

LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Task Force Report

The LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Task Force was convened this year to help the Upper New York Annual Conference strengthen its capacity for learning, conversation, and resource-sharing around the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons in the life of the church. From the outset, the group has understood its work to be pastoral and educational in nature, rather than legislative or advocacy-based. Our aim is to support congregations, clergy, and conference leaders by providing resources, fostering thoughtful conversation, and connecting people with organizations already doing important work in this area.

In our early meetings, the Task Force spent time clarifying the scope of our role. One of the questions we explored was whether the team should function as an advocate or ombudsman for individuals bringing forward grievances or concerns related to LGBTQIA+ inclusion. After careful discussion, the group agreed that other organizations—particularly the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN)—already provide effective support in that area. Rather than duplicating that work, the Task Force decided to focus on serving as a **resource and education hub** for the conference, helping people identify where to turn for support, learning opportunities, and practical guidance.

To support that goal, the Task Force has begun identifying and reviewing available resources, including those provided by RMN and other denominational partners. Members are currently exploring ways to compile and share these materials so that clergy, congregations, Board of Ordained Ministry, and District Committees on Ordained Ministry can more easily access training and support related to LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

The Task Force has also begun exploring ways better to understand the experiences and readiness of congregations within the conference, and has made meaningful progress in the development of this survey, including reviewing and refining a draft instrument that gathers information on congregational demographics, understanding of the reconciling commitment, leadership preparedness, and readiness to include fully LGBTQIA+ persons in both clergy and lay leadership. Particular attention has been given to ensuring that the language is invitational and non-confrontational, encouraging honest participation while maintaining a clear focus on leadership opportunities and challenges. The group has also carefully considered who within each congregation should complete the survey, ultimately determining that a collaborative response from key leadership—such as the pastor, SPRC chair, and lay leader—would provide the most accurate and holistic perspective. Plans are underway to distribute the survey in a digital format to Reconciling congregations across the conference, with the possibility of broader use in the future as a tool for learning and resource alignment.

As part of this work, the Task Force is also working to identify a reliable list of Reconciling congregations within the Upper New York Conference. Members are consulting both RMN and district superintendents to ensure that contact information and congregational leadership connections are accurate before any survey is distributed.

In addition to these efforts, the Task Force is in conversation with leaders from RMN about broader initiatives underway across the denomination. RMN has recently expanded its library of educational resources and is offering training opportunities for conference leadership bodies, including Boards of Ordained Ministry and District Committees on Ordained Ministry, to support LGBTQIA+ clergy and candidates for ministry. The Task Force is exploring how these resources might be shared or adapted for use within Upper New York.

Looking ahead, the Task Force will continue its work in three primary areas:

- **Resource development and sharing**, helping conference leaders and congregations access educational materials and training opportunities.
- **Listening and learning**, including the development of surveys or other tools to understand congregational

experiences and needs.

- **Connection with denominational partners**, particularly RMN and other organizations already providing support for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the church.

This work is still in its early stages, but the Task Force is committed to approaching it with care, humility, and a spirit of collaboration. Our hope is that the resources and conversations we help facilitate will strengthen the capacity of congregations and conference leaders to engage these questions faithfully and thoughtfully.

Respectfully submitted,

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Upper New York Annual Conference