

Living the Welcoming Congregation

A number of years ago, before the Reverend Keith Kron became Director of the Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns (OBGLTC), we realized that our congregations needed something beyond the *Welcoming Congregation* program. Many of our congregations voted to be recognized as *Welcoming Congregations*, received their poster and then stopped — from exhaustion, from feeling the need to address other matters, or, in some cases, because they thought that they were finished with the work of being a *Welcoming Congregation*.

Later, many of these congregations recognized the need to continue and to deepen the work they had started. At first we at the Office didn't know how to respond. These congregations were *doing* the work of the *Welcoming Congregation* program. Eventually however, we realized that we needed to create resources for these congregations to deepen and expand their “Welcoming” status.

And thus, the curriculum of *Living the Welcoming Congregation* has been in development for over seven years... thank you for your patience! Having been in direct relationship with over 400 UU congregations over the last seven years, we have created a curriculum that shows a pragmatic approach, with a fair amount of fun and creativity thrown in for good measure. This is work designed to deepen understandings, create change, and make a difference. All in all, it is good work for Unitarian Universalists.

This new *Living the Welcoming Congregation* (LWC) curriculum is created to be adaptable and re-useable in order to fit the needs and personality of your congregation. The Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns has always operated on these premises: We know something about oppression. The congregation understands itself best. These two can be combined into a good fit.

We have endeavored to create a simple curriculum that allows people to take some time for reflection. Participants can decide if the next stages of their work are for personal growth, congregational life, or working within the larger community. We have spent the last four years thinking, experimenting, testing and editing the new program.

Now it is up to you to take further. By *Living* it in your congregation.

This may not be as easy as you think but it can be extremely rewarding.

And ultimately it is *you* who will make the difference. The Office is here to help you in whatever ways we can.

Have fun,and keep changing the world!!

In faith,
The staff of OBGLTC

Membership and Leadership Guide

We recommend that no fewer than 5-6 people undertake the leadership of this project. Unusually high numbers of participants may force you to vary some of the work, but we know you will do that anyway. This curriculum is not as linear as the *Welcoming Congregation* program. We do not advise that you skip any workshops, at least on the first time through the curriculum. Since this is about making real change, you should not be afraid to take your time.

Although there are only 13 Sessions, several of them will require more planning than can be done in a week. You may wish to plan more than 13 weeks worth of sessions to give yourself some flexibility in the timeline. (Schedule more sessions than you think you will need. It is easier to cancel a session than try to add an additional one.) Additionally, there is an optional session that addresses “Working with Children and B/G/L/T Issues” which we highly recommend you take the time to do.

We strongly advise you to read or scan the entire curriculum through, at least once before beginning. And then, it is advised that you read and prepare each workshop well ahead of time. Each session builds on the next one, but there are opportunities for you to insert an optional workshop if you are not ready to move on in the series.

The workshops are designed so that one or two people can lead each one, allowing for leadership to be rotated and shared. People can also potentially work on different things at the same time. You should assess what seems to work best for your group and congregation.

If you find that you need help, please contact the Office. We are a resource for you.

Expectations

A congregation must be recognized by the Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns as a Welcoming Congregation, having completed the *Welcoming Congregation* process using the purple book OR having completed the *Welcoming Congregation* process using the black book **and** done additional sessions or other intentional work around bisexual, transgender, and race issues.

A congregation agrees to join with the Office in a covenant to *not* share these materials with congregations that have not completed the WC process. The LWC builds on the WC curriculum, and there are many congregations that may feel they are ready for the LWC but have not really done the work of WC.

A congregation will send a one-page letter or email to the Office upon completion of the curriculum, providing feedback and letting the Office know what it has done.

As questions arise, do not hesitate to contact the Office for clarifications. And please check the website regularly. Updates are made more frequently to the website than they are published in book format.