

BELONGING IS HOLY

Why Inclusion is Essential to Faith



What It's About

At its core, our faith calls us to love fully, welcome radically, and affirm the sacred worth of every person. Inclusion isn't an add-on, it's the gospel in motion. To follow Jesus is to stand with those who've been pushed aside and create space where all can belong, just as they are.

Why It Matters

Inclusion isn't just about being kind - it's about living into justice. Affirming LGBTQ+ people, people of color, disabled folks, and anyone historically excluded is a way to celebrate the image of God in each person. When the church practices true inclusion, it becomes a reflection of God's expansive love and a force for transformation in the world.



Theological Anchor

"There is no longer Jew or Greek... for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

The gospel tears down walls. Scripture invites us to see one another as beloved, image-bearing reflections of God (Genesis 1:27) and challenges us to embody love that welcomes the outsider (Luke 15:1-2).

Progressive theologians like James Cone, Miguel De La Torre, and Kelly Brown Douglas remind us: God's love is inseparable from liberation. **Inclusion is not optional - it's holy work.**



How to Begin (or Go Deeper)

Learn: Start with scripture, but don't stop there. Read queer theologians, listen to affirming podcasts like Queerology or The Bible for Normal People, and engage RMN's "[Theology, Identity, and Me](#)" series.

Reflect: Ask, Where might I (or we) unintentionally exclude? Whose voice is missing? Inclusion begins with honest self-awareness.

Act: Whether you're hosting a study, advocating for policy change, or shifting your language, every action rooted in love matters.

Sustain: Keep going. Inclusion isn't a box to check—it's a lifelong posture of grace and curiosity.

Intersectionality Lens



Inclusion means looking at all the ways people are marginalized—not just one. Race, class, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, language, neurodiversity—all intersect. The church must recognize this complexity to reflect God's justice more fully.

"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives." - Audre Lorde

Putting It All Together



Inclusion is love made visible.

It's the courage to challenge exclusion, the humility to listen deeply, and the commitment to build community where everyone belongs.

Whether you're just starting out or helping lead the way, the call is the same: love bigger, welcome wider, and never stop learning.

Call to Action



Pick one resource - an article, podcast, or RMN guide - and share it with someone!

Have one conversation with a friend, small group, or leader about how your faith community can grow more inclusive.

Reflect regularly: How am I helping create a church that feels like home for all?

Explore more resources at rmnetwork.org.



WORDS THAT WELCOME

Shaping Inclusive & Reconciling Conversations



What It's About

Our words hold power. The way we talk about people—and to people—can either open doors or reinforce barriers. This guide offers practical ways to begin (or deepen) inclusive conversations, particularly for churches exploring what it means to become a Reconciling congregation.

Why It Matters

Creating space for honest, grace-filled dialogue helps us honor the image of God in every person. Inclusive language builds trust, reflects Christ's love, and signals that all belong—not just in theory, but in practice. When we speak with intention, we build a community where transformation is possible.



Theological Anchor

"Speak the truth in love." — Ephesians 4:15

Jesus didn't just welcome people—he listened, learned, and lifted up those who had been silenced. Our words should do the same.

Theologians like Austen Hartke, Shannon T.L. Kearns, and Emily Townes remind us that **the language we use shapes not only our theology, but also the depth of our welcome** - calling us to speak with love, integrity, and a commitment to honoring every person's full humanity.



How to Begin (or Go Deeper)

This isn't about getting it perfect - it's about being intentional. Whether you're just starting or already advocating, these shared practices can move conversations forward with care:

Learn how language shapes belonging using RMN resources and inclusive theological voices.

Reflect on the assumptions in our words—especially around pronouns, God-language, and relationships.

Practice using inclusive greetings and language that helps others feel seen.

Invite LGBTQ+ voices into the conversation with care and consent. Sustain the work—language is a spiritual practice that grows with time.

Intersectionality Lens



Inclusive language is more than gender or sexuality, it's about race, ability, neurodiversity, socioeconomic status, and more. Recognizing overlapping systems of marginalization helps ensure our conversations don't replicate harm.

Putting It All Together



When our words reflect the love of God, we make room for healing and hope. Whether you're sharing your pronouns, rewriting church signage, or just saying "everyone" instead of "ladies and gentlemen," *these small shifts say: you are welcome here.*

Call to Action



Be intentional with using affirming language.

Use pronouns intentionally to help create a culture of belonging.

Start a small group using an RMN resource.

Reflect with church leaders on the messages your language sends.

 Explore more resources at rmnetwork.org.



BUILDING BRIDGES

Fostering Understanding in Divided Communities



What It's About

In a world increasingly divided, choosing to build bridges is an act of faith. This guide offers practical ways to listen deeply, connect across difference, and reflect Christ's call to love beyond lines.

Why It Matters

Polarization threatens the fabric of our communities—and our churches. Jesus didn't avoid tension; he stepped into it with love and truth. Peacemaking is holy work, and healing starts with conversation rooted in compassion.



Theological Anchor

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." — Matthew 5:9

Jesus doesn't call us to mere tolerance—he invites us into the deeper work of understanding, reconciliation, and justice. True peace isn't about avoiding conflict; it's about creating connection. As poet and theologian Pádraig Ó Tuama puts it:

"Peace is not the absence of difficulty but the presence of hospitality."



How to Begin (or Go Deeper)

No matter where you are on the journey, these shared practices help foster trust and transformation:

Listen deeply: Step into conversations that stretch you. Prioritize empathy over agreement.

Stay curious: Ask why someone believes what they do. It opens doors instead of drawing lines.

Face tension with care: Conflict doesn't have to divide us when we meet it with compassion.

Create curious spaces: Host structured forums or dialogues using RMN's Love Alike resources.

Center lived experience: Make room for those most impacted by exclusion or injustice to lead the conversation.

Intersectionality Lens



Divisions are rarely about just one issue. Conflict often reflects overlapping injustices—racism, homophobia, classism, and more. Healing must address these intersections to be real and lasting.

Putting It All Together



Bridge-building isn't about winning arguments—it's about repairing relationships.

Communities heal when we lean in, listen well, and refuse to let difference outweigh dignity.

Call to Action



Reach out to someone with a different viewpoint and practice active listening.

Host a community forum or dialogue circle using *Love Alike* or other RMN tools.

Reflect with your church: Are we creating space for real conversation or just comfort?

Explore more resources at rmnetwork.org.



JUSTICE IS INTERWOVEN

LGBTQ+ Inclusion and the Intersections of Justice



What It's About

LGBTQ+ inclusion doesn't exist in a vacuum. It's deeply connected to racial justice, disability rights, economic equity, and more. This guide explores how advocacy becomes more faithful and more effective when we recognize the ways justice movements are woven together.

Why It Matters

When we affirm one group while ignoring others, we miss the fullness of God's vision for liberation. Seeing how systems of oppression overlap helps us build communities where all people experience equity, belonging, and sacred worth.



Theological Anchor

"Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God." — Micah 6:8

God's call to justice is holistic. Advocacy that honors complexity—race, gender, ability, sexuality, class—is advocacy that reflects the wholeness of the gospel. Angela Parker, womanist biblical scholar, reminds us that justice must be embodied:

"God's justice is not abstract—it is lived in bodies, systems, and power."



How to Begin (or Go Deeper)

Wherever you're starting, here are practices to move toward more connected, courageous advocacy:

Learn how LGBTQ+ justice intersects with other systems of exclusion - racial, economic, ableist, and beyond.

Examine your ministry: Who is centered? Who is missing? Whose access or voice is limited?

Collaborate with leaders from other justice movements in your community.

Align your church's policies and outreach with values that reflect whole-person equity.

Beyond Intersectionality



Instead of viewing justice issues as separate lanes, recognize them as threads in a shared tapestry. When one thread is pulled, the whole fabric shifts.

Justice is an interwoven work, not a series of isolated efforts.



Call to Action

Invite someone with lived experience of marginalization to speak or lead in your community - compensate and support them well.

Revisit your church's mission or vision statement: Does it name justice, inclusion, or liberation? If not, start a conversation.

Partner with a local organization already doing intersectional justice work. Show up as learners, not leaders.

Explore more resources at [rmnetwork.org](https://www.rmnetwork.org).

Putting It All Together



When we honor the fullness of who people are, we move closer to the heart of God.

This work calls us to listen deeply, act boldly, and weave belonging into every corner of our faith community.

A free resource from
Reconciling Ministries Network
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VISIBLE LOVE

Becoming an Ally for All



What It's About

Allyship is more than good intentions—it's a visible, ongoing practice of solidarity. This guide offers concrete ways individuals and churches can show up with clarity, consistency, and care in support of LGBTQ+ people.

Why It Matters

Visibility builds trust. When churches and individuals take public, intentional steps to affirm LGBTQ+ people, it sends a powerful message: *You are not just tolerated here—you are beloved, celebrated, and safe.*



Theological Anchor

"Love one another as I have loved you." — John 13:34

Jesus didn't love in theory, he embodied it in word and action. Visible allyship reflects Christ's radical welcome and our commitment to live that love aloud.

Bishop Karen Oliveto reminds us:

"Being the church means creating spaces where everyone can live fully into who God created them to be."



How to Begin (or Go Deeper)

No matter where you are in your journey, these shared practices help make your allyship real:

Show it: Display inclusive symbols like rainbow flags or pronoun buttons. Visibility matters.

Say it: Make your support clear in sermons, prayers, signage, and social media.

Back it up: Push for policies that reflect inclusion—bathroom access, youth protection, hiring, and weddings.

Stay accountable: Listen to LGBTQ+ voices, center their needs, and be open to correction.

Intersectionality Lens



LGBTQ+ people hold many identities - race, ability, class, gender. When we advocate for inclusion, we must honor these layered experiences.

Visible love means showing up in ways that recognize and respond to the whole person.



Putting It All Together

Love is not neutral. It shows up.

Allyship is a daily choice to step out of silence and into solidarity—a practice of courage, humility, and fierce compassion.

When we make our love visible, we become part of God's ongoing work of healing and liberation.



Call to Action

Add visible LGBTQ+ affirming symbols to your space or platform.

Review your church's policies: Do they reflect your values of inclusion?

Speak up when anti-LGBTQ+ language or theology is shared—silence is not neutral.

Explore more resources at rmnetwork.org.



FAITHFULLY PROUD

Celebrating Pride in Faith Spaces



What It's About

Pride in the Church isn't about politics—it's about presence. This guide helps churches and individuals joyfully affirm LGBTQ+ people in worship, celebration, and community life, showing that there is no contradiction between being queer and being beloved by God.

Why It Matters

Celebrating Pride in faith spaces reclaims what exclusion has tried to erase: LGBTQ+ people are made in the image of God. Public affirmation isn't just encouraging—it's necessary to counteract harmful theology and create spaces where people know they are fully seen and sacred.



Theological Anchor

"You are fearfully and wonderfully made." — Psalm 139:14

Pride honors the diversity of God's creation and affirms that LGBTQ+ identities are not only valid—they are holy.

Rev. Dr. Patrick Cheng, queer theologian and author of *Radical Love*, reminds us that queerness can reveal God in ways that deepen everyone's faith.



How to Begin (or Go Deeper)

Whether you're just showing up or helping lead the celebration, here are ways to practice faithful Pride:

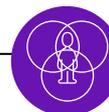
Show up with joy: Attend local Pride events and celebrate with authenticity!

Host and/or attend a Pride worship service: Center LGBTQ+ stories, music, and theology.

Partner intentionally: Work with LGBTQ+ organizations to build events rooted in justice and care.

Preach it: Incorporate affirming messages into sermons, liturgy, and visuals - not just once, but often.

Intersectionality Lens



LGBTQ+ people of color, trans folks, and disabled queer people often experience layered exclusion—even in affirming spaces.

Celebrating Pride means making space for every story and honoring the full beauty of each person.

Putting It All Together



Pride is more than a parade. It is a declaration of belovedness.

When faith communities celebrate Pride, they proclaim a gospel big enough to hold all of us. It is not performative. It is pastoral. It is not flashy. It is faithful.

And it changes lives.



Call to Action

Join or co-host a local Pride event as a faith presence.

Create a visual display or altar honoring LGBTQ+ saints and stories.

Use RMN's worship materials to incorporate into your celebration.

Explore more resources at rmnetwork.org.

