



# New Ways Ministry

## Examining Your Parish or Faith Community

*Some Questions for Reflection, Planning, and Journal Writing*

Try to answer as many of the questions in each section, in as much detail as you can. You may not immediately know all the answers to these questions. No problem. Have conversations with other parishioners and pastoral staff to get their knowledge and opinions to answer the questions that you find challenging.

The purpose of this exercise is for you to get a good picture of how prepared your parish may be to develop on LGBTQ ministry. There are no wrong or bad answers to these questions. All your answers will provide you information to aid your discernment and planning.

### I. AWARENESS

1. Are you aware of LGBTQ people or family members in your faith community?
2. How do they make themselves known?
3. Why don't they make themselves known?
4. How did you come to know of them?
5. Is there a visible LGBTQ community in the locale where you live?
6. What issues do LGBTQ people in your community face?

### II. ATTITUDES

1. What are the attitudes of faith community members towards LGBTQ people?
2. Think about the different groups in your parish, both the formal committees/organizations and the informal social groups that may have formed. Would any of these be more or less open to LGBTQ people and issues? Are there groups in your parish that would be distinctly unwelcoming to LGBTQ people?
3. What would reactions of members be if LGBTQ topics began to become more public in your parish?
4. How much education would be needed to help change attitudes to become more open and accepting?
5. What do you think would be the reaction of various parishioners if they saw two men holding hands?

### III. ATMOSPHERE

1. What characteristics of your faith community would make LGBTQ people feel welcome?
2. What might make them feel alienated?

3. Does your parish appeal to a broad range of ages, interests, education levels, family configurations, or other demographic characteristics? (Or, do your parish programs cater to only selected segments of the community: youth, senior citizens, families with small children?)
4. How many people are in your parish? How many show up for Sunday Mass? For various activities?
5. How would a newcomer feel if they arrived at your parish for Mass one Sunday? Would there be a formal welcome? An informal welcome? Would the person not be noticed?

#### **IV. OUTREACH**

1. What existing groups in your faith community would be best equipped for pastoral outreach (e.g., family life, social justice, youth ministry, adult education) to LGBTQ people and their family members?
2. To what existing programs could LGBTQ topics be connected?
3. How has your parish dealt with outreach to other marginalized groups?
4. If you invited an LGBTQ person to come to your parish, what do you think their reaction would be to such an invitation?
5. What are some ways that your parish can let LGBTQ people know they are welcome?
6. How is your parish connected to other faith communities in your area? Other social service agencies or projects?

#### **V. LEADERS/HUMAN RESOURCES**

1. Who are the decision-makers of your parish?
2. Who are the people whose opinions are highly respected?
3. What are the opinions of the two groups in questions 1 and 2 in regard to LGBTQ ministry?
4. Who can you enlist as colleagues in establishing an LGBTQ ministry project?
5. How are decisions made in your parish?
6. Are there people with power who might actively oppose an LGBTQ ministry?