

## **HOW CAN WE ENSURE LGBT+ PEOPLE FEEL WELCOME IN OUR CHURCHES**

On the whole, the answer to this question is deceptively simple: the way we welcome LGBT+ people is the same way we should welcome everyone! We greet them warmly, we get to know them, we show them hospitality. It is important not to think that because of their sexuality, the situation of LGBT+ people is different or more problematic than anyone else's. They need and have the right to be treated with love and dignity.

So, LGBT+ people don't need to be welcomed differently because of their sexuality. But because of the way that at least some, perhaps many, LGBT+ people have been treated by the Church, there are some positive things which Church members and leaders can do. But these need to be done because of the situation of LGBT+ people with respect to the Church, not because they are LGBT+ as such.

Ask them how much they are willing to share their story and journey with you, and listen to what they are willing to share. This is always a privilege! If they have been hurt by the Church in the past, acknowledge this and take it seriously.

Ask them what they would find helpful. A gay couple wanted to do an evangelistic course at a church, and the pastor invited them for dinner beforehand. Without setting aside what he believed, he explained he wanted them to feel completely welcome and he asked if there was anything he could do to ensure that. He asked them to let him know if they encountered any homophobia on the course. In doing so, he acknowledged not only that they needed to feel welcomed, but that they already had something to offer and teach the church.

Be consistent. If you let unmarried opposite-sex couples share a room at the church weekend away, you should do the same with a gay couple. If you baptise members of or the children of cohabiting opposite-sex couples, baptise members of or the children of same-sex couples. And don't hold LGBT+ people to different standards when it comes to responsibility and leadership.

### RESOURCES:

A clear bullet-point approach from Sam Allberry: ['How can our churches support Christians facing this issue?'](#)

['What makes a church safe?'](#) Kyle Keating

See also:

How do we welcome everyone without necessarily endorsing their beliefs or choices?