

Model Agenda for a Study

Welcome - thank everyone for coming - open with prayer

Present Guidelines for a Safe Discussion and ask everyone for their cooperation in honoring them. The Covenant of Understanding may also be used.

Handouts and/or Background Material

- the petition from Annual Conference
- copy of the "We Will Not Be Silent" Declaration
- Explanation of what the Western Jurisdiction is (the conferences in the Western region - Pacific Northwest, California Pacific, California Nevada, Oregon Idaho, Desert Southwest, Alaska Missionary, Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone)
- Language from the Book of Discipline regarding inclusiveness, sexuality and status of homosexuals as candidates for ordination

A Task Force can be formed to structure a study of inclusiveness at your church. Try to identify the core or central issue you want to address. This may be the most difficult thing to do. Once this is done you can decide on the process.

We recommend that you look into the purchase of study materials listed on the Resource List. You can use official study, *The Church Studies Homosexuality*, or a Bible study such as *Claiming the Promise*, which is an ecumenical Bible study resource in seven sessions or *Homosexuality and the Bible*. Because there are so many different issues this will help you focus on what your congregation wants at this time and you will have resource material readily available.

It is important to involve your entire congregation in the study. It is also important that assumptions are not made as to what a person knows or doesn't know about being inclusive. Members may not know what the traditional church position on homosexuality is or what the Bible says. Everyone should respect and value the other's point of view. It is important to provide absolute fairness in this study and also to provide a "safe place": there must be no threat of any kind hanging over any discussion. You may want to bring in a facilitator for one or more of your meetings.

Include the perspectives of all concerned. Note: it may be difficult to find a gay or lesbian person to present their perspective. PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) has chapters all over the country and a web site. See the Resource List. Contact the Conference Peace with Justice Committee for possible speakers and panelist.

Meetings can be as simple as a potluck discussion of hospitality
Discussion sessions for members with or without a speaker
Panel Discussion
Bible study

