

# Faith Community Assessment & Welcoming Journey Outline

This faith community self-assessment tool is designed to help you select an appropriate pace to set your Welcoming Journey, from the cautious to the adventuresome. In conjunction with the Building an Inclusive Church (BIC) Toolkit, these may serve as helpful guides to both the pace a Welcoming Journey should take and your faith community's overall temperament when considering disputed subjects.

Scoring is from 1 to a possible 5 points and is question-specific; **for questions that do not seem applicable or may be unknown, score those with a "3."** Each person participating in the assessment process should take the assessment individually, as one person may experience their community differently based on roles and circumstances. 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 Journey "correctly" in a faith community. Each core team is encouraged to adapt or develop its own curriculum and plan moving forward. Building the most suitable journey 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 journey by a significant percentage of active community members are the best predictors of probable success.

Be critical and honest when you complete this Faith Community Assessment tool. It will not help you or your faith community to characterize the community differently than it really is. The best use of this Assessment is as a springboard for discussion and development of your own insights.

**NOTE: If your faith community has had a history of sexual misconduct by its rostered leaders or staff, it is important and useful to do the Faith Community Assessment in order to collect data. HOWEVER, we recommend that any community with such a history of abuse choose the "St. Cautious" pace (for more information on this, see pages 23-25). If you are taking this assessment Online, know that your results are private, and will not be shared.**

FAITH COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT	SCORE
1. Does the faith community 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 is not specific to particular people groups 3 Mission or welcoming statement welcomes "All" 4 Mission or welcoming statement includes LG, or LGBT people 5 Yes, inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people and other demographics	
2. Are your rostered leaders and/or staff 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, family members, or loved ones of LGBTQIA+ persons in the faith community? 1 No 2 Yes, but they do not accept that LGBTQIA+ person 3 Yes, and they accept that LGBTQIA+ person, but do not share that in the faith community 4 Yes, and they share about that LGBTQIA+ person 5 Yes, and they are visible advocates	

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FAITH COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<p>4. Are you aware of LGBTQIA+ persons in the faith community? (Those who've shared, not who you assume)</p> <p>1 No</p> <p>2 Yes, but they are not comfortable sharing with the larger faith community</p> <p>3 Yes, and some have shared about themselves to a few members in the faith community</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 faith community</p>	
<p>5. Has the faith community already done or participated in blessings of LGBTQIA+ relationships?</p> <p>1 No, never</p> <p>2 No, but our rostered leader participated in such a service at another faith community</p> <p>3 No, but members did have a service which was private and not at the faith community</p> <p>4 Yes, but the service was private and at the faith community. The other members knew</p> <p>5 Yes, and the faith community participated</p>	
<p>6. How does the faith community receive and include new people?</p> <p>1 Outsiders are not included easily in the faith community</p> <p>2 New members are encouraged to join but not actively integrated in the life of the community</p> <p>3 New members are welcomed and are actively integrated in the life of the community</p> <p>4 Visitors of all kinds are vigorously pursued, welcomed and encouraged to join and integrate in the life of the community</p> <p>5 New members are quickly welcomed and invited to pursue positions of leadership in the community</p>	
<p>7. Does the faith community welcome/include a diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities? Choose from 1 to 5, with 1 being completely homogenous and 5 being overwhelmingly diverse. Use 3 for not applicable, or unknown.</p>	
<p>8. Is the faith community presently very homogeneous or quite diverse (ethnicity, class, ability, language, etc.)? Choose from 1 to 5, with 1 being completely homogeneous and 5 being overwhelmingly diverse. Use 3 for not applicable, or unknown.</p>	
<p>9. How does the faith community handle change, conflict or controversy? 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 Rostered Leader</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 faith community have an openly LGBTQIA+ rostered leader?</p> <p>1 Not currently, but a previous LGBTQIA+ rostered leader was fired/asked to resign/left under conflict or unwelcoming members</p> <p>2 Not currently but has in the past, but it is not open to an LGBTQIA+ rostered leader in the future</p> <p>3 No</p> <p>4 Not currently but has in the past and is open to an LGBTQIA+ rostered leader in the future</p> <p>5 Yes</p>	

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

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

## FAITH COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT – GROUP SCORING

Use this Scorecard with the Faith Community 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 faith community already have a mission or welcoming statement which explicitly includes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?								
2. Are your rostered leaders and/or staff in favor of explicitly welcoming and including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?								
3. Are you aware of parents, family members, or loved ones of LGBTQIA+ persons in the community?								
4. Are you aware of LGBTQIA+ persons in the faith community? (								
5. Has the faith community already done or participated in blessings of LGBTQIA+ relationships?								
6. How does the faith community receive and include new people?								
7. Does the faith community welcome/include a diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities?								
8. Is the faith community presently very homogeneous or quite diverse?								
9. How does the faith community handle change, conflict or controversy?								
10. Who comes up with new ideas for ministry?								
11. Does your faith community have an openly LGBTQIA+ rostered leader?								
12. Is the faith community educated about and currently working on other justice issues?								
13. What is the prevailing faith community's understanding of the message of scripture?								
14. Is the lay leadership of the faith community predominately cis-gender male or female?								
15. Does the community use inclusive language in worship or while in community with one another?								
16. Relationships within the faith community:								
17. Assess the political temperament of the faith community.								
18. Has your faith community engaged in studies on sexuality?								
19. What percentage of adults who attend services/meetings typically come to an adult forum or other adult educational opportunities?								
20. Is your faith community a member of a denominational region that has declared itself Welcoming?								
21. Do you have a female identifying rostered leader?								
22. Does your town/city/state have a non-discrimination policy for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?								
23. Does your rostered leader use examples including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in sermons, messages, or communications?								
24. Have the youth of your faith community expressed an opinion on becoming Welcoming?								
25. Size/type of faith community?								
<b>TOTALS</b>								

### WHAT DOES THE AVERAGE SCORE MEAN?

Your score is a good indication for the pace at which you should conduct your faith community's Welcoming Journey.

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

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## WELCOMING JOURNEY OUTLINE

(Based on Faith Community 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.

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### STEP ONE: LEADING THE PROCESS

#### Suggested Pace

**Tasks:** Conduct One-to-One Visits and gather a Core Team. Check in with LGBTQIA+ people in the faith community to determine their preferred level of involvement in the Welcoming Journey. Contact your denominational Welcoming Journey for additional guidance.

**St. Cautious: 3-6 months**

**Tools:** Graceful Engagement, One-to-One Visits

**St. Moderatus: 2-3 months**

**People Involved:** Core Team, LGBTQIA+ People and Welcoming Journey

**St. Adventurous: 1-2 months**

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### STEP TWO: GATHERING INFORMATION

#### Suggested Pace

**Tasks:** Examine your faith community's history, conduct a power analysis, and examine your community'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, One-to-One Visits, Faith Community Assessment, Faith Community and Conflict, How Does Change Happen in Faith Communities or Any Organization.

**St. Moderatus: 1-2 months**

**People Involved:** Core Team, Formal and Informal Leadership of Faith Community

**St. Adventurous: 1 month**

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### STEP THREE: OUTLINING THE PROCESS

#### Suggested Pace

**Tasks:** Outline each step of the Welcoming Journey for your Faith Community based on the pace and frame you've chosen.

**St. Cautious: 1-2 months**

**Tools:** Graceful Engagement, Framing, plus the information you've gathered up to this point

**St. Moderatus: 1-4 weeks**

**People Involved:** Core Team

**St. Adventurous: 1-2 weeks**

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### STEP FOUR: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

#### Suggested Pace

**Tasks:** Conduct One-to-One Visits with formal and informal leadership and faith community members.

**St. Cautious: 6-9 months**

**Tools:** Graceful Engagement, One-to-One Visits, Public Storytelling

**St. Moderatus: 3-6 months**

**People Involved:** Core Team, formal and informal leadership, faith community 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 faith community, often called the Welcoming Task Force.

**St. Cautious: 3 meetings with governing body**

**Tools:** Consult your faith community's policies, One-to-One Visits, Framing

**St. Moderatus: 2-3 meetings with governing body**

**People Involved:** Core Team/Welcoming Task Force, faith community 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 faith community.

**St. Cautious: 1-5 years**

**Tools:** Graceful Engagement, One-to-One Visits, Framing, Public Storytelling, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Bible studies, films, panels, newsletter articles, etc.

**St. Moderatus: 6-12 months**

**People Involved:** Core Team/Welcoming Task Force, rostered leaders, educators, community members

**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 Journey) and present it to the formal faith community leadership. Revise statement as needed based on feedback.

**St. Cautious: 2-6 months**

**Tools:** Sample Welcoming Statements, your chosen frame

**St. Moderatus: 1-3 months**

**People Involved:** Core Team/Welcoming Task Force, formal leadership, Welcoming Journey Programs

**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:** Core Team/Welcoming Task Force

## STEP NINE: HOLDING THE VOTE

### Suggested Pace

**Tasks:** Schedule and hold a vote according to your faith community's policies and procedures.

**When exploratory survey shows at least 75-85% support**

**Tools:** Faith community policies and procedures

**People Involved:** Core Team/Welcoming Task Force, formal leadership, and all members, Welcoming Journey Programs

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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, website, sign

**People Involved:** Core Team/Welcoming Task Force, rostered leaders and staff

**Soon after successful vote**

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**STEP ELEVEN: WE'RE WELCOMING... NOW WHAT?****Suggested Pace**

**Tasks:** Ensure faith community's policies are LGBTQIA+ inclusive. Provide ongoing educational opportunities. Provide opportunities for community members to take action on LGBTQIA+ social issues beyond the community's doors.

**Tools:** Community policies

**People Involved:** Welcoming Task Force, rostered leaders, educators Social Justice committee, and greater LGBTQIA+ community

**Ongoing**