



Of One Heart Initiative

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This document contains the timeline and supporting materials of one stake's effort to develop a stake-wide initiative aimed at creating a **more welcoming, inclusive, loving community of saints for LGBTQ+ people and their families in our stake.**

1 Start by assessing the needs of LGBTQ+ people, their families, and others in your stake.

We highly recommend convening a focus group at the very beginning of your development process.

2 Counsel with stake members in each area of leadership and coordinate your ministry to LGBTQ+ people/families.

Councils are the ideal setting to process information and create a plan that addresses the expressed needs and incorporates suggestions from focus group participants.

3 Commit to teaching the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and supporting the policies of the Church.

We have not created new callings or councils as we have endeavored to serve our LGBTQ+ members/families, and we adhere to the guidelines provided in the General Handbook of the Church.

4 Use terminology that is common and current when describing the identifiers and experiences of LGBTQ+ members.

This can be challenging, since these terms and identifiers evolve and change, but our intent is to convey respect and invite understanding.

5 Find a safe, anonymous way to share the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in your stake and their families.

Members of your stake will learn best from those within your stake.

6 Develop a list of resources for LGBTQ+ members and interested others that is vetted by your stake leaders.

There are so many resources for LGBTQ+ people and their families, but fewer that are consistent with the doctrines of the Church.

7 Be patient with your stake's process and progress.

The discussions and deliberation, and the prayer and pondering that led our stake as we developed the Of One Heart Initiative will lead your stake, as well, as you seek to minister to LGBTQ+ people and their families in your area.

Of One Heart Initiative Development Timeline (2020-2023)

2020

NOV 2020

Stake Relief Society President's (SRSP) conversation with a mom of an LGBTQ+ young adult who requested support for LGBTQ+ people and their families

DEC 3

SRSP requests support for stake LGBTQ+ members/families during her monthly ministering interview with the stake president (SP); subsequent conversations on this expressed need Jan-April during monthly interviews with the Stake President

2021

DEC 2020 -
APR 2021

SRSP conducts research into efforts to support LGBTQ+ people, their families, and allies in the Church in the USA and Canada, including: Books, articles, podcasts, and meeting (virtually) with many individuals working in the area of LGBTQ+ support and education in the North American Latter-day Saint community.

MAY

Focus Group facilitated by SRSP (LGBTQ+ people, families of LGBTQ+ people, allies, Stake YW President--no bishops or members of stake presidency invited.)

MAY 30

SRSP meets with Stake Presidency (reporting focus group information and recommendations for Of One Heart Initiative)

JUN 3

SRSP meets with Stake Council (introducing Of One Heart Initiative)

JUN/JUL

Stake President shares his plan/vision for the Of One Heart Initiative

JUL 7

SRSP meets with Bishops' Council (discussing Teachers' Council presentations and proposed youth fireside/BYDs)

AUG

Sister leaders in our stake speak in Sacrament meetings on the topic "Worshiping in Unity" by assignment from SP. Speakers are asked to specifically mention in remarks welcoming people who may feel marginalized in our congregations.

AUG 19

SRSP meets with Stake Adult Leadership Council (including bishops--reviewing Teachers' Council slide deck)

SEPT

Teachers' Council discussions begin across the stake, facilitated by members of the Stake High Council in most wards (members of the High Council received prior facilitator training).

SEPT 19

Of One Heart Initiative Fireside for YW/YM, parents, leaders, and YSAs

SEPT 26

Bishop's Youth Discussions (BYD) in each ward, Q & A on LGBTQ+ topics.

OCT 16

Of One Heart Initiative Event: Open-invitation fireside at our Stake Center with Ben Schilaty

DEC 12

Of One Heart Initiative Focus Group for LGBTQ+ members and families of LGBTQ+ members (Stake Presidency attends)

2022

FEB 6

Self-reliance Group: Emotional Resilience--a section specifically offered for LGBTQ+ persons and family members of LGBTQ+ persons. Jointly offered with neighboring Stake.

APR 24

Stake Relief Society President speaks in the General Session of Stake Conference with the assigned topic: "Ministering to LGBTQ+ People and Their Families"

MAY 21

Of One Heart Initiative sponsored picnic. All stake members invited to this informal potluck--stake provided pulled pork sandwiches/waters, attendees brought sides/desserts. 100+ people of all ages attended.

NOV 6

Of One Heart Initiative Devotional (open-invitation devotional featuring author/podcast host Richard Ostler)

DEC 1

Stake Council Discussion (reflecting on the efforts of the Initiative and discussing next steps: offering an updated Teachers' Council opportunity stakewide for teachers/leaders; regular opportunities for LGBTQ+ people/families to connect; devotional for YM/YW/YSAs, parents and leaders)

2023

FEB

Monthly of One Heart Gatherings begin for LGBTQ+ members, families and allies hosted by members in their homes or in ward meetinghouses

WHEN THEY COME OUT

How to Help and Not Hurt

When someone comes out to you, or you think that might be where a conversation is heading, it's normal to feel pressure to say and do the right thing. It might be helpful for you to ponder some things before and during those conversations...so you aren't left wishing you had after!

Questions to Consider:

- What is this person looking for in this conversation? (i.e. validation, advice, solutions, study materials, etc.)
- Am I qualified **and prepared** to give such advice?
- How can I make sure this person stays the focus of our conversation and not me?
- What do I want them to remember from this conversation? Did I say that clearly and simply?

Remember:

This person is trusting you by sharing such vulnerable insights into who they are.

Things That May Not Help:

- Bearing my testimony because I am uncomfortable.
- Giving them scriptures or talks to study without understanding their purpose.
- Promising that everything will be okay if they just _____ (read their scriptures, pray, go to church, stay temple worthy, go on a mission, etc.).
- Sharing my personal feelings, stories, and thoughts. If I start sharing then I am replacing their experience with my own. If I feel strongly about sharing something, I can wait for a follow-up conversation and see **if it still feels as important to share.**

Press Forward Saints+

What can we do in our own wards and stakes?

“We are not going to wait for angels, or for Enoch and his company to come and build up Zion, but we are going to build it.”

Brigham Young, *Discourses*, pp. 443–44

Guiding Questions

1. Where do we stand now in our Ward and Stake? (10 minutes)

- How are things going?
- What is my relationship with LGBTQ people in my Ward and Stake?
- How, if at all, is ministering taking place now?
- What are the special needs in my area?

2. What would we like to see? (15 minutes)

- Who are the LGBTQ people in my Ward and Stake and how can I build better relationships with them?
- What are the unique needs of LGBTQ people and families in my area?

3. What are the next steps to getting there? (20 minutes)

- Who are the thought leaders (whether LGBTQ or not and whether holding a formal calling or not) who can help achieve our goals?
- What are potential obstacles? Who do we need to win over?
- Is there an existing or new calling (“Belonging Specialist”) that could be created to coordinate belonging?
- Are there firesides, family home evenings, teacher trainings, “fifth Sunday” lessons, YSA activities, parents’ meetings, scripture study groups, or other events that might help foster community.

4. How will I manage setbacks? (Personal Reflection)

- Is there a scripture, friend, experience, image, or spiritual practice that you rely on when the going gets rough?

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