

Dear**ly beloveds,**

Here we go again, believing we are Better Together! We are gathered in this e-mail to celebrate the love and inclusion of all people. This communication is coming to you from two friends and clergy members (Rev. Megan and Rev. Melanie) who have been working hard to prepare another multi-faith collaboration for TOLEDO PRIDE 2026 **(sources suggest it will be August 15)** - We would love for you to consider joining us! It is our belief, and we hope you agree, that we are *Better Together*, and by uniting for Pride, we have an opportunity to model inclusion in ways that speak louder than words. What follows is a lot of information, some replicated from previous years, some updated, to help answer as many of your questions as possible as you consider this opportunity.

Our goal is not to highlight our individual faith communities, nor is it to campaign to increase worship attendance or membership; instead, our vision is to show up as a group of faithful people, with our different histories and traditions, in a way that expresses something so much bigger than any of us – **LOVE. OUT. LOUD!** Our hope is to demonstrate belonging through the bridges we build with each other, and to provide people with access to resources that can connect them with faith communities that are in their geographic locations or areas of spiritual/religious interest/backgrounds. In a world with so much division and pain, amplified in today's political landscape, we can shine hope brightly through the power of unity, love and inclusion!

Last year, once again, it was an absolute honor to gather with more than 300 people, from over 30 different faith communities, and across 9 different denominations and traditions to share a powerful embodiment of connection and community for the sake of love and belonging. We continue to hear from people who participated and who experienced the movement in different ways how meaningful it was, and we are excited to come together again for Toledo Pride 2026! If you would like to join us, or have more questions, more information (**we know, it's a lot...** 😊) is provided below.

### **How do I sign up?**

**Use the link below to our Google form to help us gather your information and interest:** Only one sign-up per community is necessary, so please engage conversations with-in your sphere of ministry to determine who will sign up and who the best contact person will be. If you are currently not connected to a specific community, and would like to participate, you are very welcome to sign up!

**[Better Together: Faith Communities United for Pride 2026 - Google Forms](#)**

## When do I need to sign up?

In order to have the names of participating communities listed on the shirts, and to provide ample time for ordering from the online Jupmode store (link will be shared with community contacts to share widely with their folx), the deadline to sign up is **June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026**.

## What will we be doing?

We will be gathering to march in the Toledo Pride parade on (as far as we know at this time) **Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup>**. We will walk together, united behind one banner and wearing coordinating shirts, to represent the inclusion we hope to inspire. After the parade, we encourage participants to enjoy the rest that Pride has to offer, enjoy the day, and consider joining together with others from your tradition to share a booth for the festivities.

## Are there options to participate other than walking?

**Trinity Episcopal Church (316 Adams St. - on the parade route)** has graciously offered a space for folx to be visible and share their love and excitement, wear the same *Better Together* shirts, and pass out the swag we are designing (this year with some shade!). More information will follow as it becomes available.

## How much does it cost to participate?

Thanks to another generous grant from the **Zoar Lutheran Church Foundation**, there is no fee to register to participate; *however, we welcome financial contributions to lower the use of grant funds and share the investment of this movement of inclusion*. Last year, we received many financial contributions from individuals and faith communities that enabled the return of some of the grant funds that demonstrated positively to the foundation that there is a shared investment in this experience to benefit future application discernment.

If your community is willing/able to contribute any amount, more information can be found in the google form or connect with us for more information. The banner, bling, shirt subsidy, and any fees associated with Toledo Pride Parade will be covered via the grant and any received donations! The only expense will be the cost of the shirt and the cost of a booth if your community/denominational group decides to continue the spirit of collaboration by sharing space (we hope you will!). Shirts will be available for individuals to purchase in an online store through Jupmode for several weeks following the sign up period. The shirt cost will be reduced to a flat \$20 for the first 350 sold as part of the grant from Zoar Lutheran Church Foundation (and any donations received).

For booths, different groups are already in conversation about sharing space and will be in contact soon (ELCA and Episcopal congregations watch for correspondence). Others are encouraged to engage conversations with your area ministry partners to coordinate booth

sharing. Several did this last year, and it was a powerful continuation of the collaborative experience for both booth hosts and Pride attendees.

### **What will we wear?**

We have thoughtfully designed a good quality t-shirt with Jupmode that we hope will make a visible impact during Pride, and be wearable any time, any year. An image of the shirt is available in the Google sign-up form. As part of the grant from Zoar Lutheran Church (and any donations we receive), a portion of the t-shirt cost will be subsidized for the first 350 ordered, making the shirt \$20 total. The shirts will be purchased online through Jupmode beginning after June 15<sup>th</sup> (a link will go out to your community's contact person). When ordering, people will be invited to select the community they are affiliated with, and orders will be sorted and picked up by the contact person for each community. Our hope is that everyone will be able to purchase/wear this year's shirt to the parade; however, if you have last year's and prefer to wear that, you are welcome to do so. Our intention is to pick a color each year that represents the vibrancy of our community, and to move through the rainbow.

### **What will we give away?**

Our intention is to once again hand out good quality items that connect to our message of love and belonging, many with the *Better Together: Faith Communities United For Pride* logo and a QR code/link that will connect to the Equality Toledo list of inclusive faith communities. More information about that list, and how to join it, is below. If you would like to create your own *Better Together* swag in addition to what we will provide, we will send you our logo.

### **What about Booths?**

We encourage communities of shared faith traditions to connect together with one booth. For example, there will be one booth that area ELCA congregations will be invited to join, and there will be one booth for area Episcopal communities to be together. The intention is to continue to model inclusion by working together, and to create a space for individual communities to share their own swag and info – this was a meaningful experience for many last year! **These booths are not organized by this initiative, but are strongly encouraged.**

### **How will people know our community is involved?**

There are several ways that we will be communicating who is involved.

1. The shirts will have a list of participating communities who signed up by the deadline of June 15<sup>th</sup>.
2. We provide signs for each community so that each group will be represented during the parade in a visible way. One thing we are doing differently this year to be good stewards of resources, now that several communities have signs, is to make signs for only communities joining us for the first time and those who request a new/additional sign.

3. We are excited to collaborate with **Equality Toledo!** We will provide a [link to their existing inclusive faith communities list](#), that is part of the good work they continue to do, in a variety of ways (swag, banner, etc) to connect folx with welcoming places to worship. Below is more information about that list:

- Equality Toledo link: <https://equalitytoledo.org/resource-guide/> and scroll to ‘welcoming places of worship’ on the lefthand side.
- Equality Toledo currently has a resource guide that lists inclusive faith communities. **If you are not already listed**, and believe your clergy and/or congregation are a safe space for all people and/or have an accepted statement of welcome, please fill out the brief survey on the *Equality Toledo* Resource Guide home page, linked under ‘Faith-Based Community’, with the relevant information. **If you are already on the list**, please verify the information listed is still accurate, and e-mail [info@equalitytoledo.org](mailto:info@equalitytoledo.org) to update. Please also consider entering into a formal process with your faith community to establish a statement of welcome and inclusion.

### **Who is invited to participate?**

**Any faith communities who are welcoming and inclusive (and/or who have/are welcoming and inclusive folx who long for a way and a place to support diversity)** and want to gather to celebrate the beauty of Toledo Pride are encouraged to join us! We have tried to connect this invitation with any and all who may be interested; please forgive repetition. **Please forward this e-mail to other communities/contacts you think would be excited and/or curious about being a part of this collaboration.**

### **What about safety?**

We are aware that the current political climate is charged, harmful, and divisive. Last year, in addition to the presence of TPD monitoring the intersections and walkways, we experienced added security in the reality of our large and united group moving together with a powerful message of love. This year, we hope for the same experience of a meaningful and safe Toledo Pride 2026.

### **Not to be redundant...what is the best way to sign up?**

**Use this Google form to help us gather your information and interest:**

## **[Better Together: Faith Communities United for Pride 2026 - Google Forms](#)**

**Please do not hesitate to contact Melanie or Megan with any questions, if you need assistance signing up, or if you would like to be removed from our contact list.**

Peace be yours,

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