

Five Case Studies

Case Study A

Your congregation's board has voted to create a Welcoming Congregation Committee. The Nominating Committee has submitted a list of names for possible committee membership. The list reflects the diversity of the congregation and is approved. After several meetings, the committee's straight members share that they want the congregation to be welcoming to all people, not as the program implies, to only the BGLT community. "Don't we want to welcome everyone?" they insist. The BGLT committee members say that yes, we want to welcome all but that is not what the Welcoming Congregation program is about. When this discussion is shared in the congregation at large, many of the BGLT members are disappointed and hurt.

Case Study B

You are a member of the Board of Trustees of your large UU congregation. Your African American minister has served the congregation for five years and revitalized the congregation with his inspiring sermons, boundless energy, innovative worship music, public social justice ministry, and witty sense of humor. You have recently received several complaints from members that he is too evangelical, too Christian, and that the music chosen for Sundays is too loud and not what attracted them to the congregation (prior to this minister). They say that this isn't Unitarian Universalism.

Case Study C

You and three others are transgender-identified members of your small suburban UU congregation. The congregation and its leadership expect you to educate the congregation about transgender identity by sharing your personal experiences and stories of what it's like growing up transgender. For you and your three friends to make yourselves vulnerable in this way, particularly when you share experiences that evoke strong emotional memories, makes other members of the congregation feel that you are too fragile or emotional to assume leadership positions. You have become so identified with this one aspect of your identity that the community doesn't see other aspects of your complex human identity. You would like to run for a position on your congregation's Board of Trustees. You take your concerns to your three friends.

Case Study D

You are a member of the board of a mid-sized UU congregation. He is a forty-one-year-old Latino musician who performs in many local venues and has been attending your congregation for only three months. He is very sociable during coffee hour and displays affection effusively, hugging and touching many women. Some people find this behavior amusing, some find it embarrassing, and some say that they will stop attending the congregation if something isn't done.

Case Study E

You are president of the Board of Trustees of your large congregation. Your congregation is in a difficult transition period with the retirement of your beloved minister of thirty years and a dramatic shortfall in the canvas. Many members say you need a second canvas. But you remember your conversations with some older members of your congregation who are living on a fixed income and feel they can no longer participate because they can't afford to pledge annually and/or their physical condition doesn't allow them to perform service as an alternative to financial stewardship.

Questions

- Name the power differences between the persons or groups involved in these situations. What experiences of personal bias or structures of cultural oppression may be present here? What is normative for this congregation?
- What responses are called for? Who needs to be involved? What are the issues that need to be addressed? What resources and/or resource people need to be engaged?
- What congregational structures and strategies—policies and procedures—for safety need to be in place? What role does the UUA or district have in these situations?