

How can I support lgbt youth in my congregation?

In a survey of 5800 youth, nearly every congregation had at least one teen who self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning—86% of them said their clergy-person was not aware of this, and 46% said their parents were not aware.¹

A young person can experience coming out as a normal and happy part of adolescent development or as a time of fear, anxiety, and even self-hate.

Here's what you can do:

- ✓ Reflect on the kind of experience an lgbtq youth would have in your congregation.
- ✓ Never assume you know the sexual orientation or gender identity of any person.
- ✓ Always allow people to come out in their own time and in their own way.
- ✓ Learn more about issues affecting the lgbt community and religious lgbt youth.
- ✓ Find ways to show that you are an informed, safe person whom youth can trust.
- ✓ Use the resources listed on the back, and share them with others in your congregation.

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Suggested Resources:

Accompaniment: A Resource For Youth Leaders ²

*Building an Inclusive Church: A Welcoming Toolkit*³

*Coming Out Strong: Information and Resources
for LGBTQA Brethren and Mennonite Youth* ²

*Doing Process Well: Recommendations for Brethren
Congregations* ²

*Safe Zone: A Workshop Guide For Leaders and
Participants* ²

*Taking a New Look: Why Congregations Need
LGBT Members* ⁴

¹ *Faith Matters: Teenagers, Religion and Sexuality*. Steve Clapp, Kristen Leverton Helbert and Angela Zizak. Christian Community, Inc.

² Available from www.bmclgbt.org or the BMC office

³ Available from www.welcomingresources.org/welcomingtoolkit

⁴ Available from www.churchstuff.com/glbthospitality

Feel free to contact BMC with questions or comments. BMC is also available for consultations, assessments and trainings with congregations, denominations and other groups.

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