

Conversations on Faith and Religion Discussion Handout

Instructions

For each of the scenarios below:

- ✓ Identify the issue/s surrounding equity, access and belonging present in this scenario.
- ✓ Reflect on how this situation may, or may not, be present in your own chorus.
- ✓ Brainstorm a range of possible responses to the scenario. In your chorus, whose responsibility is it to speak up and challenge, or support, the issue presented?
- ✓ Record your conversations and responses for reporting back to the larger group.

Scenarios for Discussion

1. The NYC Rainbow Chorus cancels their regular rehearsal that falls on Christmas Eve. That spring, a Jewish member of the chorus is told she can't sing in the upcoming concert since she has missed too many rehearsals. She takes the matter to the chorus board because two of those absences were on major Jewish Holidays.
2. Alan joins his local gay men's chorus seeking community, after coming out a few years earlier. He quickly makes friends and becomes an integral part of the chorus community. Six months later, Joe joins the chorus; after his first rehearsal, Joe recognizes Alan as one of the leaders of a former anti-gay "Change Ministry" that caused trauma in his young adult life. Joe sends an email to the entire membership demanding Alan be banned from the chorus so that he does not cause harm within the community.
3. At a chorus overnight retreat, the director of the Wyoming Queer Chorus asks a pagan member of the chorus to open the morning rehearsal by calling the Four Directions and leading a blessing song for the day. Several members leave the retreat because they are uncomfortable.
4. The Queer Chorus of Montana rehearses in a church hall. As a thank you for half-market rent, the chorus board commits the chorus to performing concert repertoire during one church service each year. Some members object because they have their own churches to attend, many sing in their church choir, and others object because they don't want to perform in a church at all. They are uncomfortable rehearsing in a church, only coming because the feeling of chorus 'family' outweighs the discomfort they experience entering a church.
5. An artistic director is programming a December concert and selects a song in Spanish. They have been careful to avoid selecting English-language pieces that contain religious wording; however, the lyrics of the Spanish-language piece are very religious. One chorister who is fluent in Spanish brings this up to the director. The artistic director responds, "It won't matter – the song isn't in English, so no one will understand the words anyway."

Action Steps

What are some concrete steps your chorus can undertake to make your chorus more welcoming for people of all faiths, and for those who do not practice a religion?
