



God is **love**.
Where there **is**
love there is God.
(1 John 4)

Introduction

We want to be known as a Church that connects with our local communities and proclaims the saving good news of God for all and a Church for all. Pride events are spaces where we can come alongside sometimes marginalised communities, as LGBT+ people ourselves or as allies, and be present as the Church.

Like missional presence at any festival or event, it's not about converting people and it's not about judging anyone. It is about being a blessing – loving and listening – unashamedly as a group of Christians witnessing to our experience of God's inclusive love for all.

Being present at Pride as Christians gives us an opportunity to meet new people, build relationships, offer hospitality and welcome, hold safe space for people to explore faith and take our Methodist Church way beyond the walls of our buildings. Evangelism at Pride may mean simply being there and seeing what conversations and encounters God has lined up for you.

*"We are present at Pride events in order to: share a message of inclusive love to a community that has been shunned and hurt by the church worldwide. **We believe God's inclusive love is for all, and that our sexualities and gender identities reflect the beauty of who God is.**"*

Christians at Pride

Methodists have creatively and joyfully engaged in Pride events for many years. There are many organisations resourcing this mission, as well as resourcing LGBT+ affirming ministry more generally and you'll find links to these at the bottom of this resource.

This resource does not seek to engage all Methodists in Pride – only those who are LGBT+ themselves and/or affirming friends and family of LGBT+ people, and/or those who have a heart for and calling to mission and ministry with the LGBT+ community. It contains liturgy, practical guidance, text to use on websites, as well as links to other resources.

There is a Methodists at Pride webpage you can use to keep up to date with resources available and share ideas. You can find it here: methodist.org.uk/methodistsatpride

Case studies:

Watch this video to hear stories about the ways these Methodist communities in Bristol, Nottingham and Derby have engaged in their local Pride events:
youtube.com/watch?v=b6wvTF34h3U



What matters most about engaging with Pride?

There might be other affirming communities of Christians already engaging in Pride in your town, city or county. Although we are **distinctly Methodist** in our messaging, we know our mission is often strengthened by working with others. Consider taking an **ecumenical approach** through **Christians at Pride** (full list of website details found at the end of this resource).

As we seek to connect meaningfully with communities that have often been excluded, we should take care not to unthinkingly exclude another community. Consider how you can commit to inclusive working with **intersectionality across all diversities** (for example, with people of colour who are LGBT+ or making your engagement with Pride also accessible for people with disabilities).

There are diverse approaches to engaging in Pride appropriately as Christians, including humility and repentance as well as celebration and joy. The Methodist Church has claimed evangelism as a vital dimension of our mission and identity in the 21st century, and therefore in our engagement with Pride – as in our whole lives – we wish to be people who proclaim the

good news of a God for all and a Church for all appropriately, contextually and sensitively yet unashamedly and authentically through our words, actions and prayers. That said, Pride is a space that 'belongs' to the LGBT+ community and therefore **we need to be sensitive to that context. As visitors to Pride, it is important to recognise that attendees are not necessarily intentionally seeking a Christian space.**

While we long for all Methodist churches and communities to become places of authentic welcome and inclusion, we acknowledge that not all churches are safe places for LGBT+ persons and therefore we should consider how we take **due care in our messaging** so we do not make untrue claims. The website honestchurch.org.uk seeks to help churches move beyond a sometimes vague statement like 'all are welcome' and express more clearly if they are LGBT+ affirming.

With all this in mind, we commit to partnership, ecumenism, humility, safety, inclusivity and evangelistic integrity in the way we are present at Pride.

Practical guidance

You might be considering engaging in Pride as an individual or as a church or circuit. If you're an individual, the best thing you can do is simply to go along and be present – soak up the atmosphere and, if you feel comfortable doing so on your own, wear a 'Christians at Pride' t-shirt, sold by **One Body, One Faith**.

Here's a simple step by step guide if you're thinking about engaging in Pride as a group, church or circuit:

1. Discuss it together and pray about. Listen for God's call.
2. Find out where and when your local Pride event is happening. Many happen during Pride month in June, but they can happen at any time in the year. There is a fairly comprehensive list of all the events in the UK here: pride-events.co.uk
3. Find out if there are already Christians engaging in your local Pride event. The **Christians at Pride** website has a list, but it is more effective to reach out to other LGBT+ affirming churches in your area to ask.
4. If you've never been to a Pride event before, it's good missional practice to attend before planning any kind of engagement. Every Pride event is different and it's important that whatever you plan is fitting. Go along, listen, take part, enjoy yourself. Pride events are usually like a party: be prepared for music, dancing and glitter – embrace it!
5. Consider what kind of engagement might work best. Whichever approach you choose, you'll need to get in touch with the organisers to arrange this. Here are some different ideas:
 - a. Is your church on the Pride parade route? In which case, you could put up a banner or a poster or run a stall outside your church giving things away and cheering on the parade.
 - b. If it's not on the route, could you march as part of the parade? Form a group of people and wear something distinctive like 'Christians at Pride' t-shirts. You could give out things to people watching the parade.
 - c. If there is a Pride festival space (usually at the end of the parade route), could you set up a stall there? You could hold a Pride communion in it, or run something interactive and creative.
 - d. Or might you take a chaplaincy approach, looking after participants and organisers throughout the day?
6. You'll want to share with the other Pride marchers that you're the Church – either through banners, placards or by wearing 'Christians at Pride' t-shirts which you can order here: onebodyonefaith.org.uk/shop/christians-at-pride-t-shirt/. Think about your slogans carefully: don't use jargon, don't be afraid to try something tongue in cheek (e.g., 'nowt as queer as Methodists') and don't be afraid to use the Bible, like these banners do: cpo.org.uk/24867-group-24867.html
7. If you're giving things away, do consider environmental concerns and make ethical choices about your giveaways. The right giveaway can be an excellent blessing to the event.

8. If you're holding a space, you could advertise short, inclusive services or prayer times throughout the day, inviting people into an encounter with God while they're at Pride.
9. Many people will go to a Pride event and experience nothing but joy, celebration and positivity, but it's also possible that there might be people there to share a non-affirming message, sometimes other Christians. It might be worth thinking about how – if at all – you would want to respond if this happened at an event you were engaging in. It's important to avoid being confrontational – you might want to respond creatively (for example, by singing a hymn) in how you share a loving message in a space where others are sharing an alternative message.
10. Bear in mind, if you're a group of heterosexual, cisgendered people, you might not be the best people to be making decisions about engaging in a Pride event. The planning will be a richer process and the engagement in Pride more satisfactory for everyone if you can ensure there are LGBT+ people involved in the planning process.
11. In order to extend your involvement with Pride beyond a once-a-year engagement, you may wish to build links and partnerships with local LGBT+ organisations and explore a more extended missional relationship.

If you've got any questions, or you'd like to hear more about the fantastic ideas Methodists all over the Connexion have for engaging in Pride, then check out our webpage

methodist.org.uk/methodistsatpride

Content for websites and social media

If you're engaging in Pride, it's a good idea to include something on your website and social media channels, if you have them. This is a great way to let local people know that you're an affirming and inclusive Church and to challenge perceptions about the kinds of spaces in which Christians are present and their beliefs. Remember to include details of what you're planning so people can join in if they'd like to. There is some suggested text below, feel free to edit it.

Come and find us during [place name]'s Pride march as we celebrate the LGBT+ community. We support Pride because we believe in a God who is love, revealed to us in Jesus, and that all people are made in the image of God. We seek to be a place where all people can safely and proudly be themselves in community. God is with all people, everywhere, all of the time, and the Bible shows us that God is working to restore people who are hurt or marginalised. Joining with Pride is a joyful expression of our solidarity alongside the LGBT+ communities as members and allies. Come and say hello, we'd love to meet you.

Liturgy for Pride events

Kindly put together by **James Blackhall**

Invitation

Come for today is a celebration of all that we are,
Come for today is a day of joy and delight,
Come for God – the Parent, the Word and the Spirit calls us to the dance.

[Optional song*]

This place is holy for this is a place where people's stories are heard;
This place is holy because people can truly be themselves;
This place is holy because of who we are

This place is holy because it is a place where protest happens;
Where we stand up and say that all are equal;
Where we stand to say that all people are loved by God.

God of love,
We praise you for we are wonderfully made.
You knew us before we were born,
You loved us before we were born,
And you will love us forever more.

We adore you, O God,
In the name of Christ
Amen.

[Optional song]

Litany:

For all who fear to be truly who they are

God of love be with them

For all who fear because of what we the church have done

Christ of love forgive us

For when we have failed to love others

Spirit of love change us

We go as forgiven people because our Maker loves us.

Amen thanks be to God

Scripture

1 John 4:11-16, or choose a different passage to suit your context.

Prayer

by Puck Glass

God of love,
Sanctify this space today

Our own sacred and holy spaces – the tables where we find you, the closets where we find ourselves in you, the relationships where we come to know you more.
Make the spaces where each of us finds ourselves today a reflection of your love and grace.

God of rainbows,
Today we celebrate the many colours by which we all gather
The colours that shape our identities
The many colours that make up our flags
The many colours that make up our bodies
Let us find that each of these shades is a reflection of your love for us.

God of peace and justice,
As we remember the struggle that unites us in our heritage
Let us not forget that this fight is not over
While we celebrate today, remind us that tomorrow there is still work to be done
Not only in our community, but in too many marginalized communities
Let our love extend like your love, well beyond our own created borders.

God of grace,
May we find grace as abundant as yours in learning from each other
May we find the grace to make mistakes and to continue learning
May we find the grace to radically expand our welcomes.
May we find the grace to breath in slowly... and know we are filled with enough.

Amen

New Zealand/Jim Cotter's Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, Life-giver, Pain-bearer,
Love-maker,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever.
Amen.

[Optional song]

Blessing

God in God's love created you as you are,
God in God's love delights in you,
God the Creator, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit delights in you and goes with you.
Amen

* Please be mindful to ensure that any song chosen features lyrics that are in keeping with the inclusive theme of the liturgy ie no exclusive/gendered language.

'The Lord's Prayer' from *Prayer at Night* by Jim Cotter is © Jim Cotter, 2001.
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Links to further resources

Many Methodists have a long history of diverse and good engagement in Pride marches as well as ecumenical groups have been resourcing and inspiring this engagement for many years. Do take a look at the excellent resources available through these three organisations.

Badges, banners, posters, and postcards

The Methodist Church has created a selection of products available for you to order to use at Pride events, including postcards with space to add your own information, available here:

methodistpublishing.org.uk/features/methodists-at-pride

Editable leaflet for Pride

(and many other resources)

Dignity and Worth (a Methodist and Wesleyan cooperative group) have produced a simple leaflet outlining an inclusive Christian approach to LGBT+ people, which is suitable for giving out at Pride events or having on a stall. It includes space to add the details of your local church or organisation.

dignityandworth.org.uk/resources/

Christians at Pride t-shirts

(and other information, blogs, and prayer gatherings)

One Body One Faith (an ecumenical members network for LGBT+ Christians and allies) offer a shop on their site selling items such as Christians at Pride t-shirts, crochet rainbows and a PDF download of 'The Body's Grace', Rowan Williams' 1989 groundbreaking lecture on faith and sexuality.

onebodyonefaith.org.uk/shop/

Information about where Christians are already involved in Pride

Christians at Pride is a website and network of Christians engaging in Pride events all over the UK.

christiansatpride.com/

Other related links:

- The Inclusive Methodist Church: methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/
- The Open Table Network: opentable.lgbt/
- Grace Like Glitter – a publication from the Iona Community: ionabooks.com/product/grace-like-glitter-pdf-download/
- LGBT+ liturgies from Enfleshed: enfleshed.com/liturgy/lgbtq-related/

This list is just a small selection of the many different websites where you can find more resources, liturgies, prayers, and support for engaging in Pride. We'd love to hear what you discover and find helpful, please share with us by emailing evangelism@methodistchurch.org.uk