

## RESOURCES



**Office of Bisexual, Gay,  
Lesbian and Transgender  
Concerns**

25 Beacon St.  
Boston, MA 02108  
USA

617.948.6475      obgltc@uaa.org  
<http://www.uaa.org/obgltc>

*OBGLTC is part of the Identity-Based Ministries staff group at the UUA and administers the **Welcoming Congregation** and **Living the Welcoming Congregation Programs**, as well as provides general b/g/l/t resources.*

### **Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Bookstore**

800.215.9076      bookstore@uaa.org  
<http://www.uaa.org/bookstore>



**Interweave: Unitarian  
Universalists for  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,  
and Transgender  
Concerns**

167 Milk St. #406  
Boston, MA 02109  
USA

<http://www.uaa.org/interweave>

*Interweave is an affiliate organization of the UUA. At both its annual Convocation and the UUA's General Assembly Interweave sponsors worship and workshops that address b/g/l/t issues and their interrelationship with other forms of oppression. Interweave also produces a quarterly newsletter. For more information about the organization please write to the address listed above.*

### **Local Contact Information:**

This pamphlet is a joint project of Interweave and OBGLTC. It was last updated June 2006. You are encouraged to reproduce and distribute this pamphlet as you see fit.

# 10 Things Your Congregation Can Do To Become More Welcoming

*When b/g/l/t people first come to your congregation, they will probably be uneasy until they know they are welcome. You can make this clear without their having to ask.*

**ONE:** If your congregation has not yet done so, get a copy of *The Welcoming Congregation Handbook* (available through the UUA Bookstore) and start the workshop series for people in your congregation who are interested in becoming more welcoming to b/g/l/t people. This gives members of the congregation who share this concern a chance to make connections and support one another.

*Many denominations and individual churches are actively hostile to and condemning of b/g/l/t people, ignore them, and/or claim to be blind to sexual orientation and treat everyone the same, refusing to acknowledge that b/g/l/t people face additional issues in society. Because of this, many b/g/l/t people will assume that you and your congregation don't want them unless you clearly invite them in.*

Members of oppressed groups, including b/g/l/t people, don't want to be the center of everyone's attention all the time. On the

other hand, they do have concerns and struggles that go mostly unnoticed by society as a whole. To feel welcome in your congregation, b/g/l/t people need to know that the congregation is aware of their issues, and that they are welcome as their full selves.

*Little things are often the most important. What will really make people feel welcome, and what will make them want to return to your church, is inclusion in all aspects of church life.*

**TWO:** Advertise in local and regional b/g/l/t publications and newsletters. These are often carried in local women's bookstores. If you cannot find one in your area check the white pages in your local phone directory for a listing under "Gay" or call the USA National Gay Info Line (888.429.4630).

**THREE:** Realizing that many b/g/l/t people are not part of any b/g/l/t organization or community, advertise your welcome in general venues: local newspapers and on bulletin boards in grocery stores, libraries, community centers, etc.

**FOUR:** Place a note in the weekly Order of Service, which states that you welcome all people. This lets b/g/l/t people know that they and their families are welcome to attend with them, and that they will be treated as a family.

**FIVE:** In your literature area and/or on your bulletin boards, display literature about b/g/l/t people and issues and what your congregation is doing about them. This may include your Social Action group working with your Welcoming Congregation Committee. Or it may mean beginning/sustaining an Interweave chapter in your congregation. The UUA's Bookstore and the Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns have pamphlets that you may want to display.

**SIX:** Provide written suggestions for inclusive language to all people who write for and edit the church newsletter; participate in your worship services (including ministers, lay leaders, guest speakers, and readers of announcements and readings); lead (professionally and volunteer) your religious education programs for all ages, and other programs in the church. Encourage them to use the suggested inclusive phrasing.

*Bisexual and transgender people have often felt unwelcome in the gay and lesbian community as well as society at large. Make the extra effort to include them explicitly, not just as part of the "gay and lesbian" communities.*

**SEVEN:** Accord full acknowledgment and respect to each person and family, as defined by the person/family. This includes the definition of pledging units, listings in the church directory, family events, and all other aspects of church life. There are few more demoralizing and alienating experiences for anyone than to

be told (explicitly or inexplicitly) that their siblings, parents, children, partners, etc. are not really their family.

**EIGHT:** If your services include a time for people to participate as a family (such as lighting a candle to start the service), invite families of all descriptions to take a turn in that part of the service. Over time, you can include a wide variety of families: single people, single people with children, same and mixed gender couples with and without children, families of choice, etc.

**NINE:** Have sermons and services that address b/g/l/t issues. Ask your Minister(s) and Director(s) of Religious Education to do supportive sermons. If b/g/l/t people are out in your congregation, invite them to do a lay-led service or just the sermon. Invite friends and family members of b/g/l/t people to discuss their experiences as well. Invite community leaders or staff from the UUA to lead you in worship around b/g/l/t issues. There are many possibilities.

**TEN:** Emphasize the inter-relatedness of all forms of oppression and weave this into everything that your congregation does. Offer the UUA adult curriculum, *Weaving the Fabric of Diversity*, which discusses oppression on the basis of ability, age, race, sex, and sexual orientation. Emphasize that oppression (the use of power and privilege to restrict the rights of a labeled group) is always wrong.