



Interfaith Action  
SW Michigan Peace & Justice Collaborative

## All Are Welcome Criteria

*Action Steps for Becoming an LGBTQ Inclusive Faith Community*

### **Education**

Promote awareness and education on LGBTQ<sup>1</sup> inclusion in your faith community.

#### Action Steps

- Maintain a resource library of faith and LGBTQ materials<sup>2</sup>
- Have at least one LGBTQ themed children's book in your library
- Reference LGBTQ non-discrimination in a sermon or worship liturgy at least twice a year
- Host a coffee hour or special educational session on LGBTQ issues
- Host a variety of workshops or conversation series on LGBTQ identities & Faith for kids, youth, and adults.

### **Involvement**

Support all forms of LGBTQ participation in your community, understanding that each LGBTQ congregant will have a unique approach to involvement in a congregation.<sup>3</sup>

#### Action Steps

- Include LGBTQ people in your worship services at least once a year
- Indicate your willingness to support and host LGBTQ weddings
- If you list wedding anniversaries in your newsletters, include anniversaries of LGBTQ couples
- Include photos or feature stories of LGBTQ individuals in your congregation in your print and digital communications.
- Highlight an LGBTQ person of faith (historic or contemporary) in your worship service or in a liturgy.

### **Transformation**

Look beyond integration and toward the transformation of systems of injustice.

#### Action Steps

- Post on your website and display outside your building of worship a symbol of LGBTQ+ inclusion, such as "*we are an All Are Welcome congregation,*" an *All Are Welcome* poster, or a pride flag
- Participate in your denomination's LGBTQ recognition program
- Use inclusive language, i.e. alternative terms to gendered terms for familial and romantic relationships, i.e partner, spouse, sibling, friends
- Express your willingness to host LGBTQ advocacy and ally groups

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<sup>1</sup> This document uses the acronym LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) to cover a wide range of sexuality and gender identities.

<sup>2</sup> If you'd like educational resources on LGBTQ information and concerns, contact Interfaith Action.

<sup>3</sup> LGBTQ population and participation will vary between faith communities.

- Recognize June as Pride Month in your digital and print communications
- Maintain a referral list for families, adults, or youth looking for counseling support around LGBTQ identities
- Participate in advocacy campaigns to secure LGBTQ legal protections
- Designate gender-neutral restrooms in your building of worship

\*All Are Welcome: 'Policy and Practice' Certification:

In addition to being formally affirming, faith communities that complete 80% of the inclusive policy and practice action steps provided by Interfaith Action will be recognized as a 'policy and practice' congregation on Interfaith Action's website and will receive a certificate from Interfaith Action.

## **All Are Welcome Rationale**

### **Education**

Suggestions about education are intended to encourage faith leaders to acquaint themselves with the diversity within their congregations. This doesn't just refer to variance in gender and sexuality, but also regarding congregants' ideas of what "inclusion" entails. Some may be fully supportive of including LGBTQ congregants as church members but hesitant to welcome a LGBTQ congregational leader. Some LGBTQ folks may want to take very visible positions of community leadership within the church, while others may want to participate quietly. A wide range of intersecting factors can influence these ideas. While an inclusive church's goal is, of course, full inclusion and participation for LGBTQ people, it is also in the best interest and safety of all to understand that a broad statement from a church or denomination may not capture the nuance in individual congregants' understanding of what that statement implies.

### **Involvement**

As stated in the previous section, LGBTQ congregants will have varying degrees of desire to engage visibly with a church. There are many reasons for LGBTQ people to want to involve themselves with a congregation *and* there are as many reasons to avoid visibility, such as unhealed religious trauma, fear of being targeted, apprehension of being tokenized, etc. Regardless of how LGBTQ congregants might be feeling about participation in a particular moment, visible and open invitations from leaders can help affirm that their participation is always welcome and is a crucial element of full inclusion.

### **Transformation**

Inviting LGBTQ people to fully join a congregation is an invitation to the whole church to embrace transformation and consider what other structures of inequality have been embedded in their context. This process can be difficult and painful, and may seem daunting and even inaccessible to congregants. External resources such as books and curricula written by members of marginalized populations can help a congregation sensitively approach topics of curiosity or concern. Additionally, partnering with local organizations that specialize in facilitating safe dialogue about sexuality and gender might help provide helpful language and also relieve pressure from individual congregants and leaders.

Language for Certification Phases:

- Hospitable
- Fully-Affirming
- Practice and Policy Inclusive