

Have Faith Initiative

Discussion on Equity & Inclusion
April 29, 2021

How do you define inclusivity and what are the things you are doing to foster an inclusive and affirming space?

The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. Including members of minority groups as well as those who have physical or mental disabilities.

Inclusivity is an ability for all people to show up in a space in the fullness and authenticity of who they are and without the need to "code-switch" or hide parts and pieces of themselves, their struggles, and/or their religious or non-religious worldview. In the campus ministry and the UU Church, we operate on a foundation of the inherent worth and dignity of every person and a commitment to equity and justice in human relations.

These commitments require us to examine our privilege and assumptions continuously and to do hard work to identify and eliminate white cisgender heteronormative supremacy in our governance and daily interactions. We also make sure to explicitly name our commitments to inclusion so people who identify with particular minoritized, oppressed groups don't have to read between the lines to know if they will be welcome and safe.

Making sure barriers are limited and we are welcoming. That our hospitality is theologically based on God's hospitality of welcoming all to the table. We have diverse staff and families which reveals God's grace to all people so that people realize it is accessible to them. I understand that while we can offer inclusive and affirming spaces, there may be non-verbal and physical cues that go against inclusivity. We strive to continuously learn and understand how we can humble ourselves and improve through study, conversation and experience.

To paraphrase St. Paul, our goal is a community in which there is not white or black for we are all one in Christ Jesus. But to reach that place of reconciliation, I work to articulate the historical causes of our alienation. I've also given a forum to parishioners of color to tell their stories.

Being welcoming to all. Treating all with respect and civility. We are hosting the United Academy for Inclusion and Belonging, in partnership with MSU's Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Inclusivity means for me providing equal access to opportunities and resources for all people to enjoy the highest standard of healthcare, regardless of race, country of origin, religion, political belief, economic, or social condition. Hand In Hand Multicultural Center (HIHMC) is open to transforming all structures to make it better for each individual knocking on the door. HIHMC provides comprehensive services to all consumers.

**Serve anyone who calls on the phone,
comes to the door, asks or needs assistance.
Invite any and everyone to worship with us.**

I define inclusivity as every person being acknowledged as valued and important creations of God. In Unity we believe everyone is born into original blessing and has equal value. We have an LGBTQIA+ group at our church. Although we are predominantly white, as is our city, we embrace people of all ethnicities. We talk about equal rights and justice issues from the podium.

Actively demonstrating compassion and kindness toward people who have been oppressed and marginalized due to race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, age, addiction, special needs/disability, religion, or diversity of thought.

(Con't)

What we have done to foster inclusion: Monthly respite night for parents of children with special needs, van service to pick up homeless friends to attend church and other events, special events for victims of domestic violence, providing food and personal hygiene items to at-risk teens and adults, on-site private school for children with special needs, providing meeting space for AA and gamblers anonymous, providing feminine hygiene products in all restrooms, installing handicap accessible ramps, one-on-one volunteers for kids with special needs during church services, etc.

What are some things faith-based institutions, nonprofits and/or the local government can do to become a more welcoming and affirming community?

Continue to have the welcome sign at any activity on property or off our property that we are engaged. Support through an open door policy and at the same time encourage others to succeed and bloom where they are planted.

Shift the cultural narrative from a toleration of difference to a celebration of difference.

Take steps outside their bubble. Experience people different in faith, color, economic status, sexual orientation, preferably outside of a community service situation where one is serving others who are different. Being in a situation of serving others reveals a power hierarchy and comforts the server and makes them feel safe.

(Con't)

If the power and ability is equally distributed, learning can take place. What projects can bring the entire community together, for the benefit for all of the community? I wonder if some sort of inclusivity and affirming report card can be established...most organizations would say that they are inclusive and affirming, until it is brought to their attention that they are not. For a consultation process, we had "mystery worshippers" come in and give their feedback. This was eye-opening and extremely helpful.

Perhaps the clergy should encourage some kind of pulpit sharing so that clergy and people can learn from each other.

Participate in the Tough Talks discussions.

Be willing to support one another; don't reinvent the wheel everytime a good idea surfaces. Serve on city/county committees. Be encouraging to everyone you meet.

This is a very deep question and needs more space to be responded to. To spark the conversation, becoming a more welcoming and affirming community is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures which exist in our society. This is a process that has to be constructed day by day, minute to minute, in a caring, kind, careful, and cautious relationship where we can include those that don't like inclusion, because inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone, including those than do not like inclusion.

We definitely need to address the homeless situation better. We need to call out discrimination in a way that clearly states that none of us will stand for it. We need to let all the people of our community know that we care about them, no matter their race, gender, lifestyle, etc.

Speak out against exclusion and inequality. Actively promote inclusion and tolerance. Upgrade space for handicap accessibility. Provide valuable resources to people who are oppressed and marginalized.

On a scale from 1-10, where would you place Springfield Community in terms of being inclusive?

Average response: 6
