



Welcoming Congregation 101

Purpose

In 1988, the UUA Board of Trustees formed the Common Vision Planning Committee to create a program for congregations interested in becoming more inclusive.

No set of guidelines can address the diverse needs of the wide range of Unitarian Universalist congregations, but the following Commitments to inclusiveness and Actions for achieving those Commitments were adopted by the delegates of the 1989 General Assembly as the outline for The Welcoming Congregation Program.

Please remember that these guidelines are not a precise blueprint, but rather a suggestive road map for congregations beginning the journey toward becoming truly welcoming.

Commitments

A Welcoming Congregation is inclusive and expressive of the concerns of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender persons at every level of congregational life—in worship, in program, and in social occasions, welcoming not only their presence but the unique gifts and particularities of their lives as well.

A Welcoming Congregation does not assume anyone's affectional/sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Vocabulary of worship reflects this perception; worship celebrates diversity by inclusivity of language and content.

An understanding of the experience of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender persons will be fully incorporated throughout all programs, including religious education.

The bylaws and other official documents of a Welcoming Congregation include an affirmation and nondiscrimination clause affecting all dimensions of congregational life, including membership, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals.

A Welcoming Congregation engages in outreach into the bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender communities, both through its advertising and by actively supporting other bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender affirmative groups.

A Welcoming Congregation offers congregational and ministerial support for services of union and memorial services for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender persons, and celebrations of evolving definitions of family.

A Welcoming Congregation celebrates the lives of all people and welcomes same-gender couples, recognizing their committed relationships, and equally affirms displays of caring and affection without regard for sexual orientation.

A Welcoming Congregation seeks to nurture ongoing dialogue between people of different affectional/sexual orientations and gender identifications, and to create deeper trust and sharing.

A Welcoming Congregation encourages the presence of a chapter of Interweave (the Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender concerns).

A Welcoming Congregation affirms and celebrates bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender issues and history during the church year (possibly including Gay Pride Week, which is in June).

A Welcoming Congregation, as an advocate for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people, attends to legislative developments and works to promote justice, freedom, and equality in the larger society. It speaks out when the rights and dignity of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people are at stake.

A Welcoming Congregation celebrates the lives of all people and their ways of expressing their love for each other.