

Creating Sanctuary

Facilitators Guide



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Purpose of the Resource

This resource is designed to help people think through the experience of being an LGBT+ person in our churches. To many LGBT+ people, churches don't feel safe and some of our LGBT+ community have experienced harm in our churches. Our LGBT+ siblings long to be accepted as part of the family.

We recognise that people have different views on same sex relationships. This resource is not intended to ask all members of the Body of Christ to think alike. It is intended to provide a framework in which we can share our thoughts, our feelings, and our spiritual discernment with each other, in safe and respectful dialogue. This resource aims to facilitate that process. It is not intended to address the theological views that lie behind different convictions. Rather, it is designed to help people be pastorally sensitive towards everyone, LGBT+ people included.

It is intended to hold us all to account for how we communicate, recognising the impact and affect we can have, and the damage we can cause, when we do so without love.

This Resource benefits from strong facilitation. If you do not have individuals with suitable facilitation skill or experience in your community, please contact us on to access bespoke facilitator training via:

- The Mint House in Oxford
- OneBodyOneFaith in London
- The Blackley Centre for Peace and Dialogue, Elland, West Yorkshire

You can find out more at:

www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/training




The methodology underpinning this resource is intentionally designed using a restorative framework; working 'with' each other, not doing 'to' or 'for', to enable all perspectives to be heard. It also encourages us to think about the impact and effect of our expressions of those views, as they translate into behaviours, to be carefully considered.

As we talk and reflect together in community, we recognise that this discussion may engender strong thoughts and feelings. It is likely to be helpful to encourage all participants to find a way to express these e.g. through keeping a journal or using creative arts, thereby providing a space to process thoughts and feelings.




Structure of the Resource

There are six components to the resource, we anticipate that each part will take you one to two hours. You could decide to take each part separately (e.g. over the course of a few weeks as a house/small group) as five individual sessions (we recommend that Session 1 and Session 2 are joined together), or you might decide to meet for two longer (Part A and Part B) daytime or twilight/evening sessions.

Part A - Real Life

-  Session 1 – What is this About?
-  Session 2 – Listening Deeply to Stories
-  Session 3 – We all have a Story

Part B - Real Love

-  Session 4 – The Inclusive Bible Story
-  Session 5 – Creating Safer Churches
-  Session 6 – Our Faith Community/Church

There will be further sessions, Part C and Part D, that you can return to in the future. These will help you to review your intended aims for your local church community.

We encourage all participants to attend all six sessions; each is designed to build on the learning and content of the previous. In order to ensure the continuity of learning and understanding, we recommend that participants complete the sessions as described here.

Ground Rules and Pastoral Care

Inclusivity and Accessibility

All of the resources, as far as we are able, have been made available in written and in visual form to accommodate different learning styles and also to ensure that those who struggle with reading and writing can be included in the conversation. As Facilitator, your aim is to ensure all feel welcomed, included and enabled to participate.

You will notice that the resources are often subtitled and some are signed to include those with hearing impairment. We have actively sought to model some of the diversity of the Body of Christ by including different genders, orientations, and cultural heritage in our discussions.

Discussions of this nature may evoke strong feelings, unwelcome thoughts or painful associations. **Preparing in advance to ensure that prayer and pastoral support is easily accessible to individuals who take part in the discussion is an essential component of this approach.**

Ground Rules

As a Facilitator we ask you to ensure that the aims and the *Ground Rules* of the Resource are clearly understood by everyone, and that particular and careful thought is given to those who are most vulnerable to experiencing harm in this discussion i.e. the LGBT+ community. This is carefully covered in Session 1, with suggested wording for facilitators. It is more scripted than in other places as it is of vital importance. In addition, individual copies of the *Ground Rules* are to be made available to all, with a visual

summary on a flip chart. Please affirm the *Ground Rules* by returning to them at the beginning of every gathering, and by ensuring your own conduct and contribution adheres to them, thereby modelling appropriate ways of relating and being.

We recommend that you undertake these conversations in your church, or familiar community buildings and adhere to your usual risk assessment processes. It is our expectation and experience that facilitators are always supported in these conversations by other members of the church leadership team or ministers/vicars.

If you have members of the LGBT+ community within your discussion, please arrange to meet with them in advance of the Resource discussion getting underway, to understand their hopes and fears for the conversation and to ensure that they are well supported during the discussion. **It is particularly important that they are not singled out in the conversation, used as an example by contributors in the room or treated as educators.** Please be mindful of contributors to the conversation who have friends, family or colleagues who identify as within the LGBT+ community and may also find the conversation challenging or emotive at times.

The *Ground Rules* encourage participants to leave the room if they feel unsafe or distressed. If an individual becomes agitated or angry, other church leaders present for the conversation, including the Designated Person for Safeguarding, are asked to assist the participant to leave the room and ensure they receive the support they need.

Pastoral Care & Prayer Support

We ask you to have pastoral care support colleagues available to attend to the needs of attendees during the conversation. These should be people who are trusted and known to the group, and there specifically for this purpose. It is important that these pastoral care colleagues do not express opinions in the group, or on what attendees choose to share, but rather focus on empathetic care for those in attendance. Attendees will be encouraged to leave the room should they feel the need, so the pastoral presence needs to be on hand. Please do not assume that attendees will want someone to pray with them. We suggest that at the outset that you identify pastoral care leaders to provide local care to all participants in the discussion and signpost to external sources of support.

Included in the appendices is guidance for those offering pastoral support for the group, plus information on Additional Pastoral Care and places or organisations available for signposting.

Note on Prayer and reflection times

Within the material there are moments, usually at the end of each session, for reflection and prayer. The exception to this is Session 3 where a prayer response time forms a central place in the session. These prayer times are designed to help create calm by centring the group's thoughts on some words of Jesus, heard from the cross.

- **Session 1**
"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." LUKE 23:34
- **Session 2**
"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." LUKE 23:43
- **Session 3:**
- *"I thirst"* JOHN 19:28

- **Session 4**
"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" MATTHEW 27:46 & MARK 15:34
- **Session 5**
"I thirst." JOHN 19:28
- **Session 6**
"It is finished" (or "It is accomplished", or "It is complete") JOHN 19:30 and *"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."* LUKE 23:46

The same sequence is followed each time:

1. **Words From the Cross**
2. **Pause to Reflect**
3. **Prayer**

We have provided prayers that we feel would be helpful within this context. However, these are not prescriptive and we encourage you to use this space as you feel led. In order to keep within the session time, try to keep the closing prayers to between five and ten minutes.

4. **Closing Song**
We have also provided suggestions for songs that will help bring your meeting to a close. These can be sung as a congregation, read aloud, or listened to - should you have the means.

To begin the period of *Prayers Around the Cross*, the facilitator could place tee lights on the floor in the shape of the cross, lighting them to mark the start of the prayer time. Alternatively, you could invite each participant to light a candle and place it on the floor, together forming the shape of the cross.

Whether you use the resources suggested or opt for a more free-style of prayer it is good to follow the same pattern each time. In order to keep within the session time, try to keep the closing prayers between 5 and 10 minutes.

If you run some of the sessions together, you may wish to select one or other of the prayer resources offered, or, draw selectively from both while holding to the “Prayers Around the Cross” pattern.

Further resources can be found in *Appendix 1*.

Safeguarding concerns

If someone makes a disclosure or shares information that suggests that they may require safeguarding or protection, please follow your church safeguarding policy and procedures. You should start by notifying the Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS) in your church. Regional Association Safeguarding Advisors and Diocese Safeguarding Leads are aware of the Resource and are available to provide help and support to your DPS, as required.

Creating Sanctuary is designed to be used with participants from within your local church community. Please take time to talk with your church’s Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS) about any relevant Contract arrangements or risk management arrangements that need to be planned for during the conversation. If participants become agitated or aggressive, other leaders from the church community, including the DPS, will take responsibility for ensuring that the participant is assisted to leave the conversation and well supported outside of the room, in response to their needs.

Managing Emotional Health Needs

Conversations of this nature can lead to wider emotional health support needs becoming visible.

If you become concerned about the mental health of any participant who is not yet being supported by mental health services, please follow your church procedures and refer to mental health services in your local area (with the informed consent of the individual involved).

In discussion with Public Health England leaders, we attach a range of support organisations in *Appendix 1* to whom you can refer participants if they have wider emotional health needs that require additional support or specialist care. This includes regional and national organisations who can help or support your community. It also includes specialist groups offering support to the LGBT+ community and their loved ones.

Approach to Facilitation

Your role as Facilitator is to facilitate a careful conversation. You do not have to be an expert in this area because your role will not be to educate, or lead, nor will; you be asked to provide the 'right answer'. A good facilitator of a group of this nature is one whose own opinions are not heard, but enables mutuality, respect, honesty and safety within the group.

We hope that facilitators will feel confident to bring their own skills and personality to this material, but ask that you always stick to the aims and objectives of the session. The exercises, questions, and stories have been very carefully chosen and written so that the resource fulfils its purpose (see above). In order to promote safe and effective facilitation of this Resource in local church communities, we are offering training for facilitators, available in Oxford, Manchester and London. For more information, visit: www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/training

The discussions of this resource may evoke strong feelings, unwelcome thoughts or painful associations. Preparing in advance to ensure that prayer and pastoral support is easily accessible to individuals who take part in the discussion is an essential component of this approach.

Practical Tips

Build rapport

You may know your group very well, but it is always important to work hard at building rapport with people. Make it know that you are interested in them as a person, by being 'present' through your attention and manner.

Maintain calm

Be a 'non-anxious presence'. The anxiety of a facilitator communicates to the group. Prepare for the sessions, listen to the videos and audios in advance so that you are not surprised by your own responses and feelings. Remember this can be challenging for us all. It may, therefore, be appropriate to consider your own pastoral care. Who do you have to talk to should the need arise? Remember that your responsibility is not to get a particular point across, or convince them of a particular point of view, but to protect and enable careful conversation, both speaking and listening, where all are valued equally.

Active listening

Much of the above is done through careful active listening. Skills more often used in pastoral encounters are needed here – attentive body language, occasional paraphrase or summary, gentle open questions. A thoughtful and careful paraphrase can check out what everyone is hearing, it can also slow down a more angry or heated exchange. Slowing down conversations, giving time for reflection, and suggesting a moment or two of silence – these are all helpful when exploring emotive issues, and helps stop people's reactivity and defensiveness, enabling real understanding to grow.

Centred speaking

Ask people to speak for self. What do they think, feel, understand; what is the impact on them? This helps minimise the speaking for others or the presumption that we all think and feel the same. If someone starts to use language, tone, or behaviours that are damaging to the group dynamic, and do not stick to the *Ground Rules*, as facilitator you must intervene. Acknowledge the strength of feeling that lies behind the words or behaviour, but ask them to speak or behave differently, referring to the agreed *Ground Rules*.

Appreciation

Finally, do not forget to appreciate people's contribution. It is their gift to the group, and it can take a huge amount of courage to speak into a group of people, especially if you know and respect them, but may not agree with them. Thank people for listening, especially to each other when things get a bit heated or tense. Thank people at the end of the session for coming and for participating and listening carefully.

Room set up

Every room is different so be creative with the space you have. Look at it and ask what you can do to make it a safe and appropriate place for the conversations. Make sure all can see the screen(s) and visuals. Try to make sure that people are not looking or speaking to the backs of other's heads (i.e. sitting in rows. It is far easier to speak an unkind word if you cannot see the impact on others. Encourage friends and couples to sit with other people rather than the person they came with. Tables can be barriers, and lead to fist banging, so be careful how you use them. Discourage people from making notes – others can feel uncomfortable about what they are writing, and it threatens confidentiality. Having water, tissues, sweets around can be helpful, although placing a box of tissues in a prominent place might be a bit intimidating!

Frequently Asked Questions

What about the verses in the Bible that appear to condemn homosexuality?

We are aware, of course, that churches have different views on same-sex relationships - our aim here is not to address different theologies. If participants start to refer to particular verses that appear to condemn same-sex relationships (often described as the 'clobber verses'), please recognise the range of views that we hold in the Body of Christ. Please remind attendees of the purpose and parameters of the conversation to build sanctuary i.e. our priority is to make churches safer spaces for all. Individuals who wish to explore the theology of the Bible verses they reference more fully are invited to read the material highlighted in *Appendix 2*.

This Resource encourages us to think about how we treat each other. It promotes respect, love, active listening and empathy and is founded on Jesus' foremost teaching:

"A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." JOHN 13:34-35

If attendees are genuinely interested in understanding whether there are alternative readings of these verses, please signpost them to the resources outlined in *Appendix 2*.

What about Transgender and Non-Binary?

Trans and Non-Binary colleagues have led the design of further Trans and Non-Binary specific Creating Sanctuary resources, recognising that both the experiences and the needs of Transgender and Non-Binary siblings are often different. These resources will be completed by September 2021.

We draw your attention to the first of

these new releases, [Trans Safeguarding in Practice](#), which is explicitly designed to respond to the questions from many churches about how Transgender siblings can best be safeguarded in church environments. We encourage all Facilitators to sign-post these additional resources and the additional reading material provided for Trans and Non-Binary safeguarding and inclusion.'

How do I manage people that find it hard to listen to others or talk over others?

It is important to immediately intervene when people start to talk across others. Remind them of the *Ground Rules* to which they agreed at the beginning of the session. Explain that you recognise that they have something which matters to them and they will have the opportunity to speak, but ask them to first listen to the other person.

If you feel that individuals are not listening to each other, you can ask them to summarise what the other person has said before they offer their own perspective. This may be challenged – if so, calmly return to the agreement made altogether that they would be respectful and treat others with grace.

Try not to 'tell them off' – affirm the strength of feeling but keep control of the space. People are more likely to speak more loudly or often when they feel that they are not being listened to, so make sure you summarise or paraphrase their comments – and use it to move on to the next person. E.g. "X has just said they feel..... and that..... I wonder if anyone else has something to say on this matter?"

If you feel that the behaviour is becoming really disruptive to the group, and the person is not listening to your intervention, it may be appropriate to take a short break

and speak to the person on their own. Listen to them and summarise, and then state your preference for how you would like them to participate. Disruptive behaviour will only escalate if left unchecked, so don't let it go.

What do I do if people become angry or upset?

Firstly, don't be surprised if this happens. The reason for this whole resource is because so often conversations on this subject are very emotive. Key to managing the emotivity is to remain calm yourself, and not add to the reactivity in the room. As a facilitator, your role is not to make sure everyone is happy, but to manage the conversation so that it takes place safely. You are neither an arbitrator (saying who is right) or a messiah (rescuing people). Instead, you are the 'holder of the space', enabling people to have the conversations they need to have in a calm and respectful manner.

We recommend that you calmly and respectfully...

- Affirm the feeling – “You are really angry about this” or “I can see that this is a very concerning issue for you.” The person who is angry/upset needs to know that what matters to them has been acknowledged and the impact on them noticed.

- Remind people that it is perfectly okay to take a break, or to leave the room. The Pastoral support is available to listen to people individually. If they chose to stay in the group, be clear that there is a purpose for the session. Remind them of the *Ground Rules*, and ask if they are willing for the group to continue.
- Ask for a minute's silence so that everyone can reflect and restore themselves. Check all are willing to continue before recommencing the session.

Other leaders from your church community, including the DPS, are on hand to help manage participants who become angry, upset or agitated.

Facilitators are encouraged to seek pastoral support from within the church leadership. Additional support is available from the providers offering Creating Sanctuary Facilitator training and from the Core Group who designed Creating Sanctuary.



Part A: Session 1

What is this About?

Purpose of the Session

To outline the purpose of this Resource and to identify our bottom line; to ensure that our churches and Christian communities are safe places for everyone, and in particular those who identify as LGBT+. This session is an integral part of the programme as it established our *Ground Rules* and culture. It is also an opportunity for people to familiarise themselves with the wider group and our approach.

Approach

Session 1 and Session 2 are best run together.

Timings

We expect Session 1 to last approximately 20-30 minutes. Please allow two hours for session 2.

Toolkit

- Printouts of the *Ground Rules* (see pg. 14). There should be enough so that each participant has a personal copy.
- Flipchart
- Pens
- Projector or screen
- Session 1 slide deck. Available from www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-1
If you do not have a projector or screen available, we suggest providing printouts
- Tee lights and matches
- Refreshments (drinks, biscuits, fruit)

Session 1 Content

i) Welcome and Housekeeping

Please welcome everyone to the room and confirm the fire exits and basic housekeeping for the day, including silencing mobile phones. We recommend that water and ideally something small to eat e.g. sweets, biscuits, fruit; is available to all during the conversation.

Please let everyone know that prayer support is available on the day.

If you are facilitating a conversation with over 20 attendees, we suggest you break attendees into groups of eight sat together in a horseshoe clusters.

It is likely to be helpful to ask attendees to introduce themselves and answer a basic ice-breaker question, here are some examples:

- What was your favourite childhood sweet?
- What would you put on your toast in the morning?
- What's your favourite film, song, book, etc?

Whilst it may be tempting to skip this stage if your participants know each other well, this simple exercise helps people enter into the conversation and also to enable everyone's voice to be heard from the outset.

ii) Purpose of the Session



> Show Slide S1:1 and read aloud

Every single person in the room today is unique.

Diversity and difference are inescapable and joyful aspects of the Body of Christ.

Discuss some of the diversity and difference present

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> **Facilitator:**

Pick up on some of the ice breaker comments and reflect on the differences in our community that we saw. Then offer the following:

"In this room we will have many different views and opinions on the Bible and on our role as a faith community in our local context. Specifically, we'll all have different views on sexuality and gender. This resource recognises those differences."



> Show Slide S1:2 and read aloud

*It does not ask participants to change their minds
on same sex relationships or same sex marriage.*

Is this what you were expecting?



> **Facilitator:**

Ask whether people are surprised to hear this? Is that what they were expecting? Then offer the following:

“Inevitably churches have different views on same-sex relationships - the aim here is not to address different theologies. Rather, we are asked to think about how we treat each other. We are encouraged to do this with respect, love, active listening and empathy. This is founded on Jesus’ foremost teaching.”



> Show Slide S1:3 and read aloud together

*‘A new command I give you: love one another. As I
have loved you, so you must love one another. By
this all people will know that you are my disciples
if you love one another. JOHN 13:34-35*



> **Facilitator says:**

“This resource is about making churches safer and helping them to become places where people no longer get hurt. This is primarily a safeguarding or pastoral resource, not a theological one.

This resource focuses on how we might interact with each other, providing a structure for a conversation - a safer and respectful discussion with each other.”



> Show Slide S1:4 and read aloud

We will spend time listening to stories and experiences of

- church leaders
- members of the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community

At times this will involve

- hearing about the impact and effect of exclusion, and at times mistreatment
- learning from brilliant examples of where differences have been embraced in an inclusive and diverse Body of Christ

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> Facilitator says:

“This discussion will give us the opportunity to hear the voices of those who are rarely invited to speak, alongside other perspectives with which we might be more familiar.

We will specifically want to consider the impact and effect that the expressions of our views can have on other people.”

Summarise the structure you will follow in your faith community e.g. five shorter sessions, two longer sessions, etc. Pause and ask if everyone is clear – Any questions?

> Facilitator says:

“In order to make sure that our conversations honour the purpose of the resource, and to keep this as safe a space as possible for all, the following Ground Rules come with the Resource and we are asked to follow them in our discussions here. Read the Ground Rules and then turn to the person next to you and talk about them: what do you not understand, what questions do you have, what impact will following the Ground Rules have on our conversations, what is missing that would be helpful for you to participate in the conversations? After a few moments we will come back together and hear some of your thoughts.”

> Hand out individual copies of the *Ground Rules*



Retain a version for the flip chart. You may also want to project them (see slides S1:5-8). Allow time for people to talk in pairs before bringing the group back together and hear comments, add additional *Ground Rules* if the group is in agreement.

Then, **get assent from all present that they will abide by the *Ground Rules*, by raising a hand, or even going around and getting assent from each by name.** Make it clear that part of your role as facilitator will be to help them keep to the *Ground Rules*. At this point you could put up a Summary Flip Chart sheet so that the group has a visual reminder from the start.

Ground Rules

'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.'

JOHN 13:34-35

As a community of people, we want to demonstrate the following Godly behaviours

- Love
- Respectful Curiosity
- Active Listening
- Empathy
- Creativity
- Hope

Ground Rules

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people may be in the room. Their experiences will be treated with care and met with love.
- Many LGBT people in Christian communities have experienced harm. We acknowledge the imbalance of power and privilege that has led to this. Their voices will be given additional respect.
- We will listen carefully to each other, with respect, allowing all views to be heard, without interruption and consciously not speaking or behaving in a way that causes further harm to LGBT+ sisters and brothers.
- We will seek to be genuine and honest.
- What we say in this room is confidential, details are not for sharing without agreement.
- We will be respectful. We will exercise grace.
- We will be careful with our language and recognise that we will sometimes hurt each other without meaning to. Your intention is not always your impact, but it's the impact of our words that can cause hurt and create 'unsafe' experiences.
- If in doubt, respectfully ask for clarification.
- If something challenges you, embrace the challenge and try and learn from it.
- If you feel unsafe or distressed at any time, it is important to leave the room, we will make sure someone is on hand to talk about what's happened and how you're feeling.
- We will maintain confidentiality. We will not discuss information about other people without their informed consent. What we discuss together today, remains confidential.

iii) A Covenant Prayer: For Creating Sanctuary Together

This prayer seeks to nurture sanctuary by embedding the *Ground Rules* that have been agreed together, into a covenant prayer. You are encouraged to use it in the first session at the point when the rules are agreed and thereafter as an opening prayer at the start of each session.



> Pray together. This prayer is available on slides S1:9-11

Gracious God

Under the shadow of your wings

We find welcome embrace and compassionate love,

And in the coming of your son amongst us,

We encounter the outstretched arms of Love without limits.

Help us to be your covenant people

Reaching out to one another

As Christ has reached out to us.

As we journey together

Help us

To be treated with care

And met with love

To listen to the voices of those least heard

And encourage all views to be respected

To seek to be genuine and honest

And not speak in ways that cause harm

To hold each other's stories in confidence

And exercise grace in our words and actions.

When disturbed or confused,

To seek understanding

When challenged or moved

To embrace the learning

Help us on this journey to be strangers no longer,

But pilgrims on the way

For the sake of Jesus

Who walks with us,

breaks bread for us to share,

and opens our eyes.

AMEN



> S1:12 (holding slide)

iv) Introducing the Bottom Line – Why is this so Important?

Sadly, many members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community have come to harm in churches in the UK. In some cases, this has even led to the loss of life.

Where people are in a minority, excluded, vulnerable or are at risk, we have a shared moral and ethical responsibility to safeguard against doing more harm. Our churches and Christian communities should intend to be a safe place for everyone.

v) Introducing the Holding Space

Throughout the discussion a 'Holding Space' flip chart page will be available, for people to write key questions that they would like to find answers to. The facilitator can review this periodically and signpost to key resources that could be accessed to help respond to the questions.

vi) Trigger warning

In our next session together (i.e. Session 2) we will start to hear from members of the LGBT+ community who will share their experiences of church community. If at anytime you feel distressed or want to talk to someone, please do let ...[named individuals in your church community]... know so that we can support you.

vii) Checking In

Discussions of this nature may evoke strong feelings, unwelcome thoughts or painful associations. Preparing in advance to ensure that prayer and pastoral support is easily accessible to individuals who take part in the discussion is an essential component of this approach. Remind everyone of the support available and introduce a comfort break.

viii) Prayers Around the Cross

Towards the end of each session, resources are offered for a short time of prayer and reflection entitled '*Prayers Around the Cross*'.

> Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant

To begin the period of *Prayers Around the Cross*, the facilitator could place tee lights on the floor in the shape of the cross, lighting them to mark the start of the prayer time. Alternatively, you could invite each participant to light a candle and place it on the floor, together forming the shape of the cross.

1. Words From the Cross



> S1:13

Jesus said: "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother."

JOHN 19:26-27

Jesus' words to his mother and the beloved disciple show the deep affection in which he held them. Here is covenant love in action: Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple stood by Jesus in his darkest hour of suffering and rejection, while at the same time Jesus reached out to them, through his pain, urging them always to be there for one another.

2. Pause to Reflect

To quietly reflect and meditate on covenant love, what it means to be constantly opening ourselves to God and one another, use this exercise based on an ancient prayer from the Book of Hours (1514)



> S1:14-15

God be in my head and in my understanding

(How have we understood, what has enabled us to form these understandings)

God be in my eyes and in my looking

(What have we seen? Lord, enable us to look again)

God be in my mouth and in my speaking

(What have I said, have I kept silent when I should have spoken out?)

God be in my heart and in my thinking

(What thoughts, stories, feelings do I carry in my heart that need to be re-visited?)

God be at my end, and at my departing.

(God in all of life ...my life always).

3. Prayer

Please feel free to either use the following prayer by Francis of Assisi (1181- 1226) or invite free prayer to commend one another to God.



> S1:16-18

*God our maker
Each day is a little life
Each night a tiny death
Help us to live with faith and hope and love
Lift our duty above drudgery*

*Let not our strength fail, or vision fade
In the heat and burden of the day.*

*Make us patient one with another
In the fret and jar of life,
Remembering that each fights a hard fight
And walks a lonely way.*

*Forgive us Lord,
If we hurt one another.*

*Teach us a gentler tone, a sweeter charity of words
And a more healing touch.*

*Sustain us, O God, when we must face sorrow;
Give us courage for the day and hope for the morrow.*

*Day by day , may we hold your hand and look up into your face,
Whatever befall,
Until our work is finished and the day is done.*

AMEN

4. Closing Song

The Servant Song by Richard A. M. Gillard reflects the practice in God's Covenant community of supporting each other.



> S1:19-21

*Brother sister let me serve you
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.*

*We are pilgrims on a journey.
Sisters, brothers, on the road*

*We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.*

*I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night-time of your fear.
I will hold my hand out to you;
Speak the peace you long to hear.*

*I will weep when you are weeping.
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through.*


*When we sing to God in heaven,
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.*

*When we sing to God in heaven,
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.*



> S1:22 (holding slide)

Any questions (and comfort break if required)



Part A: Session 2

Listening Deeply to Stories

Purpose of the Session

To encourage participants to seek to understand the lived experience of the LGBT+ community in our churches and faith communities.



Approach

Session 1 and Session 2 are best run together.



Timings

Please allow two hours for Session 2.



Toolkit

- Projector or screen and audio equipment or speakers
- Session 2 slide deck. Available from www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-2
If you do not have a projector or screen available, we suggest providing printouts
- Flipchart
- Pens
- Paper
- Suggestion box
- Tee lights and matches
- Refreshments (drinks, biscuits, fruit)

Session 2 Content

i) Welcome Back

Welcome everyone back to the session. Make a note to see if all have returned and follow up with any newly absent. If this session is on a separate occasion to Session 1, remind everyone of the *Ground Rules* and begin with the *Covenant Prayer* (see page 16 & S2:1-3).



> S2:4 (Holding slide)

ii) Purpose of the Session

Explain that the purpose of this session is to listen to LGBT+ stories. Explain that there are five stories available to listen to. Ideally we encourage local communities to explore all of the stories and suggest leaving Lizzie Lowe's to the end.

The stories are embedded in the Session 2 PPT file and can also be found on our website: www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-2

iii) Stories 1-5



> Play each story one at a time (S2:5;7;9;11;13)



> After each story has finished, ask people in small groups, of up to four, to write down or draw their responses to the below questions. These questions are also available on the slide deck (S2:6;8;10;12;14)

- What thoughts do you have about this story?
- What impact has the story had on you?
- What feelings do you have?
- What questions are you left with?



> Small group discussion (S2:15)

Once you have listened to all of the stories, give participants 5-10 minutes to consider the following:

What could we do to make our church(es) a safer place for each of the people whose stories we have heard.

iv) Lizzie Lowe's Story



> Play the video of Lizzie Lowe's story (S2:16)

The video can also be found on our website: www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-2



> **Small group discussion (S2:17)**

After a moment of quiet, please ask each group to consider these questions posed by Nick Bundock, Lizzie's Vicar:

- Which part of this story is the most important part to you?
- Which part of this story is most relevant to your church?
- Might this story have ended differently had Lizzie been a member of your church?



> **S2:18 (Holding slide)**

v) Optional Activity

If you sense that participants are either beginning to, or would like to, describe emerging welcoming values or principles for their faith community, you might encourage them to write these down. These might be values, behaviours, or ways of relating that they wish to see develop. Ask people to place their suggestions in a box and we will return to these in Session 6.

vi) Checking In

Discussions of this nature may evoke strong feelings, unwelcome thoughts or painful associations. Preparing in advance to ensure that prayer and pastoral support is easily accessible to individuals who take part in the discussion is an essential component of this approach. Remind everyone of the support available.

vii) Prayers Around the Cross

After the *Checking In* time has allowed thoughts and feelings to be expressed, bring the group around the cross for a short time of prayer. The facilitator may wish to place tee lights in the shape of the cross on the floor and light them at the start of this section or invite participants to light a candle each, together make the sign of the cross.

- > **Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant.**

1. Words From the Cross



> **S2:19**

"Today you will be with me in paradise." LUKE 23:43

From the cross Christ offers grace and comfort to an outsider.

2. Pause to Reflect



> S2:20-23

What does it mean today, for the harmed and the hurting to hear these words,

“Today you shall be with me in paradise”?

Use the following poem to aid your reflection:

Paradise Now

In the pain of rejection

Under the scrutiny of a graceless world

In the night-time of my fear

Jesus’ words

are balm to my brokenness

When doubt and disappointment overshadow me

fear and uncertainly consume me

and friends no longer hear me

Jesus’ words

calm my restlessness

When who I am is not understood

or what I feel is not acknowledged

When the body I inhabit is not loved

Jesus’ words

restore my humanity

Wherever the body of Christ

Binds the wounds of the broken

Comforts the restless

Rescues and restores the rejected

Jesus’ promise

comes alive - Paradise Now

3. Prayer

Offer this prayer for one another and for those whose stories have been shared.
Alternatively, invite the group to pray spontaneously.



> S2:24-25

*Gracious God,
We have listened to the stories,
We have heard the pain caused by silence and indifference.*

*Help us to find the boldness to break our silences,
To speak truth to power,
To make the space so that voices within our community are heard,
So we too can better reflect your love and welcome to all.*

*On the cross ,
Even through your pain and discomfort,
You reached out to offer hope and life to others.*

*Give us courage and grace to exchange out judgements and prejudices,
For your gracious love and compassion.*

AMEN

4. Closing song

This song by Marty Haugen reflects the practice in God's Covenant community of welcoming all.



> S2:26-29

*Here in this place, new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away.
See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in - the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in - the blind and the lame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.*

*We are the young - our lives are a mystery,
we are the old - who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in - the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in - the proud and the strong.
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.*

*Here we will take the wine and the water,
Here we will take the bread of new birth.
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
Call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
Give us to eat the bread that is you.
Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true.*

*Not in the dark of buildings confining,
Not in some heaven, light years away,
But here in this place, the new light is shining;
Now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in - and hold us forever,
Gather us in - and make us your own.
Gather us in - all peoples together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.*



> S2:30 (holding slide)

Close and confirm the timings for Session 3.



Part A: Session 3

We all have a Story

Purpose of the Session

To encourage participants to relate the stories of the LGBT+ community to their own lived experience and specifically to the people they know or love who are within the community.



Approach

Session 3 can be run independently; it could also be paired with Session 4 or Session 2.



Timings

We expect Session 3 to last approximately 60-90 minutes.



Toolkit

- Projector or screen
- Session 3 slide deck. Available from www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-3
If you do not have a projector or screen available, we suggest providing printouts
- Flipchart
- Pens
- Post-it notes for each participant
- Cross - placed centrally in the room
The cross of tee lights, used in previous weeks for closing prayers, will take centre stage in this session. For this you may opt for a wooden cross.
- Tee lights and matches
- Refreshments (drinks, biscuits, fruit)

Session 3 Content

i) Welcome back

Welcome everyone back.

If you wish to, please provide a short reminder of what was covered in the previous session including the purpose of the Resource and also the *Ground Rules* and *Covenant Prayer* all participants have committed to.



> Covenant Prayer S3:1-3

Invite the group to pray together the *Covenant Prayer* (see page 16).

> S3:4 (holding slide)

Revisit the *Holding Space* system, remind participants of the pastoral support available, and to those who need, at any time during a session, to take time out.

The stories we heard in Session 2 underline the importance of finding healthy and safe ways of responding to people in times of deep necessity, and confirm the need for safety and love within the church community.

Before you take time to hear and respond to one another's stories, pause around the cross to reflect again on Jesus' story and his words from the cross.

ii) Prayers Around the Cross

- > Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant. Alternatively, you may want to use a wooden cross for this session.

1. Words from the Cross



> S3:5

"I thirst" JOHN 19:28

2. Pause and Reflect



> S3:6-8

Facilitator to decide whether to read to the group or read together

*We thirst!
All of us thirst;
For recognition, friendship, inclusion; truth.*

*We thirst,
all of us thirst;
For authenticity, acceptance, understanding;
for permission to be who we wholly are.*

*It is our basic need,
A fundamental requirement of humanity.
To be fully seen.*

*Lord, when you were thirsty, they mocked you,
It may have appeared to those standing by that they met your need,
Yet what you were offered was not what you needed,
it would never have been enough.*

God, we thirst.

*In a world often parched and arid from a lack of authenticity and welcome,
Where often we too have failed to meet the needs of the other
We too have wanted to be seen to serve,
We too have caused insult, offering a second-rate solution.*

*God, we thirst,
all of us thirst,
From our need for others,*

*Our need for you,
Our need for love.*

3. A Prayer for Discernment



> Show slide 3:9 and read to the group

*As we share our stories
May the Spirit quench our thirst for truth and understanding
May the crucified and risen Lord meet us in our need
May God at work in lives so different from our own,
kindle within us a deep love and friendship for all
AMEN*



> Slide S3:10 (holding slide)

iii) Small Group discussion

> Ask participants to break into small groups of four

Explain the exercise:

- Each person is given approximately five minutes to talk about relationships, encounters, or contact they have had with members of the LGBT+ community and the impact that this has had on them.
- Those listening are asked to do so without interrupting.
- After five minutes the next person speaks and so on.
- After each person has spoken, the group should spend a further five minutes identifying what has struck them about what they have heard. Remind participants to describe the impact they have experienced, rather than making comments about other people.

This will take c.25-30 minutes

iv) Feedback to the gathered community

Each group will then be asked to feedback their observations and what they have learnt to the wider group/gathered community. Again, this will be about the impact and learning they have identified themselves, rather than commenting on other people.

This will take c.10 minutes depending on the size of the community

v) Prayer & Reflection - Active Response

> Group activity

- Gather again around the cross on the floor or table.
- Invite participants to write down the the initial of the first name of those who have brought us insight into the discussion about LGBT+ experiences. Or, if you feel that could identify someone, use an initial of a word that comes to mind when you think of them.
- Invite participants to place those initials around the cross.
- Enter into a time of silence.
- Invite people to write their own names and for those to be added around the cross
- Call all participants to gather around the cross and join in prayer. You may choose to read the following prayer to the group or, using the available slides, invite others to join you.



> Slide S3:11

*Around the Cross of Christ, we stand together,
Here is a place of grace,
where we realise that we are all in need of Jesus
Here is the great leveller,
Where the broken find healing,
Where the lost are found
Where the outcast is welcomed
The place where love, mercy, and hope abound.
Here we stand, never alone, always with others,
Others just like us, in need of Jesus.*

> Facilitator to read:

“No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us.” 1 JOHN 4:12



> S3:12 (holding slide)

vi) Checking In

Discussions of this nature may evoke strong feelings, unwelcome thoughts or painful associations. Preparing in advance to ensure that prayer and pastoral support is easily accessible to individuals who take part in the discussion is an essential component of this approach. Remind everyone of the support available.

Close and confirm the timings for Session 4.



Part B: Session 4

Inclusive Theology Discussion

Purpose of the Session

To listen to the discussion of faith sector leaders and reflect on the Biblical principles of inclusion.



Approach

Session 4 can be run independently, it could also be paired with Session 3.



Timings

We expect Session 4 to last approximately 90 minutes.



Toolkit

- Projector or screen and audio equipment or speakers
- Session 4 slide deck. Available from www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-4
If you do not have a projector or screen available, we suggest providing printouts
- Flipcharts or flipchart paper
- Pens
- Bibles
- Tee lights and matches
- Refreshments (drinks, biscuits, fruit)

Session 4 Material

i) Welcome back

Welcome everyone back and revisit the *Ground Rules*, *Covenant Prayer* (see page 16) and *Holding Space* system.



> Covenant Prayer S4:1-3

Remind participants of the pastoral support available.



> S4:4 (holding slide)

ii) Purpose of the Session

Explain that the purpose of this session is to listen in on a conversation between faith leaders about the principles of inclusion within the Gospel. The discussion focuses on two Bible stories from the New Testament ([Acts 10](#) and [Luke 24:13-25](#)). We want to consider how these Biblical principles and stories can help us in creating safer environments in churches.

This will take c.5 minutes

iii) Familiarising ourselves with the Bible passages



> Read together. Readings are available on slides S4:5-12 and S4:13-15

Before watching the Inclusive Theology Discussion video, please ask for volunteers to read [Acts 10](#) and [Luke 24:13-25](#) – perhaps by sharing the reading between three participants.

Alternatively, we have a dramatisation of these stories on the website, which participants can watch: www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-4

This will take approximately c.8 minutes.

iv) Inclusive Theology Discussion Video



> Introduce the video of the Inclusive Theology Discussion and play the video (S4:16)

The video can also be found on our website: www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-4

This will take 20 minutes.

v) Questions to consider in response to the video



> Small group discussion. These questions are available on slide S4:17

Ask participants to break into groups of three or four and consider the following questions in light of what they have seen.

- What elements of the conversation interested or surprised you?
- What did you learn from the conversation?
- How do you think the conversation could inform our thinking about making churches safer for everyone?

Ask groups to feedback three key points to the larger group.

This will take c. 20-25 minutes

> S4:18 (holding slide)

vi) Sharing our thinking together

> Group activity

Ask each group to capture three key points of learning on a flip chart, which is left out on display.

Invite participants to walk around the room taking time to read the points raised by each group. As the participants are doing this, capture points of feedback or learning that come up more frequently.

Ask all the groups to come back together in gathered community. Summarise the points of feedback that came up more frequently from several groups.

Ask participants to highlight points of learning that they had not previously thought of i.e. to reflect the value in thinking together in gathered community. (Do not get into discussion about agreement/disagreement with the points that others have raised).

This will take c. 15 minutes

viii) Prayers Around the Cross

- > Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant

1. Words From the Cross



- > S4:19

Jesus said: “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” LUKE 23:34

Jesus had compassion on the crowd. There were many groups in the crowd, but the text does not differentiate between them. We must assume that the Gospel writer has each group in focus: soldiers, Roman rulers, Jewish religious leaders, friends and disciples.

2. Pause to Reflect

They were all, in different ways, acting out of ignorance and prejudice. To each, Jesus offers empathy and forgiveness. How does this text speak into this session's discussion? For example, you have just highlighted points of learning: how do these points of learning connect with Jesus prayer?

Take a moment now as individuals to offer up to God in prayer what you have discovered. Then as a group, take time to acknowledge the need for empathy with those who suffer rejection and the desire for reconciliation with God and those who, on first reaction, we want to reject or exclude .

3. Prayers for forgiveness and reconciliation

Invite the group to read these prayers silently or choose one to read aloud. You may also like to invite spontaneous prayer where it seems helpful.



> Prayer 1: Slide S4:20

O Holy God, we know we have fallen short.

We turn our backs when we could embrace.

We remain silent when we could speak.

We speak when we could listen.

We close the door when we could fling it wide open.

We judge when we could seek understanding.

We cling when we could give.

*Forgive us, O God, for being so very human at times,
and help us to continue to grow into the people you created us to be,
through Christ our Lord.*

AMEN



> Prayer 2: Slide S4:21

Great and gracious God,

For apathy,

For meanness,

For boredom,

For pride,

For judgment,

For dismissal:

*For all those ways we hurt you by hurting each other and ourselves, forgive us. Turn
us around to you; heal us, and make us whole, we pray.*

AMEN



> **Prayer 3: Slide S4:22**

There are times, O God, when our greatest sin is not what we do but what we fail to do. For those times when we have not spoken up; for those times when we have not acted; for those times when we have not responded: forgive us.

Give us courage to name what is wrong when we see it.

Give us confidence to do what is hard.

Give us grace to reach out when that is frightening or uncomfortable.

This we pray in Jesus' name.

AMEN



> **Prayer 4: Slide S4:23**

Holy God, we are an imperfect people and we need your love.

Forgive us when we ignore your children who cry out in distress.

Forgive us when we choose not to see those who frighten us, or those who bother us, or those who remind us too much of ourselves.

Forgive us when we put rules ahead of people and choose legality over kindness and judgment that lacks mercy.

Enable us to see as you see, the wide vistas open to the possibility of compassion and grace.

AMEN

4. Closing Song

In Christ Alone, by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend, could be played to bring the prayers to a close or after the session to remind people of the focus of the cross on forgiveness and reconciliation.



> **S4:24-27**

*In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand.*

*In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.*

*There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.*

*No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.*



> S4:28 (holding slide)

vii) Checking In

Discussions of this nature may evoke strong feelings, unwelcome thoughts or painful associations. Preparing in advance to ensure that prayer and pastoral support is easily accessible to individuals who take part in the discussion is an essential component of this approach. Remind everyone of the support available.

Close and confirm the timings for Session 5.



Part B: Session 5

Creating Safer Churches

Purpose of the Session

In this session we will be thinking about what a safe and healthy church community looks like and what its core aspects should be? To help us do this, we will be exploring culture, reflecting on its positive aspects and considering how we might build towards safer and healthier church cultures.



Approach

Session 5 can be run independently, it could also be paired with Session 6.



Timings

We expect Session 5 to last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.



Toolkit

- Projector or screen and audio equipment or speakers
- Session 5 slide deck. Available from www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-5
If you do not have a projector or screen available, we suggest providing printouts
- A picture of your church or, if easier, the name printed out
- Post-it notes for each participant
- Flipchart
- Pens
- Tee lights and matches
- Refreshments (drinks, biscuits, fruit)

Session 5 Material

i) Welcome

Welcome everyone back and revisit the *Ground Rules*, *Covenant Prayer* (see page 16) and *Holding Space* system.



> Covenant Prayer S5:1-3

Remind participants of the pastoral support available.



> S5:4 (holding slide)

ii) Purpose of Session

At the start of the session explain that the focus will be on building healthier and safer cultures: To help us do this we will be exploring culture – this is really about the values, traditions, customs, behaviours and beliefs we have in our churches and the impact these have on those attending.

iii) Exercise One



> Group activity. The questions are also available on the slide deck (S5:5)

This is a fun exercise and should only take five minutes. It gets people to think about their own church culture but in a non-threatening way. Ask those attending to think about one or two of the following (whichever is most appropriate):

- Are there people who sit in particular places in the church?
- What is the church's most popular biscuit?
- Are there any phrases that are said most Sunday mornings?
- What is the favourite event in the church calendar?

Then reflect to people that each church (and even groups within churches like house groups) have their own traditions and behaviours, its own views and ways of doing things – its own culture. This is a simple way to introduce the idea of culture that we will explore.

iv) Activity & Video/audio



- > Play the video which discusses the hallmarks of a healthy Christian culture (S5:6)
The video is available at www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-5



- > Refer to slide (S5:7) that depict the hallmarks of healthy Christian cultures.



- > Ask people to reflect on the following questions and discuss (20-30 mins).
The questions are also available on the slide deck (S5:8)

1. What does it feel like when we know we are safe, valued and respected?
2. How far do we reflect the hallmarks of a healthy culture in our church and in our community?

- > **Facilitator note – it is important to start by celebrating what is being done well**

3. How does this kind of culture help to keep people safe, including those who identify as members of the LGBT+ community?
4. Are there areas in which we do not reflect these?

- > **S5:9 (holding slide)**

- > **Interactive exercise**

If it is possible, print out a picture of your church or the name of your church. Using Post-it notes, ask people to write as many ideas as they have about key areas where the church might focus on to become safer and healthier. These should then be stuck to the printed picture or name. Allow people to then read what has been said.

This will take c. 10 minutes

- > **Ask people to continue to think about this as it will be revisited next week**

v) Prayers Around the Cross

- > Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant

1. Words From the Cross



- > S5:10

Jesus said: "My God My God why have you forsaken me" MATTHEW 27:46 & MARK 15:34

2. Pause to Reflect

This cry comes from a place of deep darkness when Jesus went to the limits of human suffering and felt the pain of separation, human and divine. Because he journeyed into the darkness, to a place of deep loneliness, we know we are never alone in our suffering. The community of the church is called, under the shadow of the cross, to be a safe sanctuary, offering Christ's compassion and healing to hurting and broken lives.

3. Prayer



- > S5:11-12

*Help us O God
To build safer spaces
In your church
and in the community*

*Open our eyes to the needs of those who are vulnerable
- the neglected
- the bruised
- the misjudged*

*Open our ears
to the stories Less often heard
about how people live
And kindle in us through the story of salvation
Such love grace and generosity of spirit
As Christ has shown toward us.
Let Christ's cry from the cross not be in vain
Let no-one, because of the church, feel abandoned or forsaken.*

4. Closing Song

Read together or listen to these song lyrics. As you do, reflect quietly on the Church's calling to create sanctuary and to practice hospitality. Where is the challenge here for your church?



> Available on slides 5:13-15

*Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
A place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:*

All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

*Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,
Where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace;
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:*

*Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat:
A banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us.*

All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.



> S5:16 (holding slide)

vi) Checking In

Discussions of this nature may evoke strong feelings, unwelcome thoughts or painful associations. Preparing in advance to ensure that prayer and pastoral support is easily accessible to individuals who take part in the discussion is an essential component of this approach. Remind everyone of the support available and introduce a comfort break.

Close and confirm the timings for Session 6.



Part B: Session 6

Our Faith Community

Purpose of the Session

The aims of this session are to listen to, and learn from, the experiences of other churches who have journeyed together to become welcoming or affirming.

This session is an opportunity for participants to share their learning to their own lived community and define the kind of community they wish to be.

It is entirely within the parameters of this resource that some church communities will elect to be non-Affirming, it is important that church/faitch communities are open and honest about what they intend to be.

Approach

Session 6 can be run independently, it could also be paired with Session 5.

Timings

We expect Session 6 to last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Toolkit

- Projector or screen and audio equipment or speakers
- Session 6 slide deck. Available from www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-6
If you do not have a projector or screen available, we suggest providing printouts
- Flipchart
- Pens
- Tee lights and matches
- Refreshments (drinks, biscuits, fruit)
- Printed question slips (see page 48)
- Post-it notes
- Tokens (wooden discs or small pieces of card)

Session 6 Material

i) Welcome

Welcome everyone to the final session. Revisit the *Ground Rules* and *Holding Space* system. Remind participants of the support available.

Take some time to remind participants of the journey so far. We started by setting out our *Ground Rules* together and exploring the purpose of this discussion. We recognised that the Body of Christ is diverse in many ways, we are all unique. The bottom line was clear – to make our churches safer places for the LGBT+ community.

We considered what we could learn from Biblical principles of inclusion, and considered the Cornelius and Peter story, as well as Jesus walking alongside his bereft disciples on the Emmaus Road. We listened to leaders' discussions about the stories and identified what interested us and what we learnt.

We then considered the principles of building safer churches and health cultures, considering recent research and learning about churches.

This will take c.5 minutes

At this point, you could join in the *Covenant Prayer* (see page 16) for one final time.



> **Covenant Prayer S6:1-3**



> **S6:4 (holding slide)**

ii) Purpose of the session

This session is intended to provide a time to listen to, and learn from, the experiences of other churches who have journeyed together to become welcoming or affirming. These churches are in very different parts of the country and serve very different communities.

After we've listened to these churches' experience, we'll talk together about the kind of church we wish to be.

iii) Videos of church leaders

There are audios and transcripts of church leaders describing their learning re:creating a more inclusive church community. You will find these on our website, Session 6

www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/session-6



> **Play the recordings from the website**

This will take c.20 minutes

iv) What kind of worshipping community do we want to be?

In groups of up to four people work together discuss the values and principles, that you want other people who might find it harder to belong to experience in your local community.

Groups are to be invited to share their top 4 values/principles on post-it notes and place them on the floor.

Each participant is given three tokens and asked to place their tokens on three values/principles that they most support.

Please read out the top five values/principles to the gathered community.

Then ask the participants to reflect on the top five values/principles and identify if there are any gaps.

This is the start of the conversation, describe the decision-making process for your church e.g. Church Members meeting discussion and agreement, PCC discussion and agreement, etc.

This will take c.30 minutes.

vi) How will we hold each other accountable for the values we have committed ourselves to?

We all know that despite our best intentions, we won't be perfect.

This is an opportunity for us to agree together how we will know if we're getting it right and how we will work together if things go wrong or we disagree.



- > **In small groups of up to four people, ask people to consider the questions below.**
The questions are available on slide S6:5

- What characteristics and behaviours will we notice in our church community if we manage to live these values and principles together?
- We won't be perfect. We won't always get it right. How do we commit to working together, and talking with each other, when things are difficult, or something goes wrong?
- If we disagree with each other, how will we resolve those disagreements?
- How can we best reach people outside of our church to communicate our values?

Ask each group to write their answers on the flip charts

Invite participants to walk around the room and read each other's ideas.

Confirm that all of the ideas will be gathered up for the Leadership Team to summarise and bring to Church meeting/PCC for discussion, edit and agreement. You are not opening up group discussion at this stage.

This will take c.40 minutes

- > **S6:6 (holding slide)**

vii) Are we ready to begin the journey of providing a safer space for the LGBT+ community?

It is really important that we are honest about the kind of community we are able to be for the safety of the LGBT+ community.

Your community may have reach agreement that they can or cannot provide a safer environment for the LGBT+ community, or it might be divided.

Give each participant a piece of paper marked with this question and three answers. (Please make use of the next sheet.

Do you think we could commit to being a church that provides a safer place for the LGBT+ community? Please tick one answer

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Undecided

Ask each participant to confidentially complete their answer, fold up the paper and place it in a box. Everyone's answer is confidential.

Explain to everyone, that the answers will be counted and verified by a second person. The results will be fed back to the leadership and shared at the church meeting/PCC.



<p>Do you think we could commit to being a church that provides a safer place for the LGBT+ community? Please tick one answer.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Undecided</p>	<p>Do you think we could commit to being a church that provides a safer place for the LGBT+ community? Please tick one answer.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Undecided</p>	<p>Do you think we could commit to being a church that provides a safer place for the LGBT+ community? Please tick one answer.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Undecided</p>
<p>Do you think we could commit to being a church that provides a safer place for the LGBT+ community? Please tick one answer.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Undecided</p>	<p>Do you think we could commit to being a church that provides a safer place for the LGBT+ community? Please tick one answer.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Undecided</p>	<p>Do you think we could commit to being a church that provides a safer place for the LGBT+ community? Please tick one answer.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Undecided</p>
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viii) Final Prayers Around the Cross

- > Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant

1. Words From the Cross



- > S6:7

Jesus said... "It is finished" JOHN 19:30 (or "It is accomplished", or "It is complete")

Jesus said... "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" LUKE 23:46

2. Pause to Reflect

These final words suggest that at the cross there is both closure and yet more to be done in God's work among us.

Where this journey together as a group has led to new understanding and greater clarity, take time to celebrate and to give God thanks.

Where questions have led to new questions rather than to easy answers, commit these to God and commend your spirit into God's care, trusting in God to lead you further in your thinking and discerning.

3. Pause to Reflect



- > Invite free prayer beginning with either of the next two phrases
S6:8

"I thank you God for fresh insight and understanding ..."

"I ask you God for wisdom and discernment ..."

4. Closing Song

We return to song lyrics used in Session 2 because they sum up our whole journey. Here are words of assurance and hope that in God's time a new dawn will rise and the Son will reign. Until that time, when all will be gathered, the church will sing praises to God and celebrate the signs of God's kingdom already in the here and now.



> S6:9-12

*Here in this place, new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away.
See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in - the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in - the blind and the lame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.*

*We are the young - our lives are a mystery,
we are the old - who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in - the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in - the proud and the strong.
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.*

*Here we will take the wine and the water,
Here we will take the bread of new birth.
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
Call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
Give us to eat the bread that is you.
Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true.*

*Not in the dark of buildings confining,
Not in some heaven, light years away,
But here in this place, the new light is shining;
Now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in - and hold us forever,
Gather us in - and make us your own.
Gather us in - all peoples together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.*

Appendix 1 Additional Pastoral Care (Public Health England commissioned)

MindOut

MindOut is a mental health service run by and for lesbians, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer people. We work to improve the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ communities and to make mental health a community concern.

www.mindout.org.uk

Young MINDS

Specifically designed to provide free confidential emotional health support and self-help support to children and young people.

www.youngminds.org.uk

LLGS

(London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard) provides national information and a listening service via phone and email/ instant messaging.

Helpline: 020 7837 7324

www.llgs.org.uk

Samaritans

While not an exclusively LGB&T organisations, it provides 24/7 confidential phone support.

08457 90 90 90

www.samaritans.org

FFLAG

(Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) offers support for parents, families and friends of LGB people.

0845 652 0311

www.fflag.co.uk

ELOP

A London based LGBT mental health and wellbeing centre offering a holistic approach, with free counselling and young people's services.

020 8509 3898

www.elop.org

GMFA

A gay men's health charity and has a number of booklets and workbooks that can be downloaded for free online. They are written by counsellors and cover a range of topics exploring self-esteem and relationships.

www.gmfa.org.uk

LGBT Foundation

Charity offering health and wellbeing services and resources to the LGBT community in the north of England.

0845 3 30 30 30 (National Helpline available 365 days a year)

www.lgbt.foundation

London Friend

A long-running LGBT charity that offers a telephone support service, as well as many different drop-in counselling and support groups. It also runs a specific befriending service and a carers' support group. It is based in North London.

Helpline: 020 7837 3337 open Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays
and Fridays 7.30pm-9.30pm

www.londonfriend.org.uk

PACE

Offering specialised LGBT mental health and wellbeing services, including advocacy, counselling, training, couples and family support, and also holds workshops and produces publications. Based in London.

020 7700 1323

www.pacehealth.org.uk

Appendix 2 - Alternative readings of key Biblical texts

Alternative readings of key biblical texts

Concern over safeguarding is not dependent upon any particular reading of the Biblical texts that speak directly to sexuality or gender. All traditions share a concern and love for those who are vulnerable or subject to harm.

For participants

The Possibility of Difference: A Biblical Affirmation of Inclusivity.
Green, Marcus. London: Kevin Mayhew Ltd, 2018.

Marcus Green is an Anglican, evangelical gay vicar. The book tackles the ‘clobber’ verses, but then goes beyond them to argue for a biblical vision of radical inclusion and love.

Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church.
Sprinkle, Preston, William Loader, Megan DeFranza, Wesley Hill, and Stephen R. Holmes, eds.
Edited by Stanley N. Gundry, Counterpoints. Grand Rapids, M.I.: Zondervan Academic, 2016.

Homosexuality is one of the most hotly debated topics in the evangelical church today. In *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church* four contributors, two defending a traditional view and two defending an affirming view, address not only biblical and theological questions, but also the pressing pastoral questions for the church.

God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships.
Vines, Matthew. Reprint ed. New York: Convergent Books, 2015.

God and the Gay Christian is a game changer. Winsome, accessible, and carefully researched, every page is brought to life by the author’s clear love for Scripture and deep, persistent faith. With this book, Matthew Vines emerges as one of my generation’s most important Christian leaders, not only on matters of sexuality but also on what it means to follow Jesus with wisdom, humility, and grace. Prepare to be challenged and enlightened, provoked and inspired. Read with an open heart and mind, and you are bound to be changed.”

For Ministers and Church Leaders

Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships.
Brownson, James V. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013.

Brownson aims to grapple with the moral logic lying behind gender and sexuality in Biblical texts. He aims to present both sides of the argument fairly, but by focusing on the moral logic to help move beyond existing debates at the time. He argues that although the Bible assumes one-flesh unions are male-female, faithfulness to the Biblical witness does not require this.

Amazing Love: Theology for Understanding Discipleship, Sexuality and Mission.
Davison, Andrew, ed. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2016.

A fairly short book aimed a popular audience, from an inclusivist standpoint. It was put together as a resource for the Church of England debates. The book has a range of contributors, but these are not separated out. The book covers discipleship, the scientific background to the debate, biblical arguments and missional arguments. It is generally well argued, but inevitably too brief to deal with real points of contention in any depth. Thus, for the biblical material, particularly the New Testament texts are only dealt with sketchily, and the reader is signposted to other authors for more detail. This is a good introduction to some of the arguments made for inclusion.

Reasonable and Holy: Engaging Same-Sexuality.
Haller, Tobias Stanislaus. New York: Seabury Books, 2009.

Haller argues in favour of the church supporting and blessing same-sex marriage. His approach is to tackle the objections one by one. An accessible book, but with a deceptively rich foundation of scholarship.

Scripture, Ethics, and the Possibility of Same-Sex Relationships.
Keen, Karen R. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018.

Keen notes the current debates over the 'clobber' texts in scripture, reviewing the approaches taken. She suggests that there is currently a stalemate, and looks to resolve it by using scriptural principles that all can adhere to in applying biblical teaching to this issue. Thoughtful, imaginative, careful and non-judgmental.

Paul among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time.
Ruden, Sarah. New York: Image Books, 2010.

Ruden gives an accessible account of the violent, shaming sexual culture of much of the ancient world, helping to put Paul's statements into his contemporary context.

Online

Jonathan Tallon has produced short, accessible videos on the main verses. Available on YouTube: Bible and Homosexuality channel

www.youtube.com/channel/UCvxHn5v4XXNPdugStF3l6BQ

Companion website: www.bibleandhomosexuality.org

Appendix 3 - Guidance comments for Pastoral Support Persons

This is an essential role in the Creating Sanctuary Resource.

It is not a facilitation role – you are not delivering material, or leading discussions. The sole purpose of your presence is to pastorally support the group and the facilitator(s).

In preparation, identify an appropriate space in the building, in accordance with safeguarding policies of your church/ organisation, where you may be able to talk with one person confidentially.

Prior to the sessions, familiarise yourself with the material so that during the sessions your attention is on the room and not the content. You do not want to be surprised by your own feelings and reactions to the material when you are there to support others.

Be present

Be around as people arrive, in breaks etc. Do not initiate conversation on the material, but just be ready to listen should someone want to speak to you.

Our suggestion would be that during the sessions you sit at the back of the room, with easy access to the door (Should someone need to leave the room, you are able to unobtrusively exit to check on the person.)

Listen to input and conversation, but do not participate. It is very important that your views are not heard, as this could dramatically impact how people see you. You are there to support individuals and the group as the person with an eye to their well-being and emotional health. So even in coffee/refreshment breaks, and gathering and leaving times do not comment on content.

Do not take notes. Just listen and observe.

If you notice undue agitation make yourself available for conversation, but do not do this in front of others. It may be appropriate to check they are ok, saying you noticed they were experiencing some deep feelings and would they appreciate a conversation, but don't be offended if they decline. Even though you may feel they need speak to someone, it is their choice, not yours. If you are very concerned and they will not talk to you, perhaps suggest they find someone they trust to have the conversations they obviously need.

Listen

In this context you are not here to offer counselling or therapy. This is pastoral support and the most important thing to do is to listen. They may just need to cry, or rage, or lament. Do not try to 'fix' them. Just listen, give them the time and support they need. If appropriate you can signpost them to possible people who may be more appropriate, experienced or knowledgeable about their concerns – there is a list available of organisations and resources that may be helpful. We would suggest that you have this list with you at all sessions.

Remember that the ground rules specified for the resource also apply to you, especially with regard confidentiality. Have a conversation with the designated safeguarding persons as to how to handle disclosures etc so that you know the procedures. Inform people of the limits to confidentiality with regard safeguarding issues so they know that disclosures will be taken seriously and passed on to appropriate people.

If someone has left the session and are wanting to rejoin, help them to do so in as natural a way as possible.

Support

Whilst you are not facilitating the resource, you are an integral part of the facilitation theme, and a support to the facilitator(s). Whilst you cannot inform facilitators of the content of confidential conversations you may have had, you can give general feedback as to how you have observed the session, particularly if there is something that would help the facilitation of future sessions. At the end of the session it would be very helpful to offer the facilitator time to reflect, as they will be handling their own anxieties as well as managing those of the participants.