

Session 2: Where Are We? Where Am I?

Learning Objectives:

- To examine where the participants, congregation, and community are with regard to dismantling homophobia and heterosexism.

Session Summary:

This session is mainly about collecting data regarding values, assumptions, and interests. The information will be both educational and useful for the next steps. Participants will spend time in conversation with each other. This session is also about building community.

Background:

The three activities involve investigations of values, knowledge of history, knowledge of attentiveness, and the reframing of standard questions to promote greater thinking. If your group is not well mixed between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, you may have some difficulty in working with the third exercise. That exercise asks people to put themselves in the other's shoes and to examine these lives from both the inside and outside. It is very important for people to hear what bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people say about their lives and to trust that. You may well need to talk about that in advance. Encourage throughout for people to listen to one another without judgment and remember the ground rules.

Materials needed:

1. Paper
2. Pencil/pens

3. Newsprint
4. Markers—one for everyone
5. Handout

Preparation:

- Have the paper and pens ready for each group.
- Run off copies of the 20 questions handout if used as such.
- Prepare the questions ahead of time on the newsprint.
- Either tape the questions up ahead of time or have people post them for you.

Workshop Plan:

Opening Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

(You are invited to pick a reading and/or an opening hymn. Singing The Living Tradition is an excellent resource. Other options are a moment of silence, a prayer, or a brief check-in. You are encouraged to also begin with a chalice lighting. Please submit any readings and/or hymn choices that you have used successfully to the OBGLTC as feedback for possible inclusion in future editions of LWC.)

Activities:

Questions (25 minutes)

In groups of 3-4, have people answer the questions listed below. Allow enough time for each person to speak for a *minute or two*. For the first question, have someone in each group record their group's responses to report to the larger group.

1. What are 3 of your most important values?
2. How do these values apply to dismantling homophobia and heterosexism in our society?

Come back to the large group and ask each group's recorder to mention the values that were given and list them on newsprint. If the same values are mentioned by more than one group, note that on the newsprint. When all groups have reported, ask the entire group if there are any common values that appear in this list more than others. Suggest, after some observations, that this might be a clue as to where to engage in the upcoming work as well as a frame for the way in which they do it.

Invite comments from the second question as they relate in particular to those values that are more often mentioned. Again, listen carefully, and see where there might be clues as to how to proceed.

Twenty Questions (40 minutes)

Ask participants to find a partner. Tell them you are going to give them a series of questions to answer with their partner. There are many questions, so give each duo a minute to answer each question and then move on. (See handout.) [Ask the participants to think about which questions got/get their attention the most as they went/go through the process.] When you have completed all of the questions, invite participants to discuss which questions got their attention the most. Again this may be a clue as to what area you may wish to focus on. You may wish to distribute the questions as a handout and have participants mark the questions that were most intriguing/compelling to them. Collect these, if you want, for later use.

Newsprint (45 minutes)

Tell participants the next exercise is much more free in form. Several questions should be put up on newsprint. Hand participants a marker and tell them they have 30 minutes to engage in the questions. They are encouraged to draw or write their responses to the questions. They may work however they choose--individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

These are the questions: (One per newsprint)

1. How has the congregation changed since you became a Welcoming Congregation? (supply date)
2. How many open gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender people are in our congregation? (guess if need be)
3. What is it like to be a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender person in our congregation?
4. What is it like to be a heterosexual person in our congregation?
5. What is it like to be a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender person in our community/city?
6. What is it like to be a heterosexual person in our community/city?
7. How would your life be different in this congregation if your sexual orientation or gender identity were different than it is now?
8. How would your life be different in this community/city if your sexual orientation or gender identity were different than it is now?
9. What are the gifts to all of us of your own sexual orientation or of your being transgender?

10. What are the gifts to all of us from those with a different sexual orientation or gender identity?
11. What are the struggles of your own sexual orientation or gender identity?
12. What are the struggles of those with a different sexual orientation or gender identity?

After participants have had an opportunity to respond to each question on the newsprint, review each sheet and ask for comments. Notice when there are gaps as well. This is good information. Tell the participants that we will take this information next time to determine where to pursue our actions. Remind participants that this is good data for a place to begin work. Anything that might be inaccurate on this sheet is a good place for learning to begin.

Closing Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

(You are encouraged to find a suitable one. The difference between the Opening and Closing is that we suggest that one reading and/or one hymn is selected to be used as the closing for all sessions. The Opening may vary from session to session.)

Suggested Hymns

Suggested Readings

Add Your Suggestion

Ask participants to hold hands as they are willing, able, and comfortable.

Twenty Questions

Answer these questions quickly. Try to remember your initial first answer.

1. How would you feel if you saw two men holding hands?
How would you feel if you saw a man and a woman holding hands?
How would you feel if you saw two women holding hands?
2. You are in a room of 20 men and 20 women.
They are 20 same gender (bisexual, gay, lesbian) couples—how would you feel?
They are 20 man-woman couples—how would you feel?
3. How would you feel about your 7 year old being taught in his RE class by 2 gay men?
How about 1 straight man and straight woman?
(Feel free to keep playing with various combinations here.)
4. A member in your congregation asks you specifically to join the church group in the upcoming gay pride march to hold the church banner.
What would you say and why?
5. What would you say to a 4 year old who asked: (If they were 8? 12?)
Why are those two women holding hands?
What does gay mean?
Terry called me a fag. What should I say back?
6. A person of the same gender invites you to dinner or lunch. In the course of the meal this person says, “I think you are terrific. Are you gay, too? I wasn’t sure.” What would you say?
7. A person of the opposite gender invites you to dinner or lunch. In the course of the meal this person says, “I think you are terrific. Are you straight, too? I wasn’t sure.” What would you say?
8. The newspaper tells you that the school board is considering a motion that would prohibit any positive messages about bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people in the schools. What would you say to others and what would you do?
9. How would you feel if a man came to church in a dress (a very tasteful one, of course)? How about a woman in a nice 3-piece suit and very short hair?
10. If a friend told you that s/he was asked out on a date by someone who identified as bisexual and asked your opinion as to what they thought, what would you say?
11. You are a newcomer at church. You are asked, “Did you come alone? Are you married?” What would you say?
12. You go with a friend of the same gender to look at apartments. The agent at the building tells you “We only rent one bedrooms to married couples,” before you say anything at all. How would you respond?

13. Every committee chair at church and all but 1 board member is bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender. How would you feel about the church? How about if all but one were straight?
14. The Christmas party notice at work tells you that it is December 20th and husbands and wives are invited. How would you feel?
15. Two people of the same gender give each other a quick kiss hello. How would you feel? How about if they were male and female?
16. You are watching TV. Every character is bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender—except for 1 token straight person. How would you feel? How about if all but one were straight?
17. Your minister or board chair is speaking up for gay rights in the community, how would you feel if that person were straight? If they were bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender?
18. Pick one or something comparable: A gym, sports club, swimming pool, etc. that you go to tells you that they have a family membership if you are married and have kids—and that it is a very good deal. How would you respond?
19. Someone asks you where you go to church. You tell them. She responds with “Isn’t that where all the gay people go?” What would you say?
20. A lesbian tells you and another person that she and her partner are going away for the weekend. After she leaves, the person next to you asks, “Why does she have to talk about her sex life all the time?” You say

You now might look back on these questions and try to answer them, not from an individual point of view, but from how, in general, someone from your congregation—and then your larger community—might respond to these questions as well.

If you are straight, you might now revisit these questions and try to answer them from the perspective of some one you know who is gay or lesbian or bisexual or transgender.

If you are gay or lesbian, you might try to answer these questions from the perspective of a bisexual or straight person.

If you are bisexual and/or transgender what do the gay and lesbian and straight people not know about you?