

Taking Up Space
Rev. Molly Brewer, Rev. Julie Brock & Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Landrum

Resources for Further Learning

- Lindley Ashline, “Body Liberation with Lindley on Instagram,” <https://www.instagram.com/bodyliberationwithlindley/>
- Lindo Bacon, *Health At Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight* (BenBella Books, 2010)
- Lindo Bacon & Lucy Aphramor, *Body Respect: What Conventional Health Books Get Wrong, Leave Out, and Just Plain Fail to Understand about Weight* (BenBella Books, 2014)
- Minna Bromberg, “Fat Torah,” <https://www.fattorah.com/>
- Ragen Chastain, “Dances With Fat,” <https://danceswithfat.org/>
- Tiff Joshua Tj Ferentini, Miguel M. Morales, and Bruce Owens Grimm, Editors, *Fat and Queer: An Anthology of Queer and Trans Bodies and Lives* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2021), <http://fatandqueer.com>
- Aubrey Gordon, *What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Fat* (Beacon Press, 2020)
- Aubrey Gordon, “Your Fat Friend: Essays on Life as a Very Fat Person” <https://www.yourfatfriend.com/>
- Aubrey Gordon and Michael Hobbes, “Maintenance Phase” <http://maintenancephase.com/>
- Hilary Kinavey and Dana Sturtevant, “Be Nourished,” <https://benourished.org/>
- Cat Pausé, Jackie Wykes, and Samantha Murray, Editors, *Queering Fat Embodiment* (Routledge, 2020)
- Esther Rothbaum and Sondra Solovay, Editors, *The Fat Studies Reader* (NYU Press, 2009)
- Sabrina Strings, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia* (NYU Press, 2020)
- Sonya Renee Taylor, *The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Second Edition: 2021) and *Your Body Is Not an Apology Workbook: Tools for Living Radical Self-Love* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Workbook Edition: 2021), <https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/>

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The Fat Liberationist Congregation Action Plan

The key commitments of the fat liberationist congregation:

1. The fat liberationist congregation acts when the rights, dignity, and self-worth of fat people is at stake.
2. The fat liberationist congregation celebrates and appreciates fat bodies.
3. The fat liberationist congregation includes anti-racism and inclusion of people with disabilities in its perspectives as it becomes liberationist.
4. The fat liberationist congregation has members who understand that weight loss, food moralizing, speculating about people's health, and judging bodies (our own or anyone else's) aren't acceptable topics for casual conversation. In the fat liberationist congregation, no one comments on someone else's body without explicit consent.
5. The fat liberationist congregation isn't *just* supportive of its fat members individually because they know and love them. The fat liberationist congregation is an ally to *all* fat people because they believe this is a justice issue. This means becoming a place where people will interrupt inappropriate inquiries or bullying.

The key actions of the fat liberationist congregation:

First: become a physical space of welcoming.

- **Seating:** Have a variety of seating options. One of the things that makes a space unwelcoming for fat people is when we don't have adequate seating. Seating that can be a problem includes chairs with arms, when those chairs are not a variety of sizes, and chairs that are linked together or spaced too close together, particularly in your sanctuary. Space some chairs out, have a variety of sizes of chairs, with and without arms. This includes on your chancel! And this includes in RE classrooms, as well. If you're worried that someone might break a special antique chair, put it somewhere where it's being used for display, not for seating.
- **Pulpits and the Chancel:** Pulpits with stairs to them or sides to them can cause problems. Similarly, a time for all ages that is designed for your story teller to have to get up and down from floor level can pose a problem.
- **Doorways:** Doorways should be wide enough to accommodate a wide wheelchair.
- **Bathroom stalls:** Similarly, bathrooms should be accessible with stalls wide enough to allow fat people to enter, turn around, and move about comfortably.
- **Clothing:** If you have congregational or organizational t-shirts, make sure they go up to at least 5X or 6X. Don't make it sound like a hassle or a special order, or charge more for them, and don't include clothing as part of a gift basket or membership package. Don't assume sizes, but do have multiple sizes available if you're not doing pre-orders.

Second, become fat liberationist in documents, programs, and worship.

- **By-laws:** Include fat as a trait you won't discriminate against in the non-discrimination clause in your congregations' bylaws, particularly in the hiring of ministers and staff. Do the same for any other relevant documents.
- **Worship:** Mention fat often in positive and liberationist ways in illustrations in sermons and worship services. Mention that an author is fat and proud! Invite fat ministers and guest speakers to preach.
- **Religious Education:** Include fat-positive imagery in children's religious education classes, and mention fat as an area of bias in discussions about prejudice. Hold congregation-wide workshops to education people on fat bias and fat liberation.
- **Potlucks and Coffee Hour:** Make sure your communal food times are shame-free spaces, just as you do for people who are vegan or vegetarian or omnivores, and people who have food allergies. Respect people's food choices, and don't make negative comments or suggestions about people's food choices. This applies to both what people put on their plate and also what they choose to bring to a potluck.
- **Leadership:** Employ fat people in public-facing congregational positions.

Third, let the world know you're a fat liberationist congregation!

- **Advertise your fat liberation stance** on your website and congregation brochure. Show fat people in pictures on your website, brochure, Facebook page, and advertising.
- **Partner with fat-positive organizations** (especially those in your area if there are any) and offer to join with them on projects and programs.
- **Advocate for fat-positive legislation**, and advocate against fat-shaming and weight-controlling legislation, particularly in healthcare.
- **Integrate fat liberation** into your congregation's social justice work.
- **Advocate for local and national businesses to be fat liberationist**, including clothing stores and the airline industry. Notice when your local restaurants don't have spaces where fat people can fit, or when local gyms are unsupportive of fat people, or when clothing stores don't carry larger sizes, and act to make changes.