



LGBT+ STUDENTS OF FAITH SUPPORT GUIDE



CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY LGBT+ STUDENTS OF FAITH CONSULTATION GROUP

NAVIGATING PSEUDO-INCLUSIVE JARGON

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY SUPPORT GROUPS

EXTERNAL SUPPORT GROUPS IN CAMBRIDGE AND THE UK

HEAR FROM STUDENT SOCIETIES ON LGBT+ ISSUES

HEAR FROM WORSHIP SPACES ON LGBT+ ISSUES





FOREWORD

This guide is produced as a resolution in Cambridge SU Student Council to provide an accessible, informative and helpful guide to students on LGBT+ inclusive places of worship. Further consultations have been carried out, with an open invite to all interested to give inputs to the project. We, the working group, hope this guide can offer some help on finding the right place for you. This guide is not an exhaustive list, we have endeavored to contact all worship spaces and societies in Cambridge. For those that are not included, please do let us know so we can update this guide, please note, some have been contacted but did not reply.

Being LGBT+ carries many difficulties in life. Finding an accepting and affirming community is absolutely vital to maintain a strong and stable support network. This guide is intended as one of many tools to help you finding that community you deserve.

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We give special thanks for all those contributed to the consultations.



NAVIGATING PSEUDO-INCLUSIVE JARGON

Times have changed, and homophobia has disguised itself behind seemingly inclusive language. Here is a list of common phrases used in faith spaces, which could be misleading.

experiencing homosexual thoughts and feelings

friendly

traditional values

welcoming

sex and sexuality for reproductive purposes [only]

non-conformist views of relationships



Many phrases used can seem very innocent at first, such as "welcoming" or "friendly". As emphasised in this resource, ask questions early on. Much religiously motivated homophobia is done in the name of protecting or teaching misguided people

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

If a worship space is not listed on this resource, and you want to know if they are a right fit for you, here are some questions you could ask! Many of these are lifted from the "Honest Church" toolkit from Student Christian Movement UK

1. Do you have a policy about inclusion policy for LGBT+ people?
2. Are there any openly LGBTQ+ people or leaders in the space at the moment?
3. Would you marry same-sex couples? If not allowed yet in your denomination, would you if it was allowed?
4. What is said about LGBTQ+ relationships from those in positions of leadership? Are they affirmed and celebrated?
5. How are teachings on relationships made to be inclusive of LGBT+ people?
6. Do you think people in the church are generally supportive of Trans people and their right to live as their authentic selves (for example by transitioning)?



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY SUPPORT FOR LGBT+ STUDENTS

Cambridge has a thriving LGBT+ population within the university! There are lots of spaces you can meet other LGBTQ+ students!

LGBT+ Campaign

Branches together LGBTQ+ events and groups within Cambridge. This sits under Cambridge SU as a Liberation Campaign, so gets lots of organising and social support from the SU.

FUSE

A group that sits within the BME Campaign and represents Queer Students of Colour. Events are more fun socials and community building.

Jewish Student Society / JSOC

Holds lots of events for LGBT+ Jewish students. Student led and easy to get involved



EXTERNAL SUPPORT IN CAMBRIDGE & THE UK

These groups are either Cambridge-town based, not led or organised by students; or functions around the UK and based outside of Cambridgeshire.

Student Christian Movement

UK-wide student-led Christian group especially supporting members of the LGBTQ+ community. They have a Cambridge branch who regularly meet in town.

Hidayah LGBTQI+

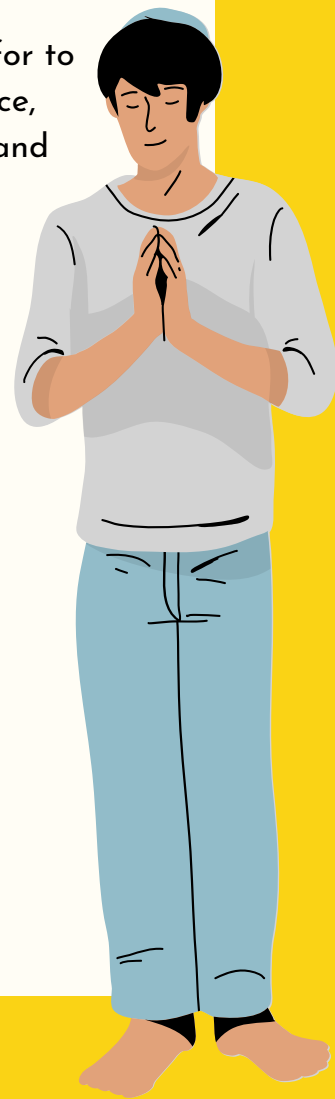
Supporting LGBTQI+ Muslims. They have chapters in the UK and US, so you are never short of community building opportunities! Their UK branch hosts social events, educational talks and guidance.

QTI Coalition of Colour

Blogs, socials and discussion spaces facilitated for self-identifying Queer, Trans and Intersex (QTI) Black, Indigenous People of Colour (BIPoC) in Cambridge

Inclusive Church

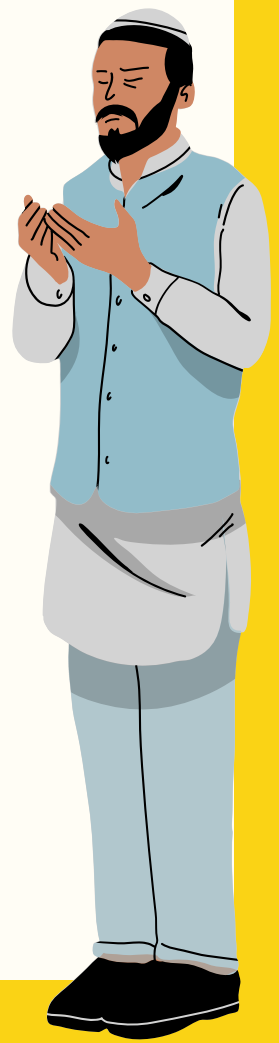
This is a registration and set of regulations churches can apply for to show that they are inclusive of LGBTQ+ people. In this resource, churches represented in inclusive church have a spiral of blue and green circles (the inclusive church logo) on their page.



HEAR FROM SOCIETIES ON LGBT+ ISSUES

we asked all faith societies in Cambridge the same 11 questions. Below, in alphabetical order, you can see their responses

- Student Christian Movement (SCM)





STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

1. **As a society/place of worship, do you have an elected or named LGBT+ Officer/Representative/Mentor?** We do not have an elected LGBT+ representative, but we only have a very small committee (currently 4 people) and as LGBT+ inclusion is a core part of our ethos having a dedicated representative is not a priority, but it may be something we consider as we grow as a society.

2. **What is your community leadership's perspective on LGBT+ relationships?** All of the current committee members are LGBT+ affirming - we affirm LGBT+ relationships, and support campaigns for same-sex marriage in churches where it is not already allowed. There is also a priest who supports us and attends most of our meetings and he is also LGBT+ affirming

3. **What is your community leadership's perspective on Trans and Non Binary people?** As part of being LGBT+ affirming, we support trans and non-binary people to embrace their gender identity.

4. **How are LGBT+ included in teaching and discussions within the society/worship space?** It is a given in our society that all LGBT+ people should be included and affirmed. Most of our weekly sessions are led by guest speakers and we aim to have at least one per term who identifies as LGBT+ and speaks on LGBT+ issues e.g. self-acceptance, finding inclusive faith spaces, campaigning for faith spaces to be more inclusive and affirming. We welcome members who have been taught to condemn LGBT+ relationships and/or identities and are on a journey of deconstructing this and learning about LGBT+ affirming theology and we sometimes discuss situations in which LGBT+ people have been excluded.

STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT (CONT...)

5. **As a society/ worship space, do you say anything about how LGBT+ people should be welcomed?** It is a given in our society that LGBT+ people are welcomed and affirmed just like anyone else and a core part of our purpose is to be a safe space for LGBT+ people.

6. **When teaching about relationships, how are all relationships brought into the conversation?** We do not generally “teach” people how they should live their lives, including relationships - instead focussing on learning from each other and holding open discussion. As such we encourage anyone to express their views and opinions, and respectfully challenge each other if we disagree. However, maintaining a safe space for LGBT+ people is a priority for us and it is an important part of our ethos that LGBT+ relationships are just as valued as cis-het relationships. If anyone was to contradict this they would find themselves in the minority but we would aim to still include them and support them to at least understand why we hold this position as far as possible, while maintaining the safety of LGBT+ people.

7. **Do you have an inclusion policy for LGBT+ People?** We have no written policy but is it clearly stated in all our publicity that we are LGBT+ affirming. We condemn behaviour or language which intentionally excludes LGBT+ people and challenge behaviour or language which unintentionally excludes LGBT+ people both within and beyond our society.

8. **Do you think that your community is generally supportive of Trans and Non Binary people?** Yes, we are supportive of trans and non-binary people.

STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT (CONT...)

9. **Would your community support a Trans person as they transitioned?** Yes we would support a trans person as they transitioned.

10. **Do you have any openly LGBT+ People in your leadership?** Yes, we currently have openly LGBT+ people in our committee. Our committee does change annually and it is possible we won't always have openly LGBT+ people in it, although a high enough proportion of our membership is LGBT it's unlikely.

11. **Does your community highlight and respect people's pronouns?** Yes. We often ask everyone to introduce themselves at the start of a meeting and pronouns are always a part of this when it happens. If anyone proceeded to not use an attendee's stated pronouns they would be gently corrected.



HEAR FROM WORSHIP SPACES ON LGBT+ ISSUES

we asked most worship spaces in Cambridge the same 11 questions. Below, in alphabetical order, you can see their responses

- Downing Place Church
- Great St Mary's Church
- Jesus Lane Friends Meeting House
- Parish of the Ascension
- St Paul's

(as mentioned previously, some churches have an "Inclusive Church" logo by their name. this is a useful marker, but you are free to make your own judgement about other spaces. As Inclusive Church only looks at Christian spaces, there are some non-Christian spaces who will not have this symbol, but may still be LGBT+ friendly!)





DOWNING PLACE CHURCH

1. As a society/place of worship, do you have an elected or named LGBT+ Officer/Representative/Mentor? Yes. As the minister who works with Open Table (as well as my broader ministry), I (Rev. Alex Clare-Young) am the first port of call for LGBTQ+ support. Alison Binney is an additional point of contact, as the Open Table Cambridge group facilitator.

2. What is your community leadership's perspective on LGBT+ relationships? Both of the ministers, the eldership and the church meeting (the meeting of all of the church members) embrace and celebrate LGBTQ+ relationships. This is exemplified by the fact that our church meeting voted to celebrate all marriages, and we have joyfully conducted several same-sex marriages since.

3. What is your community leadership's perspective on Trans and Non Binary people? One of the ministers (me!) is a transmasculine non-binary person, who uses the pronouns they/them and the other, my colleague Nigel, is a genuine ally and brilliant colleague who is constantly listening and reading and very aware of the constant need for ongoing learning. Trans and non-binary people are affirmed and celebrated as integral members of our congregation and my identity was not a topic of conversation or concern during my appointment (at which point they were aware that I am trans, as I write and speak publicly about this). Several trans and non-binary people attend services and events and have reported finding them safe and welcoming. We would be delighted to offer services that celebrate a trans and/or non-binary person's name, identity, or transition journey.

4. How are LGBT+ included in teaching and discussions within the society/worship space? We work hard to ensure that LGBTQ+ identities and people are explored in teaching and discussions at least as much as (if not more than) cis-het identities and people. LGBTQ+ people regularly facilitate/offer/lead teaching and discussions. Additionally, our Open Table Community, which meets twice a month, explicitly focusses on LGBTQ+ identities and people. LGBTQ+ inclusion, leadership, affirmation, teaching etc is not limited to Open Table, though, but is a key part of our whole church life. We also hold a special communion service each year for LGBTQ+ history month, which is often attended by a high number of visitors, and are going to offer an LGBTQ+ Fayre during Pride month starting in 2023.



DOWNING PLACE CHURCH (CONT...)

5. As a society/ worship space, do you say anything about how LGBT+ people should be welcomed? Yes - we have a page on our website entitled <https://downingplaceurc.org/lgbtq-at-downing-place/> which says that 'Downing Place is an officially registered Inclusive Church, welcoming to all. We have received accreditation from the Encompass Network as a LGBTQ+ friendly community through their Safer Spaces scheme.

Our building is registered for the marriage of same sex couples; and we are also delighted to offer blessings for civil partnerships.' As an inclusive church, we commit to welcoming LGBTQ+ people in accordance with the Inclusive Church Statement that "We believe in inclusive church - a church which celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate. We will continue to challenge the church where it continues to discriminate against people on grounds of disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality. We believe in a Church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ." In other words, we believe that LGBTQ+ people should be welcomed by:

- Being celebrated and affirmed.
- Never being discriminated against
- Challenging the church (both locally and nationally) if/when it does discriminate.
- Welcoming and serving all people.
- Continually seeking new interpretations of scripture which are both faithful and affirming and challenging the use of scripture to harm LGBTQ+ people.



DOWNING PLACE CHURCH (CONT...)

6. When teaching about relationships, how are all relationships brought into the conversation? In the same way as mentioned above re teaching more generally. Our teaching strives to never be heteronormative and, rather, to both apply to all people, and to ensure that specific examples or conversations refer to particular relationships, including LGBTQ+ relationships at least as much as, if not more than, cis-het relationships.

7. Do you have an inclusion policy for LGBT+ People? We do not have any inclusion policies, as we adhere to the inclusive church statement and the United Reformed Church's equalities policy, which can be found at <https://urc.org.uk/equalities-policy/>. However, we are looking to create an inclusion policy (which will include all protected characteristics) in 2023, as we now feel that it is vital to be more specific about the ways in which we work to include people, especially those who are not included in all faith spaces, and to outline how we will hold ourselves to account for our inclusion. This has emerged during discussions as part of the Honest Church initiative.

8. Do you think that your community is generally supportive of Trans and Non Binary people? Yes. Neither I nor other trans and non-binary people at Downing Place have experienced any abuse or micro-aggressions and, further, we have experienced explicit affirmation and practical support. We are hoping to have conversations in 2023 to issue a more fulsome statement regarding this, given the current context of culture wars in which both gender identity and faith are often weaponised.

9. Would your community support a Trans person as they transitioned? Yes. Absolutely.



DOWNING PLACE CHURCH (CONT...)

10. Do you have any openly LGBTQ+ People in your leadership? Yes, me! I am transmasculine/non-binary and bisexual. I am incredibly out and write and speak about being both LGBTQ+ and Christian in a very public way, including in national print, tv and radio media. I am also very involved in academic trans and non-binary theology and am about to have my PhD viva on this topic (on the 20th of Jan!). I have written a book about my identity as well as several articles and intend to continue writing. I speak about my identity in church and also in national church committees and actively campaign to further inclusion, affirmation and justice for LGBTQ+ people both in our denomination and in other church denominations in the UK. There are also several LGBTQ+ elders in the church and the church has previously had several gay and bisexual ministers.

11. Does your community highlight and respect people's pronouns? Yes. We encourage the use of pronouns in email footers and on social media and give the opportunity for people to highlight their pronouns during discussions and meetings. I always use my pronouns when introducing myself and am encouraging cis colleagues to do likewise. I wear a pronoun badge and, as of February 2023, will be making pronoun badges and/or stickers available to visitors.





GREAT ST MARY'S

Great St Mary's takes pride in being an open and inclusive church, which seeks to welcome all who come, irrespective of sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity or other background. I came as interim priest last October, and we are in a time of transition, preparing to recruit a permanent vicar.

There is diversity of beliefs within the church membership, and we seek to live this out with mutual respect and love, as is the process of the Church of England at the present working through what it means to be a church in which members hold different beliefs. The Church leadership is committed to including LGBT+ people and positively welcomes those who chose to join our church and share the journey of faith with us. Our aim is for all who come to Great St Mary's to be seen and flourish as people of God. Until a year ago, a LGBT+ person was part of our leadership team, and we accompanied a young person, who was transitioning in their process - just to say that we do seek to practice what we aspire to.

We don't have policies at the moment. This is something a new vicar - to be recruited in the next six months- will have to take a lead on. As part of this recruitment process, we make it clear that we are an open and inclusive church.

JESUS LANE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

1. As a society/place of worship, do you have an elected or named LGBT+ Officer/Representative/Mentor? No
2. What is your community leadership's perspective on LGBT+ relationships? Our community aspires to be welcoming of everyone.
3. What is your community leadership's perspective on Trans and Non Binary people? Our community aspires to be welcoming of everyone.
4. How are LGBT+ included in teaching and discussions within the society/worship space? We don't have discussions in our worship space.
5. As a society/ worship space, do you say anything about how LGBT+ people should be welcomed? Advices and Queries No 18: How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome? Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another. As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, ready to give help and to receive it, our meeting can be a channel for God's love and forgiveness.
6. When teaching about relationships, how are all relationships brought into the conversation? Advices and Queries No 22: Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.

JESUS LANE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE (CONT...)

7. Do you have an inclusion policy for LGBT+ People? Yes we include everyone.

8. Do you think that your community is generally supportive of Trans and Non Binary people? Yes we really hope we are

9. Would your community support a Trans person as they transitioned? Yes

10. Do you have any openly LGBT+ People in your leadership? Gender or transgender is not a barrier to full participation and responsibility within in our community.

11. Does your community highlight and respect people's pronouns? We are trying our best. We are an all-age community - we have many older members but also young families and young adults. We are very keen to welcome students.





PARISH OF THE ASCENSION: ST AUGUSTINE, ST GILES, ST LUKES

1. As a society/place of worship, do you have an elected or named LGBT+ Officer/Representative/Mentor? No, but that is not how our church governance is structured
2. What is your community leadership's perspective on LGBT+ relationships? Fully affirming
3. What is your community leadership's perspective on Trans and Non Binary people? Fully affirming
4. How are LGBT+ included in teaching and discussions within the society/worship space? In line with our IC membership, all are included in our worship and discussions.
5. As a society/ worship space, do you say anything about how LGBT+ people should be welcomed? They are to be welcomed as everyone else is welcomed.
6. When teaching about relationships, how are all relationships brought into the conversation? LGBT+ relationships are talked about on the same footing as other human relationships
7. Do you have an inclusion policy for LGBT+ People? IC statement is our policy
8. Do you think that your community is generally supportive of Trans and Non Binary people? Yes
9. Would your community support a Trans person as they transitioned? Yes
10. Do you have any openly LGBT+ People in your leadership? We have had in the past and would welcome them in the future.
11. Does your community highlight and respect people's pronouns? Not specifically but we are always open to learning from others how they would like to be addressed.



ST PAUL'S

1. As a society/place of worship, do you have an elected or named LGBT+ Officer/Representative/Mentor? No

2. What is your community leadership's perspective on LGBT+ relationships? The church voted to join Inclusive Church by over 90% of the congregation. That means we have become an Inclusive Church and seek to build a community based on the values of inclusive church. It's important that it's not simply one leader's view that dominates - we are a community that explores issues, openly, together.

3. What is your community leadership's perspective on Trans and Non Binary people? As above.

4. How are LGBT+ included in teaching and discussions within the society/worship space? We have an Inclusive Church Group (with around 10 members); they plan worship once per term looking at the whole issue of inclusion from multiple perspectives (race, gender, class, disability, sexuality etc). They also meet regularly and are a sub group of the PCC.

5. As a society/ worship space, do you say anything about how LGBT+ people should be welcomed? We have the Inclusive Church Welcome Poster at the front as people enter our worship space and information on our website. "We believe in inclusive church - a church which celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate.



ST PAUL'S (CONT...)

..We will continue to challenge the church where it continues to discriminate against people on grounds of disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality. We believe in a Church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ.

6. When teaching about relationships, how are all relationships brought into the conversation? As discussed, our Inclusive Group help frame and teach the congregation about a whole range of issues that affect those who might otherwise be marginalised or discriminated against.

7. Do you have an inclusion policy for LGBT+ People? Not other than our ethos as explained, above.

8. Do you think that your community is generally supportive of Trans and Non Binary people? We have a very strong ethos of everyone is welcome, everyone is seen as a person, not as a problem.

9. Would your community support a Trans person as they transitioned? I would have thought so.

10. Do you have any openly LGBT+ People in your leadership? In wider leadership, yes.

11. Does your community highlight and respect people's pronouns? We do not highlight it, but people are free to be who they wish to be - acceptance, welcome and non-judgment are important, from all sides. People are also free to disagree.