

Session 3: If We Are Here, What Next?

Learning Objectives:

To Begin...

- the process of discerning where the group will expend its time and energy in the work of dismantling heterosexism and homophobia.

To Use...

- the work of the first two sessions to help inform our decision making.

Session Summary:

This session is a discernment conversation. Through individual, small, and large group discernment the participants will move toward clarity about what to focus on in the upcoming sessions.

Background:

As facilitator(s), you should be aware of your own biases within this process and be up front about them—reminding the group participants that you are a part of the group as well as the facilitator(s). It is better to be up-front than to try to ignore your preferences if you have any. Do not, however, overstate your preferences.

Materials:

1. Pens/pencils
2. Paper
3. Newsprint
4. Markers
5. Overview Page of *Living the Welcoming Congregation* from Session #1

Preparation:

- Have writing materials ready for individuals.
- Have newsprint posted as well as the guidelines and overview.

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:

Journaling (15 minutes)

Give the group writing materials and ask them to reflect on paper the answer to the following questions. Allow five minutes of writing for each question.

- 1) What have I learned about homophobia and heterosexism in the last two weeks?
- 2) What have I learned about myself in the last two weeks?
- 3) Finish this sentence: I would like this group to focus on this topic/area over the rest of the session _____ because . . . (You may wish to post the overview chart from Session 1.)

Small Group Discussion (40 minutes)

In groups of 4 have people take two minutes each to share their responses to the questions. Tell participants to listen to each person without responding.

When all the sharing is complete, ask the groups to talk for ten minutes about what they shared that had common themes. Were there new things shared that intrigued them? Encourage people to understand that this is the time to ask questions of others—remembering the guidelines and being respectful of where everyone is—and to find common points of interest. Tell the participants they will share a summary of their conversation with the larger group.

Large Group (30 minutes)

Have each group present a summary of their conversation. Tell participants we will now record on newsprint the common themes that emerged. Create a chart as shown below and ask people to share their common themes within the context of the chart:

Individual	Congregational	Community

If there are disagreements or no common themes, list all the ones they present. You may wish to asterisk those that are not from a whole subgroup.

When all the small groups are done, ask the large group to look at the chart and see if one area (individual, congregational, or community) stands out as having more items. There might be one issue that runs across all three areas as well. (For example, family or history could be listed in all three categories.)

The goal at this point is to begin to identify a path to follow through the second part of the

curriculum: Individual, Congregational or Community to follow through Sessions 6 - 10. The group may have several topics that they wish to focus on and therefore may need to take a step back to see which path best fits their interests. There may only be one or two topics of interest to the group, in this case, make sure the group is clear on which path the topics best fit into.

If there is a clear consensus, on an area or topic, you have probably found your area of focus/path for this time with the curriculum. Ask people to find a partner and have them answer the following three questions:

- 1) What excites me most about this project is:
- 2) The concerns I have the most about doing this project is:
- 3) What would help alleviate those concerns for me is:

If there is no clear consensus, ask the group to rank those items listed by the following scale:

- 5—This item really interests me.
- 4—This item has some interest for me.
- 3—I could be comfortable doing this item on the list but it is not one of my top priorities.
- 2—I am not very interested in this topic, but would be willing to work on this with others if they are interested.
- 1—I have no interest in this topic at all.
- 0—I would leave if we decided to do this topic.

Give participants a moment to reflect on their choices. Hand them a sheet of paper and pen/pencil and ask them to write the number 5 on a line and then list all the items from the chart that match this category. Tell participants that

these responses will be shared with the group anonymously.

Repeat this process for numbers 4-0. Ask participants to hand their papers to you. Redistribute the papers and have people read the items that have a 5 next to them. Note this on the newsprint. Continue through the 4's, 3's, 2's, 1's and 0's. See where the highest balance is. If there are more 5's and 4's on one item than another, you may well have found your area of focus. Eventually, if there is not a clear choice, you may have to vote on your top two or three. Feel free to encourage conversation if there are a few top choices—but remind people of the guidelines and to speak from their own experiences.

Once you have decided on the path, proceed to the three questions with partners as mentioned above.

Tell the participants that the next two sessions will be about improving the analysis of how to do this work. Leave them with these questions to ponder for the next session: If we do this work on this topic, are there ways in which we could do more harm than good? How will we know we have been successful?

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.