



What else can a congregation do?

If a congregation, as part of its ministry, wants to be open and affirming, it can:

- agree on a statement inclusive of diversity. An example might be “We believe that all people are created in the image and are children of a loving God, regardless of race, gender, age, different abilities or sexual orientation”
- include the statement in its church notices and website
- pray for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who are confronting rejection and discrimination
- acknowledge and honour relationships and anniversaries.
- advise Uniting Network that your congregation wishes to be listed as open and affirming so lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people can feel welcome.



[Michelangelo, 1475-1564, Italian sculptor, painter, architect and poet, an outstanding figure of the Renaissance church. He was known to have had a male companion.]

The church needs the creativity, vision, humour, passion, skill and participation of all God's people (perspective on 1 Corinthians 12).

“A place at the table...” ^{Luke 13:29}

Open and Affirming Congregations



Uniting Network NSW/ACT

Working for safety and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people within the Uniting Church in Australia.

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UN NSW/ACT links to the Uniting Church in Australia through the NSW Board of Education



Introduction

Jesus spoke about the need to love one another. But whom exactly do church people think this applies to?

The Uniting Network believes that the Uniting Church can and should offer a safe and welcoming place for everyone “All Welcome!”.

The Network is a group of people within the Uniting Church working for the acceptance of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender people. By acceptance, this means a place where people can be eligible for participation and leadership in all spheres and where relationships are supported and celebrated.

What is this brochure for?

Information in this brochure is intended to assist congregations in their exploration of what it means to be a safe or open and affirming congregation. What can congregations do to demonstrate their wish to be open and affirming as part of their ministry?

A list of open and affirming congregations in NSW/ACT is made available for those looking for a “safe” place to worship in the Uniting Church. Contact us for details.

Note that the Uniting Network is not in any way seeking to establish an association of congregations.



Source: Leadership Magazine

What does it mean to be an open and affirming congregation?

The Uniting Network proposes that an open and affirming congregation:

- believes “in Christ there is neither male or female, Jew or Greek, slave or free, for we are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3). This great evangelical statement by the apostle Paul was one of radical equality. The Uniting Network affirms that this principle, of being “one in Christ” extends to matters of gender identity and sexual orientation.

- welcomes the “diverse gifts” which lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people bring to the Body of Christ in all areas of worship, witness and service (1 Corinthians 12). People’s God given gifts and graces for ministry are to be judged on their contribution to the life of the church, irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation.
- gives thanks to God for the ministries of lay and ordained LGBT people in the Uniting Church in Australia, affirmed in our common baptism in the name of Christ (Assembly SC, 1985, Assembly 2003)
- celebrates before God, friends and families, faithful long-term relationships (refer to *Uniting Sexuality and Faith*, pp41,42). Note that our Uniting Church in Australia does not as yet sanction same-sex blessing services, even advising that any clergy conducting such a service may be subject to disciplinary proceedings. A few clergy do however privately engage in such celebrations. The Network and others continue to seek ways of challenging the church to spiritually, socially and liturgically honour same-sex relationships.
- prays that the church continues to hear and witness to Christ’s message of love and forgiveness, health, compassion and justice, for all for whom Christ died.

