

With Open Arms:

**Gay Affirming Ministries in
Bay Area Faith Communities**



A Report Submitted to the
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund



Bernard Schlager, PhD
December 2003

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Executive Summary

Living freely with full acceptance in a pluralistic society is a central value of The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund. The foundation's work to eliminate discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people is one expression of this core value. In an effort to understand the experiences of LGBT people in Bay Area faith communities, the Fund commissioned a study by researcher Bernard Schlager, PhD, that speaks to some key questions:

- To what degree have LGBT people been welcomed in Bay Area congregations?
- What programs and practices support full integration of LGBT into faith communities?
- How might the largely positive experiences of Bay Area LGBT congregation members serve as a model for building greater understanding and acceptance within regional and national religious groups?
- What other activities would support creation of more gay-affirming ministries?

The study conducted in 2003 analyzes responses from 127 written surveys and additional in-depth, oral interviews with key participants from a range of faiths. Despite efforts to engage respondents more reflective of the general population, a majority of respondents in this survey were highly educated, white, employed full time and almost evenly divided by gender. The full text of the study can be found at www.CLGS.org.

Bay Area LGBT congregation members report a very high level of engagement with local faith communities.

- More than 85% reported attending services 2-4 times per month.
- Over half have taken on lay leadership roles and added involvement in congregational groups.
- Nearly three quarters of the respondents describe religion as "very important" in their lives.
- The respondents described their chosen congregations as highly inclusive and welcoming of LGBT people, active in social and political issues and charitable work, and very supportive of their individual spiritual growth.

What Constitutes a Gay Affirming Ministry?

Researcher Bernard Schlager, consultant to the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion and author of the report, offers this criteria:

1. Meaningful integration of LGBT people into membership and leadership (ordained and non-ordained) of a religious community.
2. Sponsorship of dialogue between LGBT people and others on a variety of topics.

3. Committees devoted to LGBT persons and their concerns.
4. Educational opportunities for LGBT persons and their allies.
5. Ministry to LGBT persons inside and outside the religious community.
6. Involvement in larger religious LGBT caucuses and/or movements.
7. Involvement in local and/or national civic LGBT events.
8. Development of theological statement of welcome and inclusion for LGBT persons.
9. Production of sermons, pamphlets and other materials pertaining to LGBT persons and their concerns.
10. Advocacy of debate and positive change within larger religious organizations (e.g. denominations, national or regional alliances of religious communities) around issues affecting LGBT persons and LGBT affirming ministries.

Next Steps

While the LGBT respondents to the survey reported that their chosen religious communities provide a largely positive experience, they also note areas with room for improvement.

- Respondents in every denomination believe their local congregations might teach other congregations and larger denominational groups much more about meaningful inclusion of LGBT members.
- Many Bay Area congregations also need to improve the educational offerings for their LGBT members.
- Increase involvement of LGBT people in their congregational programs.
- Finally, greater coordination among gay-affirming congregations such as Bay Area **Coalition of Welcoming Congregations** would provide added visibility and raise public consciousness about the contributions of lesbians and gays to faith congregations and the larger community.

Other key recommendations include:

1. Outreach to other religious communities to offer training and dialogue about developing welcoming congregations.
2. Document and disseminate information about model programs through a website, speaker's bureau, media campaigns.
3. Promote educational programs about LGBT concerns within seminaries and other religious training institutions.
4. Increase educational programming within specific ethnic and racial communities that are currently isolated from this dialogue.

The complete study can be found at www.clgs.org/5/open_arms.html.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGBT) people of faith who have found both welcome and inclusion in Bay Area religious congregations. In particular, this study seeks to provide the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund of San Francisco and other interested individual and institutional funders with the following items based upon research conducted from December 2002 through October 2003 in several San Francisco Bay Area LGBT-welcoming religious congregations:

- ◆ A summary of explicit lessons for religious communities¹ (i.e. local congregations) interested in developing and/or improving ministries for LGBT persons;
- ◆ An analysis and qualitative description of the programming offered by these religious communities with LGBT-affirming ministries;
- ◆ A description of factors which have contributed to the successful integration of LGBT persons into the religious communities surveyed in this project.
- ◆ An analysis of both successful and unsuccessful strategies for LGBT ministries in order to ascertain those successful “levers of change” for such ministries;
- ◆ The recommendation of possible strategies funders might pursue in connection with the following goals:
 - ▶ Enabling religious communities to move from the necessary stages of simply welcoming LGBT people to levels of deeper integration of LGBT people in all aspects of community life and ministry
 - ▶ Building alliances between LGBT people and their allies within various faith traditions, and initiating programming to foster creative change and dialogue among religious communities interested in developing or improving the integration of LGBT into their communities
 - ▶ Documenting and disseminating models of gay-affirming, faith-based programs

¹The term “religious community” will be used synonymously with the term “local congregation” throughout this study.

- ▶ Encouraging the influence and connection of gay-affirming congregations with other faith communities that are interested in welcoming LGBT persons
- ▶ Building the public face and voice of LGBT-affirming interfaith communities
- ▶ Promoting educational programs on LGBT concerns in religious communities (including seminaries which have such a large impact on religious leadership in local congregations)

Clearly, LGBT people have been present in religious congregations for a very long time; what is a relatively new phenomenon, however, is the concerted effort on the part of leaders and members at large within congregations to acknowledge and embrace LGBT persons within their midst. As American society has become generally more open and accepting of LGBT people over the past three decades, religious congregations of various traditions and denominations have chosen to recognize the presence and unique needs and gifts of their non-heterosexual members and attendees. At times, such openness has been occasioned by local religious leaders who have taken the initiative to encourage LGBT persons already within their congregations to make their voices heard within communities of faith; some ministers, priests, and rabbis have also welcomed LGBT individuals from their local neighborhoods into congregational life. More often, however, it has been LGBT individuals themselves who have come out of closets of hiding within religious congregations in order to name themselves as LGBT and to demand from their non-LGBT co-religionists acknowledgment of their presence and recognition of their equal status as members of a faith community.

Since the late 1960s many American religious groups have struggled with the presence of “out” LGBT members within their local congregations and larger denominational structures.² American religious groups, like American society at large, have become engaged, and more frequently embroiled, in debates about homosexuality and about the ramifications of including “out” LGBT persons as full-fledged members and, in some cases, as leaders within local congregations and regional and national denominational structures. Again, it should be noted that LGBT individuals themselves have worked hard to shape these debates over their existence as religious persons who desire and deserve full membership within faith communities. While descriptions of LGBT involvement in organized religion have often been framed only in terms of the welcome extended them by non-LGBT people, it is important to keep in mind that many LGBT persons are interested in moving beyond simple acknowledgments and gestures of

²For a useful analysis of current Christian attitudes toward homosexuality, see L.R. Holben, *What Christians Think About Homosexuality: Six Representative Viewpoints* (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1999). See Beth Ann Graede, ed., *Congregations Talking about Homosexuality: Dialogue on a Difficult Issue*, Alban Institute Publication No. 189 (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998) for a discussion of seven Christian congregations of various denominations that became “welcoming” of homosexual persons.

welcome (very often in communities where they have long been members) to explore new ways in which their identities, talents, and leadership skills might be celebrated within local congregations and larger denominational organizations.

This study specifically focuses on twenty-one Bay Area religious congregations (18 Christian, 2 Unitarian Universalist, and 2 Jewish) and the ways in which 127 LGBT persons have experienced welcome and inclusion in these congregations. Of course, denominational beliefs, governing structures, and the unique circumstances of any particular congregation are three of many factors that influence how a person experiences life within a religious organization, and such factors need to be kept in mind when considering the comments of the individuals surveyed for this study.

For instance, a lesbian member of a Roman Catholic parish in the Castro neighborhood of San Francisco will understand and experience welcome and inclusion differently than will a gay man who belongs to a Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) congregation housed in a church building only a few blocks away. Among many differences between the two congregations, official teachings on homosexuality in particular and on sexual morality in general within the respective denominational traditions of these local congregations are vastly different and obviously shape, at least in some respects, the experience of individual members within these two congregations. However, there may also be some important similarities between the congregational experiences of the Roman Catholic lesbian and the MCC gay male. Both of these congregations, for instance, may happen to place a high value on social justice issues and each individual might be involved in the effective congregational ministries of care among LGBT people conducted within the local neighborhood by her/his congregation.

Similarly, the experiences of an Asian American gay male who belongs to a largely white Presbyterian congregation in suburban Palo Alto will be markedly different in many respects from those of an African American transgendered person who attends an urban San Francisco congregation affiliated with the United Church of Christ and which boasts a leadership and membership that is predominantly black and LGBT. Once again, however, these two individuals may share something in that each experiences a form of worship that is profoundly meaningful to them precisely because their congregations embrace LGBT persons and value their spiritual experiences.

The results of this study demonstrate that it is worthwhile to compare the experiences of LGBT persons from various religious traditions and denominations with distinctive belief systems, moral theologies, social teachings, and modes of worship. Such studies reveal the many and varied ways in which LGBT people both involve themselves in religion and are helping to shape the larger American cultural landscape regarding issues relating to homosexuality, religion, and the full enfranchisement of LGBT people.

It has long been recognized by politicians, social activists, and community leaders from many sectors of American society that religion is a potent influence within American culture today. What is too frequently not explored or even recognized, however, is that many LGBT persons

are highly visible and remarkably active participants in American religious life even when the local congregations they attend may belong to larger religious denominations whose policies serve to exclude LGBT people from local congregational life and even promote outright discrimination against LGBT persons within society at large. Not all LGBT persons of faith choose to disassociate themselves from religious congregational life even when, it might seem, there are good reasons for doing so.³ Indeed, in this study of LGB-affirming congregations and their LGBT membership in the Bay Area we meet several dozen individuals who choose to take part in organized religion as highly committed and highly active members of congregations that serve as powerful institutional instruments of change on local, regional, and/or even national levels.

Certainly, many American religious groups are currently in profound turmoil over questions relating to homosexuality and LGBT people. Leaders of the Christian “religious right” in the United States, for example, have chosen homosexuality as that issue around which to rally their membership in an effort to prevent the increasing acceptance of LGBT persons as full-fledged members of American civil society.⁴ Most recently, conservative religious groups in this country are organizing to prevent the extension of civil marriage to same-sex couples under the guise of “protecting the institution of marriage.” LGBT people who are active within mainstream religious congregations pose a great threat to these conservative religious leaders and their followers because they counter the notion that LGBT persons are individuals who are not true Christians or faithful Jews. In fact, conservative Christian leaders (and some conservative Jewish leaders) desperately work to advance their view that the Judeo-Christian scriptures and religious traditions preach a clear condemnation of homosexuality, bisexuality, and the social enfranchisement of LGBT persons.

LGBT people of faith and their allies threaten the agenda of the “religious right” because they witness to forms of faith and practice that not only tolerate LGBT people but are eager to embrace them as both full-fledged believers and leaders of faith communities. Moreover, LGBT people of faith present to the American public an aspect of LGBT communities frequently missed by the public media: LGBT people who are both proud of their LGBT identity and devout members of Christian or Jewish congregations.

Understanding the ways in which LGBT people are influencing American religious life and encouraging local, regional, and national religious organizations to become institutions of full

³For an overview of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals within American religious life today, see, for example, Gary David Comstock, *Unrepentant, Self-Affirming, Practicing: Lesbian/Bisexual/Gay People within Organized Religion* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

⁴The literature on the Religious Right and homosexuality is vast. For a brief overview of the current situation in the US, see for example, Chris Bull and John Gallagher, *Perfect Enemies: The Religious Right, the Gay Movement, and the Politics of the 1990's* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1996).

inclusion is worthwhile not only because it helps us to understand better the ever-changing American religious landscape. More importantly, such an understanding helps us to appreciate the profound potential that LGBT people of faith who are active in organized religion have for shaping larger public discussions regarding LGBT persons and their involvement in American civic society.

One potential outcome of this study is the realization that LGBT people active in mainstream religious denominations are capable of organizing themselves effectively in local, regional, and even national coalitions with a uniquely effective voice in American society at large. By working together in coalition, LGBT people of faith would not only offer a much-needed counterweight to the well-funded and well-broadcast voice of the American religious right; more importantly, they would also raise powerful voices that speak of the promise and attainability of full inclusion for all members of American society, whatever their sexual identity, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, and other particular characteristics and circumstances.

LGBT people *need* to be heard loudly and clearly within the current debates about sexuality and religion since they speak in languages of belief that a good many Americans understand and utilize themselves. Acting in coalition, which necessarily means across the particular religious and denominational affiliations that characterize American religion, LGBT people of faith can become a voice of challenge and change within contemporary American culture.

Chapter 2: Scope and Methodology of Study

This study of Bay Area welcoming congregations is based on the results of 127 written surveys and 42 in-depth oral interviews of “out” LGBT individuals who are members or attendees at one of 21 congregations that can be considered, broadly speaking, open and inclusive of LGBT persons.¹ Early on in the design of this project it was decided that the focus would be placed exclusively on people who were self-identified as LGBT and open about their sexual orientation because of the study’s goal to assess the degree of welcome and inclusion of LGBT persons in congregational life. While the viewpoints of “closeted” LGBT persons on these issues might offer interesting insights, the difficulty of identifying such individuals in many (if not all) congregations was another factor in maintaining the study’s focus on “out” individuals.

Concerted attempts were made to assemble as diverse a group of individuals from a wide variety of congregations within the nine county San Francisco Bay Area. To that end, two synagogues, two Unitarian Universalist congregations, and Christian churches representing nine denominations were successfully recruited to take part in this study.² The far majority (17) of congregations included in this study, it should be noted at the outset, are local churches affiliated with Christian denominations.

A total of forty congregations were considered for this study and religious leaders as well as members and non-members who attend these faith communities were approached and asked to consider taking part in this project. Unfortunately, little success was made in securing the interest and/or cooperation of congregations with predominantly African-American memberships. Of the four approached only one agreed to take part in the study (and the response rate was considerably lower than the other congregations that took part in this study).

¹It is important to keep in mind that terms such as “welcoming,” “open,” and/or “inclusive” are used quite differently within different denominational contexts. For instance, a Methodist church may have a well-deserved local reputation among LGBT people as a congregation that welcomes them even though the church leadership does not use any of the words listed above to describe the congregation. Such a congregation may also choose not to name itself a “Reconciling Congregation” (a term denoting affiliation with a national organization that advocates the full inclusion of “out” LGBT people in the United Methodist Church of America), even though it welcomes LGBT people into membership and leadership within the local church community.

²While historically Christian in confessional belief, Unitarian Universalist individuals today by and large do not consider themselves to be Christian. In addition, UU congregations are “creed-less” communities of faith, that is, they have no statements of doctrine to which members must give their assent.

Even less successful were attempts made to enlist the involvement of two largely Asian-American congregations: one of these congregations agreed to participate after a series of long discussions between the Study Project Director and the pastor but, in the end, none of the surveys handed out to LGBT members of that congregation were returned.

Why did successful recruitment of African-American and Asian-American congregations prove to be unsuccessful? After a series of discussions between the Project Director and several individuals of color active in Bay Area congregations, it became clear that the questionnaire format may have been viewed by potential survey participants as (1) insufficient to ensure the anonymity of those surveyed; (2) too impersonal a tool for questions relating to faith and issues of sexuality; and/or (3) distrusted as the work of an “outsider” attempting to gather information on the lives and beliefs of individuals in minority communities. A mode of surveying that does not rely on written surveys and which is based largely on face-to-face interviews with trusted interviewers and which uses other personal means of gathering information would be more appropriate in African-American and Asian-American cultural contexts. (The Study Project Director is presently seeking funding to conduct such a study in league with colleagues with stronger ties to African American, Asian American, and Latino congregations in the Bay Area.³)

An additional challenge for this study involved recruiting Transgendered individuals. While almost 10% (N=12) of respondents self-identified as bisexual, only two individuals person described themselves as Transgendered (1.6%). Given the understandable hesitancy of many Transgendered individuals to take part in congregational life, such a minuscule representation is not surprising. Given the unique interests, needs, and issues of Transgendered persons involved in organized religion, it is clear that a separate study (with different approaches and tactics) is needed to explore the welcome and inclusion of T people in communities of faith.⁴

Despite these difficulties in recruitment, this study does include a large number of LGBT individuals from a broad range of congregations. As the tables below demonstrate, the congregations in this study represent 12 denominations, include suburban (5) as well as urban (15) congregations which are located in San Francisco, Alameda, San Mateo, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara counties. (For in-depth descriptions of each congregation, see Appendix #1).

³See Appendix K for the proposed report, “LGBT People of Color in Bay Area Communities of Faith.”

⁴See Appendix K for the proposed report, “Transgendered People in Bay Area Communities of Faith.”

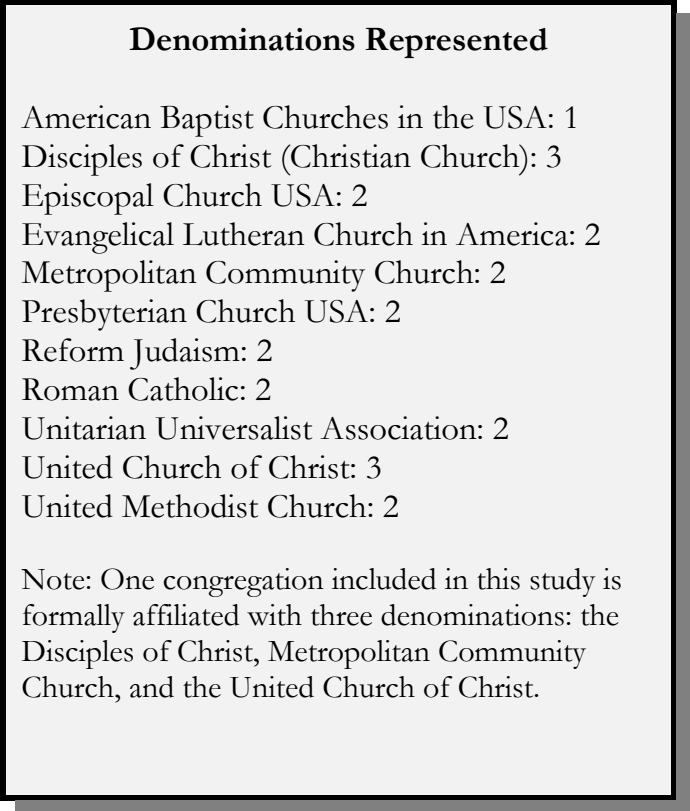


Figure 1

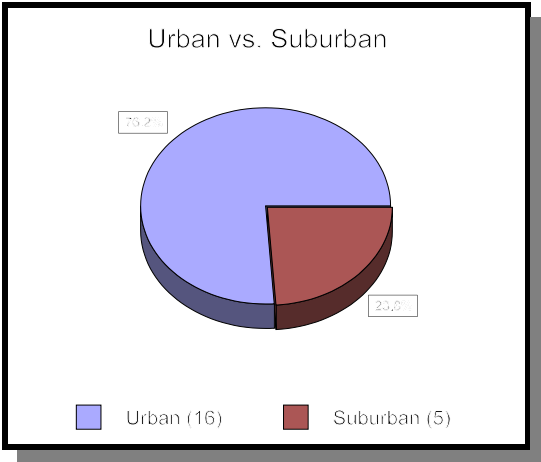


Figure 2

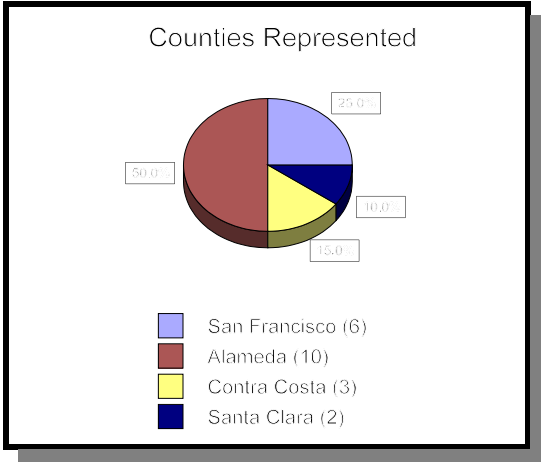


Figure 3

The written surveys were handed out to 245 individuals by LGBT contacts whom the Study Project Director met with and who are themselves members of the congregations studied. Most of these contact people are active in LGBT committees, study groups, and/or hold leadership positions in their respective local congregations and have held active membership in their churches/synagogues for at least five years. In a few cases, ministers or rabbis were themselves recruited to help disseminate the surveys.

By any measure, the vast majority of individuals who returned surveys can be considered active and highly involved members of their congregations with a vested interest in promoting programs and ministries that welcome, affirm, and include LGBT people. The participants in this survey hold strong views on the place of LGBT persons as full and equal members in local faith communities, and a very high percentage of them believe that their congregations are genuinely welcoming and highly inclusive of LGBT people.

Of the 245 surveys distributed, a total of 127 were returned which makes for a respectable return rate of 51.8%. Clearly, this high rate of return indicates that many of the people invited to participate in the written surveys were interested in sharing their experiences as LGBT persons of faith active in local congregations. This eagerness to take part in this study is also evidenced in the relatively high percentage of written survey participants (59%) who volunteered to provide their names and contact information for follow-up questions (via telephone or e-mail) and/or face-to-face interviews with the Study Project Director.⁵

Each survey was accompanied by an introductory letter (see Appendix #2) from the Study Project Director which stated briefly the purposes of the study, assured anonymity of those who wished to remain anonymous, and listed ten possible features of congregations with successful

⁵A fair question to ask is whether only those individuals with positive experiences were recruited for the study and/or whether only those with positive experiences chose to return the studies to the Project Director. Once again, it was a difficult task recruiting LGBT individuals from many congregations to take part in the study because of strong hesitancy among congregational members to identify their congregations at a time when many denominations are struggling with the issues relating to homosexuality and LGBT people. In addition, many LGBT individuals from congregations with welcoming programs in the early stages of development were afraid that they were simply not prepared to reflect in a public way on the state of their congregations' welcoming programs and/or felt that it would be impossible to recruit other congregational members to take part in the study. Finally, as mentioned earlier in this report, recruiting Transgendered individuals was not successful, and several congregations with predominantly African-American or Asian-American memberships could not be included in this study because of an inability to recruit individuals who felt comfortable taking part in a survey.

Despite these limitations, however, I believe that the information on congregational programs provided by survey participants with overwhelmingly positive assessments of their congregations' level of welcome offers valuable data on congregations with successful LGBT programming.

LGB-affirming programs and ministries. Each individual received a copy of the survey along with a stamped and addressed envelope in order to facilitate easy return via US Mail to the Study Project Director.

The surveys were made up of two main sections containing a total number of 14 pages: the first section (hereafter Section 1) of the survey was adapted from a survey entitled “Parish Profile Inventory” which was developed by the Hartford Seminary Center for Social and Religious Research and published in *Studying Congregations*, a highly regarded handbook used by clergy professionals, sociologists, and seminarians engaged in the study and analysis of local congregational life.⁶

Section 1 of the survey explores four main topics. First, background information on the individual survey respondent is collected by means of fourteen questions; additional questions gauge the respondent’s opinions on three facets of her/his congregation: its identity, its organizational characteristics, and the various tasks that the congregation performs.

Under “Background Information About Yourself” survey respondents were asked to list their gender, race(s), ethnic affiliation(s) as well as information on their current employment status and educational background. Questions regarding a respondents congregational affiliation and personal attendance at religious services were included in order to assess, in an admittedly rough fashion, the respondent’s level of involvement in congregational life. Additional queries posed to the individual respondent center on the number of additional commitments (such as committee membership) that the s/he maintains in her/his local congregation. Finally, respondents were asked to list any additional leadership roles that they fill in their congregation, to state any prior denominational affiliations, and to rate the important of religion in their own lives.

Section 2 of the survey, designed and written by Bernard Schlager, PhD, attempts to assess the individual respondent’s views on the degree and quality of welcome and incorporation of LGBT people into her/his local congregation. Questions in this section of the survey included assessments of the welcome extended to LGBT people, the level of LGBT integration into the life and work of the congregation, and the extent to which the congregation is involved in larger LGBT religious and civic projects. Ample space was also provided in this section of the survey for extended written comments on several topics such as the most effective ways in which LGBT people are included in the “leadership, life and ministry of the congregation,” suggestions for making one’s congregation more inclusive of LGBT people, and recommendations for inter-congregational dialogue and collaboration on LGBT issues within the Bay Area.

Note on the tabulation of the survey results: As mentioned above, 127 surveys were returned to the Study Project Director. However, quite often (as is typical in written surveys) not each individual respondent elected to answer every question on the survey and occasionally a

⁶Nancy T.Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

respondent answered a question by appropriately checking more than one listed option. For instance, a respondent might well have described herself as both a full-time student and as employed part-time; similarly, a respondent might describe himself as Black, Latin, and Native American. In either of the above examples the survey results include all checked responses. Hence, the total of responses for each of the survey's yes/no or multiple choice answers will not necessarily equal the total number of 106 respondents.

Chapter 3: Participating Individuals and Congregations

The 127 surveys returned to the Project Director provide valuable and relatively in-depth information on the individual respondents, their views on the congregations to which they belong or attend, and the types of LGBT-affirming programs and ministries offered by these congregations. While there are certainly limits to what any research tool can tell us about the beliefs and attitudes of those surveyed, the information culled from these project surveys does provide one means with which to assess the involvement of LGBT people in Bay Area communities of faith and the ways in which they experience welcome and inclusion in their chosen congregations. Again, the focus of this study is on LGBT people of faith and *their* experiences of welcome and inclusion in Bay Area religious congregations; the views of non-LGBT persons, while interesting in and of themselves and/or as offering points of comparison, were not sought in order to root this study solely in the experience of LGBT individuals.

In this chapter the focus is on interpreting the survey data regarding the respondents' backgrounds and the general characteristics of their congregations. Interpretation of survey data concerning the LGBT-affirming aspects of congregations will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

Beginning with information about the survey respondents, the presentation below will next treat aspects of congregational identity, organization, and tasks:

I. Background Information on Survey Respondents

- ◆ **Gender Identification and Sexual Orientation/Identity:** With an even split between male and female, a majority (47%) of respondents identify as gay, 42% as lesbian, and 10% as bisexual. Only two peoples identified themselves as Transgender and one other preferred the term “queer” as the term which described her/his sexual orientation/identity.

(The small number of transgendered individuals may reflect the fact that issues involving “T” people are only beginning to be addressed by religious congregations. Certainly such issues are at the cutting edge of inclusion in the Unitarian Universalist Association and increasingly in more mainline Protestant denominations and congregations.)

- ◆ **Racial Identity:** as mentioned above, a genuine drawback of this study is the lack of ethnic and racial diversity among those who returned surveys. The difficulty in finding congregations with predominantly African American, Asian American, and Latina/o memberships may well reflect the fact that most of these congregations (especially those with Evangelical, Fundamentalist or Roman Catholic affiliations) are conservative in their official theological views on homosexuality and related issues.

- ◆ **Marital/Partnership Status and Respondents with Children:** The high percentage of respondents who are married/partnered¹ (64%) is significant and may reflect a commonly-held opinion that religious observance and congregational membership is higher among LGBT persons who are partnered than among those who are single (23% in this study), separated/divorced (9.6%) or widowed (3.2%). Less than a quarter of respondents (27 or 21.25%) indicated that they have children; however, of this number most had children 12 years and younger.

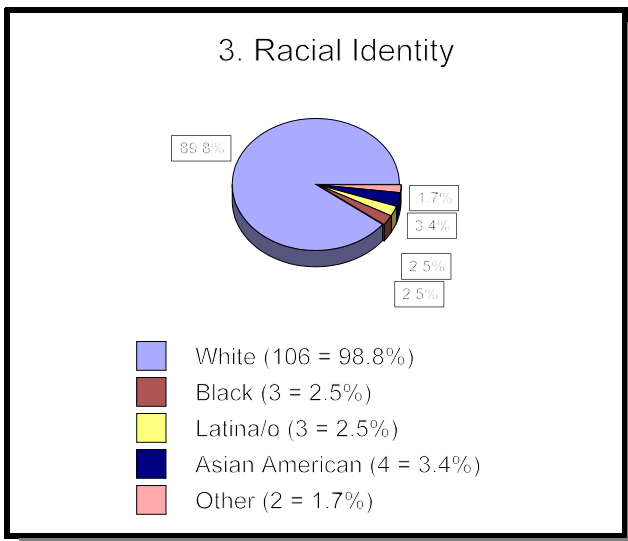
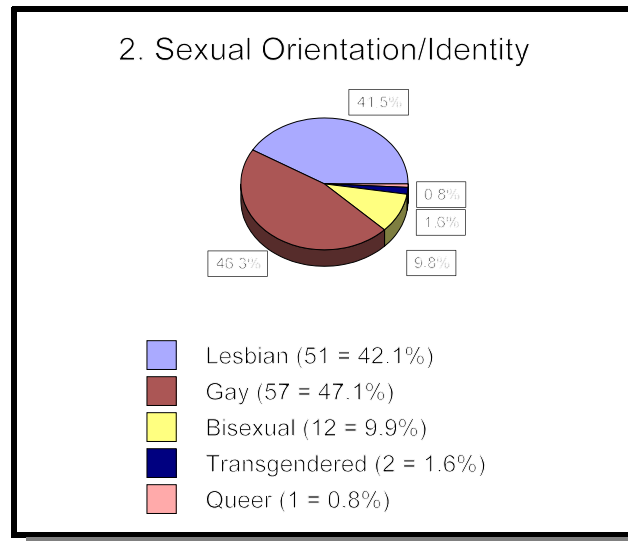
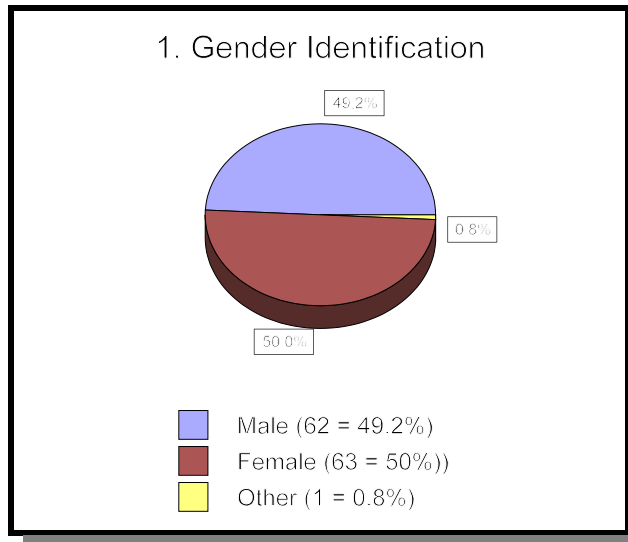
- ◆ **Highest Educational Levels and Current Employment Status:** A remarkable 70% of survey respondents report post-graduate educational experience or a post-graduate degree; 16.8% hold a college degree; 11.2% have some college, trade or vocational school experience; while none have only a high school education or less than high school education. This means that a full 88% have at least an undergraduate degree and, as will be discussed below, the LGBT persons who responded to this survey offer their congregations a very high level of educational experience.

With regards to current employment status, 80.9% of respondents are employed full-time or part-time with a small 10% who list themselves as “house person” (in lieu of the term “housewife”) or student; 8.7% were retired.

- ◆ **Years Lived in Bay Area:** Considering the fact that the Bay Area has a high rate of population turnover, especially among those who work in professional occupations, almost three quarters majority of survey respondents (74.6%) have lived in the area from 10 years or more, and only 25.4% have been Bay Area residents 9 years or less.

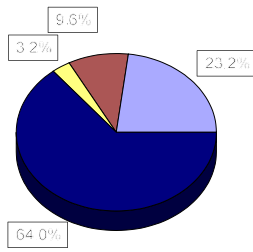
¹ The terms “married/partnered” were used in the survey because some LGBT persons in committed relationship use both or either to refer to their relationships regardless of whether or not they have taken part in ceremonies of civil union, holy union, or sacramental same-sex marriage.

TABLES 1-3:



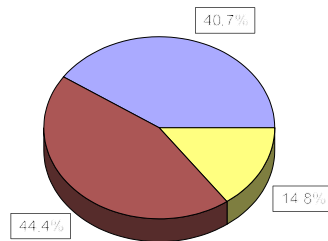
TABLES 4-6:

4. Marital/Partnership Status



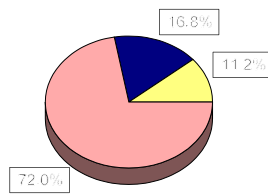
- Single, never married/partnered (29 = 23.2%)
- Separated or divorced (12 = 9.6%)
- Widowed (4 = 3.2%)
- Married/Partnered (80 = 64%)

5. Respondents With Children



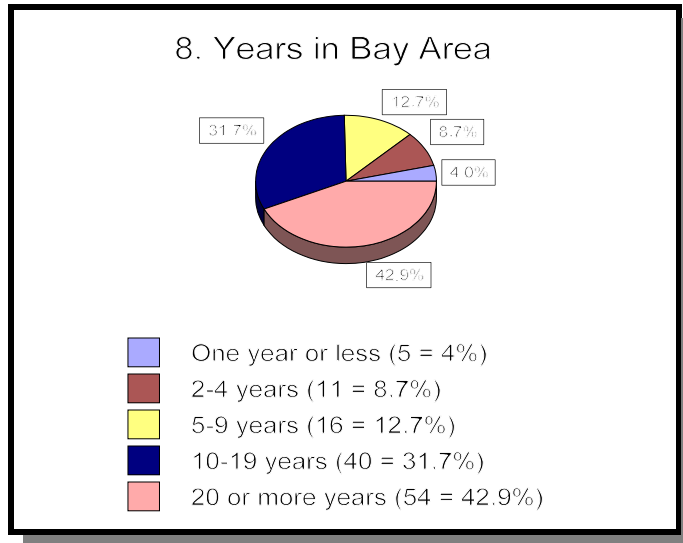
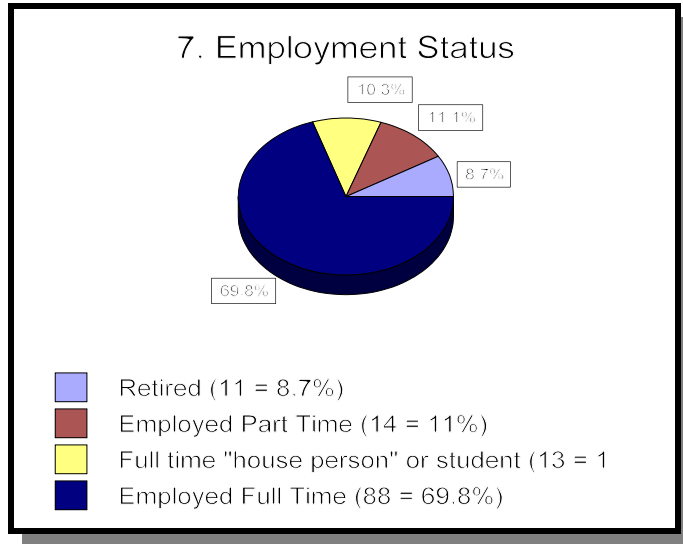
- Birth-4 years old (11)
- 5 - 12 years old (12)
- 13-17 years old (4)

6. Level of Education



- Less than high school graduate (0)
- High School Graduate (0)
- Some college, trade, vocational school (14)
- College degree (21)
- Post-graduate work or degree (90)

TABLES 7-8:



- ◆ **Membership, Worship Attendance, and Levels of Involvement in Congregations:** Seven survey questions were devoted to these issues and what emerges from the data is that the respondents exhibit high rates of involvement in several areas of local congregational life, including worship attendance, committee involvement, and lay leadership.

With regards to **length of congregational membership**, significant numbers of individuals were relatively new members or attender of their respective congregations: 11% of individuals had joined their congregations within the past year; those who had belonged to their current congregations for only 2-4 years make up the largest percentage (35.2%), and 22.4 % of respondents had belonged to their congregations for 5-9 years. Those with 10-19 years of membership made up 20.8% of the survey total, while 10.4% of respondents claimed memberships totaling 20 years or more.

One often-used gauge of congregational involvement is **frequency of attendance at worship services** and the LGBT individuals who took in this survey attend their congregational worship services on a very frequent basis, in fact, to a higher degree than do other Americans: 85.8% report an attendance rate of 2-4 times per month, with 9.8% claiming a higher rate of attendance (7.9% attend 5-9 times per month and 1.6% saying that they worship at their local congregation more than ten times every month). When asked how frequently (on average) they had attended religious worship services during the past year, however, the exceptionally high rate of congregational involvement in this area is quite remarkable: 58.7% worship 4 or more times every month; 33.3% attend 2-3 times per month; and only 4.8% had attended only once per month on average during the past 12 months.²

When asked generally about the **hours spent on average in any given month in congregational activities** and commitments outside of worship services (i.e. in serving on committees or assisting with social events, educational and/or outreach programs), respondents once again indicated their high levels of involvement. In fact, every participant in the survey gave at least some time to congregation activities in addition to attending worship services. 17.5% of those surveyed reported devoting 11-20 hours per month or more than 20 hours per month while equal percentages (24.6% each) had given 3-5 or 6-10 hours per week. Those who had given 1-2 hours per month made up 21.1%.

An additional indication of the very significant investment that these individuals make in congregational life can be seen when they are asked about the **number of congregational organizations, committees, and/or groups** in which they hold membership: a full 63.3% hold membership in two or more such groups (including the

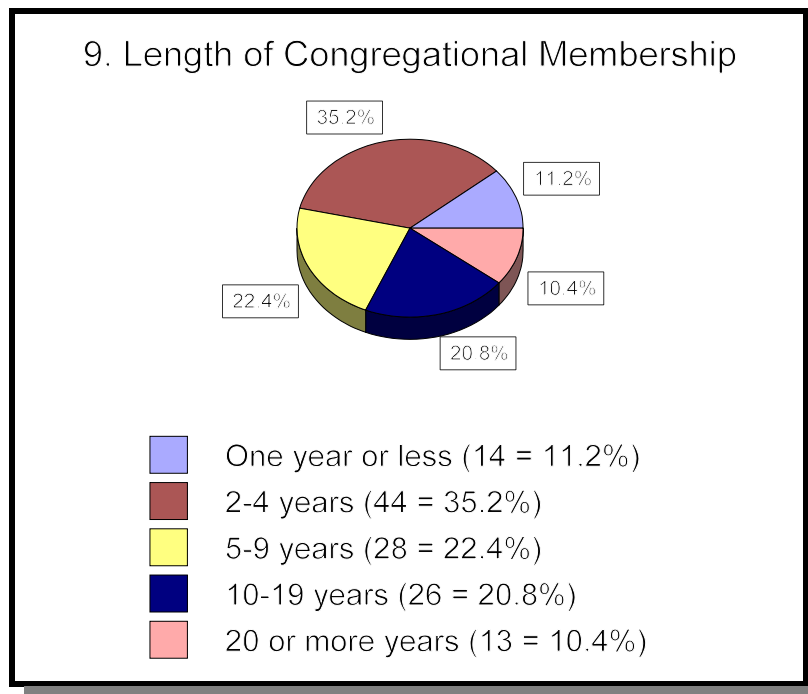
²According to the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, 44% of Americans attend church on a weekly basis. See University of Michigan News and Information Services, 10 December 1997 News Release, "Study of Worldwide Rates of Religiosity, Church Attendance. Web version: <http://www.umich.edu/~newsinfo/Releases/1997/Dec97/r121097a.html>.

18.8% who are members of four or more such groups), while 20.3% hold membership in one committee. 16.4% of respondents held no such memberships.

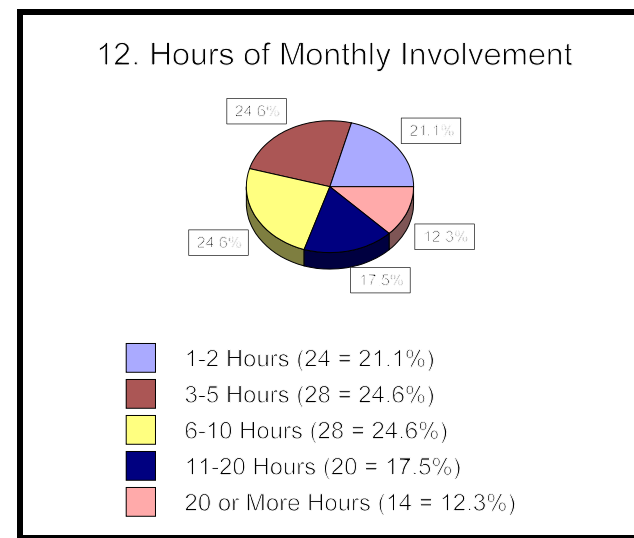
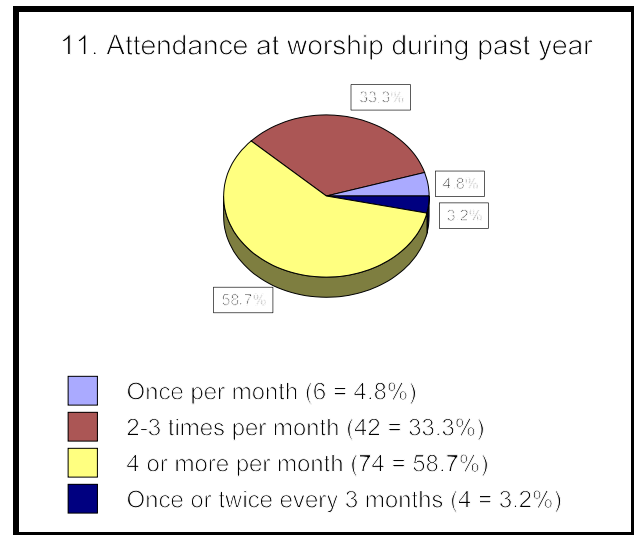
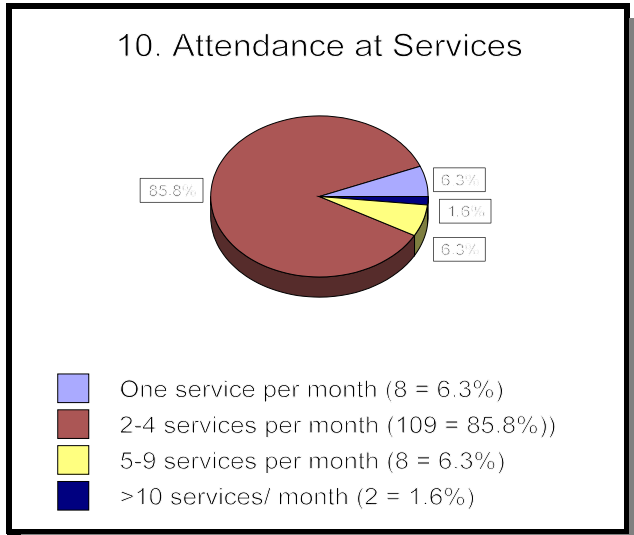
The personal motivation of respondents to maintain or increase their levels of involvement in congregational life is reflected as well in the survey results: 28.9% had maintained their current level of such involvement while 51.6% has become more involved in recent years. In contrast, only 19.5% had become less involved in their congregations in recent years.

Finally, more individuals held positions as elders, deacons, vestry members, and/or other official positions of lay authority in their congregations than had not, according to the survey results: 62.2% vs. 37.8%. When one considers that the appointment of out LGBT persons to such positions is a hotly contested issue for many Christian and Jewish congregations, these results attest to the progressive nature of the congregations surveyed.

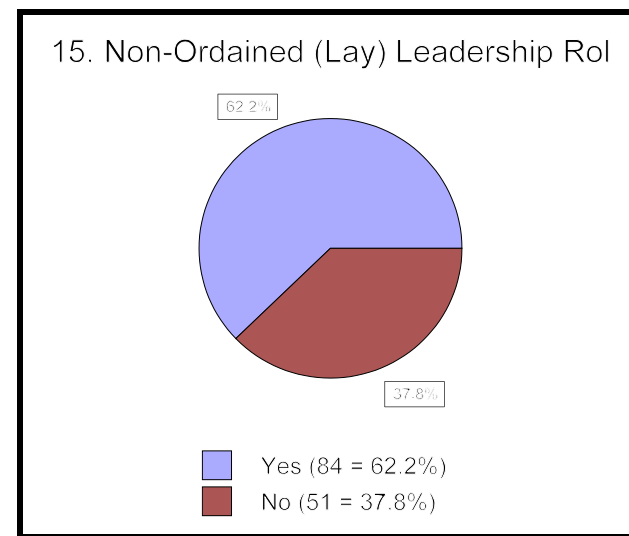
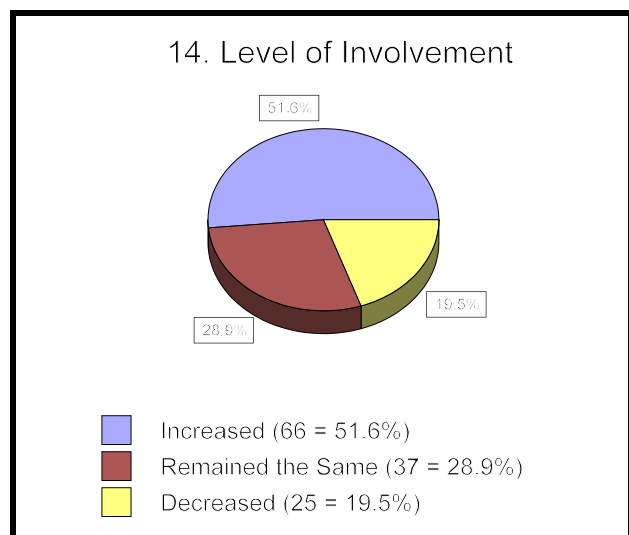
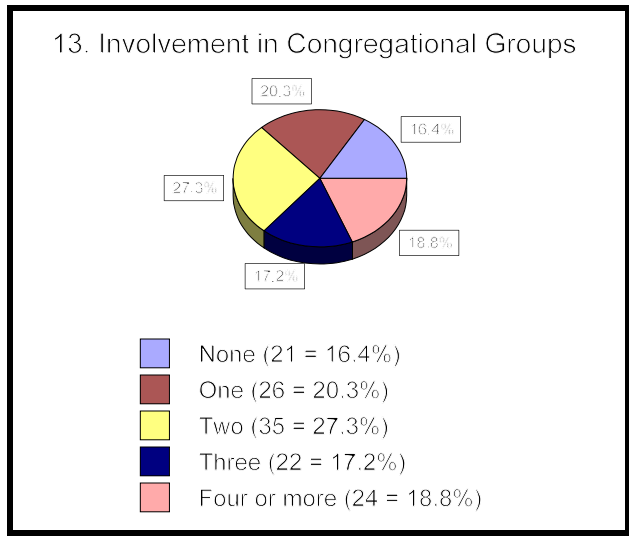
TABLE 9



TABLES 10-12:



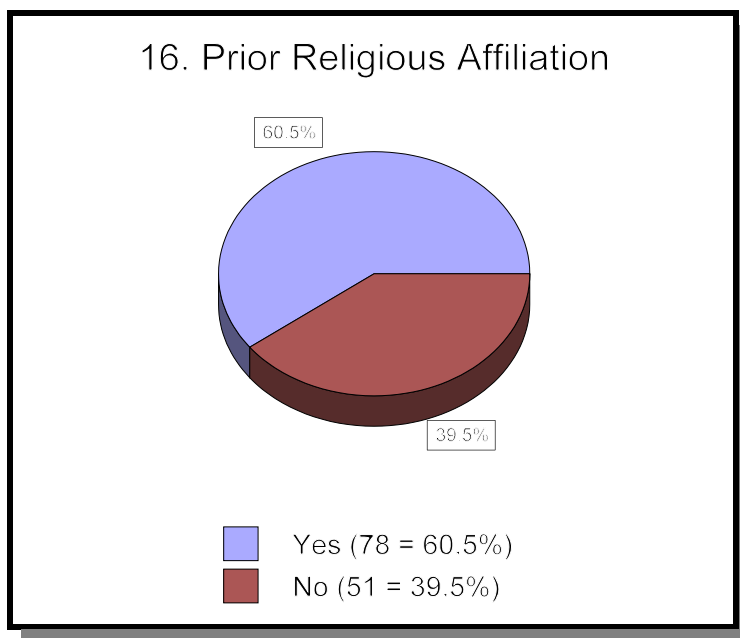
TABLES 13-15:



- ◆ **Prior Religious Affiliation and the Importance of Religion in One’s Life:** According to one recent study, 16% of American adults have changed their religious identification or preference.³ Those who took part in this survey, however, report a much higher rate of switching religious affiliation: a full 60.5% of survey respondents have changed religious affiliation at least once during their lives. In addition, among those who had switched denominations, 38.8% had left that two largest US denominations (Roman Catholicism and the Baptist church) which uphold official teachings that strongly condemn homosexual activity.

As might be expected of LGBT people affiliated with local religious congregations, religion is a very important part of their lives. However, when compared with the figures from a recent poll on worldwide religiosity (which reports that 53% of Americans describe religion as very important in their lives⁴), the responses of this survey’s participants are startling: 73.8% of respondents rank religion as very important in their own lives (followed next by those who consider religion somewhat important [23.8%]). Only one respondent reported that religion was somewhat important; one that religion was not important; and one individual was unsure.

TABLE 16:

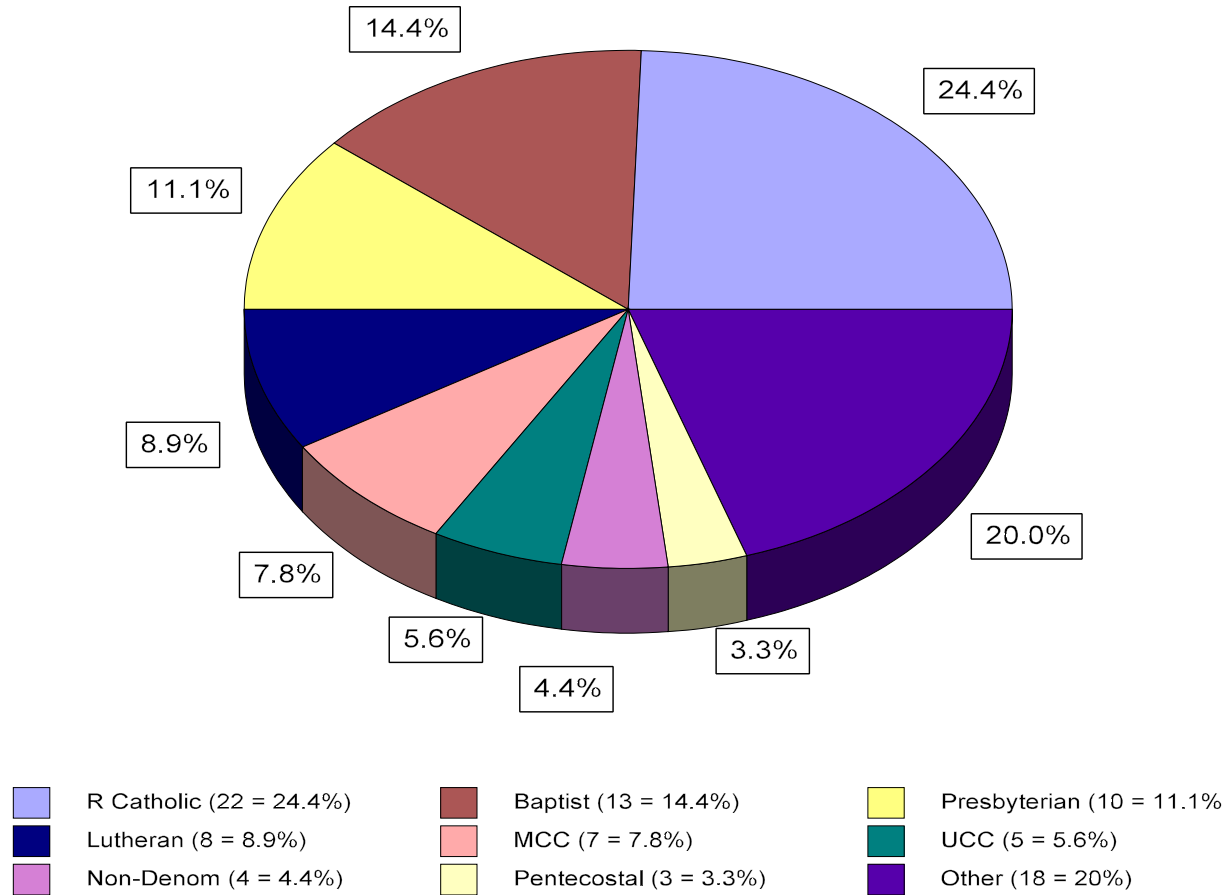


³See Ariela Keysar, Barry A. Kosmin, Egon Mayer, “American Religious Identification Survey of 2001,” Graduate Center of The City University of New York. Web version: http://www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/key_findings.htm.

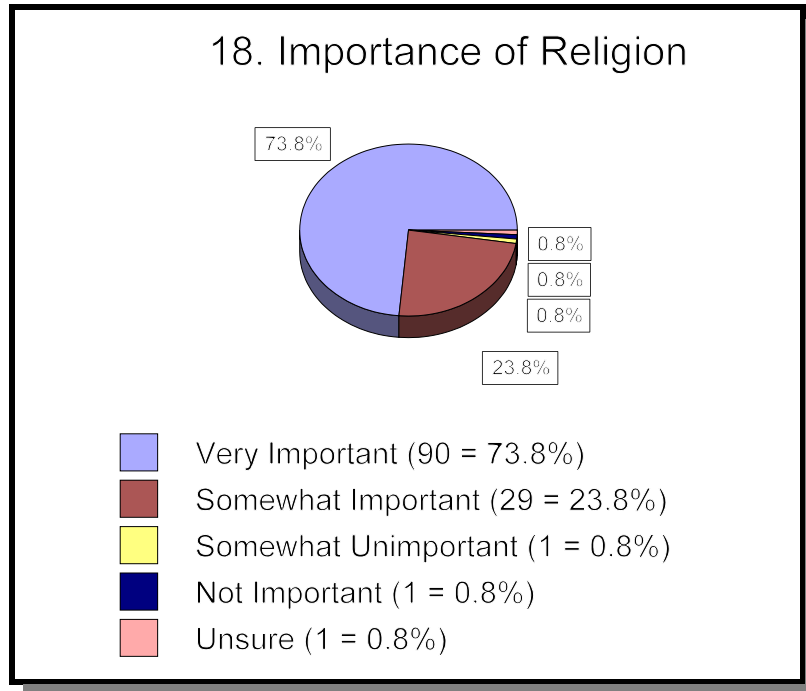
⁴University of Michigan News and Information Services, 10 December 1997 News Release, “Study of Worldwide Rates of Religiosity, Church Attendance. Web version: <http://www.umich.edu/~newsinfo/Releases/1997/Dec97/r121097a.html>.

TABLES 17-18:

17. Prior Denominational Affiliation



18. Importance of Religion

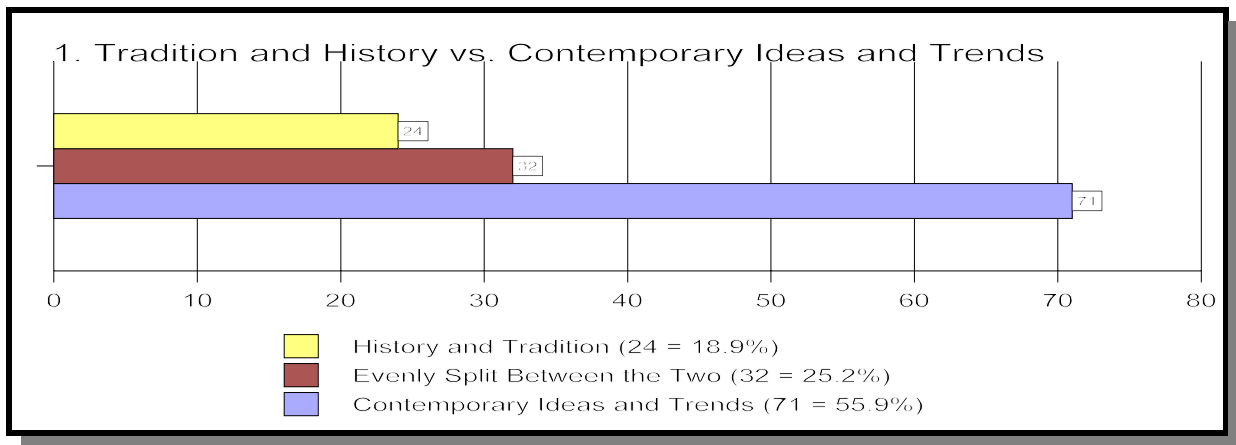


- ◆ **Summary:** For the most part, participants in this survey are highly-educated individuals who identify primarily as gay or lesbian; they are largely white women and men with atypically high levels of formal education (including post-graduate studies) who are employed in full-time work. Clearly, participation in organized religion is an important value for these LGBT people of faith as is evidenced in their high levels of worship attendance, congregational committee involvement, and the number of hours devoted to congregational projects in general. In addition, a clear majority of survey participants hold formal positions of responsibility in their congregations as elders, deacons, or lay ministers. Almost three quarters of respondents describe religion as “very important” in their lives and well over half of those surveyed had changed denominational affiliation at least once in their lives no doubt reflecting active choices made by many of these individuals to join a particular local congregation in which they feel at home.

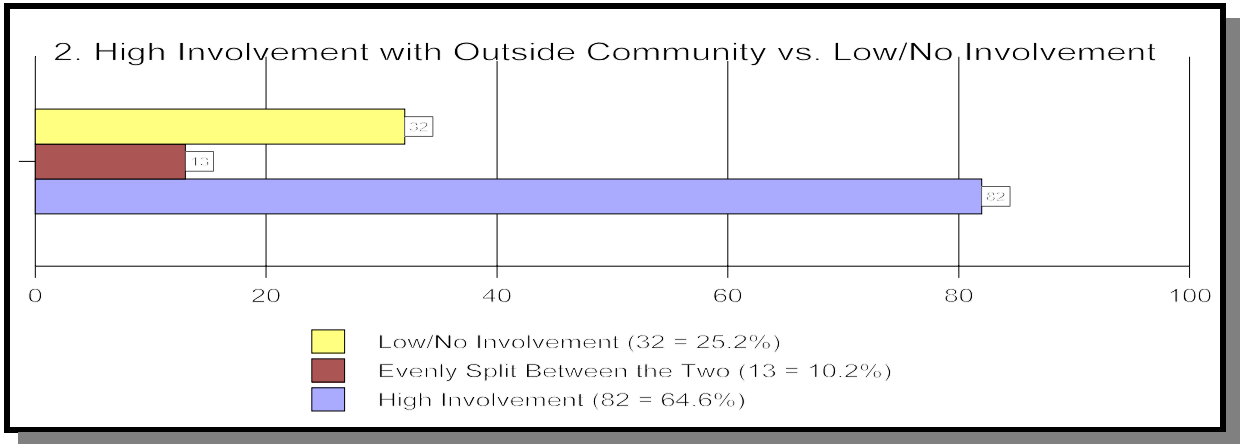
II. Congregational Identities

As the five charts below demonstrate, the survey respondents describe their respective congregations in remarkably similar ways. The twenty one congregations surveyed are, for the most part, socially minded and socially-active communities of faith with strong emphases on the world beyond their church or synagogue walls.

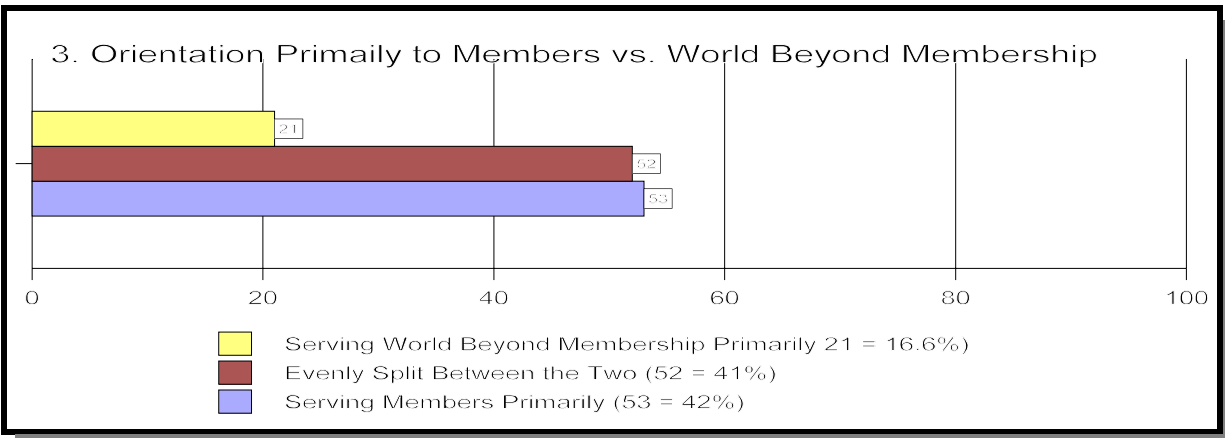
1. On the whole, participants describe their congregations as more influenced by contemporary ideas and trends (55.9%) than by tradition and history (18.9%); a quarter of respondents characterize their congregations as lying somewhere between the two poles. Such descriptions might well be expected from “out” LGBT individuals active in local religious communities in an era when homosexuality and related issues have become such “lightning rod” issues for many Christian and Jewish congregations of various affiliations or denominations.



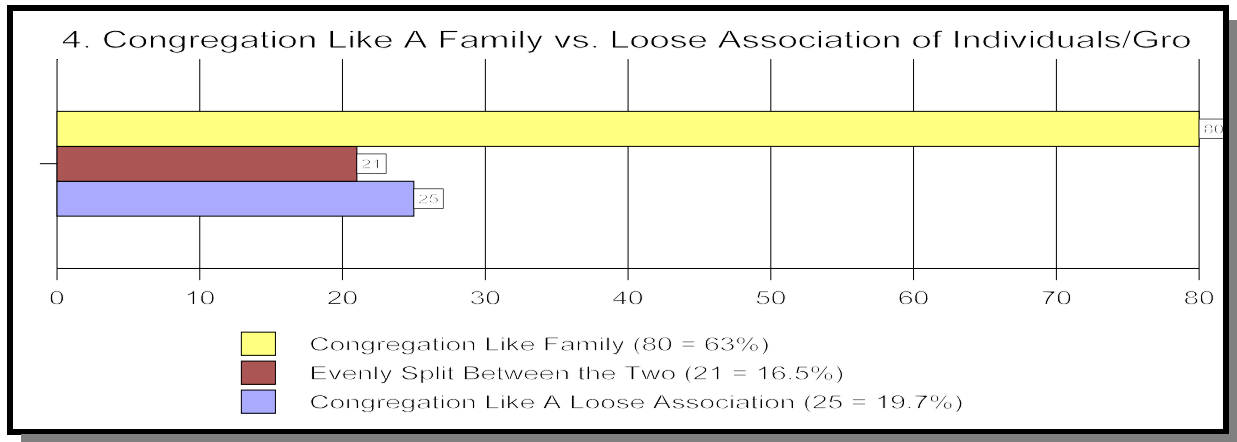
2. With regard to the involvement of local congregations in their outside communities a significant majority of survey respondents (64.6%) report high levels of such involvement. Such involvement would include programs sponsored or supported by the congregations among the poor, needy, and other marginalized groups, including LGBT causes (as will be discussed below).



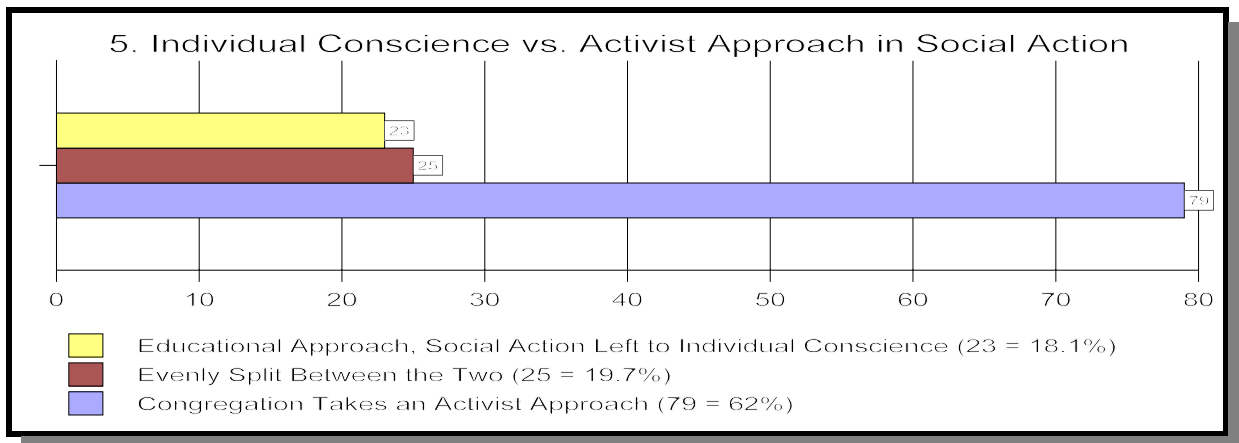
3. The apparently strong focus of these congregations on people and concerns beyond their own walls, however, does not mean that the “inner life” of the congregations is being neglected, according to the survey respondents. Indeed, when asked to rank their congregations as either “primarily oriented to serving our members” or as “primarily oriented to serving the world beyond our membership” there is an even split in those who reported a primarily member-focused orientation (41.7%) and those who decided that their congregations were evenly split between the two orientations. Only 16.5% believe that their congregations focused significantly more on “serving the world beyond our membership” than on serving the congregation’s membership.



4. Respect for the interests and concerns of individuals and groups within these congregations seems to be indicated by the overwhelming tendency of respondents to describe their own congregation as more like a family than a “loose association of individuals and groups.” As indicated by these following comments, this family-type environment is an important aspect of congregational life for the survey’s participants.



5. A final survey question relating to congregational identity asked respondents whether their church or synagogue typically approached social issues by educating their membership (and leaving social action to individual conscience) or whether the congregation had “a proven history of taking a stand on social issues as a congregation.” Six out of ten respondents viewed their congregations as more often taking public stands on social issues rather than leaving social action to the individual alone. Roughly equal percentages portrayed their congregations as either maintaining an even balance between the two characteristics (20%) or as focused on an educational approach (18%).

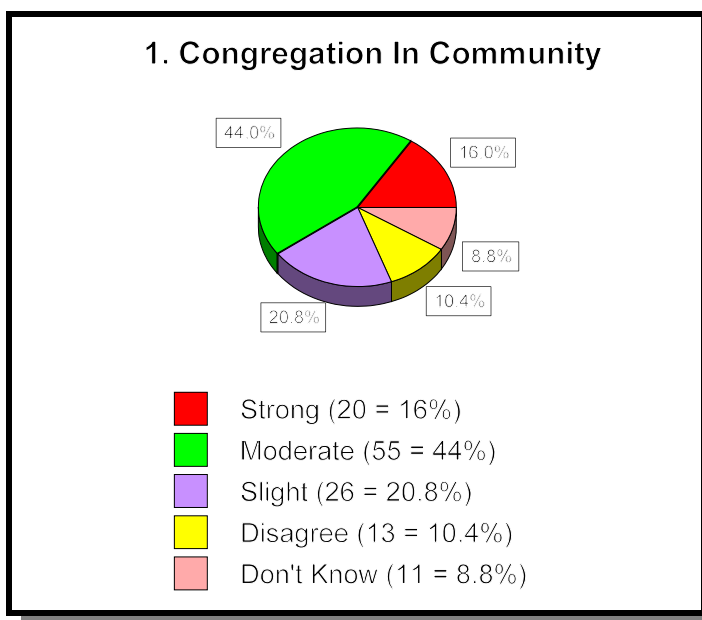


III. Congregational Organization

Several questions in the survey asked respondents to consider the ways in which their congregations supported their memberships, made decisions, and dealt with conflict. A rather complex profile of the congregations can be drawn from this section of the survey but, by and large, what emerges are descriptions of congregations in which members are encouraged to be innovative. In addition, the congregational life described by these individuals places a high value on the inclusion of members in the overall work of the congregation. (The graphs below are accompanied by the full text of the questions as they appeared in the surveys.)

With regard to local community knowledge of activities taking place within the congregation, 16% of respondents believe strongly that their particular congregation is well known within the larger community, with 44% reporting that this is moderately true. It should be noted, however, that a significant minority (33%) disagree with this description as is evidenced by those who only slightly with this statement (20.8%) or disagree altogether with this view (10.4%).

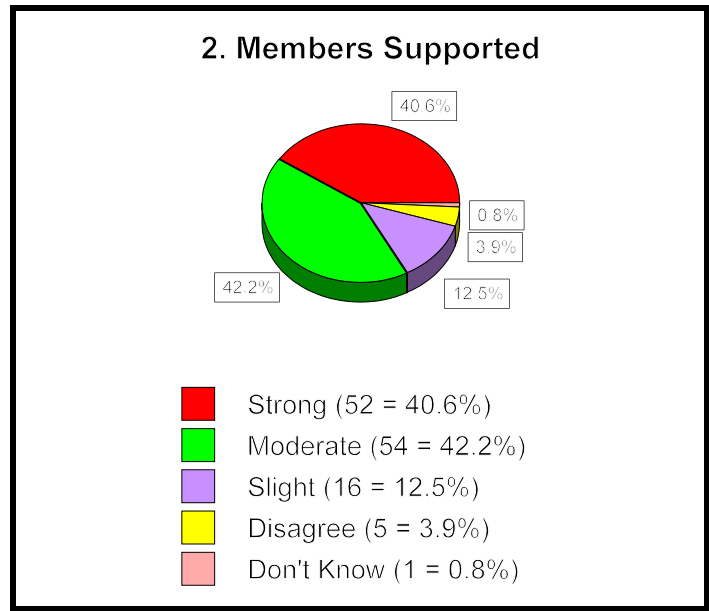
1. "The community around the church/synagogue is well informed about the activities taking place in the congregation."
 - a. Strong (20)
 - b. Moderate (55)
 - c. Slight (26)
 - d. Disagree (13)
 - e. Don't Know (11)



Support of congregational members, however, is something that the majority of survey participants agree with either strongly (40.6%) or moderately (42.2%). Such a response might well indicate that LGBT members of these welcoming and inclusive congregations appreciate religious communities that support innovation and initiative on the part of their members. In a related question (#3 below), similar responses were recorded when individuals were asked to describe congregational attitudes toward the cultivation of ministerial gifts and talents on the part of members.

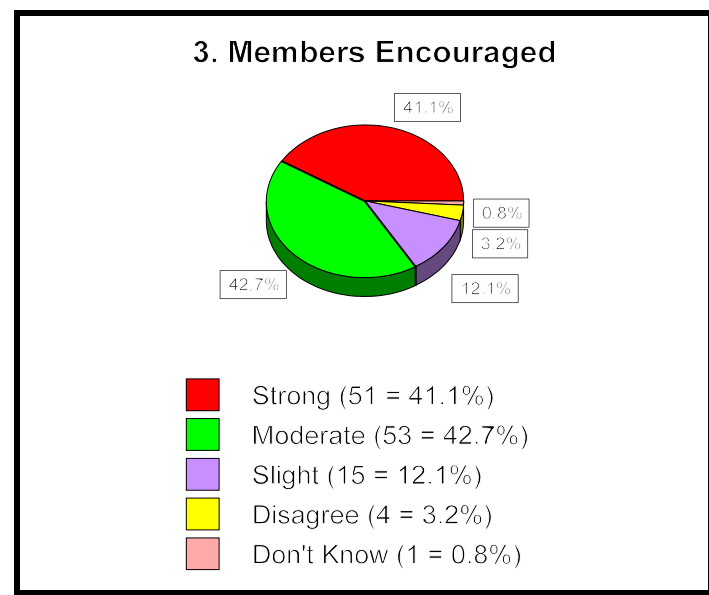
2. “Members and groups get a lot of support and are encouraged for trying something new in the congregation.”

- a. Strong (52)
- b. Moderate (54)
- c. Slight (16)
- d. Disagree (5)
- e. Don't Know (1)



3. “Members are encouraged to discover their particular gifts for ministry and service.”

- a. Strong (51)
- b. Moderate (53)
- c. Slight (15)
- d. Disagree (4)
- e. Don't Know (1)

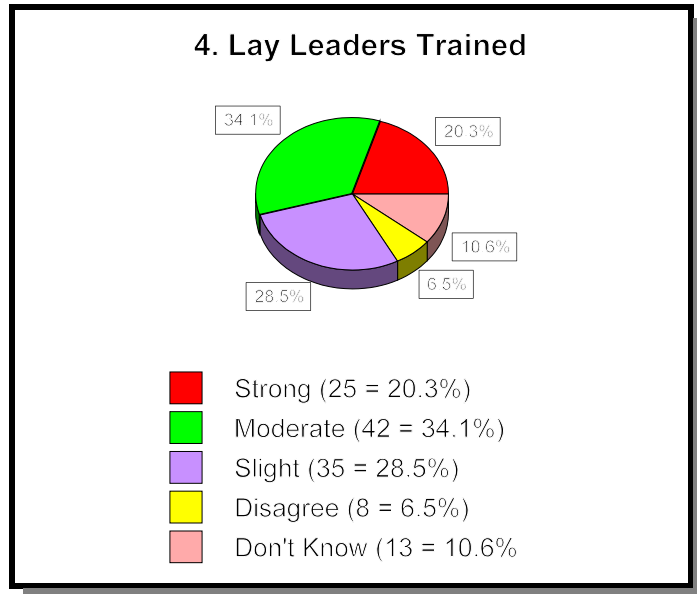


Another important feature of congregational life, in the view of these LGBT respondents, is

the commitment of their congregations to the promotion of non-ordained leadership. Lay leaders are, by and large, given training to carry out their duties within the congregation (Table 4) and positions of leadership are open to lay individuals who are capable and interested (Table 5).

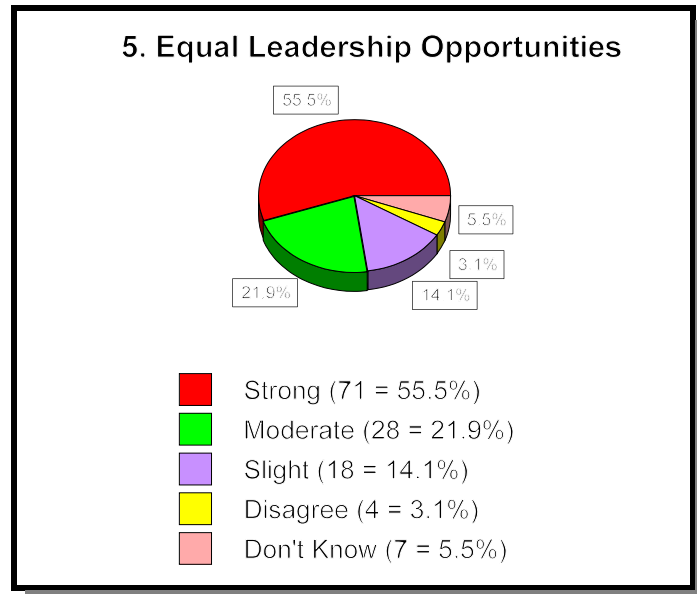
4. “Lay leaders are provided the training they need for their committee and task assignments.”

- a. Strong (25)
- b. Moderate (42)
- c. Slight (35)
- d. Disagree (8)
- e. Don't Know (13)



5. “Every member who is capable and interested has an equal opportunity to hold key leadership positions.”

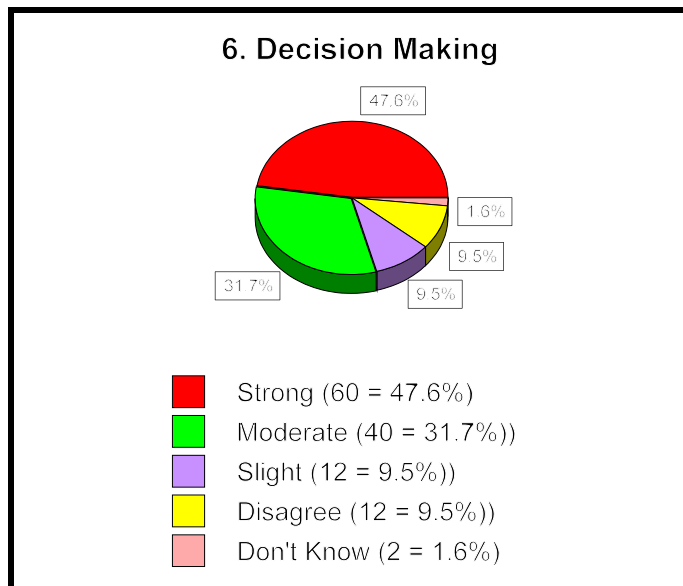
- a. Strong (71)
- b. Moderate (28)
- c. Slight (18)
- d. Disagree (4)
- e. Don't Know (7)



Another important feature which characterizes most of these welcoming and inclusive congregations relates to the open manner in which decision-making and conflict are dealt with in these communities of faith. When asked whether open discussion (on the part of both congregational leadership and membership) accompanies decision-making within the congregation, nearly half (47.6%) of respondents agree strongly that this is the case in their respective congregations (with 31.7% registering moderate assent). Furthermore, a full three quarters of survey participants report that in their congregations conflict is dealt with openly and not behind closed doors.

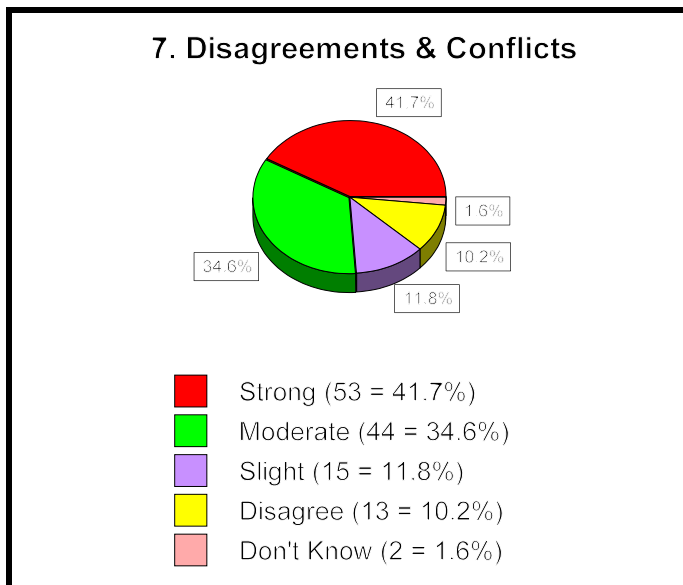
6. "Important decisions about the life of the church/synagogue are rarely made without open discussion by church leaders and members."

- a. Strong (60)
- b. Moderate (40)
- c. Slight (12)
- d. Disagree (12)
- e. Don't Know (2)



7. "Disagreements and conflicts are dealt with openly rather than hushed up or hidden behind closed doors."

- a. Strong (53)
- b. Moderate (44)
- c. Slight (15)
- d. Disagree (13)
- e. Don't Know (2)



Clearly, the congregations described by survey respondents value lay participation and take steps to ensure that individual congregants are encouraged, supported, and provided with the training they need to work as active members. There also appears to be significant assent to the statement that important congregational decisions are made not only by the ordained leadership but with the consultation of the membership. Finally, there is awareness within the larger communities of these congregations about the activities which take place within. All in all, the LGBT participants in this survey describe congregations that work hard to enfranchise their members in decision-making, leadership, innovation, and ministry.

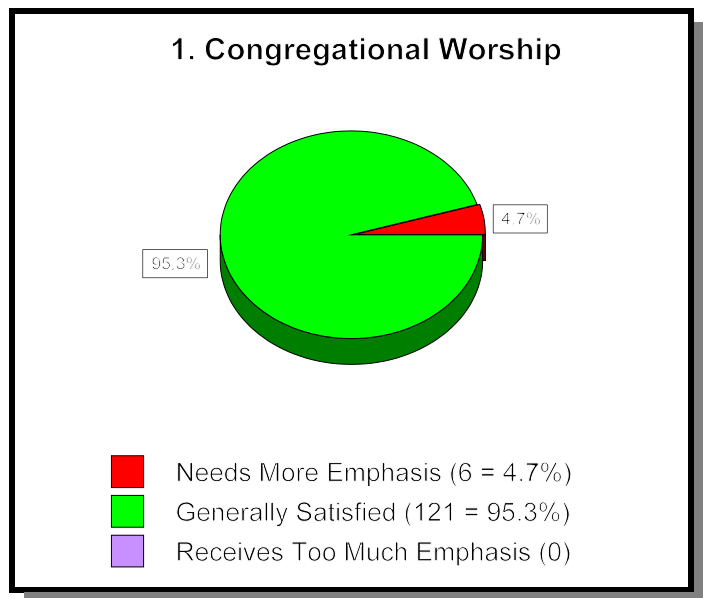
IV. Congregational Tasks

A third set of questions focusing on the local congregations asked survey respondents to rank their congregations in terms of “tasks that a local church/synagogue is likely to perform.” Such tasks included spiritual, educational, and outreach programming. Respondents were also asked to decide if they were satisfied with their congregation’s current performance of any given task, whether they felt that the task in question needed more emphasis, or whether such a task received too much emphasis.

As the following three survey questions (and their accompanying graphs) below indicate, the congregations included in this study were ranked highly by LGBT individuals in terms of providing meaningful worship experiences, ensuring opportunities for deepening “personal and spiritual relationships with God,” and fostering fellowship for congregational members.

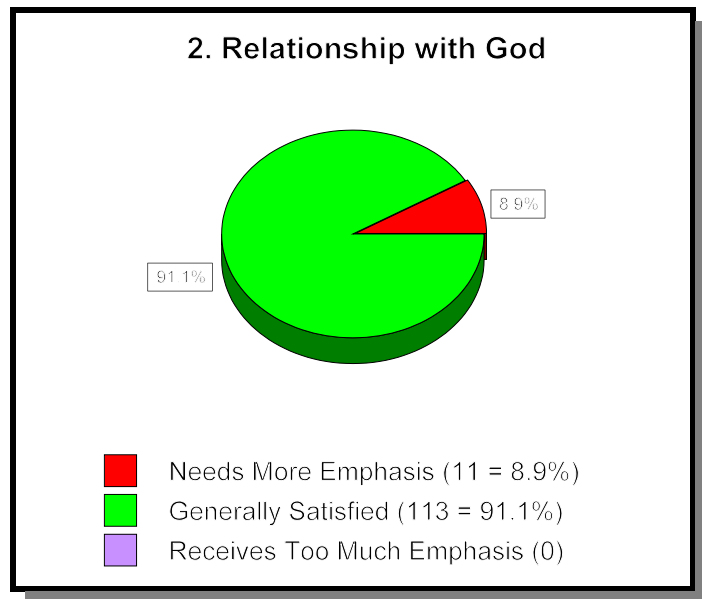
With regards to congregational worship, not one respondent felt that her/his congregation placed too much emphasis on this feature of congregational life, and more than 9 out of 10 respondents reported that s/he was generally satisfied with worship within her/his congregation.

1. “Providing worship that deepens members’ experience of God and the Christian/Jewish/Unitarian tradition.”
 - a. Needs More Emphasis (6)
 - b. Generally Satisfied (121)
 - c. Receives Too Much Emphasis (0)



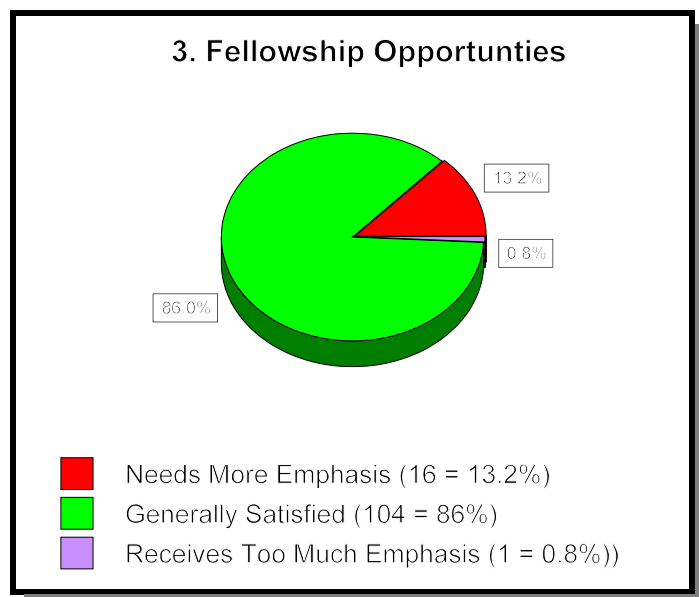
Once again, 9 out of 10 survey respondents felt that members were sufficiently assisted in developing a personal spiritual relationship with God which, as mentioned below, was deemed an important and attractive feature of congregational life for those LGBT individuals surveyed.

2. "Helping members deepen their personal and spiritual relationship with God/Spirit."
 - a. Needs More Emphasis (11)
 - b. Generally Satisfied (113)
 - c. Receives Too Much Emphasis (0)



In addition to the spiritual purposes of congregational life, providing fellowship/community-building opportunities for members was something that project participants believed their congregations were providing in a satisfactory manner (86% of those surveyed reported general satisfaction with this own congregation's performance in this area).

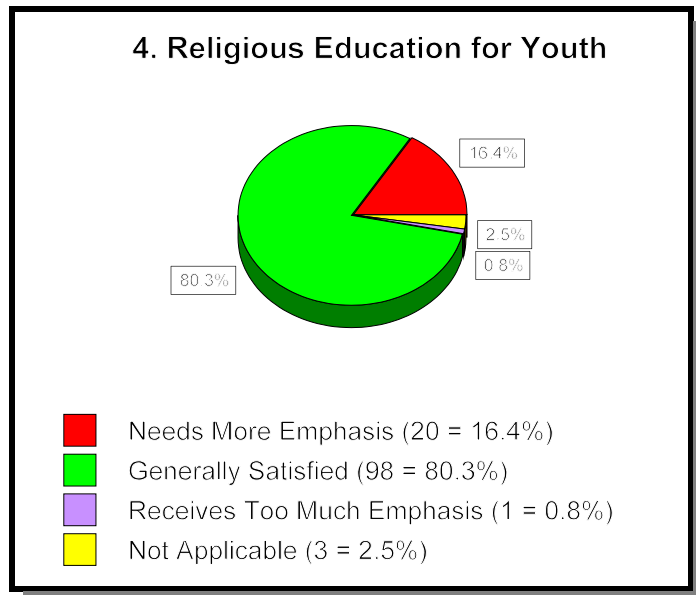
3. Providing fellowship opportunities for members
 - a. Needs More Emphasis: 16
 - b. Generally Satisfied: 104
 - c. Receives Too Much Emphasis: 1



With regard to **educational offerings**, an interesting item emerges from the three tables below: while the quality of religious education for children/youth and adults within their congregations satisfied most of the respondents (80.3% were generally satisfied with congregational religious education of children/youth; 78% felt similarly with regard to adult religious education), a significantly lower percentage of respondents (65.9%) were satisfied with religious education programming for LGBT people. In fact, 33% of respondents believe that religious education for LGBT people needs more emphasis within their congregations.

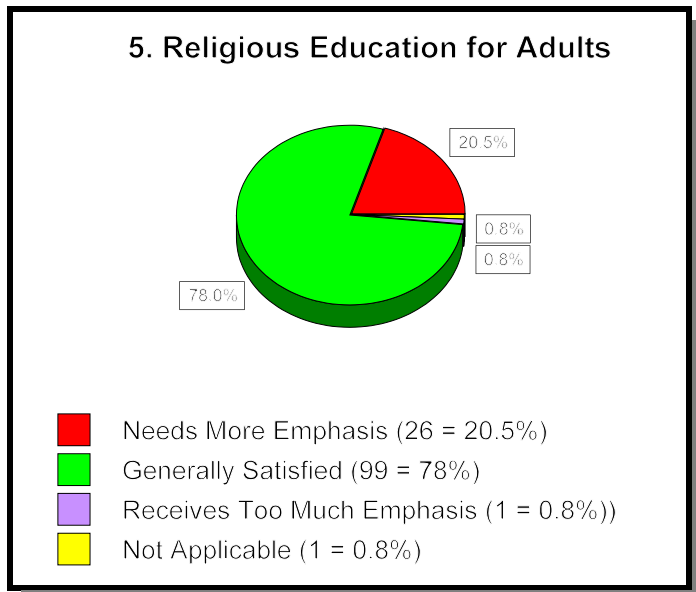
4. “Providing Christian/Jewish/Unitarian education for children and youth.”

- a. Needs More Emphasis (20)
- b. Generally Satisfied (98)
- c. Receives Too Much Emphasis (1)
- d. Not applicable (3)



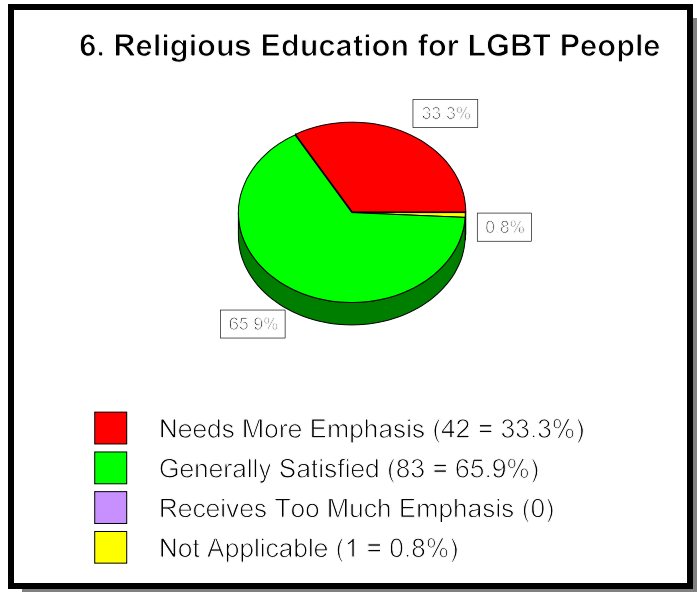
5. “Providing Christian/Jewish/Unitarian education programs for adults.”

- a. Needs More Emphasis (26)
- b. Generally Satisfied (99)
- c. Receives Too Much Emphasis (1)
- d. Not Applicable (1)



6. "Providing Christian/Jewish/Unitarian education programs for LGBT people."

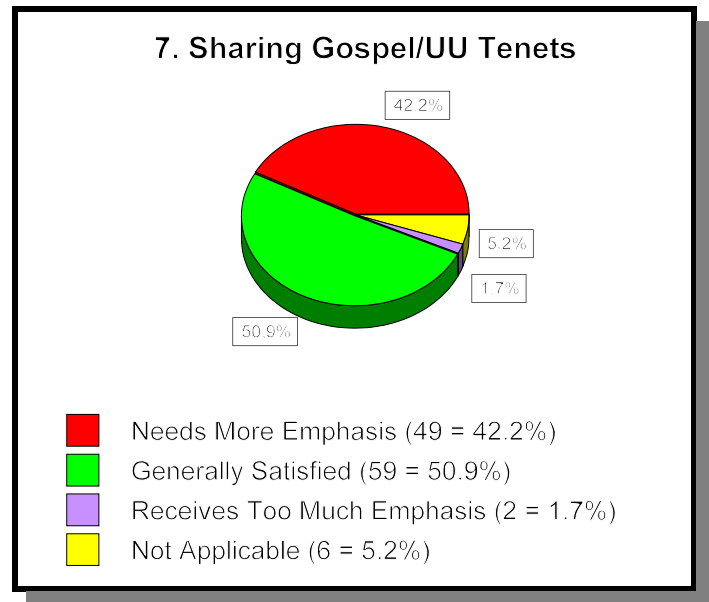
- a. Needs More Emphasis (42)
- b. Generally Satisfied (83)
- c. Receives Too Much Emphasis (0)
- d. Not Applicable (1)



Five additional questions in this section of the survey inquired about specific aspects of local congregational outreach programming: the first of these questions (#7) was directed solely to Christian and Unitarian Universalist respondents and questioned the level of outreach to non members (the “unchurched”). Half of those who answered were satisfied with such outreach while a significant 42% felt that such outreach needed to be emphasized more.

7. “Sharing the good news of the Gospel/tenets of Unitarianism/Universalism with the unchurched.”
[note: this question omitted from Synagogue surveys]

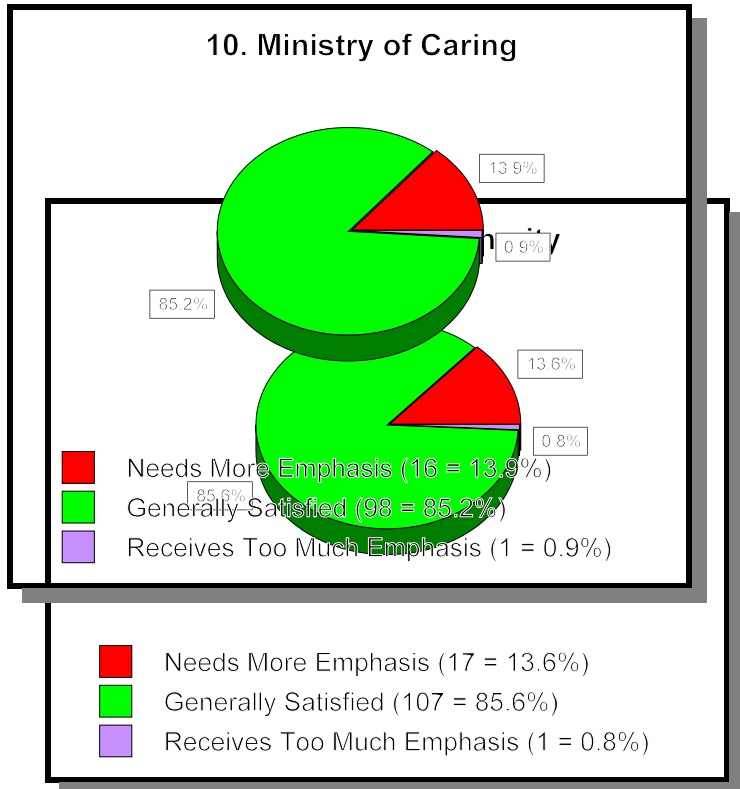
- a. Needs More Emphasis (49)
- b. Generally Satisfied (59)
- c. Receives Too Much Emphasis (2)
- d. Not Applicable (6)



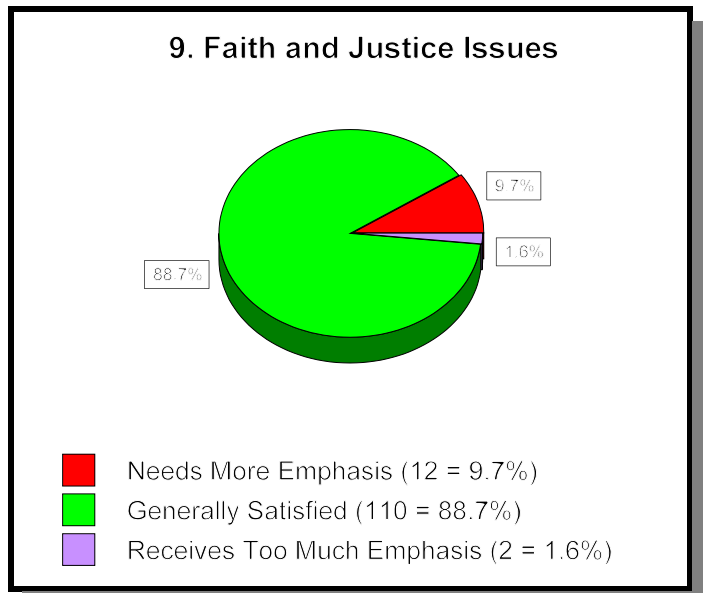
The following three questions (asked of all survey participants) attempt to assess respondents’ satisfaction with the social service activities of their congregations or the non-religious outreach to non-members. In answer to all three of these questions high percentages of general satisfaction are reported: 85% are satisfied that their congregation engages in acts of charity and serves those in need; 87% believe that their congregation encourages “members to act on the relationship of the Christian/Jewish/Unitarian faith to social, political, and economic issues;” and 85% believe that “a caring ministry for the sick, shut-ins, those in crisis, and the bereaved” is provided by their congregation.

Such high levels of satisfaction indicate that, in the minds of these LGBT people of faith at least, most of the congregations in this study are highly committed to social-service work beyond the confines of their membership. Moreover, explicit connections have been made in the minds of these individuals between personal and communal faith and charitable work in the larger community; in other words, the importance of bringing one’s faith and church/synagogue life to bear on the real-life needs of the sick, the bereaving, and the hungry is a value that most of these individuals share as people of faith.

8. “Engaging in acts of charity and service for persons in need.”
- a. Needs More Emphasis (17)
 - b. Generally Satisfied (107)
 - c. Receives Too Much Emphasis (1)



9. “Encouraging members to act on the relationship of the Christian/Jewish/Unitarian faith to social, political, and economic issues.”
- a. Needs More Emphasis (12)
 - b. Generally Satisfied (110)
 - c. Receives Too Much Emphasis (2)



10. Providing a caring ministry for the sick, shut-ins, those in crisis, and the bereaved.

- a. Needs More Emphasis: 16
- b. Generally Satisfied: 98
- c. Receives Too Much Emphasis: 1

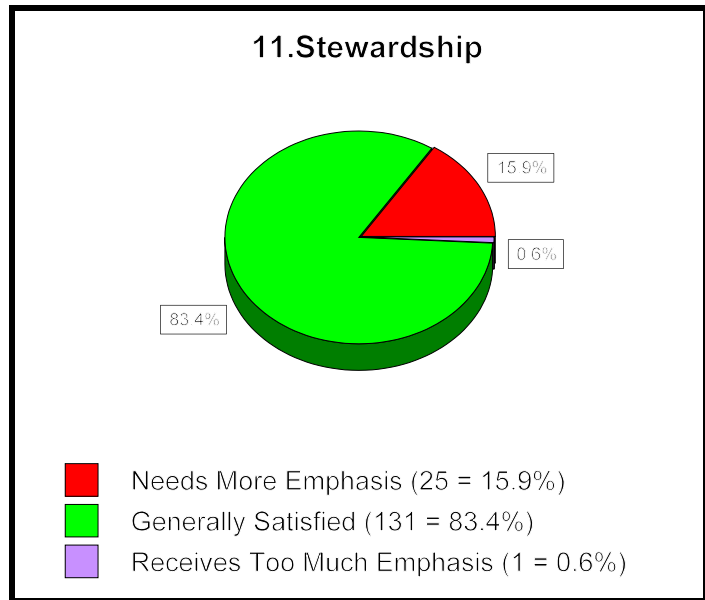
In a further attempt to assess the translation of religious faith into concrete action, survey participants were queried about their level of satisfaction regarding the ways in which their congregations helped their memberships “to understand their use of money, time and talents as expressions” of their faith. For Christians and Unitarian-Universalists, the notion of “stewardship” is often employed to refer to those activities of giving and social service which are a result of the believer’s own faith and church involvement; for Jewish people a more appropriate phrasing of this question asks about the relationship between one’s faith or Jewish identity and giving. Eight out of ten survey participants reported satisfaction with their congregation’s performance on this question.

When asked to assess their congregation’s success at “supporting the world mission of the church [for the Jewish surveys the words ‘Jewish causes’ were used] through study and giving,” a similar percentage (78.9%) responded satisfaction.

A third question in this section asked about the level of assistance that survey respondents, as members of congregations, received for discovering their own gifts for ministry and service. This question (Survey Question 1:13), like the two preceding it, is yet another attempt to understand the connection drawn between personal faith, communal expression of that faith, and service to others (both inside and outside of the congregation). 77% of respondents answered that they were “generally satisfied” with congregational support for their personal ministries to others.

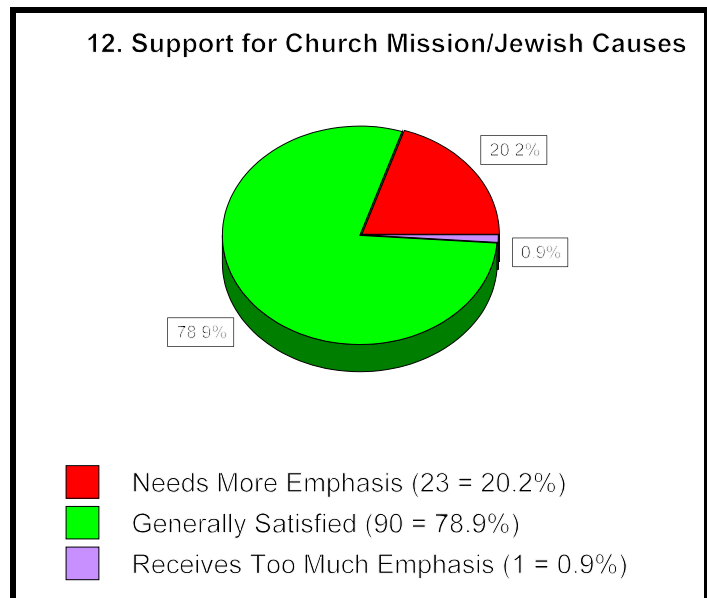
11. Helping members understand their use of money, time and talents as expressions of Christian/Jewish/UU stewardship/faith.

- a. Needs More Emphasis: 25
- b. Generally Satisfied: 131
- c. Receives Too Much Emphasis: 1



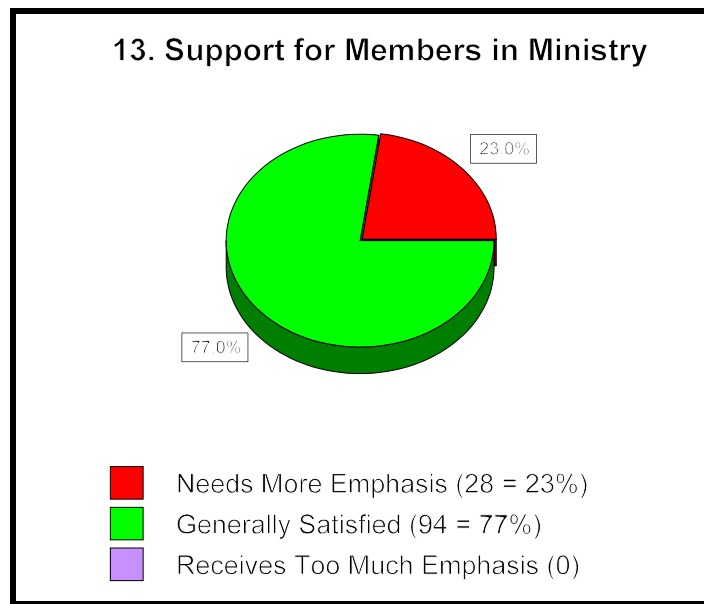
12. Supporting the world mission of the church/Jewish causes through study and giving.

- a. Needs More Emphasis: 23
- b. Generally Satisfied: 90
- c. Receives Too Much Emphasis: 1



13. Helping members discover their own gifts for ministry and service.

- a. Needs More Emphasis: 28
- b. Generally Satisfied: 94
- c. Receives Too Much Emphasis: 0



The last question relating to congregational tasks asked the respondents to list one task (from the above list) which, in their opinion, their congregation performed best; likewise, respondents were asked the following question: “For the sake of your own personal involvement in your congregation, which one task would you most like to see strengthened?”

With regard to those items which their congregations performed best, the following three items were ranked highest:

1. “Providing worship that deepens members’ experiences of God and the Christian/Jewish/Unitarian tradition” (N=41)
2. “Encouraging members to act on the relationship of the Christian/Jewish/Unitarian faith to social, political, and economic issues” (N=22)
3. “Helping members deepen their personal and spiritual relationship with God” (N=17)

Given that these are people of faith who, for the most part, report high levels of satisfaction with their respective congregations and exhibit high levels of congregational involvement, it is not surprising that items #1 and #3 above (which focus on spirituality and religious experience) should be rated highly by survey respondents. These individuals, with their higher than average levels of church/synagogue attendance, clearly find communal worship meaningful and they appear eager to develop their personal relationships with the divine. It is important to note too, however, that 22 survey participants report that their congregations are

best at drawing the connection between personal faith and social, political, and economic issues. This is in line with other survey results discussed above which show that a large majority of these respondents describe their local congregations as placing a high value on social action within the world.

With regard to those items which their congregations believed needed the most strengthening, the following three items were selected:

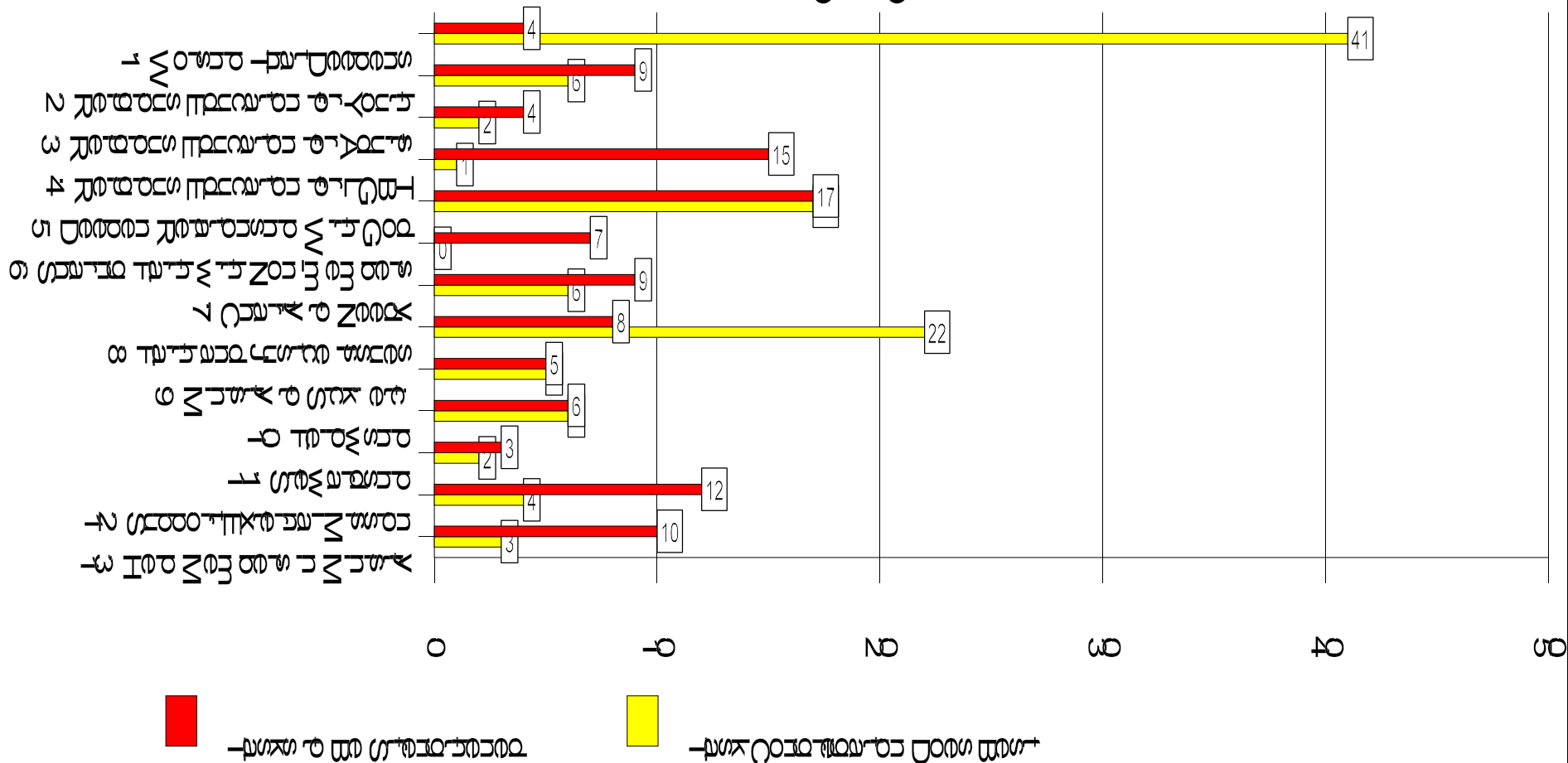
1. “Helping members deepen their personal and spiritual relationship with God” (17)
2. “Providing Christian/Jewish/Unitarian education programs for LGBT people” (15)
3. “Supporting the world mission of the church [for the Jewish surveys the words ‘Jewish causes’ were used] through study and giving” (12)

Interestingly, an identical number of individuals (N=17) reported that helping members deepen their relationship with God was in need of the most strengthening as did those who reported it as a strength of their congregational life. Of course, attempting to quantify the spiritual lives and experiences of people is a very difficult task and it is not surprising that there would be a broad range of responses to questions concerning one’s personal relationship with God.

In the second and third items above, however, it is worthwhile noting the desire for better educational offerings within the congregation for LGBT people and the interest in supporting church/synagogue ministries through study and financial giving.

(The following graphic details this ranking of congregational tasks)

Congregational Tasks



With Open Arms: Gay Affirming Ministries in Bay Area Faith Communities

Chapter 4: What Makes A Congregation Welcoming And Affirming?

Baptist minister Jack Belile, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Chicago, writes that a religious congregation must do the following to becoming genuinely welcoming to LGBT people¹:

1. “[T]ake into account the depth of people’s betrayal and pain at the hands of the institutional church in all the dimensions of fellowship, preaching, teaching, and pastoral care.”
2. Offer “significant opportunities for LGBT people to have visibility, voice and leadership roles in the life of the community.”
3. Ask this question: “‘To what are we welcoming folks?’” Belile explains that the members of a religious congregation that aspires to be welcoming and inclusive of LGBT people “must reckon with the realities that they may be called to go places which push the envelope of respectable Christian doctrine or moral teaching... that seeks to ‘main-stream’ LGBT folks.”

Underlying this study of Bay Area communities of faith with successful LGBT-affirming ministries is the conviction that congregations must work in deliberate and concerted ways to welcome and include LGBT persons in the membership, governance, and day-to-day tasks of their congregations. As Belile points out, many LGBT people have experienced significant alienation and outright discrimination within and from religious institutions such as local churches and synagogues. Moreover, it is crucial to keep in mind that LGBT people of faith have long been present and active in congregations of all religions and denominational varieties however closeted some LGBT people may have felt they needed to be in order to maintain their membership and perhaps even their dignity in their local faith communities.

To speak, therefore, of non-LGBT people “welcoming” LGBT people into congregations sounds patronizing if we keep in mind that many (and perhaps all) congregations have had LGBT members for many years. Perhaps a more accurate terminology would include such terms as “recognizing,” “acknowledging,” “including,” and/or “integrating” LGBT people already within religious congregations. Whatever terms are used, however (and I have chosen to retain the use

¹Jacki Belile, “Building Well-coming Communities of Faith,” *Chicago Theological Seminary Register* 92:2 (Summer 2002): 4-5.

of more traditional wording)², it is important to keep in mind that LGBT persons need to be active participants in any congregation that works to be fully inclusive of LGBT people. In addition, as Belile points out, any process of welcoming means that the congregation at large will necessarily be transformed by the LGBT people who are invited to live as “out” members of the congregation. Those congregations that fear such transformations are not ready to incorporate in any meaningful way LGBT people who bring unique gifts, talents, and needs to the community-at-large and perhaps even challenge their non-LGBT coreligionists in ways that may make some of them profoundly uncomfortable. To welcome LGBT people into congregations of faith is risky business precisely because it is an invitation that involves change on the part of those who have the power to do the welcoming.

Based on my experience as a seminary instructor, past Program Director (and current Consultant for National Programming) at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at Pacific School of Religion, I posit the following ten characteristics common to many churches and synagogues with successful LGBT-affirming programs. (While not intended to be exhaustive in nature, this list of characteristics contains features that I believe are key to any such programming on a congregational level.)³ Successful programming for LGBT persons within a religious community setting can be characterized by one or more of the following features:

1. Meaningful integration of LGBT people into membership and leadership (ordained and/or non-ordained) of a religious community;
2. Sponsorship of productive dialogue between LGBT persons and non-LGBT persons on a variety of topics;
3. Existence of committees specifically devoted to LGBT persons and their concerns;
4. Educational offerings for LGBT persons and their allies;
5. Ministry to LGBT persons both inside and outside of the religious community;
6. Involvement in larger religious LGBT caucuses and/or movements;
7. Involvement in local and/or national civic LGBT observances and events;
8. Development of theological statements of welcome and inclusion for LGBT persons;
9. Production of sermons, pamphlets, and other publications pertaining to LGBT persons and their concerns;

²Terms such as “inclusion” and “integration” might well be a terminology that more appropriately reflects the agency of LGBT people in religious congregations but since the words “welcoming” and “affirming” have long been used by LGBT people themselves in religious and denominational settings, this study employs the latter terms.

³This list, used in the development of Survey 2, was attached to the project surveys in order to summarize for the study participants some of the most common features of congregations with growing or well-developed ministries of welcome and inclusion for and with LGBT people.

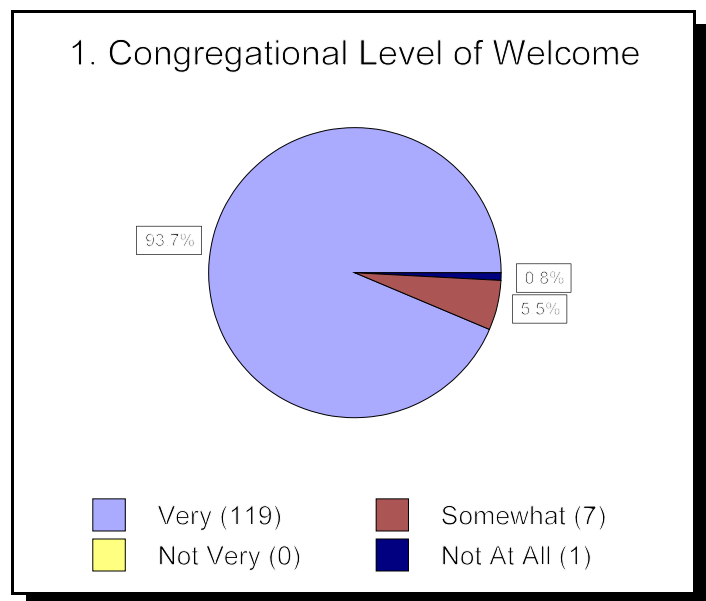
10. Advocacy of debate and positive change within larger religious organizations (e.g. denominations, national or regional alliances of religious communities) around issues affecting LGBT persons and LGBT-affirming ministries.

As mentioned earlier in this report, it is the second half of the Project Survey (Survey 2) that seeks to uncover answers to the essential question posed by this project, i.e., what makes a congregation welcoming and affirming (or inclusive and integrative)?. Following the order of questions as printed in the survey itself, the text and commentary below incorporates statistical tabulations of the survey results, written comments of the survey respondents as well as comments received from participants via e-mail correspondence, telephone interviews, and face-to-face conversations with the Project Director.

1. Clearly, the congregations selected for this study (which represent a variety of denominations in various settings) are seen as places of welcome by virtually everyone who participated in this study. In response to a query about the degree of welcome experienced by respondents in their local congregations, 9 out of 10 reported feeling very welcomed as LGBT persons.

How welcoming is your local religious community (i.e. your local congregation) to LGBT people?

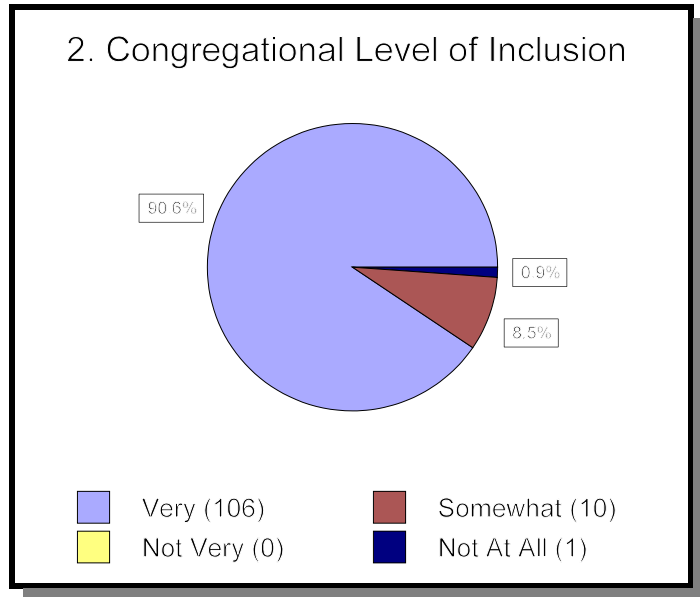
- a. Very: 119
- b. Somewhat: 7
- c. Not Very: 0
- d. Not At All: 1



2. Most survey participants also rate their respective congregations very highly in their level of inclusion in all areas of congregational life. Not only are these congregations, for the most part, effective in making their LGBT membership feel welcomed but, from the viewpoint of LGBT persons themselves, they are working to make them fully-enfranchised participants in the leadership, life, and ministry of the community.
-

How included are LGBT people in the leadership, life and ministry of your local religious community (i.e. local congregation)?

- a. Very: 106
- b. Somewhat: 10
- c. Not Very: 0
- d. Not At All: 1



Speaking of her synagogue community in San Francisco, Rebecca⁴ recalls, in a long listing, that LGBT people make up “the founders, [members] of the Va’ad (board), ritual committees, all leadership bodies, the rabbi, some staff, the Bikkur Cholim Committee, teachers in the religious school, service leaders, and [the] social action committee.”

Similarly, Arlene, a member of a largely African American United Church of Christ congregation in San Francisco, writes of the many and varied ways in which LGBT people are included in her church:

“We have the first ever, anywhere Transgender Choir. My church has a mentorship program to reach and mentor LGBT youth ages 18-26. We [also] have support groups for Transgender people and outreach ministries to LGBT

⁴To protect the privacy of survey participants who were interviewed, all names have been changed to pseudonyms.

people in jail. Elders, pastors, ministers, deacons, ushers – , all have equal opportunities to participate regardless of sexual orientation.”

Many individuals interviewed spoke of the value of complete integration of LGBT people into their congregations. As Paul spoke of his own Lutheran congregation in Oakland, “This is pretty simple. At my church, LGBTQ people participate in every facet of leadership, life and ministry. There is no separation or distinction, and at the same time, there is easy knowledge of sexuality of members of the community.” A fellow parishioner of Paul’s, Margaret, corroborated his views on full integration:

“LGBT people are completely integrated in our community by virtue of the attitudes of the individual members honoring each person and his or her life. My life as a mother, partner, member is respected and the fact that I am lesbian counts only as a colorful side note.”

In a suburban Bay Area church affiliated with the Disciples of Christ denomination, Phyllis emphasizes not only the full inclusion that she and her partner feel at their church, but also of the responsibility that they, as lesbians, have to be out members of their church, to be comfortable with the rest of the community:

“We are treated like people first. Our sexual orientation is really not an issue. People here meet each other soul to soul. We are an all accepting/all affirming congregation. It’s in our mission statement and spoken every Sunday during communion. My partner and I are seen as a couple and feel very welcomed! We are asked to serve on all committees, receive all the invitations to socials, ask to speak in church, etc. It also requires the LGBT individual to not hide... to take the responsibility to be as involved as they want to be.”

In several of the congregations included in this study, LGBT people fill important ordained and professional positions, thereby confirming the welcoming and inclusive nature of congregational life. As one lesbian woman who belongs to a United Methodist congregation in Berkeley says:

“Three of five staff members are lesbian/gay; gay families [are] included in recognition [ceremonies such as] Advent Candle Lighting, etc. Gay couples serve communion as a couple [and they] feel free to share unique perspectives during “Joys and Concerns.” As a lesbian I lead worship at least monthly, [and] preach several times over the year.”

George, a member of this same Methodist congregation, emphasizes just how involved LGBT people are in this congregation's life:

“LGBT include the youth director, music director, worship ‘director’ (committee chair) and annual conference lay member - [and they’re all] different people. We chair committees, teach K-adult, [and] assist with communion. ‘Out’ kids are fully included in classes, parties, events. We cook for a monthly elders group and a homeless shelter. We are greeters and ushers. We are acknowledged and appreciated. We are heard.”

Many survey participants praised their congregation's welcome inclusion of LGBT people while making clear that such attitudes did not characterize their denomination as a whole. As Quentin, a member of a Roman Catholic parish in San Francisco, noted:

“[LGBT people] are encouraged to participate in all aspects of congregational activities. Gay and lesbian activities (for example, Gay Pride [and the] Castro Street Fair) are acknowledged and the parish participates. Gay relationships are honored. All of the above [however,] applies only to the local community parish and not to the church as a whole.”

The above comments, which reveal that many of the study participants rate their congregations very in terms of their welcome of LGBT people, does not mean that many participants, when asked, were hesitant to think of some ways in which LGBT might be more effectively included in the life and ministry of their congregations. For instance, Jered, a member of a suburban Bay Area Disciples of Christ congregation, would like to see a more explicit welcome extended:

“Though homosexuality isn’t an issue for the church, that also means that a specific ‘welcome’ isn’t extended which needs to be articulated for some LGBTs to feel included. I would like to see conversations created for the congregation on GLBT issues and how we might positively influence our wider denomination to fuller inclusion and activism.”

A comprehensive suggestion for a higher level of inclusion is offered by Lucas, a 30-year member at a Presbyterian church in Palo Alto with a well-deserved reputation as inclusive of LGBT people. He lists the following four suggestions for better LGBT inclusion in his congregation:

1. More concerted efforts to invite [LGBT people] into arenas that are not GLBT issues.
2. Ask them to do specific outreach to GLBT communities and prepare the congregation to receive them.

3. More conscious effort to develop stronger ties to ‘straight’ allies and with the GLBT folks attending the church.
4. Concerted effort to educate the congregation to prepare them for understanding and welcoming the Transgender community.”

Two Baptists from an Oakland congregation suggested that their church, unusual in its denomination because of its welcoming stance, be more direct in its incorporation of LGBT people. While Nan believes that “it would be good to have a regular meeting group for LGBT people [at the parish],” Collin would like to see a welcome of LGBT people that extended to Sunday preaching:

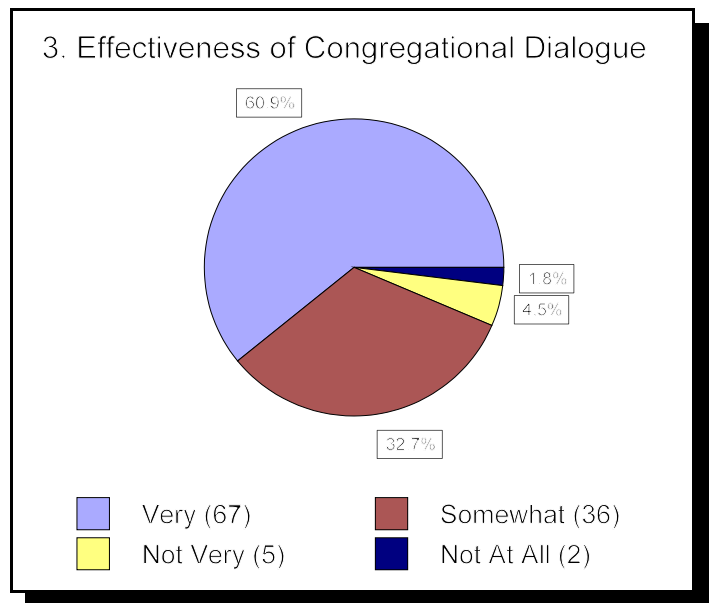
“It would be nice if it [LGBT inclusion] was more specifically discussed. We tend to use and welcome gay people, but not really talk about it much or directly affirm their gayness. We rarely if ever hear a sermon on the topic.”

3. In contrast to the highly positive rates of the first two questions from Survey Two, this question reveals a more tempered assessment of LGBT inclusion. While a majority (60.9%) describe congregational discussions about LGBT persons and matters as “very effective,” a significant minority (32.7%) say that such discussions are only “somewhat effective.”

How effective are discussions in your religious community (i.e. local congregation) about matters relating to LGBT persons, their needs, and their involvement in your local religious community (i.e. local congregation)?

- a. Very: 67
- b. Somewhat: 36
- c. Not Very: 5
- d. Not At All: 2

For the most part, survey participants reported feeling very comfortable with being LGBT within their congregations. One lesbian member of a small urban church in West Berkeley states



that “people bring their gay and lesbian friends and partners to church and they are included.” A long-time Unitarian Universalist member of a large congregation in Kensington compliments her church for its strong stance on LGBT inclusion both within the church and within larger public debates:

“Whatever the issues, members have been there. [When] Proposition 22 [was on the ballot] we couldn’t get enough yard signs [for every church member who wanted one]. We debated [putting] a banner on the church door against it. When a Transgendered person came as our [ministerial] intern he was transitioning from F to M. It was quite an education for the congregation; today most would do anything to defend him.”

Occasionally the presence of an out rabbi or minister can make a big impression on LGBT congregants as in the case of Sarah, who belongs to a large and well-established synagogue in San Francisco. She writes that “we almost never have discussions [about the inclusion of LGBT people]. But inclusiveness is assumed at our synagogue. We have a lesbian rabbi and that makes a huge difference.” The fact that news about parish LGBT events are brought to the congregation’s attention impresses Karl, a 13-year member at a Roman Catholic parish in Berkeley: Such announcements are regularly posted, he says, “in the church bulletin [and in] announcements from the pulpit about the LGBT group [and its] monthly meetings.”

For many congregations with welcoming programs in place, their work with LGBT persons and action on LGBT inclusion extends beyond the walls of the church/synagogue to the larger denominational structure. Referring to his Oakland church as a place for open discussion on a wide range of LGBT issues, Paul says that

“My church has long been a place of conversation. We have, when necessary, community meetings; address issues at the synodical and national levels; talk with members of other congregations; include such things as violence against LGBTQ people in prayer.”

At a Methodist church in Berkeley concerted efforts are made to bring issues of inclusion to the congregation as a whole to discuss. Such openness does, however, risk alienating some members, as one congregant, Tom, reports:

“There is one committee that focuses on these issues particularly within the denomination, there are also adult classes that raise issues re LGBTQ folk; issues also come up at our church council meeting. Discussions are generally open - differing opinions are usually heard with kindness – although since declaring our openness/inclusiveness there are few dissenting voices – folks who didn’t like our stance have left (not many).”

A Transgendered member of a United Methodist church in Walnut Creek describes a congregation that fosters discussion and reflection on LGBT people and their inclusion in several ways: “We have had and continue to have discussion forums that have been incorporated into the adult Christian Education program. We have placed many articles in the church paper [and] we have an established church library of LGBT books and magazines.”

Another common method of encouraging a congregation to reflect on LGBT issues involves the use of small discussion groups that encourage the larger congregation to reflect on the full inclusion of LGBT persons. Speaking of her experience at an urban Unitarian Universalist congregation in San Jose, Janette says that

In small group ministry we’ve discussed LGBT issues and [various] perspectives on [these] issues. This has been a very effective method to communicate and share views and values within a group of mixed sexual orientation. Occasional sermons have dealt with LGBT issues as well (particularly youth).

Educational offerings which focus specifically on LGBT topics are another important way in which several of the congregations included in this report strive to inform their congregations about issues relevant to LGBT people and their allies. A Presbyterian church in Palo Alto offers an annual series of lectures, panel presentations, and discussion sessions on religion and homosexuality. At a predominantly African American United Church of Christ congregation in downtown San Francisco there are many groups tailored to the needs of Transgendered members, including support groups, recovery programs, and a gospel choir. As Randall writes,

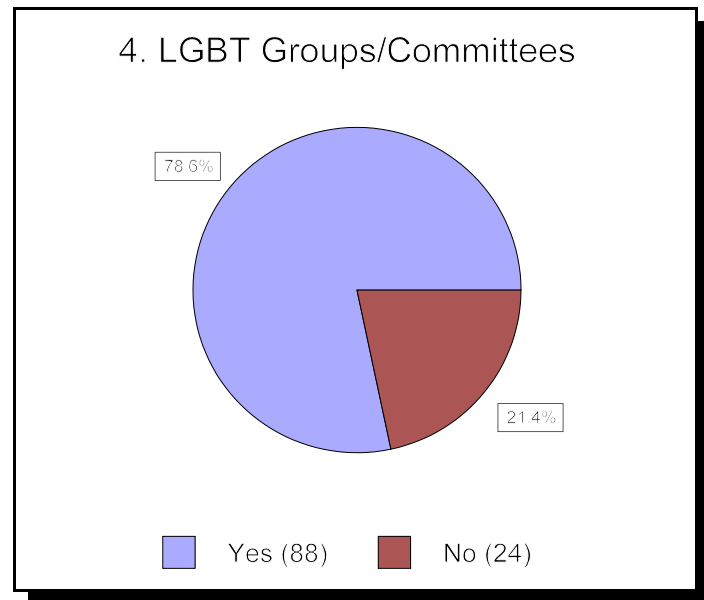
“We have an extensive outreach program for Transgender people that provides employment and educational assistance. We have a mentorship program for gay and transgender youth. We [also] have numerous outreach programs that don’t specifically target LGBT persons, but are open to them.”

Worship services are another means by which LGBT people are celebrated in these welcoming and inclusive congregations. Services held in conjunction with June Gay Pride events are held in many of the congregations included in this study and prayer groups made up of LGBT congregants are another way in which some religious communities serve their LGBT memberships.

4. Survey respondents appear to be highly aware of whether or not their local congregation has any groups or committees that focus on LGBT persons and their concerns. As might be expected, congregations which belong to more liberal denominations (such as the Metropolitan Community Church, Unitarian Universalist Association, or the United Church of Christ) are more apt to sponsor such groups. However, in one of the two Roman Catholic parishes, there is an LGBT committee which is notable given current teachings of this church's hierarchy on homosexuality and LGBT persons.

Are you aware of any groups/committees in your religious community (i.e. local congregation) that are devoted to LGBT persons and their concerns?

- a. Yes: 88
b. No: 24



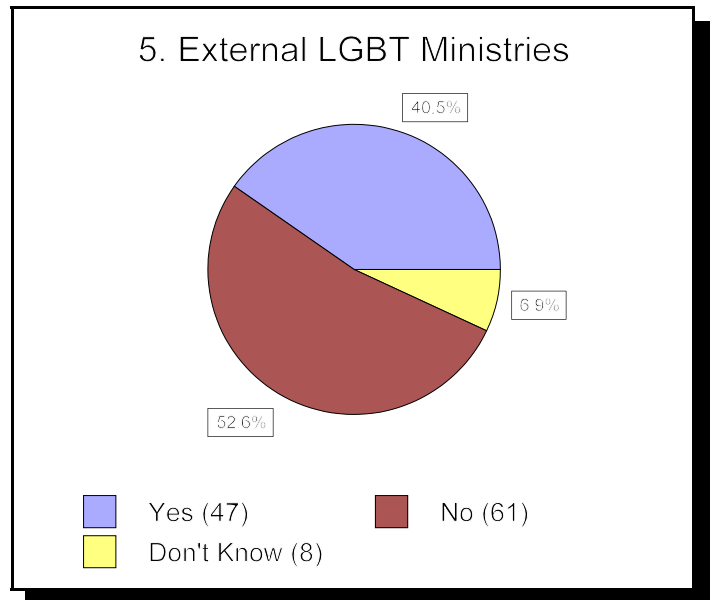
5. Even though all of the congregations included in this study are certainly liberal in their stances on LGBT issues (including those congregations affiliated with more conservative denominational bodies), it is somewhat surprising that 40% of individuals surveyed report that their local congregations maintain ministries focusing on LGBT people who are not members. It is well known that most liberal Christian churches (and liberal Jewish synagogues) in the United States do not support ministries of conversion or missionizing akin to more conservative Christian churches, and this question, of course, can be taken to refer to ministries that are non-proselytizing in nature (such as AIDS ministries). In either event, the existence of ministries to LGBT people is noteworthy.

The experiences of Bay Area congregations with such ministries/external programming also points to an important opportunity for increasing such outreach on the part of other LGBT-inclusive congregations in the Bay Area. That is, congregations without such

external LGBT programming might learn much about being entering into effective neighborhood coalitions with LGBT people who are not member of faith communities. In addition, congregations with such enter into larger coalitions that share their experiences about program development and community-building across denominational lines within neighborhoods. Coordinated programs of congregational outreach might also be fostered with an eye to increasing the effectiveness of coalitions devoted to serving as progressive religious voices for LGBT persons in the Bay Area.

Does your religious community (i.e. local congregation) sponsor any external ministries to/for LGBT persons (that is, ministries directed to LGBT persons who are not members of your religious community [local congregation])?

- a. Yes: 47
- b. No: 61
- c. Don't Know: 8



Cynthia, who attends an Episcopal church in Berkeley wishes that her congregation “could minister more to LGBT [persons] outside of the congregation.” Her comment reflects the sentiment of those surveyed who believe that their congregations need to provide more for LGBT individuals who do not belong to their congregations. Ideas for ways to become involved in such external work, however, abound in the comments of many respondents who agreed to follow-up interviews. For instance, members of a Metropolitan Community Church in San Francisco list a long and interesting list of programs and activities that they sponsor for the LGBT community outside of their church:

- ◆ Meeting space for the following LGBT groups: Evangelicals Concerned, Q-Spirit, Q-Sangha, Dignity; More Light Presbyterians, The Open and Affirming Movement, PFLAG, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and other LGBT interest groups.

- ◆ Feeding programs, housing programs, educational programs, game nights (Bingo) and dramatic presentations intended to involve LGBT people outside of the congregation.
- ◆ Taize prayer services, a Buddhist ministry, a program which entails ‘adopting’ a local school, and a baby shower project
- ◆ Involvement with The Harvey Milk Public School of San Francisco.

6-7. LGBT caucuses and movements within various Christian, Jewish, and Unitarian-Universalist denominations have profoundly influenced the welcome and inclusion of LGBT people in local congregations in various ways. In the early years of LGBT inclusion in the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), for example, the national leadership took visible positions of support for Lesbian and Gay ministers and seminarians; in addition the UUA set up an office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, developed a congregation-based educational program of welcome, and sponsored a denomination-wide organization of support for LG (which in time, has included B and T) persons.

According to the survey participants, half of the congregations included in this study were either “somewhat” involved or “not very” involved in larger LGBT organizations with a focus on religion. While this relatively high percentage of congregations without such involvement may indicate an intentional decision on the part of congregational leadership that there is not a high need for such extra-congregational involvement, it also points out another area of potential congregational cooperation in the area of Bay Area welcoming congregations. An LGBT religious caucus or movement based on geographical proximity may well provide a connection with similarly-minded congregations and people of faith that would serve as an effective coalition to develop and support a variety of outreach programs that support LGBT beyond local congregational borders.

The power of local congregations to effect change within their denominational bodies of leadership and association (whether on regional, national, or international levels) is profound and perhaps best illustrated by LGBT individuals and organizations of faith that have worked to have issues important to LGBT people addressed at levels higher than that of the local congregation. In the national bodies of the Presbyterian Church USA, the Episcopal Church USA, the United Methodist Church, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and others, LGBT people have raised such issues and required the acknowledgment of LGBT presence within local religious congregations and larger denominational structures. Of equal importance has been the call for full inclusion of LGBT persons in these denominations.

Several congregations included in this study have been among the first in their respective denominations to institute policies and programs of inclusion for LGBT persons. One of the most well-known of these congregations is a Lutheran congregation in San Francisco which was expelled from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1995 because of its ordination of two lesbians and a gay man to the ordained ministry. This expulsion has shaped the character and ministry of the congregation in very significant ways and members of this local church have had an important role to play in the continuing debates over the ordination of LGBT people in the ELCA. Rose, a parishioner at this parish since 1989, speaks of the national role that her local congregation has played in the ELCA:

“Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministries (LLGM) is a national organization that provides financial, legal, and pastoral support to sexual minority seminarians, pastors and the congregations that support them. LLGM began as a local ministry with offices in our church building... This congregation provides benevolence monies to LLGM, and individual members of the congregation support LLGM and other Lutheran GLBT advocacy groups... As I see it, we [in the congregation] are following the example set by our enter congregation and pastoral leadership in 1989 when it voted to call and ordain a lesbian clergy couple, which resulted in our suspension and then expulsion from the ELCA. Even though we have been expelled by the ELCA, we continue to actively advocate for change in the church body that expelled us.”

Similar stories of a Bay Area congregation taking a stand of welcome and inclusion for its LGBT members are repeated by dozens of survey participants who proudly tell of their congregation’s early and prophetic positions. Paul, the member of an Oakland Lutheran church quoted above, speaks proudly about his own congregation’s support of gay and bisexual clergy in these words:

“My parish was one of the first nationally to become a Reconciling in Christ congregation that welcomes full participation of LGBTQ people nearly 20 years ago (or more). When our pastor came out as a gay man in relationship, and was formally defrocked, the church refused to remove him from his position. Subsequently, with a growing number of local congregations, we have ordained an unrostered gay man as Youth Pastor and a bisexual woman as local Nursing Home Chaplain.”

Even denominations that support the full inclusion of LGBT people may have to be challenged by one of its own congregations to take positions of leadership around issues relating to LGBT issues. For instance, an MCC congregant in San Francisco reports that his church “has pushed other MCC congregations to take a position of openness in the

local religious community.”⁵ Similarly, a Roman Catholic parish in San Francisco with a large LGBT membership has attempted to open a dialogue with the current archbishop who is well known for his conservative views on homosexuality. According to Juan, an active parishioner in this parish, “Our parish has fostered and sponsored meetings with the archbishop and [we participate] in outreach activities to lapsed Catholics.”

One particularly good example of the influence a local congregation can have in larger church structures is seen in the description given by Leanne of her United Methodist congregation in Berkeley with its long-standing commitment to LGBT welcome and inclusion:

“We have a published statement of inclusion and are part of a network of inclusive churches in our denomination. We have elected delegates to our Annual Conference who are very well versed in these issues. Two of our pastors have been very involved in actions around ‘holy unions’ – as well as many lay members. Some of our lay folk (as well as clergy), straight and LGBT – have attended our National Church Conferences (held every 4 years) to lobby for change within the denomination. Some are members of a national Affirmation caucus supporting LGBT people and their rights w/in the church; and some are members of a national group (Methodist Federation for Social Action) focusing on many social justice issues.”

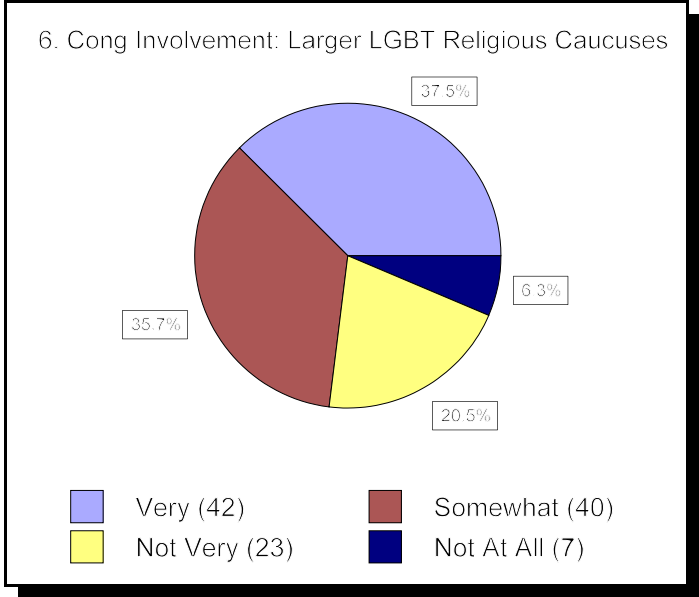
A similar story is told by Leah, a member of a synagogue in San Francisco with a large LGBT membership. She writes:

[With regard to] the San Francisco Jewish community in general, former members [of our congregation] are now serve in leadership positions I other synagogue (and one former member is president of his conservative synagogue). There is outreach to LGBT people in virtually all Bay Area synagogues now (except possibly the Orthodox movement) as a result of changing times, and [because of] our success as a congregation.

⁵The MCC denomination was founded by a gay minister to minister chiefly to LGBT persons; its current membership remains predominately LGBT.

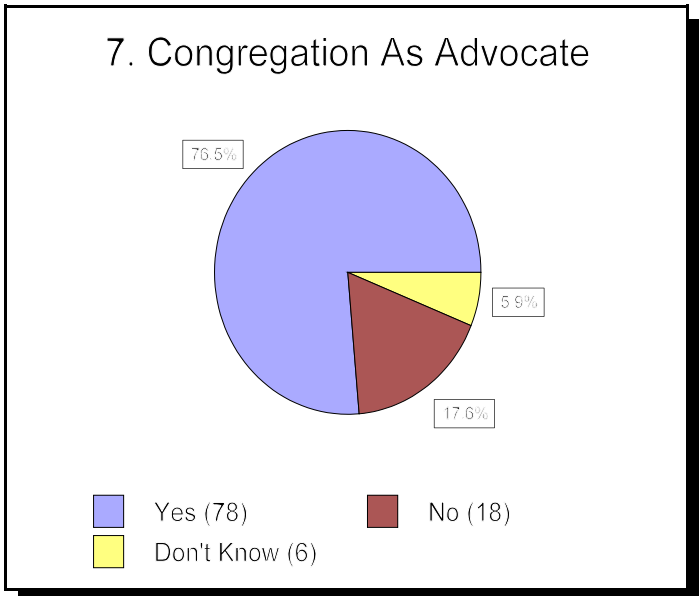
How involved is your religious community (i.e. local congregation) in larger religious LGBT caucuses and/or movements?

- a. Very: 42
- b. Somewhat: 40
- c. Not Very: 23
- d. Not At All: 7



Has your religious community (i.e. local congregation) advocated for positive change within any larger religious organizations (e.g. denominations, national or regional alliances of religious communities) around issues affecting LGBT persons and LGBT-affirming ministries?

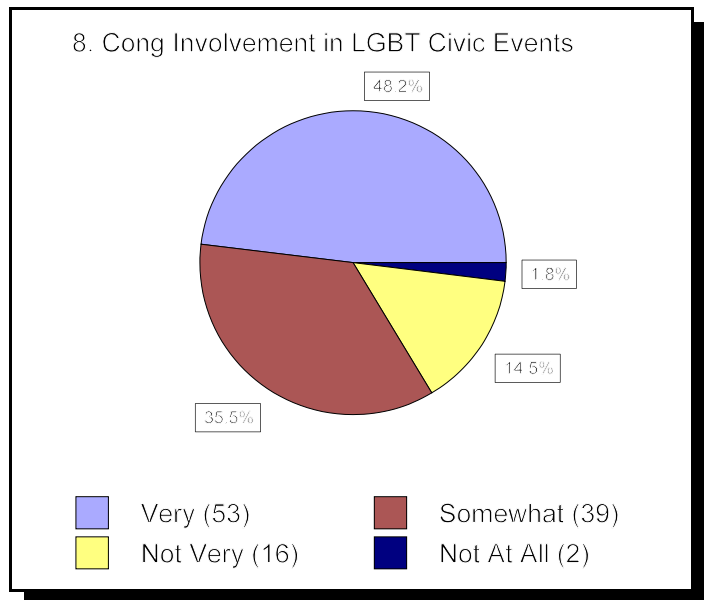
- a. Yes: 78
- b. No: 18
- c. Don't Know: 6



8. LGBT individuals and groups affiliated with local religious congregations often take part in such events as local Pride parades and festivals, local AIDS Day events, and various political events as one way in which they support LGBT efforts and celebrations but also make known to the larger LGBT community the welcoming stance of their congregation. According to the survey participants slightly more than half of the congregations in the study take place in such observances and events; another area of cooperation between these (and similar) welcoming congregations in the Bay Area might be connected with the observation of important dates and the celebration of LGBT holidays.

Is your religious community (i.e. local congregation) involved in any local and/or national civic LGBT observances and events?

- a. Very: 53
- b. Somewhat: 39
- c. Not Very: 16
- d. Not At All: 2



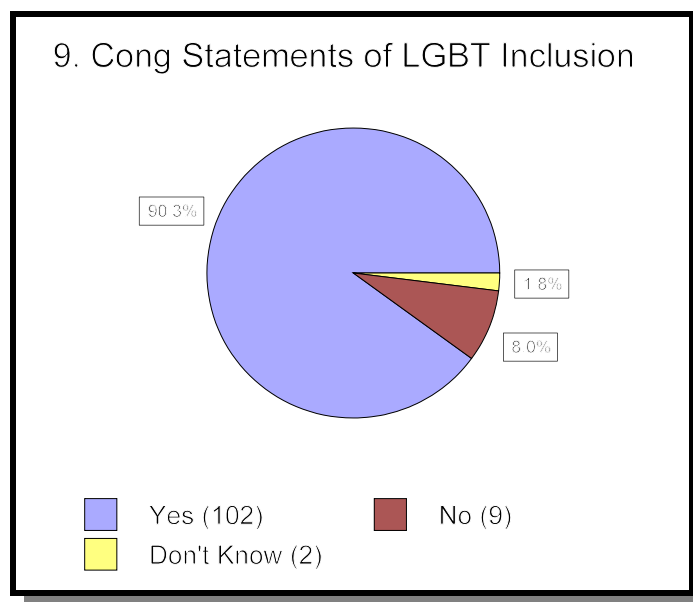
9. It is significant that virtually all of congregations in this study have written statements of LGBT welcome since relatively few of these denominations have issued public statements of welcome for LGBT who do not choose to live as sexual celibates. Based on the comments of many survey participants, such statements of welcome are vital for many LGBT people of faith. Such statements assure individuals within the congregation that they are, in fact, considered full-fledged members; when such statements are publicized they serve as vehicles of welcome and inclusion for LGBT visitors and potential members.
- By and large, survey respondents were well aware that their local congregations had written statements of welcome and support for LGBT persons and they were knowledgeable, as well, of the positions of their denominations with regard to

homosexuality. For those individuals who belonged to congregations in the United Church of Christ denomination, the Unitarian Universalist Association, or the Reform Movement of Judaism, they enjoyed, as LGBT persons, both local and broader support from the fellow church/synagogue members. At a United Church of Christ congregation in San Francisco, for instance, Sunday services begin with a statement of inclusion, as Arlene describes:

“In the opening of our worship services we start with statement of faith. We are a Ministry of Reconciliation. ‘[Our congregation] welcomes ALL people regardless of age, color, ethnicity, religious background or sexual orientation.’ We celebrate people that might be different than us, we celebrate our creator’s diversity. We worship Christ.”

Has your religious community (i.e. local congregation) written any statements of welcome and inclusion for LGBT persons?

- a. Yes: 102
- b. No: 9
- c. Don't Know: 2



As a member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation in Kensington, Albert is keenly aware of his congregation’s explicitly stated stance of welcome for LGBT persons and he remarks that “not only is my church welcoming to and affirming of LGBT members but, moreover, LGBT persons have equal status with non-LGBT persons in all areas of church life, including ministerial opportunities and marriage ceremonies.”

Silas, a member of a Presbyterian church in Palo Alto, enjoys a setting in which LGBT people are both welcomed and celebrated. He states that his church takes a position of

“inviting and celebrating the full participation of LGBT people of faith into full membership and leadership. [In addition, the congregation promotes] advocacy in justice concerns both within the Presbyterian Church USA and in society.”

A fellow congregant of Silas’ shares his enthusiasm for the welcoming nature of this local church but she quickly points out that currently its denomination, the Presbyterian Church USA, is embroiled in a bitter dispute over homosexuality and LGBT members. She reports that

“The Presbyterian Church USA is in the midst of a national fight regarding the place of GLBT persons in the denomination. For the past 6-8 years there have been repeated votes on whether GLBT’s can be ordained, whether pastors can perform Holy Unions ([that is, same-sex] commitment ceremonies). My understanding is [that] ‘GLBTs can be in the Presbyterian Church, but don’t tell us about it.’ Beyond our congregation, the reception is unwelcoming to hostile, but many are fighting for acceptance.”

A similar situation is described by Martin who, as an out gay man, has found a home in a Catholic Newman Center in Berkeley and yet is well aware of the negative stance on homosexuality and LGBT persons held by the larger denomination. He states that

“LGBT people are valued [at my local parish], but there is an outdated and at times hurtful teaching about homosexuality that is still held by the official teaching organs of the denomination. While LGBT people are not ‘bad,’ their orientation is believed to be intrinsically disordered (that is, not according to the natural order), and so, expression of love in a sexual manner by LGBT persons is not deemed licit by official [church] teaching.”

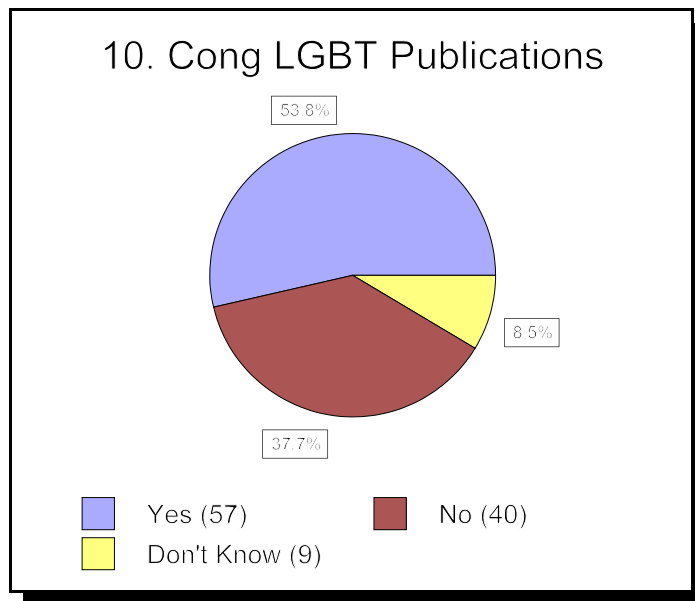
Two church members at an Oakland Baptist church, Nan and Collin, speak of the struggles that their own congregation has undertaken in an attempt to sway their national denomination’s anti-LGBT theology and policies. Nan states that “our national denomination is basically anti-gay though we have struggled for years to be included. Our individual congregation was kicked out of our local region because of its welcoming/affirming status.” In a creative response to the homophobic stance of its denomination, this local church has taken the step of choosing a different association of Baptist congregations, one that is LGBT-affirming. According to Collin,

“The regional body locally has declared homosexuality incompatible with Christianity and has excommunicated our congregation. We have since joined the regional body of Metropolitan New York. That body and the national are more welcoming, although I don’t believe they have an official stance on the issue.”

10. In addition to written statements of welcome, printed publications can serve not only as important indications of welcome for LGBT people – they also serve as an important means of communication for ministers and congregational members regarding matters of concern to anyone interested in LGBT-affirming ministries. A potentially powerful means of promoting collaboration among Bay Area welcoming congregations is the publication of a newsletter (print and/or on-line) to link LGBT people of faith and their allies; such a publication could provide a valuable vehicle for education and activism among a faith-based constituency.
-

Has your religious community (i.e. local congregation) produced pamphlets and/or other publications that pertain to LGBT persons and their concerns?

- a. Yes: 57
b. No: 40
c. Don't Know: 9



11. A solid majority of those surveyed believe that collaboration between their respective congregations and other local congregations would be beneficial. Again,

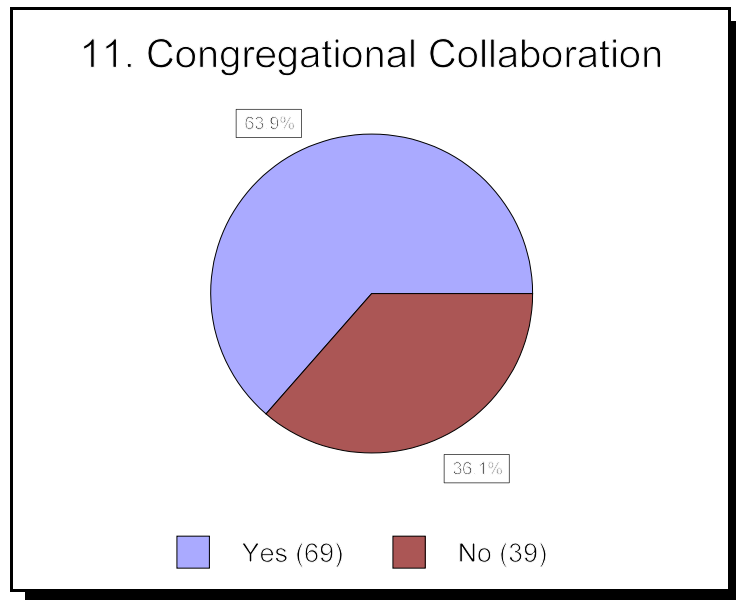
what is missing in the Bay Area is a formal structure of cooperation that would facilitate such collaboration. Such collaboration could include a myriad of effective programs, including periodic conferences which would focus on education, coalition building, and strategies for positive change within the religious worlds of the Bay Area and society at large.

When the relatively large percentage (35.6%) of “no” responses to this question are asked why they don’t think such collaboration would be beneficial to their own religious congregation, the far majority reply (either in writing or in oral interviews) that they

think that their own congregations have something to teach others because of their progressive stances on welcome and inclusion. Another interesting dimension of this issue can be seen in the low level of awareness on the part of survey respondents with regard to LGBT-welcoming and affirming programs in congregations of other denominations. Again, such a lack of awareness points to the powerful potential of effective collaboration between individuals and congregations.

Do you think that your religious community (i.e. local congregation) could learn from other religious communities (from the same or other denominations) about ways to be a religious community (i.e. local congregation) that is more welcoming, more inclusive, and/or more pro-active regarding LGBT persons and LGBT issues?

- a. Yes: 69
- b. No: 39



Common responses to interview questions regarding inter-congregational collaboration around LGBT issues include the suggestions that LGBT people come together to worship, dialogue about their experiences as people of faith, and join in coalitions to strategize about ways to enter

into larger societal issues about homosexuality and religion by offering their voices as progressive LGBT people of faith. One Bay Area Baptist suggests that simply knowing about “what other congregations are doing” with regard to LGBT people and issues would be helpful; a fellow congregant suggests that what is needed for collaboration are “joint activities, conferences, etc. with other LGBT-affirming churches.”

Thomas, a Methodist actively involved in her welcoming congregation, believes that such collaboration would provide a valuable opportunity for sharing information. She writes:

“I think we are very welcoming and inclusive. Perhaps we could share info with other religious communities on ways to be more pro-active – such as – marketing to non-churched people; community involvement. How would we do this? -newsletters, community gatherings, joint events.”

Likewise, Amelie, who is a member of a Berkeley church that is affiliated with three denominations (United Church of Christ, Metropolitan Community Churches, and Disciples of Christ) is enthusiastic about the ways in which congregational collaboration might work. She believes that the best way to build a coalition of welcoming congregations would best succeed

“By developing relationships with our community: discovering people’s, groups, service providers who collaborate with our community needs and becoming familiar with their cultures, language, and perceptions of what is relevant for them and important regarding spiritual and religious community.”

Donna, a co-congregant of Amelie’s, recommends that both clergy and lay people be involved in an coalition of LGBT-inclusive congregations. She calls for “regional or area gathering of LGBT concerns committees to discuss what has been done [as well as] regional trainings and workshops for clergy and laity on how to become open and affirming/reconciling, etc.”

Finally, Beata, a member of a university-based Episcopal church in Berkeley, calls for the formation of an organization that embraces many denominations and works to champion the rights of LGBT people of faith wherever they may worship. She writes:

“There needs to be an advocacy group that comes in from outside the denomination for all denominations [in order] to help ordinary people defend themselves, reduce homophobia, teach what their ecclesiastical ‘rights’ are, and help folks in each parish/congregation to help each other.”

5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This study of Bay Area welcoming congregations reveals a vitality as well as strong potential for further growth among local religious communities that incorporate LGBT people into full membership and make available to them congregational positions of leadership. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered people of faith are finding both welcome and inclusion in local Christian, Jewish, and Unitarian congregations in the Bay Area; they are often active members who serve as influential lay (and sometimes ordained) leaders within their chosen churches and synagogues, and many LGBT people of faith see their local congregations as important promoters of diversity within society at large.

Three main areas of focus make up the final chapter of this report: (1) brief summaries and descriptions of the views of the individual LGBT people who took part in this study; (2) a discussion of those elements common to local religious congregations that have built programs of welcome; and, finally, (3) recommended strategies that the Haas Jr. Fund might pursue in order to support religious congregations in the Bay Area that are affirming of LGBT people and to promote the efforts of gay-affirming congregations with strong potential for reducing the negative effects of conservative religious groups with homophobic agendas and policies.

I. LGBT PEOPLE OF FAITH IN THE BAY AREA

Based on the surveys and interviews conducted for this study, the following attributes characterize a solid majority of the individual LGBT people of faith who took part in this project.

Characteristics Common to Most Respondents:

- ◆ **High Levels of Education:** Respondents are highly educated individuals who present themselves as well-informed on matters affecting LGBT people. A high percentage of respondents were aware of denominational statements regarding homosexuality and were knowledgeable about the structure, policies, and programs of their local congregations. An important finding of the survey (which was strongly supported in several of the follow-up interviews) is the fact that a third of respondents believe that their local congregations need to provide better religious education for LGBT individuals. Clearly, even congregations with strong programs of welcome and inclusion for LGBT people are not doing as well as they might in providing educational opportunities that are tailored, at least in

some respects, to the needs of a group that demonstrate high levels of attendance and commitment.

- ◆ **Years in Bay Area:** Nearly three quarters of respondents have lived in the Bay Area for ten or more years, and almost a third of respondents had been members of their current religious congregations for a similar length of time. This is a group made up of many people who have made the Bay Area home for many years. Given the rootedness of these individuals and their strong connections with local faith communities, they have the potential for working as effective collaborators in faith-based projects that are inclusive of LGBT people and witness to the power of progressive religious people and their congregations to promote positive social change for LGBT people in society at large.
- ◆ **Prior Religious Affiliation:** As mentioned above, this group of individuals is made up of many who have actively chosen their current religious and congregational affiliations. Not surprisingly, many of them have left behind more traditional denominations with clearly enunciated stands against the acceptance of homosexuality and homosexual and bisexual persons who live non-celibate sexual lives. While many LGBT people have chosen to live outside of religious congregations (and for good reasons, it might be added), these individuals have chosen to be active members of congregations and denominations even when these institutions officially espouse anti-LGBT teachings and strongly urge governmental leaders to enshrine homophobic policies in civil laws.
- ◆ **Partnership Status:** A large percentage of survey respondents (64%) live in partnerships and provide an important witness within their respective congregations that committed same-sex relationships are an important value to many LGBT persons. It is unclear whether partnered LGBT people are more apt to become members within religious congregations or whether the teachings of the congregations studied are particularly friendly to individuals in relationship. Whatever the case, such individuals might be enlisted in faith-based programs which not only advocate publicly for same-sex marriage within society at large but also serve to counteract the powerful voices of conservative religious groups active in the USA today.

Levels and Intensity of Congregational Commitment and Involvement

- ◆ **Spirituality and Church/Synagogue Attendance:** Very high priority is placed by most of these individuals on developing and cultivating their spiritual lives. Most respondents stated that they appreciate the emphases placed on spiritual development within their congregations and nine out of ten individuals are satisfied with the worship experiences provided by these congregations.

One of the ways in which survey respondents demonstrate their level of congregational commitment is in the high rates of attendance at religious services: on average, 58% of these individuals attend four or more such services per month. Congregational involvement outside of worship is also significantly high: more than seven out of ten individuals surveyed spend three or more hours per month serving on parish/synagogue committees, in educational and outreach programs, and/or assisting with social events. Moreover, 51% report that they have increased such involvements in recent years. What emerges from these statistics is a highly-motivated group of individuals who demonstrate their commitment to congregational life and activities by not only attending worship service but also by committing their time and talents to the larger projects of the synagogue/church.

- ◆ External Programs and Ministries: This project survey also queried LGBT people of faith on their local congregational commitment to external programs and ministries. 88% of respondents agreed that their congregations currently dedicated sufficient resources to help their members reflect upon and act upon the relationship of their faith to social, political, and economic issues, and almost 65% of respondents rated their congregations as having a high involvement with the outside community.

Virtually every one of the congregations studied support rather extensive programs of charity for those in need, and many of by respondents emphasized the importance that they place personally on social justice and programs of social welfare which their congregations support. One particularly interesting finding of the survey was that nearly 42% of Unitarian-Universalist and Christian respondents believed that their congregations needed to place more emphasis on external religious ministries.

- ◆ Importance of religion: Finally, it is not surprising that a high proportion (73.8%) of respondents characterize religion as very important in their own lives. These are LGBT people who have chosen to express their personal spiritualities and beliefs within the traditional structures of church and synagogue. Quite contrary to the image of LGBT people as enemies of established religion (promoted by more than a few religious conservative in the USA), these individuals reveal a relatively invisible phenomenon: “out” LGBT who live as active and dedicated members of synagogues and churches.

II. CONGREGATIONS WITH SUCCESSFUL LGBT-AFFIRMING PROGRAMS

What characterizes successful congregational programs of welcome and inclusion for LGBT people? This question, which is the central focus of this report, can be answered by returning to the ten hypotheses drawn up in preparation for the development of Survey 2; additional features

of congregations with successful programs of welcome and inclusion are discussed following these guiding hypotheses:

1. “Meaningful integration of LGBT people into membership and leadership (ordained and/or non-ordained) of a religious community.”

Synagogues and churches, it is clear, need to do more than simply state that LGBT people are welcomed into their communities of faith. Time and again in this survey (both in written and oral commentary) respondents stated they required more than basic statements of welcome to feel at home in any local religious community. While certainly pleased to know that official statements of welcome for LGBT people had been adopted or drawn up by their local congregations, respondents were clear in their opinion that genuine “welcome” entailed a variety of features from educational offerings for LGBT people and their allies to LGBT presence in all areas of congregational and denominational life. In those congregations which belong to more conservative denominations many respondents believed firmly that their local congregations had much to teach other congregations and larger denominational structures about creating meaningful inclusion of LGBT members.

2. “Sponsorship of productive dialogue between LGBT persons and non-LGBT persons on a variety of topics.”

This is an element that only the most progressive congregations sponsor in any real detail. For instance, both Unitarian Universalist congregations included in this study have undertaken ongoing educational programs that bring together LGBT people and non-LGBT people as a way of fostering discussion among both groups. For several years now the Unitarian Universalist Association has officially sponsored a well-developed program for congregations that desire to effectively integrate LGBT people into their communities and provide safe arenas for discussions on biblical attitudes toward homosexuality, present-day societal fears of LGBT people, and what it means to be a congregation that is welcoming to LGBT persons.¹

The First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto included in this study provides another example of the effectiveness that programs of education and dialogue can have on LGBT and non-LGBT persons in a congregation. By sponsoring an annual week of talks and other events on homosexuality, religion, and related topics (entitled “The New Visions Project”), this local church becomes an important center for the exchange of ideas

¹See Unitarian Universalist Association, *The Welcoming Congregation Handbook: Resources For Affirming Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, And/Or Transgender People*. Second Edition. (Boston: UUA Office Of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, And Transgender Concerns, 1999).

between LGBT people and non-LGBT people on various topics relating to faith and sexual orientation.²

3. “Existence of committees specifically devoted to LGBT persons and their concerns.”

78% of those Bay Area congregations included in this study have groups or committees that are devoted to LGBT persons and their concerns. The presence and activity of these groups and committees is absolutely key to the building of effective programs of inclusion for LGBT people because they ideally (and very often actually) provide avenues of education and discussion on matters important to LGBT people who most often live as sexual minorities within their congregations. Such groups can take the form of support for LGBT members and/or provide a conduit for communication between LGBT persons themselves, LGBT people and other congregational members at large, and the congregation’s LGBT community and congregational leadership.

4. “Educational offerings for LGBT persons and their allies.”

As mentioned above, this is a value for many LGBT people surveyed for this study. Moreover, this is an area in which many Bay Area congregations with LGBT-affirming ministries need to improve. Perhaps one reason for the lack of sufficient educational offerings in this area relates to the need for congregational leaders and members to be trained in issues regarding homosexuality and religion. Too often only negative theological assessments of LGBT people and homosexuality are known to those in positions of leadership at local congregations. Moreover, the effectiveness with which conservative religious American leaders put forth their homophobic messages in the media only serves to drown out progressive religious voices working to dismantle homophobia. Members and leader of Bay Area congregations with LGBT-affirming ministries would benefit greatly from informal but well-structured educational offerings on religion, sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular.

5. “Ministry to LGBT persons both inside and outside of the religious community.”

This is another area of potential growth for Bay Area congregations with significant LGBT presence. While internal ministries to LGBT people receive generally high marks from the survey respondents, almost half of those surveyed believe that their congregation are not engaging sufficiently in ministries among LGBT people outside of their congregations. Such external ministry need not be proselytizing in nature; rather,

²For information on The New Visions Project of The First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, see their website: <http://www.newvisionsproject.org/>.

like many congregation-sponsored HIV/AIDS programs that have long been serving many LGBT people, such ministries could focus on those particular needs of the LGBT community that are not addressed by governmental and civic entities.

6. “Involvement in larger religious LGBT caucuses and/or movements.”

It can be argued that a major initial force behind the appearance and subsequent growth of LGBT-affirming congregations in the United States has been denominational LGBT caucus groups which have worked to change the policies of these larger religious structures so that the particular needs of LGBT people might be addressed at the local congregational level. Such caucuses and movements have proven to be remarkably effective and long-lasting in all denominations, from Roman Catholic groups like Dignity and New Ways Ministry to the Open and Affirming organization within the United Church of Christ.

What is missing, however, is an LGBT organization, caucus, or movement that attempts to bring together LGBT individuals of faith and their religious congregations (from a variety of religions and denominations) within a specific geographical area in order to build a coalition of progressive LGBT people of faith. Such a coalition could offer an effective voice within the Bay Area, with its culture of diversity and historic embrace of LGBT people, on matters relating to homophobia, the enfranchisement of LGBT people within society as a whole, and as a proactive voice for inclusion from the Religious Left.

7. “Involvement in local and/or national civic LGBT observances and events.”

Many of the congregations included in this study take part in such observances and events. Pride parades and AIDS Day memorials are two such examples of participation, and the potential exists for Bay Area welcoming congregations to come together and advocate for change with respect to other issues such as marriage rights for same-sex couples.

8. “Development of theological statements of welcome and inclusion for LGBT persons.”

Theological statements of this sort may seem merely academic but they are important items that demonstrate a religious foundation for welcoming and including LGBT people of faith in local congregations. In fact, many survey respondents revealed a sophisticated understanding of the theological statements of the denominations regarding homosexuality and LGBT people. Sometimes a local congregation may issue a theological statement of welcome and inclusion in opposition to those issued by the denomination in an effort to affirm the LGBT people within their congregation and also

to challenge the denomination to renounce homophobic theological statements and become denominations of inclusion for everyone.

9. “Production of sermons, pamphlets, and other publications pertaining to LGBT persons and their concerns.”

Another effective tool for congregations building a reputation and ministry of LGBT inclusion is the development of publications designed for LGBT persons. Such publications can serve to explain denominational and congregational stances and disagreement over homosexuality; they can let current and potential members know of offerings which might be of particular interest to LGBT persons; and they can help to educate members on topics relating to homosexuality, homophobia, religion, and LGBT persons. 90% of respondents reported that their congregations do publish such materials, only 8% stated that their congregations did not produce such publications, and only 1% did not know of any such publications. In the current society-wide debates over homosexuality, gay marriage, and the adoption of children by LGBT people, publications of items on LGBT topics by a consortium of congregations from various denominations could become an effective organ for dialogue, debate, and change within the Bay Area.

10. “Advocacy of debate and positive change within larger religious organizations (e.g. denominations, national or regional alliances of religious communities) around issues affecting LGBT persons and LGBT-affirming ministries.”

As stated previously, local congregations in many denominations can exercise a profound influence on larger debates regarding homosexuality and related issues. In fact, several of the Bay Area congregations in this study have taken historic positions with regard to the full inclusion of LGBT people in the life and ministry of their congregations and these congregations have required larger religious structures to address LGBT issues. For instance St. Francis Lutheran Church in San Francisco has been removed from its formal affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America because of a congregational decision several years ago to ordain two lesbians. Likewise, other congregations have risked reprimand and censure for their decisions to fully include LGBT people in their life and work.

11. In addition to the ten features listed above, survey respondents have provided further information which adds three important features shared by congregations with successful programs of welcome and inclusion for LGBT people:
 - a. The congregations in this study are characterized by their LGBT members as communities of faith with a remarkable degree of openness to contemporary ideas and trends. Perhaps this is to be expected of congregations that are seen to be welcoming to LGBT people, but it is worthwhile to keep in mind that for nearly

all of these congregational stances of LGBT inclusion do not stand apart from progressive attitudes toward other social justice issues which result in an eagerness to broaden the diversity of membership and to sponsor and/or support address external ministries of care to those in need.

- b. When asked to describe their congregations as serving primarily their own membership or serving primarily the world beyond their congregations, four out of ten chose the latter, and a similar 40% reported an even split between the two descriptions. Once again, it is apparent that these communities of faith place a high value on work beyond the confines of the synagogue/church; indeed, most respondents appear to link their own experiences of welcome and inclusion in local congregations with their own commitment to serving people outside of their congregations.
- c. Finally, most respondents characterize their congregations as placing more emphasis on an “activist approach to social action” than on a more traditional approach which provides educational resources on social issues but leaves social action to congregants as a matter of individual conscience. These are communities of faith for whom involvement in matters of social concern is a shared responsibility and a common project that directly links religious faith with issues that affect society in general. Moreover, a clear majority of the LGBT individuals surveyed involve themselves eagerly, as people of faith, in matters of social justice and are not content to leave debates over religion and sexuality to conservative people of faith.

III. STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF BAY AREA LGBT PEOPLE OF FAITH AND THEIR CONGREGATIONS

The Haas Jr. Fund and other individual and institutional funders could provide important support to Bay Area congregations with successful LGBT-affirming ministries in the following ways:

1. Enable religious communities to move from the necessary stages of simply welcoming LGBT people to levels of deeper integration of LGBT people in all aspects of community life and ministry:
 - a. Through the sponsorship of a **Bay Area Coalition of Welcoming Congregations (CWC)** which would link such congregations of various religious traditions and denominations throughout the nine county region;
 - b. Such a coalition could build itself into an effective voice of progressive religious persons and congregations that demonstrates the ways in which churches, synagogues, mosques, and other communities of faith might work together to strengthen legal protections for LGBT people and their family members; provide a religious rationale for supporting civil marriage for lesbian and gay people; and initiate public dialogue on a myriad of issues that conservative religious groups so effectively control and manipulate today.
 - c. To launch this coalition, representatives (of all ages, including young adults) from 40 Bay Area congregations, local LGBT Religious Caucus groups, and northern California seminaries would be invited to a planning conference. Perhaps structured along the lines of other religious advocacy groups (such as Pax Christi), this coalition would provide a voice for societal change that comes from LGBT people of faith.
 - d. This coalition would need to form strong alliances with non-religious LGBT activist organizations in the Bay Area not only in order to increase its own effectiveness but also to serve as a useful ally to such organizations that are dedicated to reducing the harmful effects of homophobia within our society and countering the harmful effects of well-funded conservative religious organizations in the Bay Area and in California as a whole.
2. Build alliances between LGBT people and their allies within various faith traditions, and initiate programming to foster creative change and dialogue among religious communities interested in developing or improving the integration of LGBT into their communities:

- a. Local Bay Area conferences and trainings that draw upon the experience of welcoming congregations and offer valuable advice for congregations just beginning to recreate themselves as LGBT-affirming congregations is a need that is currently unmet;
 - b. Support of seminary-based programs that work to educate journalists, activists, policy makers (as well as ministers, rabbis, and people of faith) on LGBT in religious life;
 - c. Bay Area county-based, city-based, and neighborhood-based groups of support for LGBT people of faith and their allies are another possible means of effective alliance-building that could foster positive change for LGBT people within Bay Area cities and towns.
3. Document and disseminate models of gay-affirming, faith-based programs:
- a. Though the publication of studies such as their report on Bay Area LGBT-affirming ministries;
 - b. By supporting a Bay Area speakers bureau of LGBT people of faith who would be available to speak to public media, local religious and civic organizations, and in schools about religion, homosexuality, homophobia, and related issues;
 - c. A simple print or web-based publication on the work of LGBT-affirming congregations in the Bay Area could prove to be an effective means of documenting and disseminating such information and serve as a means of communication among LGBT people of faith and their allies;
 - d. Through support of projects that explore the intersections between race and ethnicity for LGBT people of faith and their allies.
4. Encourage the influence and connection of gay-affirming congregations with other faith communities that are interest in welcoming LGBT persons:
- a. Given their strong commitment to a variety of social justice issues, congregations with LGBT-affirming ministries and programs might be well positioned to serve as models for other religious congregations that have strong social justice commitments but that currently lack of realized commitment to LGBT inclusion;
 - b. Once again, a Bay Area Coalition of Welcoming Congregations could provide such a means of connecting like-minded congregations and encourage other local congregations to explore ministries of welcome and inclusion for LGBT people.

5. Build the public face and voice of LGBT-affirming interfaith communities:
 - a. Through the sponsorship of a Bay Area media campaign that highlights the work of LGBT people of faith and their congregations in dismantling homophobia; in countering the negative effects of anti-gay religious doctrines from conservative religious organizations; and in providing communities of faith for LGBT people;
 - b. By supporting creative programming (such as a speakers series, roundtable discussions, and/or interactive meetings) on topics of important to LGBT people of faith at Bay Area venues such as LGBT community support centers.

6. Promote educational programs on LGBT concerns in religious communities (including seminaries which have such a large impact on religious leadership in local congregations):
 - a. Through support of LGBT-education and LGBT-advocacy centers located at Christian and Jewish seminaries and centers of religious study;
 - b. Support for the creation of alliances of welcoming, synagogues, welcoming mosques, and/or welcoming Buddhist sanghas in the Bay Area to promote and support LGBT-welcoming religious communities from traditions other than the dominant Christian denominations;
 - c. Educational programming tailored to the needs of a particular ethnic groups is an especially needed item since religious congregations with predominantly African American or Asian American members approach issues relating to religion and sexuality differently than many congregations with a predominantly European membership. Such programming would be on the cutting edge of the LGBT-welcoming movement, and the Bay Area, as a location with historic and ongoing struggles for LGBT inclusion, would be a natural location for such pioneering work.

With Open Arms:
Gay-Affirming Ministries in
Bay Area Faith Communities



Appendix A
Profiles of Participating
Bay Area Congregations

Profiles of Participating Bay Area Congregations

1. **City of Refuge United Church of Christ** (San Francisco, San Francisco County)

City of Refuge
1025 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94103-2823
<http://www.sfrefuge.org/>

Denomination: United Church of Christ

Mission Statement:

“City of Refuge United Church of Christ is a ministry of restoration. We are intentionally radically inclusive, welcoming all persons regardless of race, color, ancestry, age, gender, affectional orientation, and those who are specially abled. We celebrate the Creator's diversity.”

2. **St. Paul Lutheran Church** (Oakland, Alameda County)

St. Paul Lutheran Church
1658 Excelsior
Oakland, CA 94602
<http://www.stpaul-lutheran.com/index.html>

Denomination: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Mission Statement:

This congregation acknowledges that it is a community of individuals called and gathered together by God in this location to serve the people of God. We also acknowledge that as God has blessed us, so we are sent to be a blessing to other people. Believing as we do that salvation is a freely given gift from a loving God, and believing that this gift is

intended for all people, we therefore declare our intention to seek, welcome, and involve persons of every race, socioeconomic status, background, religious background, age, and lifestyle in activities, programs, and groups of the congregation.

We affirm that we are sincere in our intent to be all-inclusive in our ministry and in the sharing of the Good News of God's unconditional love and acceptance in Jesus Christ. Confessing that the Church has often isolated, rejected, and inflicted pain upon certain groups and individuals we therefore express a commitment to reach out to every person and group, but especially do we declare our intention to be an open, accepting community for those who have traditionally been alienated from, or rejected by, the Church.

Martin Luther once declared that "we are all beggars telling one another where to find bread". Such an outlook breaks down our tendency to create and sustain "in-groups" and "out-groups" and reminds us that we are called to share God's love with any who will listen. Our desire to be inclusive, therefore, is not to be understood as being motivated by self-righteousness nor is it to be seen as patronizing in nature. Rather, all we do is motivated by a desire to share The Gift: complete life, joy, and hope as revealed in Jesus Christ. It is to be understood that this direction in ministry grows out of our desire to be truly the whole people of God that, in fact, we already are through God's action.

We proclaim a desire to be enriched by individual and collective experiences, insight, and awareness. Some examples are: the trauma of the refugee newly arrived in this country, a gay person struggling with self-acceptance and personal integrity, or a divorced person dealing with the issue of loneliness. We desire to listen and learn, to give and to receive, to share together. We recognize and desire the richness and insight that is to be gained from such a common sharing.

We also affirm that part of our ministry is speaking out on behalf of those who are powerless, oppressed, and discriminated against. We believe that such advocacy is consistent with the clear witness of the scriptures. As Jesus Christ intercedes on our behalf, so we are called

upon to intercede on behalf of others in the social, political, and religious arenas of our society.

We believe that salvation by God's grace in Jesus Christ is about the business of bringing healing and wholeness to broken humanity. The clear proclamation and servant action of the Gospel is to be addressed to all of God's people. In these days of deepening fragmentation of the human family there are no more important tasks to which the body of Christ is called, in its proclamation of the Gospel, than to be inclusive and to be an advocate for justice.

We ask God to bless us with the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek to live out our calling to be proclaimers of the Good News.

3. **Lafayette Christian Church** (Lafayette, Contra Costa County)

Lafayette Christian Church
584 Glenside Drive
Lafayette, CA 94549
<http://www.lafayettechristianchurch.org/>

Denomination: Christian Church / Disciples of Christ

Mission Statement:

The Lafayette Christian Church is an open, accepting and affirming congregation, inclusive of all God's people. We seek to be the visible presence of God's grace where we are challenged to model our Christian faith in everyday life. We celebrate in worship and gather to learn, grow, nurture, and teach. We courageously demonstrate God's love in our kinship with the global community.

4. **First Presbyterian Church** (Palo Alto, Santa Clara County)

First Presbyterian Church
1140 Cowper Street
Palo Alto, CA 94301
<http://www.fprespa.org/index.html>

Denomination: Presbyterian Church USA

Mission Statement:

We are a church committed to:	We are...
A Christian, biblical foundation	A Sanctuary Church, supporting refugees and conscientious objectors
Care and concern for one another	A More Light Church, welcoming gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals into full membership
Social outreach	A Peace and Justice Church, working for human dignity and survival
Lay involvement in worship	An Earth and Spirit Church, loving the earth as God's creation
Inclusive Language	
Stimulating adult study	
Lively children's education	
Small group ministry	

5. **Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Parish/Newman Hall** (Berkeley, Alameda County)

Holy Spirit Parish / Newman Hall
2700 Dwight Way
Berkeley, California 94704
<http://www.calnewman.org/>

Denomination: Roman Catholic (Diocese of Oakland)

Mission Statement:

We are a Eucharistic community, striving to make the promise and challenge of the Gospel and the Catholic tradition a tangible reality in our own lives and the lives of the university community, the residents of our parish, and those drawn to us by the movement of God's grace. For 101 years we have been served and guided by the Paulist Fathers and their mission of evangelization, reconciliation, and ecumenism & interfaith relations.

OUR GOALS are to enhance the faith life of our community; to act as a servant church; to point to God's action in the world and our own lives; to communicate the Good News of God's love and acceptance; to reconcile the alienated and wounded; to heal divisions within the Christian church and with other religions.

OUR MISSION is enhanced by the intersection of the university community and a geographical and intentional parish. The youth and intellectual challenge of the university invigorates the parish life; and the experience of family life, age and childhood expands the boundaries of academia.

6. **Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church** (Oakland, Alameda County)

Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church
3534 Lakeshore Avenue
Oakland, California 94610
http://www.geocities.com/labc_oakland/

Denomination: American Baptists Churches USA

Mission Statement:

"The Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church is an inclusive community of believers in Jesus Christ. We worship, witness, and work to advance God's purpose in all of life. Empowered by the Spirit to be God's

ministers we strive to embody peace and wholeness in a broken world."
(Adopted September 11, 1988)

7. **Metropolitan Community Church** (San Francisco, San Francisco County)

Metropolitan Community Church
150 Eureka Street
San Francisco, CA 94114
<http://www.mccsf.org/>

Denomination: United Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Mission Statement:

MCCSF is a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer spiritual community grounded in the Christian tradition, affirming and exploring many paths to God. Whoever you are, you are welcome. We are a progressive church, influenced by liberation, inclusive, feminist as well as traditional Christian theologies. We celebrate God's image as both feminine and masculine, and the embodied integration of sexuality and spirituality

8. **Epworth United Methodist Church** (Berkeley, Alameda County)

Epworth United Methodist Church
1953 Hopkins St.
Berkeley, California 94707
<http://www.gbgn-umc.org/epworthberkeley/home.html>

Denomination: United Methodist Church

Mission Statement:

Epworth welcomes people of all races, ages, and sexual orientations. At Epworth you'll find babes in arms, seniors in walkers, teens and singles, and the rich diversity of families that make up the Bay Area.

We support our community and each other, and we extend our support to others in need. In worship we sing joyfully, renew our spiritual well-being, and explore our faith with intellectual depth.

9. **St. Francis Lutheran Church** (San Francisco, San Francisco County)

St. Francis Lutheran Church
152 Church Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
<http://www.st-francis-lutheran.org/>

Denomination: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Mission Statement:

We believe that all people are children of God, who is the Creator of life. We believe that the Christian church is made up of those who have been baptized and believe Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Lutherans believe that they are a part of that community of faith which began with the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's presence with his people, on the day of Pentecost.

The church, regardless of the external form it takes, is the gathering of those who believe in Christ. The church is essential to Christian life and growth. Its members are all people in need of God's grace. It has no claim on human perfection. The church exists solely for the hearing and doing of what Jesus said and did.

Most Lutherans recognize a wider fellowship of churches and are eager to work alongside them in ecumenical and interfaith projects.

10. **Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley** (Kensington, Contra Costa County)

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley
1 Lawson Road
Kensington, CA 94707
<http://www.uucb.org/>

Denomination: Unitarian Universalist Association

Mission Statement:

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley (UUCB) is a welcoming and vibrant congregation. We joyously support spiritual development guided by individual faith, reason, and conscience. We are committed to serving one another, our church, and the local and global communities. We foster a spirit of generosity and trust that encourages care for our church home, and affirms diversity and relationships consistent with Unitarian Universalist principles.

11. **New Spirit Community Church** (Berkeley, Alameda County)

New Spirit Community Church
2140 Shattuck Street, Suite 810
Berkeley, CA 94704
<http://www.newspiritchurch.org/index.html>

Denomination: United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, and United Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Mission Statement:

- ◆ We are a welcoming and affirming community creating a spiritual home.
- ◆ We value sustenance through embodied worship that is deeply spiritual, prayerful and God-centered.

- ◆ We value the continuing creation of healing spiritual practices from ecstatic to contemplative.
- ◆ We courageously seek and celebrate diversity and justice.
- ◆ As a Christian-based community, we seek to live out God's unconditional love through acts of compassion and social justice.

12. **First Unitarian Church of San José** (San Jose, Santa Clara County)

First Unitarian Church of San José
160 N. Third Street
San José, CA 95112
<http://www.sanjoseuu.org/>

Denomination: Unitarian Universalist Association

Mission Statement:

The First Unitarian Church of San José is an open and inclusive community committed to promoting the values and principles of Unitarian Universalism in the Santa Clara Valley. As individuals and in community, we seek to deepen our understanding of Unitarian Universalist principles and to embody them in our lives, that in bold and loving ways we can become agents for spiritual growth, healing, social justice, compassion, and joy. We will live out the goals of the church through our commitments to meaningful worship, ritual and celebration, to providing opportunities for religious education, growth, service, and fun for all ages, to fostering the process of becoming a diverse and multicultural congregation, and to dedicating ourselves to service that contributes to justice in our local community and in the world.

13. **The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd** (Berkeley, Alameda County)

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd
1823 Ninth Street
Berkeley, CA 94710
<http://www.goodshepherdberkeley.org/>

Denomination: Episcopal Church in the United States (ECUSA)

Missions Statement:

We are people who take Christian faith seriously, but not in dogmatic or authoritarian ways. We think that mature faith is distinguished by its openness to questions and its willingness to grow in understanding. In our life together we seek to retrieve the rich resources of Christian traditions for our worship and for living the Christian life. We also wish to expand the images and texts we use in our worship to reflect our growing understanding of God and God's presence among us. So while we rely on the most recent version of the American Book of Common Prayer (1979) to guide us, we also draw on other sources for our liturgical life, including our own communal theological reflection. We take care to craft our liturgies with gender-inclusive language and to stress God's unconditional love for all people, as well as the responsibility this entails for us to work for social justice and to treat every human person with dignity and respect.

14. **First Congregational Church of Berkeley** (Berkeley, Alameda County)

First Congregational Church of Berkeley
2345 Channing Way
Berkeley, CA 94704-2201
<http://www.fcb.org/index.shtml>

Denomination: United Church of Christ

Mission Statement:

The First Congregational Church of Berkeley is a community of disciples of Christ:
bound in covenant with God and one another,
inspired by the Word of God,
and strengthened by the faith and history we share.
Our future offers us challenges and choices as we seek to discern and follow our calling
to love God with all our hearts and souls, minds and strength,
and our neighbors as ourselves:
to share our faith as children, youth, and adults in a loving, learning community, and to carry the Good News to others;

to minister to our members, and respond to the needs of the world;

to foster intellectual dialogue, and nurture spiritual growth;

to worship God with passion and power, in spirit and truth.

We embrace the challenge to live with compassion, openness and integrity amidst these creative tensions, responding to them as good stewards of the gifts God has given us.

Glory be to God, who both calls and empowers us.

15. **Walnut Creek United Methodist Church** (Walnut Creek, Contra Costa County)

Walnut Creek United Methodist Church
1543 Sunnyvale Avenue
Walnut Creek, California 94596
<http://www.gbgm-umc.org/walnutcreek/>

Denomination: United Methodist Church

Mission Statement:

Not Available.

16. **Montclair Avenue Presbyterian Church** (Oakland, Alameda County)

Montclair Presbyterian Church
5701 Thornhill Drive
Oakland, CA 94611

Denomination: Presbyterian Church USA

Mission Statement:

We are an open, inclusive community where we celebrate: Social Action, Art, Music and Drama, Intellectual Challenge, Spiritual Growth, and Children & Youth

17. **Most Holy Redeemer Parish** (San Francisco, San Francisco County)

Most Holy Redeemer Parish
100 Diamond Street
San Francisco, CA 94114
<http://www.mhr.org/>

Denomination: Roman Catholi

Mission Statement:

Not Available.

18. **St. Mark's Episcopal Church** (Berkeley, Alameda County)

St. Mark Episcopal Church
2300 Bancroft Way
Berkeley CA 94704
<http://www.stmarksberkeley.org/>

Denomination: Episcopal Church in the United States (ECUSA)

Mission Statement:

Saint Mark's is a Christian Community seeking to celebrate God's inclusive love and to embody it in the world. As a member of the world-wide Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church has its roots in the English Reformation but maintains as well continuity with the richness of the catholic Christian tradition.

The Good News of the Gospel is intended for all people. Saint Mark's strives to celebrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ: We worship God in liturgies of word, sacrament, and music; we serve God in ministries in the parish and the world; we grow in the Christian life through fellowship, study, discussion, prayer, and reflection. Saint Mark's embraces many gifts and voices and persons of a variety of backgrounds and life styles, and welcomes all persons to join in our spiritual journey.

19. **The Congregation Emanu-El** (San Francisco, San Francisco County)

The Congregation Emanu-El
2 Lake Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
<http://www.emanuelsf.org/>

Denomination: Reform Jewish Congregation

Mission Statement:

Congregation Emanu-El serves as the foundation of community life for Jews and non-Jews, for members and non-members. We invite your participation in a myriad of innovative programs that begin from birth and span the cycles and events of life.

We do this by:

Responding to the challenges of being Jewish in our time by upholding the core value of the individual's ability to choose the manner of his/her religious identification and expression

Providing access and resources to all Jews who seek to nurture and renew their faith

Providing pastoral care for our members

Embracing K'lal Yisrael (Unity of the Jewish Community) through strengthening our link to worldwide Jewry and the State of Israel

Articulating and responding to the call for social justice through Tikkun Olam (Healing of a Broken World)

Providing resources and support for interfaith families

Providing life-long innovative Jewish education and cultural activities that reinforce the positive, empowering elements of Jewish life and history

Sustaining the physical presence of our landmark Temple

20. **Congregation Sha'ar Zahav** (San Francisco, San Francisco County)

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav (San Francisco)
290 Dolores Street

San Francisco, CA 94103-2262
<http://www.shaarzahav.org/>

Denomination: Reform Jewish Congregation
Member of The Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Mission Statement:

The purpose of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is to provide the means to:

- Both to celebrate and worship God in accordance with the principles and practices of Reform Judaism, using an inclusive liturgy for all religious, festival and life-cycle ceremonies that reflects the diversity of our membership..
- Work for the principles of creating an equitable society where all people will be valued and dignified.
- Cultivate greater knowledge of the history, traditions, and ideals of Judaism.
- Gather together for worship and companionship.
- Commit ourselves as Jews to the awareness and responsibility of tikkun olam (healing the world) by working to enhance our community and the world in which we live.

21. **University Christian Church** (Berkeley, Alameda County)

University Christian Church
2401 Leconte Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94709
<http://home.earthlink.net/~pastoruccb/>

Denomination: Disciples of Christ

Mission Statement:

University Christian Church seeks to be faithful through

- . . . A deep spirituality
- . . . True community
- . . . A passion for justice

With Open Arms:
Gay-Affirming Ministries in
Bay Area Churches Faith Communities



Appendix B
List of California
Welcoming Churches

California Churches with LGBT-Affirming Ministries

United Church of Christ Open and Affirming Congregations

First Congregational	Alameda
Altadena Congregational	Altadena
Congregational Church of Belmont, UCC	Belmont
Community Congregational	Benicia
First Congregational	Berkeley
New Spirit Community Church (UCC, DOC, MCC)	Berkeley
New Fellowship UCC	Hayward
Pilgrim Congregational	Carlsbad
Congregational Church	Chico
Claremont UCC, Congregational	Claremont
United Church of Cloverdale	Cloverdale
Danville Congregational Church, UCC	Danville
Diamond Bar Congregational Church	Diamond Bar
Mira Vista UCC	El Cerrito
First Congregational UCC	Eureka
Fairfax Community	Fairfax
Fremont Congregational	Fremont
Niles Congregational UCC	Fremont
College Community Congregational Church	Fresno
First Congregational	Fresno
Congregational Church of Fullerton	Fullerton
The Community Church UCC	Guerneville
Eden UCC	Hayward
New Fellowship UCC	Hayward
United Church of Hayward	Hayward
Irvine UCC	Irvine
Arlington Community Church, UCC	Kensington
Shepherd of the Hills	Laguna Niguel
First Congregational UCC	Long Beach
Community Congregational UCC	Los Alamitos
Hollywood Independent UCC	Los Angeles
Mt. Hollywood Congregational UCC	Los Angeles
Westwood Hills Congregational	Los Angeles
Skyland Community Church	Los Gatos
Mentone Congregational UCC	Mentone
Community Church of Mill Valley	Mill Valley
College Avenue Congregational	Modesto
Faith Community Church of Novato	Novato

First Congregational Church of Oakland	Oakland
Plymouth UCC	Oakland
Orinda Community Church, UCC	Orinda
First Congregational UCC	Pasadena
Ladera Community Church, UCC	Portola Valley
Redlands United Church of Christ	Redlands
First Congregational	Riverside
Parkside Community Church	Sacramento
Pioneer Congregational Church	Sacramento
First Congregational UCC	San Bernardino
City of Refuge	San Francisco
First Congregational UCC	San Francisco
St. John's UCC	San Francisco
First Congregation Church of San Jose	San Jose
New Community of Faith	San Jose
San Leandro Community Church	San Leandro
Congregational Church of San Mateo	San Mateo
College Heights UCC	San Mateo
First Congregational	San Rafael
Church of the Foothills, UCC, DOC	Santa Ana
First Congregational	Santa Barbara
La Mesa Community Church	Santa Barbara
First Congregational, UCC	Santa Cruz
First Congregational UCC	Santa Rosa
Community Church of Sebastopol	Sebastopol
United Church of Christ	Simi Valley
First Congregational Church of Sonoma	Sonoma
Congregational Community	Sunnyvale
Little Brown Church of Sunol	Sunol
Community Congregational	Tiburon

Disciples of Christ Open and Affirming Congregations

First Christian Church	Alameda
University Christian Church	Berkeley
BRIM	Berkeley
First Christian Church	Concord
Geyersville Christian Church	Geyersville
Hollywood-Beverly Christian Church	Hollywood
Lafayette Christian Church	Lafayette
Delhaven Christian Church	La Puente
United Christian Church	Livermore
Chapman University, Disciples On Campus	Orange
First Christian Church of Pomona	Pomona

University Christian Church
First Christian Church
Chalice Christian Church
Church of the Foothills
First Christian Church
Raynor Park Christian Church
First Christian Church
Church of the Valley

San Diego
San Jose
San Mateo
Santa Ana
Stockton
Sunnydale
Vallejo
Van Nuys

Presbyterian More Light Congregations

First Presbyterian Church
St John's Presbyterian Church
Northminster Presbyterian Church
Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church
Redwoods Presbyterian Church
United University Church
West Hollywood Presbyterian Church
St Andrew United Church
Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship
Montclair Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Church
Noe Valley Ministry
Seventh Avenue Presbyterian Church
Christ in Terra Linda Church
Sausalito Presbyterian Church
Westminster Presbyterian Church

Baldwin Park
Berkeley
El Cerrito
Hayward
Larkspur
Los Angeles
Los Angeles
Marin City
Oakland
Oakland
Palo Alto
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Rafael
Sausalito
Tiburon

Lutheran Reconciled in Christ Congregations

Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church
University Lutheran Chapel
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Redeemer Lutheran Church
Peace Lutheran Church
Christ Lutheran Church
Hollywood Lutheran Church
Hope Lutheran Church
Resurrection Lutheran Church
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Bethel Lutheran Church
Lutheran Church of the Master

Altadena
Berkeley
Berkeley
Cupertino
Danville
El Cerrito
Hollywood
Hollywood
Long Beach
Long Beach
Los Angeles
Los Angeles

Emmanuel Lutheran Church
 Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church
 St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
 St. Paul Lutheran Church
 Faith American Lutheran Church
 First Lutheran Church
 First Evangelical Lutheran Church
 University Lutheran Church
 Historic First Lutheran Church
 Grace Lutheran Church
 Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer
 Peace Lutheran Church
 First Lutheran Church
 St. Paulus Lutheran Church
 Golden Gate Lutheran Church
 St. Mark's Lutheran Church
 St. Francis Lutheran Church
 Christ Church Lutheran
 First United Lutheran Church
 Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
 Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church
 Faith Lutheran Church
 St. John's Lutheran Church
 Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
 Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church
 Faith Lutheran Church

Napa
 Newark
 North Hollywood
 Oakland
 Oakland
 Oakland
 Palo Alto
 Palo Alto
 Pasadena
 Richmond
 Sacramento
 San Bruno
 San Diego
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Jose
 San Jose
 San Rafael
 Sunnyvale
 Tiburon
 West Covina
 Yucaipa

United Methodist Reconciling Congregations

Albany UMC
 Trinity UMC
 Epworth UMC
 Wesley Foundation, Univ. of Calif. at Berkeley
 First UMC
 Claremont UMC
 Cal Aggie Christian Assoc., UC Davis
 Davis UMC
 El Cerrito UMC
 Fair Oaks UMC
 Wesley UMC
 First UMC
 Wesley Foundation, UC Santa Barbara
 Hollywood UMC
 First UMC

Albany
 Berkeley
 Berkeley
 Berkeley
 Campbell
 Claremont
 Davis
 Davis
 El Cerrito
 Fair Oaks
 Fresno
 Gardena
 Goleta
 Hollywood
 Long Beach

Wilshire UMC
 United University UMC
 Wesley Foundation serving UCLA
 United Ministry, USC
 First UMC
 Malibu UMC
 Martinez UMC
 Sunnyhills UMC
 Toluca Lake UMC
 Lake Merritt UMC
 St. Andrew's UMC
 St. Paul's UMC
 United Campus Ministries, Watkins House
 The Church in Ocean Park
 Pacific Beach UMC
 Glide Memorial UMC
 Hamilton UMC
 First St. John's UMC
 Bethany UMC
 Pine UMC
 Calvary UMC
 Temple UMC
 St. Paul's UMC
 Almaden Hills UMC
 Alum Rock UMC
 First UMC
 First UMC
 Grace UMC
 Christ Church UMC
 Grace UMC
 Central UMC
 St. Mark's UMC
 St. Paul's UMC
 Fellowship UMC
 Walnut Creek UMC
 Crescent Heights UMC

Los Angeles
 Los Angeles
 Los Angeles
 Los Angeles
 Los Gatos
 Malibu
 Martinez
 Milpitas
 North Hollywood
 Oakland
 Palo Alto
 Redondo Beach
 Riverside
 Santa Monica
 San Diego
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Francisco
 San Jose
 San Jose
 San Jose
 San Jose
 San Rafael
 Santa Cruz
 Santa Cruz
 Santa Rosa
 Saratoga
 Stockton
 Stockton
 Vacaville
 Vallejo
 Walnut Creek
 West Hollywood

Episcopal Welcoming Congregations
 (U-Unofficial, O=Official, I=Integrity)

Church of the Epiphany (U)
 St. Mark's Episcopal Church (U)
 St. Timothy's Episcopal Church (U)
 St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church (U)

Agoura Hills,
 Altadena
 Apple Valley
 Arroyo Grande

St. Luke's Episcopal Church (U)
 St. Agnes Episcopal Church (O)
 St. Stephen's Episcopal Church (U)
 St. Andrew's Episcopal Church (U)
 Good Shepherd (U)
 All Saints' (U)
 St. Columba's (U)
 The Episcopal Church in Campbell (U)
 St. John's (U)
 All Saints' (U)
 St. Dunstan's (U)
 St. Ambrose (U)
 St. Michael and All Angels (U)
 St. John the Divine (O)
 Holy Trinity (U)
 Immanuel (U)
 St. Michael the Archangel (U)
 St. Nicholas' (U)
 St. Luke's (U)
 St. Ambrose (U)
 St. Andrew's (U)
 St. Anselm's (U)
 St. Mark's (U)
 Grace (U)
 St. Michael's (U)
 Trinity Church (U)
 St. Andrew and St. Charles (U)
 St. Thomas' (U)
 St. George's (U)
 St. Cross-by-the-Sea (U)
 St. Luke's (U)
 St. Wilfrid of York (U)
 St. Clement's (U)
 Holy Faith (U)
 St. Andrew's (U)
 University of California Canterbury (U)
 St. George's (U)
 St. John's (U)
 St. Mary's (O)
 St. George's (U)
 Faith Community
 Holy Nativity (O)
 Christ the Good Shepherd (U)
 Chapel of St. Francis (U)
 St. John's (O)

Atascadero
 Banning
 Beaumont
 Ben Lomond
 Berkeley
 Beverly Hills
 Camarillo
 Campbell
 Capitola
 Carmel
 Carmel Valley
 Claremont
 Corona del Mar
 Costa Mesa
 Covina
 El Monte
 El Segundo
 Encino
 Fontana
 Foster City
 Fullerton
 Garden Grove
 Glendale
 Glendora
 Goleta
 Gonzales
 Granada Hills
 Hacienda Heights
 Hawthorne
 Hermosa Beach
 Hollister
 Huntington Beach
 Huntington Park
 Inglewood
 Irvine
 Irvine
 La Canada
 La Verne
 Laguna Beach
 Laguna Hills
 Laguna Niguel
 Los Angeles
 Los Angeles
 Los Angeles
 Los Angeles

St. Gregory's (U)	Long Beach
St. Thomas of Canterbury (O)	Long Beach
St. Luke's	Long Beach
St. Mary's Church, Mariposa Ave. (U)	Los Angeles
St. Athanasius' (U)	Los Angeles
St. James' (O)	Los Angeles
All Saints' (O)	Los Angeles
St. Thomas the Apostle (O)	Los Angeles
St. Stephen's (U)	Los Angeles
St. Barnabas' (U)	Los Angeles
St. Bede's (O)	Los Angeles
Canterbury LA (U)	Los Angeles
St. Mary's - Palms Episcopal Church (O)	Los Angeles
Trinity (O)	Los Angeles
St. Philip's (U)	Los Angeles
Canterbury, USC (U)	Los Angeles
St. Alban's (O)	Los Angeles
Pueblo Nuevo de Jesucristo (O)	Los Angeles
Holy Nativity (O)	Los Angeles
Christ the Good Shepherd (U)	Los Angeles
Chapel of St. Francis (U)	Los Angeles
St. John's (O)	Los Angeles
St. Luke's (U)	Los Gatos
St. Benedict's (U)	Los Osos
St. Aidan's (U)	Malibu
St. Luke's (U)	Monrovia
Grace Church (U)	Moreno Valley
St. Timothy's (U)	Mountain View
St. Cuthbert's (U)	Oakland
Christ Church (U)	Ontario
Trinity (U)	Orange
St. Mary's (U)	Pacific Grove
St. Matthew's (U)	Pacific Palisades
St. Margaret's (U)	Palm Desert
St. Paul in the Desert (I)	Palm Springs
All Saints Episcopal Church (U)	Palo Alto
St. Francis (U)	Palos Verdes
All Saints' (O)	Pasadena
St. James' (U)	Paso Robles
All Souls Church (U)	Point Loma
St. Paul's (O)	Pomona
St. Clare's (U)	Rancho Cucamonga
Christ Church (U)	Redondo Beach
St. George's (O)	Riverside
St. Paul's (U)	Salinas

St. George's (U)	Salinas
Good Shepherd Episcopal Church (I)	Salinas
St. Matthew's (U)	San Ardo
St. John's (O)	San Bernardino
St. Clement's by-the-Sea (U)	San Clemente
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral (U)	Sacramento
St. Paul's Cathedral (I)	San Diego
St. Gregory Nyssen (U)	San Francisco
Trinity Church (O)	San Francisco
St. Aidan's Church (O)	San Francisco
Grace Cathedral (O)	San Francisco
Church of the Incarnation (O)	San Francisco
Advent of Christ the King (O)	San Francisco
Episcopal Church of St. John (O)	San Francisco
All Saints (U)	San Francisco
St. Stephen's (U)	San Jose
St. Philip's (U)	San Jose
Trinity Cathedral (I)	San Jose
The Church of the Holy Child (U)	San Jose
St. Francis' (U)	San Jose
St. Stephen's (U)	San Luis Obispo
St. Edmund's (U)	San Marino
St. Peter's Episcopal Church (O)	San Pedro
Messiah (O)	Santa Ana
Trinity (O)	Santa Barbara
All Saints by-the-Sea (U)	Santa Barbara
St. Stephen's (O)	Santa Clarita
Calvary (U)	Santa Cruz
St. Peter's (U)	Santa Maria
St. Augustine by-the-Sea	Santa Monica
St. Andrew's (U)	Saratoga
Ascension (U)	Sierra Madre
St. Francis of Assisi (U)	Simi Valley
St. Richard of Chichester (U)	Sky Forest
St. James' (U)	South Pasadena
St. Michael and All Angels (O)	Studio City
St. Thomas' (U)	Sunnyvale
St. Andrew's (U)	Torrance
St. Paul's (U)	Tustin
St. Mark's (U)	Upland
St. Mark's (U)	Van Nuys
St. Paul's (U)	Ventura
St. Matthias' (O)	Whittier
St. Stephen's Church (U)	Whittier

Welcoming and Affirming Baptist Congregations

First Baptist Church of Berkeley	Berkeley
Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church	Oakland
Dolores Street Baptist Church	San Francisco
New Community of Faith	San Jose
San Leandro Community Church	San Leandro
Shell Ridge Community Church	

Alliance of Christian Churches

Peace in the Valley Christian Church	Apple Valley
Free Spirit of Hope	Hesperia
Christ Chapel of Long Beach	Long Beach
Free Spirit Church	Ontario
Riverside Chapel of Peace Christian Church	Ontario
Christ Chapel of North Park San Diego	San Diego
Celebration of Faith Praise and Worship Center	San Jose
Faith Full Gospel Fellowship	San Leandro

Brethren Mennonite Supportive Congregations

San Diego Mennonite Church	San Diego
First Mennonite Church of San Francisco	San Francisco
La Verne Church of the Brethren	La Verne

Community of Christ Congregations

(Formerly The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

Belmont Community of Christ	Belmont
Berkeley Peace Chapel	Berkeley
Fremont Community of Christ	Fremont
Monterey Community of Christ	Monterey
Novato Community of Christ	Novato
San Francisco Community of Christ	San Francisco
Basileia Open Door Community of Christ	Orange County
San Jose Community of Christ	San Jose
Santa Rosa Community of Christ	Santa Rosa
Suisun Valley Community of Christ	Suisun Valley
Walnut Creek Community of Christ	Walnut Creek

Other Welcoming Congregations and Ministries

Calvary Open Door Center	Bellflower
Newman Hall/Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church	Berkeley
Holy Spirit Fellowship Church	Long Beach
Spiritual Truth Unity Fellowship Church	Long Beach
Open Door Ministries	Long Beach
Liberation in Truth Unity Fellowship Church	Los Angeles
Christ Chapel of the Valley	North Hollywood
Weave of Faith-Christian Feminist Community	Oakland
Free Spirit Church of Ontario	Ontario
Unity Fellowship Church	Riverside
Celebration of Faith Praise & Worship Center	San Jose
The Remnant of Jesus Christ Church	San Jose
Faith Full Gospel Fellowship	San Leandro
Freedom In Christ Evangelical Church	San Francisco
Grace Inclusive Church	Santa Cruz
Tulare County Rainbow Community Church	Tulare
Our Lady of Guadalupe Ecumenical Catholic Church	Vallejo
WeHoChurch	West Hollywood

Unitarian Universalist Congregations

Unitarian Church of Orange County	Anaheim
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Santa Cruz County	Aptos
Sierra Foothills Unitarian Universalists	Auburn
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Kern County	Bakersfield
Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Bayside
Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists	Berkeley
Unitarian Universalist Church	Berkeley
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church	Canoga Park
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula	Carmel
Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church	Costa Mesa
Unitarian Church of Davis	Davis
Mission Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Fremont
Unitarian Universalist Church	Fresno
Unitarian Universalist Church	Fullerton
Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Goleta
Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church	Hayward
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Hemet/San Jacinto Valley	Hemet
Unitarian Universalist Church	

of the Verdugo Hills	La Crescenta
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Laguna Beach
Antelope Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Lancaster
Unitarian Universalist Church	Livermore
Unitarian Universalist Church	Long Beach
First Unitarian Church	Los Angeles
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Los Gatos
Unitarian Universalist Church	
of South Orange County	
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County	Modesto
Monte Vista Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Montclair
Unitarian Universalist Society of North Bay	Napa
Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains	Nevada County
Unitarian Universalists of Santa Clarita Valley	Newhall
Sepulveda Unitarian Universalist Society	North Hills
First Unitarian Church	Oakland
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert	Palm Desert
Unitarian Universalist Church	Palo Alto
Throop Memorial Church Unitarian Universalist	Pasadena
Neighborhood Church, Unitarian Universalist	Pasadena
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Porterville
Chalice Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Poway
Pacific Unitarian Church	Rancho Palos Verdes
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Redding
South Bay Unitarian Fellowship	Redondo Beach
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Redwood City
Universalist Unitarian Church	Riverside
Unitarian Universalist Church	Sacramento
Unitarian Universalist Society	Sacramento
First Unitarian Universalist Church	San Diego
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Summit
First Unitarian Universalist Society	San Francisco
First Unitarian Church	San Jose
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	San Luis Obispo
Unitarian Universalists	San Mateo
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Marin	San Rafael
Unitarian Universalist Society	Santa Barbara
Unitarian Universalist Community Church	Santa Monica
Unitarian Universalist Church	Santa Paula
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sonoma County	Santa Rosa
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of San Dieguito	Solana Beach
First Unitarian Universalist Church	Stockton
Unitarian Universalist Church	Studio City
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	Sunnyvale

Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Unitarian Universalist Church
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church

Thousand Oaks
Tuolumne County
Ventura
Visalia
Vista
Walnut Creek

Metropolitan Community Churches

MCC of the Harvest
New Spirit Community Church
Free Spirit MCC
Resurrection Beach MCC
MCC Glendale
MCC of the Redwood Empire
Sunrise MCC
Glory Tabernacle MCC
MCC Los Angeles
Heartland Christian Fellowship MCC
MCC in the Valley
MCC of the Coachella Valley
MCC of Sacramento The Cathedral of Promise
All Saints MCC
MCC San Diego
MCC San Francisco
Spirit Connection MCC (San Jose)
MCC of Greater Hayward
Christ Chapel MCC
Lavender Road MCC
New Hope MCC
Valley Ministries MCC
Lighthouse MCC of the South Bay

Bakersfield
Berkeley
Corona
Costa Mesa
Glendale
Guerneville
Lancaster
Long Beach
Los Angeles
Mira Loma
North Hollywood
Cathedral City
Sacramento
San Buenaventura
San Diego
San Francisco
San Jose
San Lorenzo
Santa Ana
Santa Cruz
Santa Rosa
Stockton
Torrance

MCC Los Angeles
Good Samaritan MCC

West Hollywood
Whittier

With Open Arms:
Gay-Affirming Ministries in
Bay Area Faith Communities



Appendix C
List of Bay Area
Welcoming Churches

Bay Area Churches with LGBT-Affirming Ministries

United Church of Christ Open and Affirming Congregations

First Congregational	Alameda
Community Congregational	Benicia
First Congregational	Berkeley
New Spirit Community Church (UCC, DOC, MCC)	Berkeley
New Fellowship UCC	Hayward
Danville Congregational Church, UCC	Danville
Mira Vista UCC	El Cerrito
Fremont Congregational	Fremont
Niles Congregational UCC	Fremont
The Community Church UCC	Guerneville
Eden UCC	Hayward
New Fellowship UCC	Hayward
United Church of Hayward	Hayward
Arlington Community Church, UCC	Kensington
Skyland Community Church	Los Gatos
Community Church of Mill Valley	Mill Valley
Faith Community Church of Novato	Novato
First Congregational Church of Oakland	Oakland
Plymouth UCC	Oakland
Orinda Community Church, UCC	Orinda
Ladera Community Church, UCC	Portola Valley
Parkside Community Church	Sacramento
Pioneer Congregational Church	Sacramento
City of Refuge	San Francisco
First Congregational UCC	San Francisco
St. John's UCC	San Francisco
First Congregation Church of San Jose	San Jose
New Community of Faith	San Jose
San Leandro Community Church	San Leandro
Congregational Church of San Mateo	San Mateo
College Heights UCC	San Mateo
First Congregational	San Rafael
First Congregational UCC	Santa Rosa
First Congregational Church of Sonoma	Sonoma
Congregational Community	Sunnyvale
Community Congregational	Tiburon

Disciples of Christ Open and Affirming Congregations

First Christian Church	Alameda
University Christian Church	Berkeley
BRIM	Berkeley
First Christian Church	Concord
Lafayette Christian Church	Lafayette
United Christian Church	Livermore
First Christian Church	San Jose
Chalice Christian Church	San Mateo
First Christian Church	Vallejo

Presbyterian More Light Congregations

St John's Presbyterian Church	Berkeley
Northminster Presbyterian Church	El Cerrito
Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church	Hayward
Redwoods Presbyterian Church	Larkspur
St Andrew United Church	Marin City
Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship	Oakland
Montclair Presbyterian Church	Oakland
First Presbyterian Church	Palo Alto
Noe Valley Ministry	San Francisco
Seventh Avenue Presbyterian Church	San Francisco
Christ in Terra Linda Church	San Rafael
Sausalito Presbyterian Church	Sausalito
Westminster Presbyterian Church	Tiburon

Lutheran Reconciled in Christ Congregations

University Lutheran Chapel	Berkeley
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church	Berkeley
Redeemer Lutheran Church	Cupertino
Peace Lutheran Church	Danville
Christ Lutheran Church	El Cerrito
Emmanuel Lutheran Church	Napa
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Oakland
Faith American Lutheran Church	Oakland
First Lutheran Church	Oakland
First Evangelical Lutheran Church	Palo Alto
University Lutheran Church	Palo Alto

Grace Lutheran Church
Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer
Peace Lutheran Church
St. Paulus Lutheran Church
Golden Gate Lutheran Church
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
St. Francis Lutheran Church
Christ Church Lutheran
First United Lutheran Church
Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church
Faith Lutheran Church
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church

Richmond
Sacramento
San Bruno
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Jose
San Jose
San Rafael
Tiburon

United Methodist Reconciling Congregations

Albany UMC
Trinity UMC
Epworth UMC
Wesley Foundation, Univ. of Calif. at Berkeley
First UMC
Cal Aggie Christian Assoc., UC Davis
Davis UMC
El Cerrito UMC
First UMC
Martinez UMC
Sunnyhills UMC
Lake Merritt UMC
St. Andrew's UMC
Glide Memorial UMC
Hamilton UMC
First St. John's UMC
Bethany UMC
Pine UMC
Calvary UMC
Temple UMC
St. Paul's UMC
Almaden Hills UMC
Alum Rock UMC
First UMC
Christ Church UMC
Grace UMC
St. Paul's UMC

Albany
Berkeley
Berkeley
Berkeley
Campbell
Davis
Davis
El Cerrito
Los Gatos
Martinez
Milpitas
Oakland
Palo Alto
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Francisco
San Jose
San Jose
San Jose
San Rafael
Santa Rosa
Saratoga
Vacaville

Fellowship UMC
Walnut Creek UMC

Vallejo
Walnut Creek

Episcopal Welcoming Congregations
(U-Unofficial, O=Official, I=Integrity)

Good Shepherd (U)	Berkeley
The Episcopal Church in Campbell (U)	Campbell
St. Luke's (U)	Los Gatos
St. Timothy's (U)	Mountain View
St. Cuthbert's (U)	Oakland
All Saints Episcopal Church (U)	Palo Alto
St. Gregory Nyssen (U)	San Francisco
Trinity Church (O)	San Francisco
St. Aidan's Church (O)	San Francisco
Grace Cathedral (O)	San Francisco
Church of the Incarnation (O)	San Francisco
Advent of Christ the King (O)	San Francisco
Episcopal Church of St. John (O)	San Francisco
All Saints (U)	San Francisco
St. Stephen's (U)	San Jose
St. Philip's (U)	San Jose
Trinity Cathedral (I)	San Jose
The Church of the Holy Child (U)	San Jose
St. Francis' (U)	San Jose

Welcoming and Affirming Baptist Congregations

First Baptist Church of Berkeley	Berkeley
Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church	Oakland
Dolores Street Baptist Church	San Francisco
New Community of Faith	San Jose
San Leandro Community Church	San Leandro

Alliance of Christian Churches

Celebration of Faith Praise and Worship Center	San Jose
Faith Full Gospel Fellowship	San Leandro

Brethren Mennonite Supportive Congregations

First Mennonite Church of San Francisco San Francisco

Community of Christ Congregations
(Formerly The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

Berkeley Peace Chapel	Berkeley
Fremont Community of Christ	Fremont
Novato Community of Christ	Novato
San Francisco Community of Christ	San Francisco
San Jose Community of Christ	San Jose
Santa Rosa Community of Christ	Santa Rosa
Walnut Creek Community of Christ	Walnut Creek

Other Welcoming Congregations and Ministries

Newman Hall/Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church	Berkeley
Weave of Faith-Christian Feminist Community	Oakland
Celebration of Faith Praise & Worship Center	San Jose
The Remnant of Jesus Christ Church	San Jose
Faith Full Gospel Fellowship	San Leandro
Freedom In Christ Evangelical Church	San Francisco
Our Lady of Guadalupe Ecumenical Catholic Church	Vallejo

Unitarian Universalist Congregations

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley	Kensington
First Church	Oakland
Unitarian Universalist Church	San Jose
Unitarian Universalist Church	San Francisco
Walnut Creek Unitarian Universalist Church	Walnut Creek

Metropolitan Community Churches Statewide

With Open Arms:
Gay-Affirming Ministries in
Bay Area Faith Communities



Appendix D
List of LGBT Religious Caucuses
By Denomination

**Bay Area Communities of Faith with
Successful Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual-Affirming Ministries**

List of LGBT Religious Caucus Groups (by denomination) Source: www.christianlesbians.com	
American Baptists	American Baptists Concerned
Brethren Mennonite	Supportive Congregations
Catholic	Dignity USA; New Ways Ministries
Community of Christ	GALA
Disciples of Christ	GLAD
Episcopal	Integrity
Evangelicals	Evangelicals Concerned Alliance of Christian Churches
Jewish	FIND
Lutheran, ELCA	Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministries; Reconciled in Christ
Mormons	Affirmation
Presbyterian	More Light Congregations; That All May Freely Serve (GLBT ordination)
Quaker	Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns
UFMCC	Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

United Church of Christ	The Coalition for LGBT Concerns
United Methodist	Affirmation and Reconciling Congregations
Unitarian Universalists	Interweave; The Office for BGLT Concerns; Welcoming Congregations

With Open Arms:
Gay-Affirming Ministries in
Bay Area Faith Communities



Appendix E
List of LGBT-Affirming Synagogues
In California

LGBT-Affirming Synagogues/Religious Groups in California

Temple Beth El
Aptos

Berkeley Hillel
Berkeley

Shalom Chavurah
Brea

Shalom Chavurah
Costa Mesa

Valley Beth Shalom
Encino

Congregation Kol Simcha
Irvine

Congregation Kol Simcha
Laguna Beach

The Lesbian and Gay Havurah of the Long Beach Jewish Community Center
Long Beach

Beth Chayim Chadashim
Los Angeles

Congregation Beth Chayim Chadashim
Los Angeles

South Bay Gay and Lesbian Havurah
Los Gatos

Out and About at Temple Sinai [OATS]
Oakland

Congregation Beth Am
Los Altos Hills

B'not Vashti

San Diego

Yachad
San Diego

Congregation Ahavat Shalom
San Francisco

Congregation Beth Sholom: Keshet Chavurah
San Francisco

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav
San Francisco

Congregation Sherith Israel
San Francisco

Queer Minyan
Santa Cruz

JEWELS: Jewish Lesbians of Sonoma County
Sonoma County

Members of the Tribes (Hillel at Stanford University)
Stanford

Congregation Kol Ami
West Hollywood

Eleventh Commandment
Westside and Hollywood-Los Feliz Jewish Community Centers