



Tips for Writing or Revising a Community Welcome Statement

Basics

- State who and what you affirm.
- Be specific about what welcome and inclusion means. For SCN membership, this should include welcoming lgbtqia people into full participation, leadership and rites of the church.
- Bring your words of welcome into alignment with your practices, cultural norms, policies. See: [Building an Inclusive Church Toolkit 3.0](#) for resources and process suggestions.
- Example statement from Seattle Mennonite Church:
We desire that all who enter here may be received as Christ. We celebrate and affirm the image of God in persons of every age, gender, race, ability, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and strive to find common ground on which to build relationship with our neighbors near and far. We publicly affirm that LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) persons are welcome to participate in the full life and ministry of our church, including membership, baptism, marriage, leadership, and pastoral ministry.

Tips for a Stronger Welcome Statement

- Connect with the unique mission/ethos of your community: How might your welcome statement extend your commitment to hospitality? to justice? to radical love? Reference language and themes from your congregation's beliefs, values and/or covenant.
- Embed your welcome in your theology: what scriptural or theological references most inform your congregation? Consider making your welcome statement an extension of this. For example: "Just as we follow the prophet Isaiah's call, proclaimed by Jesus, to bring freedom to the oppressed, so to do we seek to be a liberatory community for all among us. We welcome into full life and leadership persons of every age, race, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, ..."
- Affirm the sacredness of marginalized peoples. Use this statement as an opportunity to proclaim the divine goodness of those historically and presently harmed by the church – to counteract spiritually abusive messaging.
- How is this welcome statement a *living* commitment? Name your continued work and commitment to dismantle unjust systems and beliefs, both interpersonally and systemically.
- Find the words that best reflect your community and commitments. Acknowledge the ultimate limits and evolving nature of language (you might even name this publicly), and focus on integrity of word and action, rather than landing the "perfect statement."
Blessings!

Sample statements

West Charleston Church of the Brethren

<https://www.westcharlestoncob.org/lorem-ipsu/>

- names why a specific welcome is important and draws directly from their own stated values in their mission statement
- names dynamics of power, alongside welcome and inclusion
- commits to the ongoing work of dismantling injustices, systemically and internally among themselves

Belmont Mennonite Church

<https://belmontmc.org/bmc/>

- framed as a succinct theological affirmation (“We celebrate that everyone is created in God’s image...”)
- clearly defines “full inclusion” for their congregation: <https://belmontmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Statement-of-Inclusion-and-Definition-of-Full-Participation.pdf>

Camp Friedenswald

<https://friedenswald.org/welcome-inclusion/>

- claims the sacredness of diverse peoples, embedded in their theology (“we honor the diversity that is present in creation, believing it to be *good* and an expression of God’s spirit...”)
- connects back to their existing mission to be a place of refuge and restoration
- offers transparency on their process toward this statement (links to blog post)

Annabeth Roeschley
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