

APPENDIX THREE

Congregational Assessment & Welcoming Process Outline

This congregational self-assessment tool is designed to help you select an appropriate Welcoming curriculum from the cautious to the adventuresome. These questions are not to be seen as sure-fire predictors, but they may serve as helpful guides to both the pace a Welcoming Process should take and your congregation's overall temperament when considering controversial subjects.

Scoring is from 1 to a possible 5 points and is question-specific. Each person participating in the assessment process should have a separate Worksheet. Each person should total the score on the Worksheet. See further scoring instructions at the end of this Worksheet.

There is no perfect template for how to do this Welcoming Process "correctly" in a congregation. Each congregational team is encouraged to adapt or develop its own curriculum. Building the most suitable process for your situation takes careful attention. Remember, as always, the building of solid relationships across ideological and affinity group lines, along with real engagement in the process by a significant percentage of active congregants are the best predictors of probable success.

Be critical and honest when you complete this Congregational Assessment tool. It will not help you or your congregation to characterize the congregation differently than it really is.

The best use of this Assessment Worksheet is as a springboard for discussion and development of your own insights.

Note: Any question which does not seem applicable should be scored with a "3."

NOTE: If your congregation has had a history of sexual misconduct by its clergy or staff, it is important and useful to do the Congregational Assessment in order to collect data. HOWEVER, we recommend that any congregation with such a history of abuse choose the "St. Cautious" pace (for more information on this, see pages 20-22).

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT	SCORE
1. Does the congregation already have a mission or welcoming statement which explicitly includes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities? 1 No mission or welcoming statement 2 Mission or welcoming statement with no diversity mentioned 3 Mission or welcoming statement embracing diversity 4 Mission or welcoming statement with gay and lesbian folk included 5 Yes, inclusive of gay, lesbian, bisexual AND transgender people	
2. Are your clergy in favor of explicitly welcoming and including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities? 1 Vocally against 2 Privately against 3 Undecided/unknown 4 Personally, but not publicly, in favor 5 Strongly and publicly in favor	
3. Are you aware of parents or family members of LGBT persons in the congregation? 1 No 2 Yes, but they do not accept their LGBT children or family members 3 Yes, and they accept their LGBT children or family members, but are in the closet in the congregation 4 Yes, and they are out of the closet about their LGBT children or family members 5 Yes, and they are visible advocates	

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CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<p>4. Are you aware of LGBT persons in the congregation?</p> <p>1 No</p> <p>2 Yes, but they are in the closet</p> <p>3 Yes, and some are out of the closet to a few members in the congregation</p> <p>4 Yes, and individuals and/or couples are visible, but not active in leadership</p> <p>5 Yes, and several individuals and couples are visible and active in leadership of the congregation</p>	
<p>5. Has the congregation already done or participated in blessings of same-gender relationships?</p> <p>1 No, never</p> <p>2 No, but pastor participated in such a service at another church</p> <p>3 No, but two members did have a service which was private and not at the church</p> <p>4 Yes, but the service was private and at the church. The congregation knew.</p> <p>5 Yes, and the congregation participated</p>	
<p>6. How does the congregation receive and include new people?</p> <p>1 Outsiders are not included easily in the congregation</p> <p>2 New members are encouraged to join but not actively integrated in the life of the church</p> <p>3 New members are welcomed and are actively integrated in the life of the church</p> <p>4 Visitors of all kinds are vigorously pursued, welcomed and encouraged to join and integrate in the life of the congregation</p> <p>5 New members are quickly invited to consider positions of leadership in the congregation</p>	
<p>7. Does the congregation welcome/include a diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities?</p> <p>Choose from 1 to 5, with 1 being completely homogenous and 5 being overwhelmingly diverse.</p>	
<p>8. Is the congregation presently very homogeneous or quite diverse (ethnicity, class, language, etc.)?</p> <p>Choose from 1 to 5, with 1 being completely homogeneous and 5 being overwhelmingly diverse.</p>	
<p>9. How does the congregation handle disagreement, conflict or controversy?</p> <p>Choose from 1 (avoids conflict) to 5 (faces conflict head-on and keeps on loving each other!)</p>	
<p>10. Who comes up with new ideas for ministry? (Score the highest number that applies)</p> <p>1 Clergy</p> <p>2 Council/Session/Governing board</p> <p>3 Various lay leaders, not all are elected to an office</p> <p>4 Ideas of lay members are valued and pursued</p> <p>5 Ideas are solicited from members who think outside the “everyday church” box</p>	
<p>11. Does your congregation have an openly LGBT pastor?</p> <p>1 Not currently, but a previous LGBT pastor was fired/asked to resign/left under conflict or accusations</p> <p>2 Not currently but has in the past and is not open to an LGBT pastor in the future</p> <p>3 No</p> <p>4 Not currently but has in the past and is open to an LGBT pastor in the future</p> <p>5 Yes</p>	

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CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<p>12. Is the congregation educated about and currently working on other justice issues?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 No, not really 2 No, but they have from time to time 3 Yes, but only a few congregants are involved 4 Yes, and the congregation actively supports this work 5 Yes, and the congregation actively seeks new issues for education and action 	
<p>13. What is the prevailing congregational understanding of the message of scripture?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 The book of rules to avoid eternal condemnation 2 The way to achieve personal salvation 3 No overall view 4 The message that God is Love 5 Full of examples of God's radical inclusivity 	
<p>14. Is the lay leadership of the congregation predominantly male or female? Choose from 1 to 5 with 1 being completely male to 5 being completely female</p>	
<p>15. Does the congregation use inclusive language in worship?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Not at all 2 Inclusive language for human beings but not for God 3 Inclusive language for human beings and God in sermons 4 Inclusive language for human beings and God in sermons, hymnody and liturgy 5 Inclusive language for human beings and God in sermons, hymnody, liturgy and Scripture readings 	
<p>16. Relationships within the congregation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Isolated individuals and families 2 Small groups of close friends (cliques) 3 Friendly within affinity groups (i.e. age, gender, class, race, language, education, orientation) 4 Friendly across affinity group lines 5 A community of faith embracing relationships across affinity and ideological lines 	
<p>17. Assess the political temperament of the congregation. Score from 1 completely conservative to 5 completely liberal/progressive</p>	
<p>18. Has your congregation engaged studies on sexuality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 No, never; the subject is taboo 2 Yes, and we'll never do it again 3 Yes, in confirmation and adult Sunday School but only a few people participated 4 Yes, in confirmation and adult Sunday School and we had a good turn out 5 Yes, there was lots of interest and we plan to extend our studies of sexuality 	
<p>19. What percentage of adults who attend worship typically come to an adult forum or other adult educational opportunities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 5% to 10% or less 2 10% to 20% 3 20% to 30% 4 30% to 50% 5 More than 50% 	

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CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<p>20. Is your congregation a member of a denominational region that has declared itself Welcoming?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 No, the matter has never come up in our region 2 No, it was discussed at the regional level and defeated 3 Yes, but we never hear anything about it in the region 4 Yes, and the region has a committee charged with encouraging congregations to consider becoming part of the Welcoming program 5 Yes, and the congregation is open to educational efforts provided by the region 	
<p>21. Do you have a female pastor?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 No, and we never considered one 2 No, but we have considered calling one 3 Not at present, but we did in the past 4 Yes, as part of a multiple-clergy team 5 Yes, solo or senior pastor is female 	
<p>22. Does your town/city/state have a non-discrimination policy for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 No, and it has never come up 2 No, it came up and never made it to a vote, the congregation gave no opinion 3 No, it was brought to a vote and defeated, the congregation had mixed views 4 Yes, it was brought to a vote and passed, the congregation had mixed views 5 Yes, it was brought to a vote and passed, the congregation largely supported the measure 	
<p>23. Does your pastor use examples including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in sermons?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 No, never 2 Maybe once or twice but it caused a problem in the congregation 3 Yes, without comment from the congregation 4 Regularly, without comment from the congregation 5 Often, with positive comment from the congregation 	
<p>24. Have the youth of your congregation expressed an opinion on becoming Welcoming? (If no youth group, select 3.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Yes, and they are solidly against 2 No, have not heard a thing 3 Yes, their view is positive but the adults of the congregation have mixed views of this 4 Yes, their view is positive and the adults are listening 5 Yes, they supported the Welcoming agenda at denominational youth events and have returned with an interest in the Welcoming Process for this congregation 	
<p>25. Size/type of church?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Corporate church with average worship attendance over 800 2 Corporate church with average worship attendance 400 to 749 3 Program church with average worship attendance 200 to 399 4 Pastoral church with average worship attendance 76-199 5 Family-sized church with average worship attendance 75 or less 	
TOTAL	

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT – GROUP SCORING

Use this Scorecard with the Congregational Assessment Worksheet for your Core Team. Enter the scores from each person’s Worksheet in columns A-F. In the next column, enter the total from columns A-F, then in the final column, find the average by dividing the total by the number of people.

	Person						Total	Average
	A	B	C	D	E	F		
1. Does the congregation already have a mission statement which explicitly includes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?								
2. Are your clergy in favor of explicitly welcoming and including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?								
3. Are you aware of parents or family members of LGBT persons in the congregation?								
4. Are you aware of LGBT persons in the congregation?								
5. Has the congregation already done or participated in blessings of same-gender relationships?								
6. How does the congregation receive and include new people?								
7. Does the congregation welcome/include a diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities?								
8. Is the congregation presently very homogeneous or quite diverse (ethnicity, class, language, etc.)?								
9. How does the congregation handle disagreement, conflict or controversy?								
10. Who comes up with new ideas for ministry?								
11. Does your congregation have an openly LGBT pastor?								
12. Is the congregation educated about and currently working on other justice issues?								
13. What is the prevailing congregational understanding of the message of scripture?								
14. Is the lay leadership of the congregation predominantly male or female?								
15. Does the congregation use inclusive language in worship?								
16. Relationships within the congregation:								
17. Assess the political temperament of the congregation.								
18. Has your congregation engaged studies on sexuality?								
19. What percentage of adults who attend worship typically come to an adult forum or other adult educational opportunities?								
20. Is your congregation a member of a denominational region that has declared itself Welcoming?								
21. Do you have a female pastor?								
22. Does your town/city/state have a non-discrimination policy for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?								
23. Does your pastor use examples including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in sermons?								
24. Have the youth of your congregation expressed an opinion on becoming Welcoming?								
25. Size/type of church?								
TOTALS								

WHAT DOES THE AVERAGE SCORE MEAN?

Your score is a good indication for the pace at which you should conduct your congregation’s Welcoming Process.

We suggest: 25–75: the **St. Cautious** pace
 76–100: the **St. Moderatus** pace
 101+: the **St. Adventurous** pace

WELCOMING PROCESS OUTLINE (Based on Congregational Assessment Score)

NOTE: Some of these steps happen concurrently. The suggested pace is exactly that – a suggestion. This is more art than science. This must be tailored for your particular setting.

STEP ONE: LEADING THE PROCESS

Suggested Pace

Tasks: Conduct One-to-One Visits and gather a Core Team. Check in with LGBT people in congregation to determine their preferred level of involvement in the Welcoming Process. Contact your denominational Welcoming Church Program (Back Page) for additional guidance.

St. Cautious: 3-6 months

Tools: Graceful Engagement (Appendix One), One-to-One Visits (Appendix Two)

St. Moderatus: 2-3 months

People Involved: Core Team, LGBT People and Welcoming Church Program

St. Adventurous: 1-2 months

STEP TWO: GATHERING INFORMATION

Suggested Pace

Tasks: Examine your congregation's history, conduct a power analysis, and examine your congregation's culture to gain a better understanding of how it deals with change and conflict. Choose a pace for your process.

St. Cautious: 2-3 months

Tools: Graceful Engagement (Appendix One), One-to-One Visits (Appendix Two), Congregational Assessment (Appendix Three), Congregations and Conflict (Appendix Four), How Does Change Happen in Churches or Any Organization (Appendix Five).

St. Moderatus: 1-2 months

People Involved: Core Team, Formal and Informal Leadership of Congregation

St. Adventurous: 1 month

STEP THREE: OUTLINING THE PROCESS

Suggested Pace

Tasks: Outline each step of the Welcoming Process for your congregation based on the pace and frame you've chosen.

St. Cautious: 1-2 months

Tools: Graceful Engagement (Appendix One), Framing (Appendix Six), Part B of this Toolkit, plus the information you've gathered up to this point

St. Moderatus: 1-4 weeks

People Involved: Core Team

St. Adventurous: 1-2 weeks

STEP FOUR: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Suggested Pace

Tasks: Conduct One-to-One Visits with formal and informal leadership and church members.

St. Cautious: 6-9 months

Tools: Graceful Engagement (Appendix One), One-to-One Visits (Appendix Two), Public Storytelling (Appendices Seven and Eight)

St. Moderatus: 3-6 months

People Involved: Core Team, formal and informal leadership, church members

St. Adventurous: 1-3 months

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STEP FIVE: MAKING IT OFFICIAL**Suggested Pace**

Tasks: The Core Team transitions into a formally-recognized committee of the congregation, often called the Welcoming Task Force.

St. Cautious: 3 meetings with governing body

Tools: Consult your congregation's policies, One-to-One Visits (Appendix Two), Framing (Appendix Six)

St. Moderatus: 2-3 meetings with governing body

People Involved: Core Team/Welcoming Task Force, congregational governing body

St. Adventurous: 1 meeting with governing body

STEP SIX: SETTING THE FRAME AND PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**Suggested Pace**

Tasks: Set up a series of educational opportunities for the congregation.

St. Cautious: 1-5 years

Tools: Graceful Engagement (Appendix One), One-to-One Visits (Appendix Two), Framing (Appendix Six), Public Storytelling (Appendices Seven and Eight), Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (Appendix Nine), Bible studies, films, panels, newsletter articles, etc.

St. Moderatus: 6-12 months

People Involved: Welcoming Task Force, clergy, educators, congregation

St. Adventurous: 3-6 months

STEP SEVEN: WRITING YOUR WELCOMING STATEMENT**Suggested Pace**

Tasks: Create a draft Welcoming Statement (that meets the requirements of your denominational Welcoming Church Program) and present it to the formal congregational leadership. Revise statement as needed based on feedback.

St. Cautious: 2-6 months

Tools: Sample Welcoming Statements (Appendix Ten), your chosen frame (Appendix Six)

St. Moderatus: 1-3 months

People Involved: Welcoming Task Force, formal leadership, Welcoming Church Programs (Back Page)

St. Adventurous: 2-4 weeks

STEP EIGHT: CONDUCTING AN EXPLORATORY SURVEY**Suggested Pace**

Tasks: Send out post cards or develop anonymous online survey for the entire congregation.

1-4 weeks

Tools: Postcards and postage or free online survey service

People Involved: Welcoming Task Force

STEP NINE: HOLDING THE VOTE**Suggested Pace**

Tasks: Schedule and hold a vote according to your congregation's policies and procedures.

When exploratory survey shows at least 75-85% support

Tools: Congregational policies and procedures

People Involved: Task Force, Council, and all members, Welcoming Church Programs (Back Page)

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STEP TEN: CELEBRATING AND PUBLICIZING**Suggested Pace**

Tasks: Notify your denominational Welcoming Church Program. Hold a worship service or celebration, and publicize your new Welcoming status to the greater community.

Tools: Special liturgy, bulletin inserts, church website, church sign

People Involved: Welcoming Task Force, clergy and staff

Soon after successful vote**STEP ELEVEN: WE'RE WELCOMING... NOW WHAT?****Suggested Pace**

Tasks: Ensure church policies are LGBT-inclusive. Provide ongoing educational opportunities. Provide opportunities for church members to take action on LGBT social issues beyond the church doors.

Tools: Church policies

People Involved: Welcoming Task Force, clergy, educators, Social Justice committee, greater LGBT community

Ongoing