



STAGES OF INCLUSION

Each church's journey is unique, but many follow a general progression along these lines -

Rejection and Exclusion

LGBTQ+ identities condemned; discriminatory practices like conversion therapy promoted, despite official UMC opposition.

Growth Steps:

- Foster grace-centered conversations.
- Listen to LGBTQ+ stories.
- Offer inclusive Bible studies and Wesleyan theology discussions.

Tolerance and Silence

Avoidance of open discussion; conditional acceptance with expectations like celibacy.

Growth Steps:

- Create structured dialogue spaces.
- Address pastoral needs of LGBTQ+ congregants.
- Use inclusive language and denominational resources.

Reflective Questions:

- Who feels unsafe here?
- What prevents open dialogue?

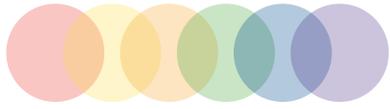
Welcoming but Not Affirming

LGBTQ+ individuals welcomed, yet restrictions remain in leadership or marriage; traditional views debated internally.

Growth Steps:

- Transition to active inclusion, inviting LGBTQ+ leadership.
- Host workshops and studies on LGBTQ+ experiences.
- Explore becoming a Reconciling Ministry.





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Affirming Individuals, Limited Structural Change

Full personal affirmation, but limitations persist (e.g., no same-sex weddings); mixed support among congregation.

Growth Steps:

- Implement inclusive policies explicitly.
- Support LGBTQ+ leadership and public advocacy.
- Collaborate with affirming communities.

Reflective Questions:

- How do our practices align with our values?
- Are we prepared to publicly affirm LGBTQ+ inclusion?

Fully Affirming & Inclusive

Complete inclusion in all church roles, marriage, and ordination; LGBTQ+ identities celebrated openly.

Growth Steps:

- Engage in ongoing education.
- Partner in intersectional justice work.
- Mentor other communities in their inclusion journeys.

Advocating for LGBTQ+ Justice

Active public advocacy and policy work; LGBTQ+ leadership shapes mission and theology.

Growth Steps:

- Engage in public activism and advocacy.
- Center LGBTQ+ voices in church leadership.
- Host forums and educational events on LGBTQ+ justice.

