



HONORING OUR DIFFERENCES

a speaker series on Diversity & Inclusion

Sundays • 9:35-10:25 am

Heritage Hall @ Messiah Church

Coffee & Refreshments • Childcare Available

In 2023, Messiah Church issued an Inclusion Statement that expressed our desire to work together to be an inclusive faith community. This series, developed by our Diversity & Inclusion Team, is designed to help all of us learn more about this important commitment.

January 14 • Why Does Messiah have an Inclusion Statement?

What is inclusion and why is it important for a faith community? Isn't it enough to just say "Everyone is Welcome Here"? In this session, **Pastor Brian Hacklander (Messiah's Pastor of Congregational Care)** and **Holly Schlangen Rice (a member of our Diversity & Inclusion Team)** will help us understand the reasons for inclusion and diversity in churches. We'll discuss what the Bible says about inclusion, the barriers and benefits to being a more inclusive church, and you'll learn the meaning of the terms diversity, inclusion, equity, equality, BIPOC, and DEI.

February 11 • Why Racial Justice & Diversity?

Do we, as a church, understand the barriers to racial justice and equity that exist in our own communities? Are we aware of our own, often subconscious biases toward other races and ethnicities? In this session, speaker **Kevin Ward, Executive Director of Interfaith Outreach and Community Partners**, will help us examine subconscious beliefs and behaviors that may keep us from being inclusive and welcoming to persons of color.

April 21 • What About LGBTQIA+?

LGBTQIA+ persons face incredible obstacles when it comes to being part of a church or worship experiences. Far too often, churches have created the most painful rejection in an LGBTQIA+ person's life. Some of the church's attitudes and treatment of LGBTQIA+ comes from a lack of understanding of gender identity, sexual orientation, and the many terms related to LGBTQIA+. In this session, **Paul Blom, CEO of Right at Home and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community**, helps us learn more about the importance of recognizing God's love for all human beings.

LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

May 19 • What About Mental Health?

There is a mental health crisis in our country! One in five Americans will experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime and suicide is the second leading cause of death in ages 10-24. And yet, many churches still stigmatize mental illness and are not welcoming to those who suffer from the various types of mental health disorders. In this session, **a speaker from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Minnesota)** will help us learn ways we can become a caring congregation.



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MessiahChurch.org/honoring-our-differences-series