

Including LGBT Congregants

- Call LGBT people to serve as clergy members, paid staff, or in elected lay positions, as appropriate
- Offer mission trips and outreach groups that address LGBT issues
- Host “wedding reunions” and include committed partnerships and civil unions of same-sex couples

Rabbi Larry Edwards

Congregation Or Chadash, Chicago, IL

“Many congregations have become more welcoming, but Or Chadash is still the Jewish congregation most closely identified with the LGBTQ community. We have participated for many years in the Pride Parade. Most of our programs (guest speakers, etc.) feature individuals from the LGBTQ community and/or topics of direct concern. We see ourselves, and want to be seen, as the Jewish presence in the LGBTQ community and the LGBTQ voice in the Jewish community.”

LGBT-related Sermons or Announcements

- Make regular announcements concerning LGBT current issues (e.g. marriage equality)
- Encourage LGBT members at your place of worship to share their stories at services, events, trainings, etc.
- Give sermons that are LGBT-related a couple of times a year
- Include sentiments of LGBT inclusion in congregational prayers (example below)

Reverend Rex Piercy

Congregational United Church of Christ, Arlington Heights, IL

“Gracious God, Spirit of the wind, Spirit of the grass and the wild sea, Spirit of the human heart – we gather with and for one another, seeking glimpses, whispers and shouts, the glancing, evocative touch of your presence. We come from many places. We come together in our longing for you, and we come, trusting that your spirit thrives in the gathering of our diversities. Help us all...all of us, richer and poorer, gay and straight, older and younger, man and woman and infant child...help us all to love ourselves as you intended and love our neighbors as you commanded. Amen.”

Donation Strategies to Support LGBT Congregants and Communities

- Donate a Sunday collection plate, Tzedakah box, or give Zakat to an LGBT organization
- Allocate free space for hosting PFLAG or other LGBT group meetings
- Donate time to LGBT organizations
- Help/host displaced LGBT or Questioning youth

Old St. Patrick’s Church

Chicago, IL, LGBT Host Home Program

“Old St. Pat’s GLBT outreach is an initiative where gay and lesbian people of faith are welcomed to explore their spirituality and share their experiences, strengths and hopes with everyone especially the larger church. Our mission is to provide a safe place for Spiritual practice, Educational events, Social activities and engage in Service to others in a supportive way; and to Outreach to the larger church and Archdiocesan community. One of our initiatives is to partner with UCAN’s LGBTQ Host Home Program which is an innovative approach to moving Chicago’s LGBTQ youth beyond life on the streets. It is a housing model that provides an alternative to the shelter system for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning homeless youth. Host Home volunteers step forward to open their home for a period of time to a youth aged 18-24. The goal of this program is to create the safety and stability necessary for a youth to work towards their goal of self-sufficiency and a permanent transition from homelessness to independence.”

For more information: oldstpats.org or ucanichicago.org

Connecting Faith and Sexuality

- Perform and honor same-sex unions and marriages
- Welcome children from all types of families into your faith community by holding their baptisms, brit milah, or other rites
- Join a denominationally-based Welcoming Church Program
- Build a list of LGBT-related resources so that you can refer anyone of that population who is in crisis or in need to the appropriate group, institution, or organization (see back panel)

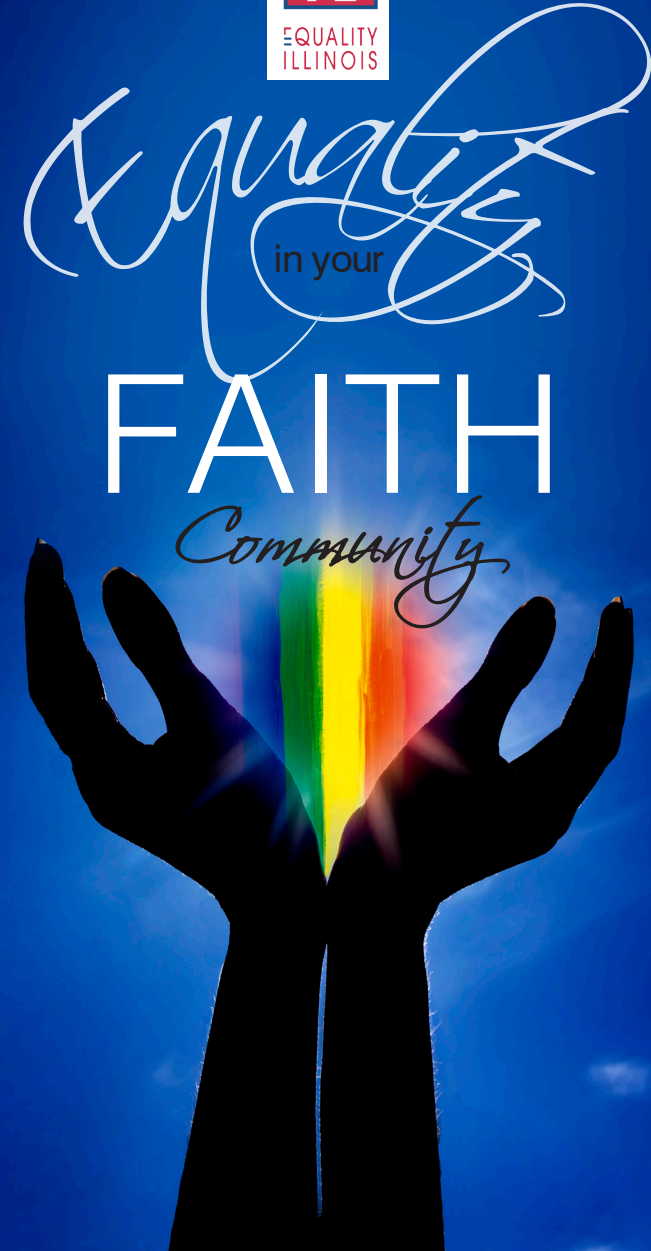
LGBT-friendly organizations and resources:

- www.equalityillinois.org - Equality Illinois - an LGBT civil rights organization with resources for marriage equality, anti-bullying, equal employment, etc.
- www.aamft.org - The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists - professional association of counselors trained in marriage and family therapy, with links to finding local therapists
- www.thetrevorproject.org - The Trevor Project - a youth suicide prevention organization advocating in schools, online, and in communities
- www.itgetsbetter.org - The It Gets Better Project - an online video project started by columnist Dan Savage promoting youth suicide prevention
- www.rainbowhealth.org - The Rainbow Health Initiative - an organization advancing the health and wellness of the LGBT communities through education, research, and advocacy
- www.pflag.org - Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays - a network of support groups and chapters for straight allies of LGBT people
- www.glsen.org - The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network - an organization for students, parents, and teachers that affects positive change in schools
- www.auburnseminary.org - Auburn Media - seminary provides media expertise to religious leaders and religious expertise to the media

For more information on Welcoming LGBT members please see the Institute for Welcoming Resources’ “Building an Inclusive Church” toolkit, available for free download on their website, <http://www.welcomingresources.org/>. The guide is catered towards Communities of faith with few inclusive practices currently in place, and is the work of numerous Clergy members representing an array of Faith Communities.

For Jewish Communities of Faith, please see the Union for Reform Judaism’s “18+ Ways to make Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Members feel Welcome in your Congregation,” available for download on their website, <http://urj.org>.

We would like to thank all of the organizations and individuals who contributed to the “Equality in your Faith Community” publication. A complete list of contributors is included in the expanded online version of the “Equality In Your Faith Community” booklet found at www.eqil.org.



A GUIDE TO LGBT-INCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

AT EQUALITY ILLINOIS, we envision a fair and unified Illinois where everyone is treated equally with dignity and respect, and where all people live freely regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

As part of our work toward that vision, we have launched the Faith & Freedom Initiative to build bridges and strengthen relationships between communities of faith and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality movement. People of faith and religious leaders are already strong advocates for LGBT equality, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender congregants are an integral part of many religious communities.

In a step towards that vision, we have reached out to communities of faith who have responded with their desire for a guide to inclusive practices. In an effort to make this possible, we want to hear what you do on a regular basis; whether you include LGBT and Questioning individuals in your practices and services, or celebrate them each and every day.

Our aim in this project is to share your knowledge. Some communities of faith already practice these thoughtful and creative ways to show their support, and some are looking for ways to further their inclusion and deepen their welcome. Some of what has been shared with us in this project thus far are practices which can be utilized every day, while some are much larger and more visible. Please feel free to take from this what you feel you can comfortably implement and use this guide to continue to nurture and develop your spiritual community.

In our effort to keep this a living document, we continue to welcome submissions to this project via our website at www.eqil.org. We want to keep spreading the word that the faith community loves and welcomes the LGBT community, and that the advocates for true equality are as widespread and diverse as the people of the world.

Thank you for dedicating your time and energy to the inclusion and affirmation of all individuals.



Welcoming *the* LGBT Community with Language and Literature

- Use inclusive or LGBT-friendly language in places like in-house literature, in sermons/homilies or on your website, etc; for example, you could use “partner” or “spouse” in addition to “husband” or “wife”
- Have welcoming literature present and easily accessible; posters that include many types of families (e.g. blended, same-sex parents), pamphlets about LGBT-related issues, or language-sensitive prayer books
- Post rainbow flags on windows, posters, literature, or other high-profile places
- Publish a “statement of welcome” (example below)

St. Paul Lutheran Church,
Wheaton, IL

Statement of Welcome and Affirmation

“As a community of the people of God, we are called to minister to all people in our world, which can be a place of alienation and brokenness. Christ calls us to be a family of healing and welcome within our society. We profess our commitment to invite and openly welcome all to hear and experience the work of God, to share communion and the promise of the risen Christ. Further, we believe that the Holy Spirit can and does work with and through all beings created by God. It is for this purpose that we affirm the following:

- *that persons of all races, national and ethnic origins, ages, mental and emotional condition or capacity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, economic situation and those who suffer from addictions share with others the worth which comes from being unique individuals created by God, and that all stand before God in need of forgiveness;*
- *that all persons named and unnamed above are welcome within the membership of our congregation upon making the same affirmation of faith that all other members make;*
- *and that as members, all are expected and encouraged to share in the worship, fellowship, and general life of this congregation.”*

For more information, please visit www.stpaulwheaton.org



Educating Leaders *and* Congregants of your Place of Worship About *the* LGBT Community

- Host or present talks, roundtables, film series, etc. with an LGBT theme*
- Host a speaker, with a Q&A session, which focuses on LGBT issues
- Encourage faith leaders and congregants to attend specific classes to learn about sexual orientation, terminology, issues, welcoming, inclusion, etc.
- Sponsor an educational session hosted by LGBT members of your place of worship or by an LGBT organization (example below)

PFLAG: Straight for Equality in Faith Communities

From the website:

“This 90 minute - 2 hour discussion based training starts with a panel of individuals with different experiences and points of view on GLBT and faith issues. After each person on the panel speaks, the trainer leads a discussion with the audience. This allows everyone to reflect on the material and open up lines of communication with others in their faith group. This is not about politics, not about advocacy. This is about the everyday changes you can make in your faith community.

For PFLAG members and supporters, we will teach you how to present this program in your faith community and be ready to start creating change now.”

For more information, please visit www.pflag.org

* Please see our “Faith In Our Community” resource guide for movies, books and other publications with LGBT themes.

Events Celebrating *the* LGBT Community

- Plan to have members of your place of worship march in a local Gay Pride parade
- Volunteer your faith community to host/display the Names Project (AIDS) Quilt, or the Shower of Stoles Project*
- Host or plan brunches, pot-lucks, or get-togethers for LGBT congregants, families and friends
- When posting photos of families and/or events, incorporate photos of all types of families (example below)

Eileen Wiviott

Membership Director of the Unitarian Church of Evanston
Exhibit: “Love Makes a Family”

‘Love Makes a Family’ is a museum-quality traveling exhibit including photographs and interviews with families that have lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) members. Through first-person accounts and positive images, this exhibit seeks to challenge and change damaging myths and stereotypes about LGBT people and their families. At the most basic level, Love Makes A Family combats homophobia by breaking silence and making the invisible visible. By encouraging people of all ages - beginning in early childhood - to affirm and appreciate diversity, this traveling rental exhibit contributes to the process of dismantling the destructive power of prejudice and intolerance, thereby making the world a safer place for all families.

Designed for audiences of all ages, Love Makes a Family challenges stereotypes about LGBT people and helps dismantle homophobia.”

For more information, please visit <http://www.familydiv.org/lovmakesafamily.php>

* For more information on the Names Project Quilt or the Shower of Stoles Project see:

www.aidsquilt.org
www.welcomingresources.org/sosp.htm