

## Session 6B: Congregational History and Change

### Learning Objectives:

- To deepen the group's understanding of their congregation's history with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity
- To deepen the group's understanding of how change happens

### Session Summary:

This session will further explore how the congregation's history may be used to determine the best approaches to being a Welcoming Congregation.

### Background:

Knowing the history of sexual orientation and gender identity issues is important, but knowing how change happens is vital to moving forward with this curriculum.

### Materials needed:

1. Timeline of congregational history from previous week
2. Newsprint
3. Markers
4. Paper
5. Writing materials

### Preparation:

- Have timeline of congregational history posted.
- Post lists from Session #5 of what people believe they already know and the questions they have.
- Write questions from the Change Activity on newsprint if you wish.

### 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:

#### Reviewing and Updating the Timeline (60 minutes)

Ask participants to look at the timeline that they created in the last session. Review any questions from the previous session and discuss what answers, if any, were found since then. Take some time to add or change items to the timeline as needed.

If the timeline from the previous session was about a specific area of the congregation (like religious education) then they will need to take some time to reflect on and include a more complete picture of the congregational history. If the timeline was very general, they will need to spend some time getting specific on various aspects of congregational life like religious education, worship, social justice activities, membership, ministerial history, board decisions and other committees' work. Allow time for these to be recorded, but save time for group reflections about this. Depending on the size of your group, you may wish to have everyone add to the timeline, or you may wish to have one person record items as participants share them.

When the timeline is completed, ask participants to reflect on the timeline in groups of two for no more than 10 minutes. What does this timeline tell them about the congregation? What do they need to be aware of as they move forward? What have been the successes of this work in the

congregation? Where have the stumbling blocks been and what can be learned from the stumbling blocks?

After the 10 minutes, allow for the entire group to share their thoughts and reflections. You may wish to record some of these responses on newsprint.

The total activity should last about an hour. Wrap up discussion as best you can to stay within this time. You will have additional opportunities to incorporate insights from this conversation in future sessions.

## **Change (50 minutes)**

Ask participants to get into groups of three. Tell them you are going to take them through a series of questions about the concept of change. Each person will have 3 minutes to reflect aloud on each question and there will be time for follow-up within the small group. The groups will spend a total of approximately 12 minutes per question. Encourage different people to start with each new question posed. During the common time after each person has answered, encourage the groups to discuss common themes and new insights to share with the larger group later. A recorder may be needed for this, so have paper and writing utensils available for each group. You may also wish to have these questions posted on newsprint.

**Question #1:** Think of a time when you are aware that you changed. It can be a positive, not so positive change, and/or mixed change. What happened in you that made that change possible? Did you want to change or were you resistant? What other people and circumstances impacted that change? How has that change affected who you are now?

**Question #2:** Think of someone close to you that has changed in some positive way. Without necessarily naming the person, describe the change this person made or what happened and how it affected this person's life. What helped make this change happen and how was it greeted? How has this change affected this

person since and how has it affected those around this person?

**Question #3:** Think of an institution or group outside of the congregation that you know well. Think of a significant change that has happened in the life of this institution or group. Describe the change that happened and the effects of this change on this institution/group as well as on those in relationship with this institution/group. Why did this change occur and what were the effects of this change? How was the change greeted?

After the three questions have been discussed, re-gather as a large group. Ask the group to reflect on the process of change and how it happens.

What helps make change happen?

What are some barriers to change?

Are there differences between individual and institutional change?

Are there similarities between individual and institutional change?

You may wish to record these reflections on newsprint.

Wrap up the discussion by posing this question for contemplation/reflection in future sessions: How has change happened here in this congregation and how will that affect what we do? Tell participants that they will have an opportunity to explore these questions in a future session. Next session will involve a closer examination of the way the congregation currently operates.

**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.