

Welcoming Congregation

Information session

March 28th, 2010

Welcoming Congregation 101

- What is it?
- Why do it?
- How long has it been around?
- How many churches have become Welcoming Congregations?

Welcoming Congregation 101

- What is it?
 - Volunteer program
 - Helps congregations become more inclusive towards bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people
 - Goal is to help congregation increase understanding and acceptance among people of different sexual orientations in community

Welcoming Congregation 101

- Guiding principles: A welcoming congregation:
 - Includes and addresses the needs of b/g/l/t persons at every level of congregational life - welcoming not only their presence, but the gifts and particularities of their lives as well.
 - Seeks to nurture ongoing dialogue between bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgender, and heterosexual persons and to create deeper trust and sharing.
 - Speaks out when the rights of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people are at stake.

Welcoming Congregation 101

- The Welcoming Congregation program was established in 1989.
- Since then, 629 of 1022 churches have completed the program (61.5%) and 86% of UUs attend a Welcoming Congregation.
- In the Southwest District, the statistics are similar (43% of churches; 79% of members)

Becoming a Welcoming Congregation

- 16 Action Steps are required, divided into groups:
 - Education
 - Congregational Life
 - Outreach

Education

- BGLT life issues included in RE, including the workshop series from the Welcoming Congregation Program.
- Church leadership participation in the Welcoming Congregation Program.
- Offer a congregation-wide workshop program(s), with follow-up opportunities for study and reflection.
- Use the Unitarian Universalist sexuality education program, *Our Whole Lives*.

Congregational Life

- Form a Welcoming Congregation committee.
- Include an affirmative nondiscrimination clause in official church documents
- Use inclusive language and content as a regular part of worship services.

Congregational Life

- Support BGLT rites of passage, such as services of union and dedications of children.
- Welcome BGLT persons in the congregation's brochure.
- Respect the status of any member and/or couple.

Community Outreach

- Celebrate and affirm BGLT issues and history during the church year.
- Support efforts to create justice, freedom, and equality for BGLT people in the larger society.
- (*again*) Support BGLT rites of passage, such as services of union and dedications of children.

Community Outreach (cont)

- Maintain contact with local BGLT groups to offer support and promote dialogue and interaction.
- Advertise in the local press and/or other media that reaches the BGLT communities.
- Provide use of building space for an Interweave chapter on an equivalent basis with other UU organizations.

Finally...

When congregation feels action steps are complete



**and votes to be recognized as a
*Welcoming Congregation***



a brief description of actions and notification of process completion is sent to OBGLTC

What of this have we done?

- Education

- BGLT issues in RE

- Leadership involved in WCC

- Church-wide workshops

- OWL

What of this have we done?

- Congregational Life
 - Form the WCC
 - Nondiscrimination clause
 - Inclusive language
 - Rites of passage
 - Inclusive brochure
 - Respect status choices

What of this have we done?

- Community Outreach
 - Celebrate issues and history
 - Social Justice
 - Rites of passage (again)
 - Contact local groups
 - Advertising
 - Space for Interweave chapter

What would come next for us?

- Formation of a Welcoming Congregation Committee
- Repeated offering of WC workshops
- Outreach to BGLT groups/social justice actions if necessary

- Questions?
- Comments?