are Wondrously Made: <https://clgs.org/multimedia-archive/for-you-are-wondrously-made/>
 - Transgender Curriculum for Faith Communities: <https://clgs.org/multimedia-archive/transgender-curriculum-for-faith-communities/>
- **Resources:**
 - Include books and resources on gender expression, gender inclusivity, and sexuality in your organization's library
 - ◆ Children's Books:
 - *One a Kind Like Me/Único Como Yo*, by Laurin Mayeno, an author and mixed race Asian mother of a gay, gender-expansive son
 - *Who Are You? The Kids' Guide to Gender Identity* by Brook Pessin-Whedbee, a public

1 James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality, page 4.

2 Ibid, page 3.

3 Ibid, page 6.

4 See <https://www.mediamatters.org/research/2016/05/05/comprehensive-guide-debunked-bathroom-predator-myth/210200> for articles which debunk this myth.

- school teacher and mother to three little ones who joyfully bend and break the gender boxes
 - *What Makes a Baby?* by Cory Silverberg, a book for every kind of family with every kind of kid
 - *My Princess Boy*, by Cheryl Kilodavis
 - *Jacob's New Dress*, by Sarah Hoffman and Ian Hoffman
- ♦ Adult Books:
 - *The Bible and Transgender Experience: How Scripture Supports Gender Variance*. Herzer, Linda Tatro. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2016.
 - *Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community*. Noach Dzmura, ed. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2010.
 - *Trans-Gendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*. Justin Tanis. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2003.
- **Language:** In liturgy, publicity materials, and educational materials, use language that recognizes that sexual orientation and identity can be fluid and is non-binary. Some ideas to get you started are:
 - <http://modernchurch.org.uk/downloads/send/12-forewords/815-mcfw7>
 - <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2014/02/heres-a-list-of-58-gender-options-for-facebook-users/>

Profile: Rabbi Jane Litman, Coastside Jewish Community

“I workshopped gender and trans concerns with a group of rabbis, and the first question I received was, ‘How do I communicate that I am open to trans* people?’ So I said, ‘In the room outside of my study I curate the books that I have to reflect what I am open and able to speak about - a book on parenting disabled children, a book on growing old, a book on lesbian families... and I always make sure I have one relevant to trans* issues.’*

“A few minutes later someone asked the question again, ‘How do I show that I am open to trans folks?’ And I answered and said that the stories of trans* individuals should be included in sermons. And then once more, I was asked the same question. In the end, I just said this: ‘I think the most important thing is for leaders really to be welcoming in practice and from their hearts.’”*

—Rabbi Jane Litman, Spiritual Leader, Coastside Jewish Community

Coastside Jewish Community (CJC) provides ritual practice, rich cultural celebrations, and educational programming to the Jewish community and friends from the San Mateo Coast up to San Francisco. CJC is part of the Bay Area Coalition of Welcoming Congregations and holds the inclusion of LGBTQI+ community members as central to its mission.

Under the guidance of queer spiritual leaders, the CJC congregation initially reached out to lesbian and gay community members, inviting them into the congregation as an embodiment of the teachings of chesed (loving kindness), rachamim (compassion), and tzedik (justice) of the Torah. After this successful broadening of the community, the gender transition of a CJC leader created visibility and curiosity around trans* experiences and concerns.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Jane Litman, a board was created to explore ways in which ritual and communal life could release itself from the confines of the gender binary. This included making adjustments to the language in the *aliyah* in order to accommodate the calling of non-binary congregants to read the Torah, using pronoun badges during services, and regularly including trans*-relevant information in the newsletter. Rabbi Litman cites such progress in trans* inclusion as a function of a broader invitation- one that invites all congregants to see gender as a performance relevant to each of our lives.

Chapter 2: Youth

Thanks to tremendous advocacy over the years, today's youth are coming out in an environment that is more supportive than in years past. Many children and teens have positive experiences in their homes and schools. But LGBTQI+ young people still face significant challenges that their straight and non-transgender peers do not. A Los Angeles based study found that 1 in 5 youths in foster care were LGBTQI+, and those in care were more likely to be living in a group home and twice as likely to be treated poorly in the system.⁵ According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than a third of youth report being bullied in their schools. This includes high rates of physical and emotional attacks, bias, and violence.⁶ Children and youth continue to be rejected by their families. Some community groups still shy away from providing services to youth for fear of accusations of sexual misconduct, despite no evidence that supports this damaging and false stereotype.

LGBTQI+ youth need spiritual care, just like all young people. Being included within a faith community has the same benefits, offering opportunities for connection, service, and a widening understanding of the world and our place in it. When your community of faith welcomes youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities, you counter the negative messages that they receive about and from religious groups. It is critical not only to provide services to youth but also to show them what accepting communities can look like. This can help shape their understanding of faith for a lifetime.

Questions for Discussion

Are LGBTQI+ youth welcomed within our existing youth programs? Are there ways that we can better communicate to LGBTQI+ youth that they are accepted here? Can we offer a safe space for LGBTQI+ youth to gather? What are the youth telling us about what they need?

Best Practices and Suggestions

- **Create inclusive and affirming youth space**
 - Expect there to be LGBTQI+ youth in your youth group, whether or not any young people have come out to you.
 - Include preferred gender pronouns as a part of regular introductions.
 - Be mindful of language, especially around gender, gendered roles, and sexuality.
 - ◆ Use either gender-neutral terms or rotating gender pronouns when referring to the Divine.
 - ◆ Use peoples of all genders and sexualities when creating or uplifting examples or scenarios.
- **Conversation/Workshop topics**
 - Sex and sexuality may be discussed in an appropriate and professional manner after consent is provided by parents of minors (written consent is best)
 - Utilize Social Justice Lens
 - ◆ Sexual and gender identities in the ways they intersect with higher rates of homelessness, sexual assault, bullying, or suicide may be discussed with more freedom.
 - ◆ Offer anti-bullying and de-escalation training; one resource is <https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-you-can-do/teens/index.html>
 - ◆ Utilize and Disseminate Youth-specific Resources, for example,
 - <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
 - <https://www.genderspectrum.org/resources/faith-2/#more-404>
- **Leadership**
 - Do your best to include a diversity of gender expressions, sexual orientations, races, ethnicities, ages, etc., in leadership.
 - Leaders who can commit long-term to a community will serve well as anchors for the youth, many of whom may experience a great deal of transience.
 - Leaders who are expected to deal with issues of sex and sexuality directly should be trained in this type of education to ensure effectiveness and maintain appropriate boundaries.
 - Leaders should complete Child Abuse Mandated Reporter training where applicable.
- **Education:** Our Whole Lives curriculum, produced by the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association, is an excellent resource for education of all ages, from children to adults; it can be found at <http://www.uua.org/re/owl>. The OWL curriculum provides a holistic approach to human sexuality in age appropriate

5 Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center. <https://lalgbtcenter.org/rise>

6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "LGBT Youth." <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>

lessons, with faith-friendly framing and language. OWL facilitator trainings take place around the United States, as well as in Canada.

- Note: Leaders ought to take seriously the social, spiritual, health, and legal ramifications of providing inappropriate sexual content to minors, and must handle educational efforts with care.
- Alternatively, an outside expert or professional panel can be utilized.
- **Community**
 - Full community engagement with youth ministry efforts will lead to strongest results, especially when parental support is secured.
 - Have youth lead in a ritual, offer a speech, or facilitate a community activity or discussion which shares what they've learned.

Profile: United Church of Christ Community Church of Sebastopol

“Adolescence by definition is a time of change and discovery of identity. The youth programs at the local church level, the regional level, and the national level have worked together to make sure Queer youth know that their identity includes beloved children of a diverse and loving God, whatever their gender identity or sexual expression. Youth have enough other challenges in their lives so it’s important for the adults working with them to make sure they know they are unconditionally accepted and loved by The Divine and precious members of the wider faith community. There are many ways of doing this: one is to provide adult role models who live in the rainbow of queer and are secure themselves in the knowledge of their place in God’s Beloved Community.”



—Rev. Lizann Bassham, Former Minister of Sebastopol UCC

The United Church of Christ Community Church of Sebastopol is an open-and-affirming congregation with a commitment to the formation of its youth through education as well as recreational community building. The youth of the church are regular attendees of the larger UCC Outdoor Ministries Summer Camp Program.

Rev. Lizann Bassham, the former pastor, and current Youth Leader Ross Galleto, both of the Sebastopol church, shared reflections on the intersection between Youth ministry and LGBTQI+ concerns and interests. As adolescence is a time of critical identity discovery, providing proper support in the discernment of sexuality and gender is both crucial and complex in a faith-based education context. Due to the sensitivity of these topics, it is necessary for youth leadership teams to discern healthy boundaries of conversation and, in addition, all mentors working with you should be properly trained.

Rev. Bassham and Mr. Galleto emphasized the importance of offering holistic education around sexuality discernment and gender expression. By keeping a focus on visibility, inclusion, and intersectional justice, it can be made clear to youth that non-normative sexualities and gender expressions are welcome. The presence of ‘out’ queer leaders serves to normalize an inclusive culture, embody welcome, and maintain a diversity of perspectives on the mentorship and youth education teams. Even small shifts, such as rotating gendered terms for the divine within worship contexts and inviting youth to personalize their relationships with the divine through their own preferred gender pronouns, creates a youth culture that sees such inclusion and fluidity as an *expectation* rather than an *exception*. In addition, well-structured panel discussions and social justice terminology can be used to illuminate important issues facing teens around the world including homelessness, suicide, and sexual abuse, which can offer youth both the opportunity to address and consider more difficult topics, while offering them the necessary tools to seek further help should members of their own communities or networks face any of these hardships.

Rev. Bassham also participated in the creation of the UCC’s “Our Whole Lives” curriculum, which is an age-appropriate, sexual education curriculum spanning from Kindergarten through adulthood. A resource such as this can be utilized to create healthy standards and spread accurate information throughout faith communities that currently lack holistic health education in their youth programming.

Chapter 3: Immigration and Asylum

LGBTQI+ people leave their countries of origin for many of the same reasons that anyone else does. Every group of refugees and immigrants includes people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Yet there are distinct circumstances that LGBTQI+ people face as immigrants. Almost 80 countries still criminalize sex between consenting adults of the same gender, and many others remain dangerous places for LGBTQI+ people.⁷ Crimes against LGBTQI+ people, including murder, are not investigated or prosecuted effectively in a number of other countries. This danger leads LGBTQI+ people to flee, seeking a safer place to live. Some of these individuals formally seek asylum and legal status. Others become refugees or are undocumented immigrants.

LGBTQI+ people often encounter additional homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination in refugee camps or in detention facilities, making the task of finding safety that much harder. They may also face discrimination at the hands of customs officials and the staff of resettlement programs.

Some congregations work directly to accompany LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers, helping with practical needs like housing, employment, clothing, transportation and obtaining household goods. Others work to provide social and spiritual opportunities. Many congregations find that the same impulse that led them to welcome LGBTQI+ people has opened their eyes to welcoming other marginalized groups such as immigrants. They have followed the process that they used to make a decision to welcome LGBTQI+ people as a model for deciding about issues of broader welcome. They also recognize that LGBTQI+ undocumented people seeking sanctuary may not be accepted at congregations who have anti-gay and anti-transgender theologies.

Questions for Discussion

Have we explored who the immigrants in our neighborhood are; what languages do they speak and where are they from? What does our faith teach us about welcoming immigrants, refugees, and asylees? In what ways is our physical space a literal sanctuary for people? Are there ways we can let more people find sanctuary here?

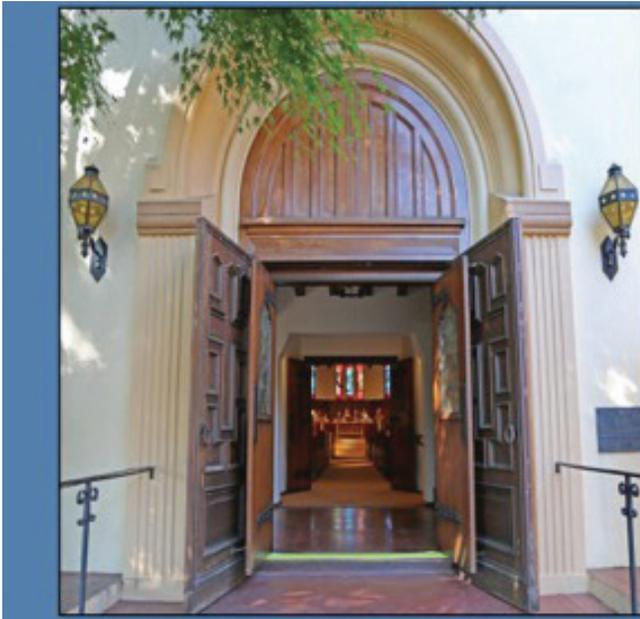
Best Practices and Suggestions

- **Learn more about the needs of LGBTQI+ refugees**, many of these advocacy organizations have tool kits and resources for local action:
 - The Immigrant Legal Resource Center: <https://www.ilrc.org/special-considerations-LGBTQI+-immigrants>
 - Immigration Equality: <http://www.immigrationequality.org/>
 - Organization for Refugees, Asylum and Migration (ORAM): <http://oramrefugee.org/>
 - Rainbow Welcome Initiative: <http://www.rainbowwelcome.org/about-us/feature-archives?featureID=6>
 - Jewish Family and Community Services of the East Bay LGBT Refugee Services: <https://jfcs-eastbay.org/lgbt-refugee-services/>
- **Take your cues from refugees and immigrants about what they need**; it may be different than what you think.
- **Serving refugees, asylees, and immigrants can take many forms**:
 - Direct accompaniment, offering resettlement support and services.
 - Acquiring and donating useful items, like bedding, bicycles, notebooks, etc., to help someone make a home, get to work, etc.
 - Raising funds for organizations which serve these groups of people.
- **Engage in Sanctuary work**:
 - Learn the special legal and social benefits afforded to faith organizations which make them ideal for Sanctuary Status and Action.
 - ◆ ACLU Sheet: <https://www.nwirp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ACLU-Sanctuary-FAQ-March-2017.pdf>
 - ◆ UCC San Mateo Sanctuary Guidelines Page: <http://ccsm-ucc.org/sanctuary-movement/>
 - ◆ What Does Sanctuary Look Like Today? (Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity): https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WVkd4AI5IrfzhI-WFjNKgNOMq5v7_RMxsmQZkULUIE/edit
 - ◆ Immigration Raids Rapid Response Worksheet: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1TisxxdUP71TER6X0V2cFRfXzg/view>
 - Determine if your organization is able to aid in one or more of four major categories: (see the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity resource at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WVkd4AI5IrfzhI-WFjNKgNOMq5v7_RMxsmQZkULUIE/edit).

7 See Immigration Equality's website at www.immigrationequality.org for additional information.

- ◆ Physical sanctuary for someone facing final deportation
- ◆ Accompaniment of immigrant families or youth
- ◆ Advocacy
- ◆ Networks of projection of rapid response
- Study and apply, appropriately, the strategies that other organizations have used to assist immigrants; see, for example: *The Process of Becoming a Sanctuary Congregation Guide*, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1TIsxxdUP71VmtIX29MVVltVUE/view>
- Develop a committee and process for introducing a Sanctuary movement proposal to your organization
 - ◆ Utilize retired clergy, administrators, and professionals already within your community—often those currently working as pastors, rabbis, imams, etc., are too overwhelmed to head new projects!
 - ◆ Designate one or more community members as in-house specialists to coordinate activities such as:
 - Legal Outreach
 - Rapid Response Network Contact
 - Congregational Education Leader
 - Immigrant Community/Member Outreach Coordinator
 - Congregational Q&A Sessions Organizer (coffee hours, office hours, one to one discussions, etc)
- Integrate refugee and immigration justice information into existing your curricula
 - ◆ Discuss the application of an “open and affirming” mentality to other marginalized groups
 - ◆ Faith and Immigration Study Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/y8hx6skg>
 - ◆ Utilize testimony and story as inroads to create empathy and connection to immigrant communities
 - Use denominational resources, such as this one from the Unitarian Universalist Association: <http://www.uua.org/immigration/re/ga/208962.shtml>
 - Jose Antonio Vargas spoke on faith and immigration at Pacific School of Religion; you can view the talk here: <https://psr.edu/earl-17/> Use videos like this to spark conversations.
 - ◆ Emphasize the power of discussing these issues openly and becoming visible allies with immigrant and refugee rights groups
- Educate your congregation/organization about Sanctuary movement, options for getting involved, legality, safety, resources, etc; before bringing the Sanctuary designation to a vote
 - ◆ Clarify the legal repercussions for declaring Sanctuary status
 - ◆ Work with the resources you have already—Legal professionals? Extra church space? Wide networks?
- Join the Sanctuary Pledge as a faith organization, and stay connected with other organizations, at sanctuarynotdeportation.org
- **Challenge your congregation or organization to create an environment conducive to diversity**
 - Create opportunities for a wider variety of community members to participate:
 - ◆ Host immigration rights, LGBTQI+, and People of Color, and woman directed Film Nights.
 - ◆ Coordinate interfaith event partnerships, picnics, and/or youth activities.
 - ◆ Offer multi-lingual services, Bible studies, etc.
 - ◆ Ensure that many leadership positions and resources are held/created by people of color, women, immigrants, and/or LGBTQI+ members/clergy.





CCSM: A Sanctuary Congregation

Profile: Sanctuary Team, Congregational Church of San Mateo (CCSM)

“Not only was ‘Open and Affirming’ [ONA] embedded in leadership and congregants, but CCSM folks easily adopted a sanctuary church resolution. One could say that CCSM has embraced its ONA declaration of 15 years ago as evidenced by our lesbian Senior Minister. Yet it’s more than that. At CCSM I see many people who are committed to follow Jesus on this most challenging journey of all, to welcome all God’s beloved along the full range of humanity.”

—Valerie Duecker, Editor & Co-Chair Sanctuary Team, Congregational Church of San Mateo (CCSM)

The journey for the Congregational Church of San Mateo (CCSM) towards an embodied practice of “open and affirming” ministry began more than 30 years ago. What began as a largely homogenous community (who originally voted down a proposition to adopt sanctuary status) now stands as a progressive spiritual congregation strongly committed to ‘delight in diversity’ with ‘a passion for justice’ and all of the related work encompassed by such commitments. The paradigm shift began when the pastoral team began framing the gospels in terms of social justice—making them accessible and brushing off the cobwebs—so that the congregation might begin to think more widely in terms of God’s message. Instead of actively avoiding participation with community neighbors, the pastors and leadership team decided to begin outreach within their own parish to soften those boundaries. From these seeds of love grew the roots of understanding, hard-work, and education which led CCSM to vote in favor of becoming an open and affirming congregation.

As such boundaries became more fluid and welcoming, CCSM saw its membership begin to diversify along gender, sexuality, and ethnic lines. And, importantly, the congregational programming kept pace with these changes by instituting bilingual Bible studies, representing new dimensions of diversity in leadership positions, and introducing activism efforts relevant to local housing needs. Then, amidst the uncertainty of immigration rights under the Trump administration, the congregation dealt with many difficult emotions, ideas, and decisions about how best to continue its mission. After much deliberation, the community opted to shift its focus to another immediately pressing issue—sanctuary. Specifically, the congregation considered how to offer its sanctuary as a place of welcome and sanctuary. After a series of trainings, research presentations, and congregational education opportunities which closely reflected the ONA push many years prior, the community voted to adopt the symbolic “sanctuary” status in name, and to explore the steps for embodied practice moving forward.

Chapter 4: Climate Justice

The climate is changing, and our movements for justice must change too.

The environmental justice movement has many faith-based foundations, and has repeatedly shown that marginalized communities are hit first and worst by both the causes and the consequences of climate and ecological crises. LGBTQI+ people are disproportionately more likely to be living in poverty⁸, have higher rates of asthma⁹, cancer¹⁰, food insecurity¹¹ and housing insecurity.¹² These are all environmental issues. The socioeconomic and political vulnerabilities of LGBTQI+ communities are the direct result of the same extractive systems that drive ecological crises.

Being on these frontlines, LGBTQI+ communities can play a key role in building strength, resilience and power in the movement for a Just Transition towards local, sustainable and regenerative economies for people and the planet. As climate chaos escalates, transition away from fossil fuels is inevitable, but justice is not guaranteed. The Just Transition Movement envisions a fair shift away from an extractive economy by addressing the root causes of both ecological and social injustices, while lifting up the leadership of the people experiencing the worst of the environmental and social impacts of our current extractive systems.¹³ As people whose lives embody change and transformation, LGBTQI+ people have made, and will continue to make, contributions to the global struggle to protect and regenerate land, water, food, and biocultural diversity. In order to achieve a Just Transition, we must queer our movements for ecological justice by amplifying holistic responses to ecological crises and uplifting the spiritual wholeness and ecological well-being of gender and sexual diverse peoples around the world.

Questions for Discussion

How are faith communities responding to our global ecological realities? How do those practices relate to, support, and/or strengthen their welcome to LGBTQI+ communities? What does queering our relationships to land and place look like? What does our faith tradition teach us about our relation to the planet?

Best Practices & Suggestions

- **Regenerative Design Initiatives & Reducing Environmental-Impact Programs:**
 - Examples Include: Solar Energy Initiatives, Local Organic Food Production and Distribution, Waste Management Reform (Recycling and Composting), Rainwater Catchment Systems, Green Building and more.
 - Utilize denominational or faith based resources, such as the Jewish Climate Access Network, <https://www.jewishclimate.org/> or the *UCC Creation Justice Program: A Dynamic Toolkit for Congregations*: http://www.ucc.org/creation_justice_churches
- **Disaster Readiness:** Make LGBTQI+ cultural competency an important part of all trainings for staff and volunteers. In the event of a climate disaster or following a decision to provide sanctuary space, make sure that all bathrooms are accessible and that every staff member and volunteer uses culturally-appropriate language. Helpful Tips and Toolkits:
 - Working with the LGBT Community: A Cultural Competence Guide for Emergency Responders and Volunteers: https://nationalmasscarestrategy.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/emergencyresponders_-_lgbt_competency.pdf
 - Family Equality Council Disaster Preparedness for LGBT Families, http://www.familyequality.org/_asset/nc9zI5/FEC_DisasterPreparedness.pdf
- **Education, Ministry and Storytelling:**
 - Creation Care & Bio-Cultural Diversity: Topics that touch on the intersections of ecology, spirituality, sex-

8 Sears, Brad and Badgett, Lee. "Beyond Stereotypes: Poverty in the LGBT Community." TIDES. Momentum Issues 4, June 2012. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/headlines/beyond-stereotypes-poverty-in-the-lgbt-community/#sthash.oVo0Hwei.dpuf>

9 Stewart J. Landers, Matthew J. Mimiaga, Kerith J. Conron. "Sexual Orientation Differences in Asthma Correlates in a Population-Based Sample of Adults." *Am J Public Health*. 2011 Dec; 101(12): 2238–2241. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2011.300305 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3222437/>)

10 "Disparities between Lesbians and Gay Men in Cancer Diagnosis/Treatment." National LGBT Cancer Project. <http://lgbtcancer.org/lgbt-cancer-survivorship/disparities-between-lesbians-and-gay-men-in-cancer-diagnostictreatment/>

11 Gates, Gary J. "LGBT People Are Disproportionately Food Insecure." Williams Institute. February 2014.

12 Durso, L.E., & Gates, G.J. *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*. 2012. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund.

13 *Strategic Framework for a Just Transition Zine*, Movement Generation Justice and Ecology Project, 2017. <http://movement-generation.org/justtransition/>

uality, and gender can deeply illuminate for congregants the sacredness of gender and sexual diversity in all living systems and deepen a sense of interconnection with all of creation.¹⁴

- History of Faith-Based Organizing for Environmental Justice: Faith communities have a long legacy of leadership within the Environmental Justice movement, including the United Church of Christ's *Toxic Waste and Race* publications, some of the most cited research on environmental racism.¹⁵
- Land-Based Stories of LGBTQI+ People: Story-based strategy is one of our most important tools for the Just Transition movement. Holding sacred space for people to explore their relationships to land and creation and navigate how they have been shaped by neighborhoods, food, migration, displacement, access to green space, and environmental advocacy is crucial.
- **Local, Regional & National Advocacy:** Adopting congregational environmental initiatives must be accompanied by political advocacy for holistic economic transformation in order to address the global scale of ecological crises. In addition to California Interfaith Power and Light, get to know these coalition-based movements committed to building deep solutions for climate justice and working at the Intersections of LGBTQI+ justice and ecological justice:
 - Climate Justice Alliance / Our Power Campaign: <http://www.ourpowercampaign.org/>
 - Grassroots Global Justice Alliance: <http://ggjalliance.org/>
 - Queer EcoJustice Project: <http://queerecoproject.wixsite.com/collective>
 - Out for Sustainability: <http://out4s.org/>



14 Book resource: *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* by Joan Roughgarden.

15 United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice. "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites." http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries_toxic-waste-20

Profile: Rev. Will Scott, Program Director of California Interfaith Power & Light

“As a queer priest working to address the climate crisis with faith communities throughout California, I have been grateful to discover so many LGBTQI+ affirming congregations and queer persons of faith raising their voices for climate justice. Together these faith communities are advocating for clean air, water, and energy. These visionaries are transforming houses of worship, neighborhoods and entire cities into models of sustainability, resilience, hope and healing. From the world’s first gay synagogue in Los Angeles to San Francisco’s iconic Grace Cathedral, from Tassajara Zen Mountain Center to La Mesa’s The Table UCC, LGBT affirming faith communities are among our statewide network’s longest and most engaged climate minded members.”

—Rev. Will Scott



Rev. Will Scott is an ordained minister with over ten years of experience working in multicultural and interfaith contexts, serving large and small congregations in both urban and suburban settings. Most recently as Vicar of St. Cyprian’s Church in San Francisco, Will’s leadership inspired greater neighborhood engagement, water conservation, energy efficiency, and collaborative partnerships. He is a graduate of Bard College at Simon’s Rock and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary. As part of an interfaith marriage and a family with diverse religious and spiritual practices, he is committed to emboldening the witness of people and communities of all faiths for a healthier planet.

For More Information and to Get Involved visit the California Interfaith Power & Light Website:

<http://www.interfaithpower.org/>



Chapter 5: Addressing Hate

LGBTQI+ people are, per capita, the most targeted group in our country,¹⁶ they experience more violence than those attacked on the basis of race and religion. The victims are those perceived to be different in their sexual or gender presentation; most are LGBT but some are simply assumed to be. These differences in sexuality and gender often bring up strong emotions on the part of their attackers, leading to particularly violent acts. One unique challenge of anti-LGBT bias-motivated crimes is that the attackers may also have feelings of same-gender attraction¹⁷ or question their own gender identities. Their violence against others may be the result of self-hatred or internalized fears. Race plays a factor as well, with transgender women of color being targeted at an even higher rate for murder and violence.

Hate-motivated violence damages communities as well as individuals. When an attack occurs, its impact ripples from those directly injured to all who share an identity with the victim. Acts of violence may also retraumatize survivors of previous attacks. Faith organizations can play a vital role as healers for both individuals and groups when violence has occurred as well as helping to create safe spaces within the community and engaging in prevention efforts. We can begin by cultivating compassion for those who are “the other,” whether they are different because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, nationality, and/or any other factor.

The number of hate groups in our country is on the rise.¹⁸ It is vital that people of faith take a stand against those who promulgate hatred against others, in line with our values of treating others as we want to be treated. Taking a stand against hatred strengthens our communities and offers vital opportunities for our members to grow spirituality. The bottom line is that faith should promulgate love, not hatred.

Questions for Discussion

Are you aware of victims of anti-LGBTQI+ crimes in your area? Where might you check to see if these crimes are occurring? Could your building be a space of sanctuary for LGBTQI+ people? How can you make that clear to someone on the street? What efforts are being made in your community to reduce violence? How can your congregation participate in these efforts? Could you raise awareness about anti-LGBTQI+ crimes as part of this process?

Best practices and suggestions

- **Speak up** when you see someone targeted for their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, national origin, or other characteristic. Silence reinforces the hater’s power.
- **Raise questions** when someone tells a derogatory joke, asking, “Why is that funny?” or ask if others in the group perceive the joke as humorous.
- **Direct your attention to the target of an attack.** Ask, “Are you okay?” “Can I be of help?” Pay attention to your own safety and then act to help another. Consider calling the police if you believe that they will aid the victim and increase the safety of the situation. If a white person is attacking a person of color, sometimes the police have sided with the attacker so be aware of those potential dynamics in your community.
- **Call upon local law enforcement and politicians to engage in violence-prevention efforts** and to treat all members of the community with respect. Speak up at community meetings. Encourage comprehensive approaches, such as those that address poverty, child abuse and neglect, mental health, and substance abuse issues, and suggest policing solutions that are responsive and responsible to community needs. Raise the issue of crimes against LGBTQI+ people in your neighborhood.
- **Mark your building** so that people are aware that LGBTQI+ are welcome in your building and can seek sanctuary there.
- **Offer space** to community groups holding vigils for victims of violence and to families that need space to hold a funeral or memorial service. You can let local funeral homes know that you are willing to provide these services for LGBTQI+ people. Some religious groups still refuse to hold funerals that include a same-sex surviving partner and some refuse to use the preferred

16 Park, Haeyoun, and Mykhyalyshyn, Iaryna. “L.G.B.T. People Are More Likely to Be Targets of Hate Crimes Than Any Other Minority Group.” *The New York Times*. June 16, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/06/16/us/hate-crimes-against-lgbt.html>.

17 Bryner, Jeanna. “Homophobes Might Be Hidden Homosexuals.” *Scientific American*. Accessed June 13, 2017. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/homophobes-might-be-hidden-homosexuals/>

18 Southern Poverty Law Center. “Hate Map.” Accessed May 22, 2017. <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>.



name of a transgender person, even in a funeral service.

- **Report the actions of hate groups** to the Southern Poverty Law Center, to internet service providers, and others.
- **Hold vigils for traumatic events experienced by marginalized and at-risk communities**
 - Anniversary of the Pulse nightclub massacre.
 - Ethnic/Racial Hate Crimes
 - ◆ February 2017 loss of Srinivas Kuchibhotla and wounding Alok Madasani
 - ◆ Say Their Names List
 - ◆ Police Killings in US
 - Any local deaths, losses, or hardships.
 - Deported or at-risk community members and their families.
- **Discuss, vote, and choose honorary awardees as community role models** in anti-hate outreach, for example, *Prayers for Bobby* author Leroy Aarons, BlackLivesMatter activist Alicia Garza, and local community leaders
- **Train congregation members on how to understand groups who are “othered”**- aid in normalizing a variety of marginalized cultures from Latinx to Middle Eastern to LGBTQI+
 - Film and Discussion
 - ◆ Resources and Examples for Sexuality:
 - *When We Rise*, ABC miniseries
 - *RENT*
 - Book Club/Study Group
 - ◆ *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander
 - ◆ *When We Fight, We Win* by Greg Jobin-Leeds
 - ◆ *I Speak for Myself: American Women on Being Muslim* edited by Maria M Ebrahimji
 - ◆ *Unveiled: A One Woman Play* by Rohina Malik
 - Testimonies
 - ◆ Invite local immigrant and LGBTQI+ activists and faith leaders as keynotes, guest speakers, preachers, etc.
- **Challenge your congregation or organization to create an environment that is conducive to diversity itself:**
 - Create opportunities for a wider variety of community members to participate:
 - ◆ Host immigration rights, LGBTQI+, and POC/woman directed Film Nights
 - ◆ Coordinate interfaith event partnerships, picnics, or youth activities
 - ◆ Offer multi-lingual services, Bible studies, etc;
 - ◆ Ensure that many leadership positions and resources are held/created by POCs, women, immigrants, and/or LGBTQI+ members/clergy
- **Witness Our Welcome Program**
 - Maintain a social media presence with news updates and trainings about progress made by marginalized groups
 - Celebrate annually an open and affirming mindset
 - Include an annual “Witness Our Welcome” introductory training for new members
- **Create and implement a “Diffusing Hate Program”**
- **Host theologically relevant social justice events** to promote tolerance and increase education and cultural competency within your community/congregation
 - “Love your Muslim Neighbor”
 - Explore curricula for youth and adult programs
 - ◆ A Lesson Plan for Christian Youth Group Leaders to Start Interfaith Dialogue
 - ◆ UUA Official Statement of Solidarity
 - ◆ *Fighting Islamophobia* Curriculum Guidebook
 - BLM Curriculum and Education
 - ◆ UUA Trainings and Curricula on Anti-racism, Anti-oppression, and Multiculturalism
 - ◆ Black Lives Matter Guiding Principles
 - ◆ Asians for Black Lives
 - ◆ UUA Social Justice Activity Toolkit
- **Think critically about potential pitfalls including appropriation, misrepresentation, or retraumatization**
 - Utilize small groups (15-30 people) for most of these activities and trainings
 - Ensure that experts/leaders in each community are present
 - NEVER role play utilizing actual harassment language—it may inadvertently harm and trigger participants. Utilize body language and postures, while adopting “lalalalala” in place of aggressive language.

Profile: Rev. Will McGarvey, Executive Director, Interfaith Council Contra Costa County

“We thought a lot about what sort of program was needed today. Because of the rhetoric going on right now, what’s really needed is help in having hard conversations. What we need to figure out is how to have a real conversation, how to speak truth and listen to difference.”

—Rev. Will McGarvey, Executive Director, Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County (I-4-C)

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County (or the “I-4-C”), serves as a bridge for communication, solidarity, and cooperation between over 100 faith organizations that represent the growing pluralistic population of Northern California. Since 1997, its programming has expanded to include four major foci: Health and Faith in Action, Social Justice, Interfaith Understanding, and Climate Action. In addressing these areas, groundbreaking intersectional work has come to life, such as the burgeoning Diffusing Hate program. Executive Director Rev. Will McGarvey recently reflected on the rich potential for intersectional justice work and his work on the new Diffusing Hate curriculum.



As the pastor of the Community Presbyterian Church of Pittsburg (CPCP), Rev. McGarvey developed creative and respectful tools for ‘visioning and luring communities into the inter-religious realm of building new ways of being the human family’. He helped lead the CPCP to become open and affirming to LGBTQI+ people through an accessible and integrative education process which invited parishioners to flex assumptions and grow in understanding of what seemed at the time to be an alien culture. Through LGBTQI+ classic movie nights, queer-led discussion groups and lectures, and an active “Witness Our Welcome” LGBTQI+ interests social media page, CPCP came to be LGBTQI+ inclusive with an increased cultural literacy and expectation of welcome for all.

Rev. McGarvey’s current project with the I-4-C takes this spirit of welcoming acceptance and applies it to moments of hateful confrontation, such as the hate-speech and assaults which have become all too prevalent recently. Rev. McGarvey is creating a curriculum comprised of a series of trainings in order to empower participants to safely assess and intervene in such moments of hate. The Diffusing Hate program utilizes Non-Violent Communication methods to teach congregants, community members, and faith leaders how best to defuse hate-incidents-in-progress as active bystanders. As hate speech is directed towards minorities at many intersections, including people who are or appear to be women, people of color, LGBTQI+, non-Christians, disabled, or non-American, Rev. McGarvey’s methods involve engaging the victim of the abuse while drawing attention and power away from the attacker. In order to achieve this successfully, participants are trained in active listening, clear communication, and solicitation of appropriate assistance based on context. This type of training allows for the open and affirming philosophy of welcome and compassion to function in moments of great, immediate, and personal need.

Details on the methods of the Diffusing Hate program are available at <http://interfaithccc.org/about-us-our-programs/>



Chapter 6: HIV/AIDS

Some people think of the HIV/AIDS epidemic as something only in our past that is now a manageable illness for everyone living with HIV/AIDS. However, HIV continues to impact our community every day. In fact, today gay and bisexual men and transgender women of color in the American South face the highest rate of HIV seroconversion and infection in the world.¹⁹ According to the Centers for Disease Control, one of every four Latinx bisexual or gay men will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime, as will half of their Black counterparts. More than half of Black transgender women are also HIV+; 28% of transgender women are HIV+, says the National Institute of Health. These numbers show the ways in which HIV is especially prevalent in communities already experiencing additional health disparities and marginalization in many other areas of life.

Becoming HIV positive brings with it the need for medical treatment, as well as emotional and spiritual support. Health care is a right for all people, and yet many in the United States still face great difficulty finding effective and compassionate medical treatment. People with HIV need access to testing, treatment, and care. Not all people respond well to the medications that can keep them alive, leaving some in our community still sick and dying. HIV continues to be stigmatized and that can impact not only those with the disease but their partners, families, and caregivers.

Communities of faith can play a vital role in offering spiritual care for those impacted by HIV/AIDS. Statements of compassion and advocacy can counter stigma.

Questions for Discussion

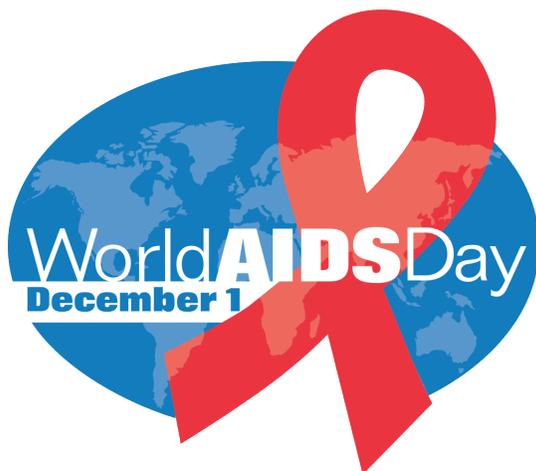
Is there a level of comfort about talking about HIV/AIDS in your congregation or is there resistance and discomfort? What is causing that? What does the congregation need to understand so that its members feel safe welcoming people with HIV/AIDS? How has HIV/AIDS impacted the lives of people in your congregation? Is HIV transmission criminalized in your state? If so, what is being done about that?

Best practices and suggestions

- **Normalizing HIV talk in community**
 - If the topic of HIV is uncomfortable for your community, begin to bring it forward as a rotating point of education and discussion in the community.
 - HIV can be addressed as a subtopic of discussions around human sexuality. If the community is not able to engage in dialogue on sex and sexuality, it is unlikely that productive and holistic conversations on HIV will occur.
 - Note how other ministries may intersect with HIV ministry, such as your Food Pantry, Sexual Health Education, and Housing Justice work.
- **Normalize HIV testing** by offering it at your community of faith. You can provide a supportive environment that can lessen the anxiety of being tested as well as modeling that testing is an important part of healthy living. Detection of HIV is vital to encouraging people to get medical treatment as soon as possible and to prevent transmitting the virus to others. Community clinics often offer mobile testing programs at little or no cost.
- **Stay current with the facts and terminology about HIV/AIDS** so that you can address these issues knowledgeably.
 - Stay updated on statistics and raise awareness around risk factors, prevention, and treatment - the HIV field is constantly changing, requiring attention and regular research.
 - Have a list of referrals available for testing, health care, housing, legal, and other services for people with HIV, specific to your city and county.
 - Keep abreast of respectful, up-to-date medical and social terminology in your programs
 - ◆ Social: <https://mic.com/articles/128718/how-to-talk-about-hiv#.U2ZvTLqxK>
 - ◆ Medical: http://www.hoccprograms.org/GlossaryHIVrelatedTerms_English_2015.pdf
- **Have a list of referrals available** for testing, health care, housing, and other services for people with HIV. Know what is available in your city and county.
- Designate one or more community members as an in-house specialist
 - Send staff to HIV education trainings
 - Give regular opportunities for organizers to inform and update the community on issues related to HIV
- **Access/distribute:** (<http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/idu/pubidu/en/>)

¹⁹ “America’s Hidden H.I.V. Epidemic - The New York Times,” accessed June 14, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/06/magazine/americas-hidden-hiv-epidemic.html?_r=0.

- Sharps containers
 - ♦ <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/medicaldevices/productsandmedicalprocedures/home-healthandconsumer/consumerproducts/sharps/ucm278782.pdf>
- Condoms (For various genitalia)
 - ♦ http://www.ucc.org/ucan_why-give-out-condoms
- Location of nearest needle exchange
 - ♦ Note: Studies have not confirmed whether bleach-cleaning methods effectively prevent the spread of HIV, and all should be encouraged to always use only new needles.
- **Curate and distribute lists of housing and health care referrals**
 - Housing Options:
 - ♦ <http://www.thebody.com/index/hotlines/calif.html>
 - ♦ <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?NID=1347>
 - ♦ <http://sf4tay.org/placecategory/hivpositiveyoungadults/>
 - ♦ <http://www.sfcenter.org/resources/housing>
 - ♦ <http://sfaf.org/client-services/housing-support/?referrer=https://www.google.com/>
 - ♦ <http://www.acgov.org/cda/hcd/hiv-aids-housing/>
- **Build connections** with reproductive rights organizations and harm-reduction organizations
 - Reproductive Justice:
 - ♦ <http://accesswhj.org/> <https://reproductivefreedomca.org/>
 - ♦ <http://religiousinstitute.org/reproductive-justice/>
 - Harm Reduction:
 - ♦ <http://harmreductiontherapy.org/> <http://harmreduction.org/>
 - ♦ <http://www.smchealth.org/hivstds>
- **Offer comprehensive sex education for children, youth, and adults in your community** in age appropriate ways. There are programs specifically designed for communities of faith, such as the excellent Our Whole Lives curriculum developed by the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universality Association.
- **Provide free condoms, clean works kits, and sharps containers**, placed in public spaces where people can easily access them. Studies have proven that these do not encourage sex or drug use and do decrease HIV transmission.
- **Mark World AIDS Day** on December 1 with a worship service, newsletter article, sermon, blog post or social media post. Note other important days that may be relevant to your community, such as African-American AIDS Awareness Day (February 7th), and Latinx AIDS awareness Day (October 15th); see <https://www.hiv.gov/events/awareness-days> for a list of awareness days.
- **Host a display of the Names Project Quilt** in your community, either in your own building or in another public space. <http://www.aidsquilt.org/>



Profile: Minister Rob Newells, Executive Director, AIDS Project of the East Bay

“The deal with HIV ministry is that every church is going to be in a different place and start in a different place. And a church doesn’t even have to talk about HIV to be effective in the HIV epidemic. If you have a women’s ministry that talks about interim partner violence, know that you are working on HIV prevention. If you have a feeding program, food insecurity is a direct factor for HIV infection risk, so you are working on HIV. If you have a housing program and you work with homeless folks, you are working on HIV. There are all these intersecting issues that folks can be working on to affect the HIV epidemic. I think it can be scary for people when you have queer folks coming in saying you have to do X, Y, and Z, when really it is, whatever you are doing: Let’s add this component to it and do it better. It’s not necessarily starting something totally new, starting a special thing for this special group of people - it’s really about what you are already doing and working with that.”

—Minister Rob Newells, Executive Director, AIDS Project of the East Bay

The Imani Community Church (ICC) is a progressive African-American congregation located in Oakland, California. Rob Newells is currently one of the Ministers at ICC, while also serving as the Executive Director of the AIDS Project of the East Bay. Minister Newells began HIV ministry at the church in 2010, just as the congregation began its transition towards engaging an open-and-affirming practice. In 2011, he served as a fellow at the Community Mobilization College at the African-American HIV University of the Black AIDS Institute. He then went on to help develop the East Bay HIV Faith Collaborative in 2013, which brought together clergy and lay people from the San Francisco Bay Area to create workshops promoting HIV discussion and prevention education in faith communities.

Newells advocates for a holistic educational approach as a medium for integrating concerns about HIV/AIDS into conversation at the ICC. Rather than immediately focusing on niche information about HIV statistics and prevention, the first step involves addressing and eliminating the stigma around the virus and those who have it. By normalizing discussion around personal health, including sexual health of congregants as a regular topic of conversation, HIV will be seen as an important consideration in the fabric of health and wellness. Newells suggests that HIV is best discussed as part of a larger curriculum around healthy sex and sexuality. In order for a faith community to take seriously the risk factors and preventative measures related to HIV, it must be able to speak frankly about sex, including sex among young people, the elderly, and members of the LGBTQI+ community. HIV prevention as an intersectional effort related to many other justice ministries creates bridges for this area of concern to emerge as a natural point of importance rather than be seen as a tangential subject.

Chapter 7: Housing

Access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is a human right that many LGBTQI+ people struggle to maintain. The primary housing insecurity issues faced by LGBTQI+ communities includes housing discrimination, displacement, and homelessness - with youth, seniors, communities of color, and LGBTQI+ people living with disabilities being the most impacted populations. According to recent studies, 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQI+. ²⁰ Over half (52%) of the entire LGBT adult population in the U.S. lives in a state where there is no legal protection from housing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.²¹ On a local level, rapid gentrification and displacement of historical neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay Area have displaced many low-income LGBTQI+ communities with 294 buildings in the Castro consisting of 837 units evicted via the Ellis Act from 1997–2013; in the Mission, a neighborhood that contains a large transgender population, 158 buildings and 455 units have been cleared in the same time period.²² These statistics demonstrate that housing justice must be a central focus for LGBTQI+ movements.

Questions for Discussion

How are faith communities across the country addressing the housing crisis? What capacity is there to offer direct services to LGBTQI+ populations who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless? What local advocacy efforts could you join to support permanently affordable community-controlled housing?

Best Practices & Suggestions:

- **Direct Service and Rapid Response Programs:**
 - **Radically Inclusive Staff & Volunteer Training** - Insuring LGBTQI+ Cultural Competency across sectors and services is very important for providing direct services to homeless populations.
 - **Hiring:** Hire and resource community members who reflect the populations you seek to serve, in this case people who are a part of LGBTQI+ communities.
 - **Assessment Tools:** It is important to have intake and assessment tools that are appropriate and timely. While it is important to understand the needs of the communities you are serving, it may vary when and how you ask people if they identify as LGBTQI+. Be sensitive about how this information is requested in direct service programs.
 - **Transitional Housing Services:** Use and expand church resources and/or partner with other organizations to provide transitional housing to LGBTQI+ communities, particularly to LGBTQI+ youth.
- **Housing Advocacy and Coalition Building:** Reclaiming the sacredness of land and place requires advocating for a world where we put people over profit, and where it is possible for everyone to live in the places where they work, play, pray, and love. Some local and national advocacy and grassroots community resilience networks to consult include:
 - Right to the City Alliance / Homes for All Campaign: <http://righttothecity.org/>

20 Durso, L.E., & Gates, G.J. *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*. 2012. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund.

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- SAGE - National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative: <https://www.sageusa.org/lgbthousing/>
- Transgender Housing Network: <http://www.transhousingnetwork.com/post/70638413381/heres-your-list-queer-housing-resource-list>
- The Faith Alliance for a Moral Economy: <http://workingeastbay.org/work/fame/>
- CenterLink: LGBTQI+ Community Centers Directory: <http://www.lgbtcenters.org/>



Profile: Glide Memorial Church

“Because of Glide’s genesis as an informal church group rooted in community connections, we have the opportunity to create real community with people creating deeper connections and long-term trust. That’s service.”

—Ben Lintschinger - Glide, Advocacy Program Manager

GLIDE’s mission is to create a radically inclusive, just and loving community that is mobilized to alleviate suffering and break the cycles of poverty and marginalization. Among Glide’s robust wellness programs, its Walk-In Center is the only site in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco where people can reserve a bed in San Francisco’s shelter system. In addition, Glide’s Rental Assistance program provides access to financial help for individuals and families needing assistance with back rent, rental and security deposits, and other critical needs. Glide also provides basic needs services and has a robust Case Management and Family Resource Center. Alongside programs that feed the hungry and heal the sick, GLIDE’s organization is also a place that offers LGBTQI+-affirming ministry under a diverse leadership.



Chapter 8: Incarceration and Detention

The United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, both for those convicted of crimes and those being held in immigration detention. Racism is very evident in these rates, with people of color much more likely to be incarcerated, and for longer terms, than white defendants accused of the same crimes. LGBTQI+ people also face higher rates of criminalization—LGBTQI+ persons are 3.8% of the population, yet represent 7.9% of the state and federal population and 7.1% of city and county lockups.

In 2014, 75% of LGBTQI+ or HIV+ persons had a “face-to-face” encounter with law enforcement. Almost half of black trans persons have spent time behind bars. Between 12-20% of juvenile offenders identify as LGBTQI+. In addition, LGBTQI+ people experience significantly higher rates of sexual victimization while incarcerated than other groups. Because of this, LGBTQI+ prisoners and detainees may be segregated or held in solitary custody, which takes an enormous emotional and spiritual toll on a person.

LGBTQI+ affirming faith leaders can make a significant difference to these populations. A large percentage of prison ministry is conducted by conservative Christian groups, creating a significant gap in positive and culturally competent spiritual care for LGBTQI+ prisoners and detainees. Of course, all human beings deserve spiritual care which respects their personhood and upholds their dignities. Many of our religious traditions urge us to visit the prisoner and uphold justice.

Questions for Discussion

Are people aware of these issues in our community? How can we raise their awareness? What do our sacred texts and religious traditions tell us about how to relate to those in prison? How do we fulfill those mandates in our congregational life? What role can people of faith play to challenge the devastating rates of incarceration in our country, particularly as it impacts of communities of color?

Best practices and suggestions

- **Visit those in prison and detention** to offer affirming spiritual care. There are special procedures to go through to receive clearance to visit; these procedures often vary by institution. The chaplain’s office may be able to provide you with guidance about these. There may be different requirements for clergy and laity.
- **Advocate for humane practices in jails, prisons, and detention centers.** Insist that programs to prevent violence and sexual assault be implemented, as well as opportunities for those incarcerated to gain access to education, art, music, religious, and other programs. Speak out specifically about the needs of LGBTQI+ prisoners and detainees and their rights to access all programs.
- Find out if **community groups** offering spiritual tools, such as the Enneagram, meditation, and other programs, are active in your local jails, prisons, and detention centers, and support these efforts.
- **Educate yourself and your community** about the needs of prisoners and detainees in your local area.
- **Recruit volunteers to write to prisoners.** Black and Pink is a program which specifically supports LGBTQI+ people in prison and can connect individuals or congregations to prisoners. These letters provide a vital lifeline of support and encouragement to those behind bars. Amnesty International’s LGBTQI+ program also offers addresses to write to LGBTQI+ prisoners of conscience around the world, as well as to advocate for their release.
- **Connect with wider programs for prison abolition** or efforts to decrease the rate of incarceration in our country. Raise issues specific to LGBTQI+ prisoners as well as calling into question the racist nature of the US judicial system and its application.

Profile: Black and Pink

“We meet people where they’re at, as no one is perfect. We don’t engage in destructive, harsh call-outs but learn together and lovingly push each other’s analysis and praxis toward abolition and liberation. We encourage people to step back when they want/need to do self-care on their own terms, and we also put effort into community care, such as scheduling community dinners and volunteer appreciation gatherings that aren’t meant to be ‘productive’ but just a time to appreciate one another, take a break, and have fun.”

-Black and Pink Website

Black & Pink organizes a community of LGBTQ prisoners and “free world” allies, offering avenues for mutual communication, support, and advocacy. Chapters of Black & Pink run workshops and trainings on the nature of the Prison Industrial Complex, its relationship to the LGBTQ community, sexual violence in prison, and the LGBTQ Youth School-to-Prison Pipeline. The workshops are directly informed by experiences of incarcerated people and are oriented towards the abolishment of the Prison Industrial Complex altogether. The organization also provides information about how incarcerated individuals might go about advocating for themselves in prison, and what forms of assistance and advocacy allies can offer a prisoner experiencing harassment, sexual violence and/or lack of access to proper health care. In addition, Black & Pink produces and distributes a monthly newsletter featuring stories, poetry, art, and articles by LGBTQ people in prison, information about programs and advocacy, and broader queer and prison related news.

Black & Pink also provides resources for LGBTQ incarcerated individuals and allies to communicate as pen pals by facilitating a forum for introduction and providing helpful guidelines and tips regarding conversations topics and fruitful boundaries (many of which have been put forward by incarcerated individuals who have successfully participated with pen pals in the past). Black & Pink offers opportunities for prolonged relationships as well as one-time group correspondences.

Black & Pink currently has volunteer-run chapters in Boise, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, New York City, Providence, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and the Southwest Ohio region. Congregations, religious organizations, or individuals interested in participating in Incarceration related ministry can connect to Black & Pink through a nearby chapter, or create a new chapter if there is none in the area.



Conclusion

The calling that led our congregations to welcome and affirm LGBTQ+ people continues to inspire us. That drive for inclusion can grow and encompass other movements for justice. It is our hope that this guide has sparked some new ideas about how you or your congregation can expand your vision in ways that lead to greater inclusion and effective advocacy for LGBTQ+ people and other marginalized groups. There are many ways to build a just and affirming world. It is not important which of these ideas you pick or whether you select an idea of your own—what matters is that we take action in line with our faith. We hope that you'll let us know how you engage in this important work!

Contact us at clgs@clgs.org



Center for
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