

RESOURCES FOR THE ONA JOURNEY

UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns

Call or email us for resources and a list of ONA consultants in your area.

Neighboring ONA congregations

Other congregations have taken the ONA journey, and can share the experience.

Neighbors and friends with stories to tell

LGBT people, families, youth, allies

Support groups

Especially PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)

ONA starter page

www.uccoalition.org/ona/start

UCC Office for Health and Wholeness

www.ucc.org/lgbt

UCC Resources

ucc.org/ucc-resources

Institute for Welcoming Resources

welcomingresources.org



UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns

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WHAT CHURCHES SAY ABOUT THE ONA EXPERIENCE

It has been a spiritual journey for our church.

The process helped us to talk better about difficult issues; we gained a new level of honesty and openness.

There's a renewed sense of community and purpose.

It feels like we became "church" when we voted to become ONA.

There followed applause and tears of joy, and we concluded our time together by reading, in unison, the statement we had just adopted, and in that moment it became for our church an affirmation of faith.

New people have joined—LGBT and straight—because they want to belong to a church that values every person.

We have finally claimed our identity.

On a personal level, [ONA] brings with it a sense of freedom and relief—freedom in knowing for certain that my church has promised to love others the way I want them to be loved, relief that I will no longer experience a wave of absolute sadness because someone asked my minister if they will be "safe" in my church. Not only will they be safe, but welcomed with loving, accepting arms!

RESOURCES FOR ONA CHURCHES

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HOW DOES MY CHURCH BECOME OPEN AND AFFIRMING?



UCC COALITION FOR LGBT CONCERNS



WHAT IS OPEN AND AFFIRMING?

Open and Affirming (ONA) is a designation for congregations and other settings in the United Church of Christ that publicly affirm lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, welcoming them fully into the life and ministry of the church.

The ONA Program is funded and administered by the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns.

Today, more than 1,000 congregations in 48 states have adopted ONA covenants. We are the largest and fastest-growing LGBT welcoming movement in the Body of Christ.

WHY BE OPEN AND AFFIRMING?

LGBT people of faith often experience emotional and spiritual injury in churches that condemn their capacity to love and seek love. Because they've learned that "All Are Welcome" usually doesn't apply to them, they can't assume that any church will be safe for them and their families.

A public welcome by an Open and Affirming church sends a clear message to LGBT people that they have a home in the United Church of Christ.

A congregation's affirmation and support through an ONA covenant can be a life-saving and life-changing experience—especially for LGBT youth.

By adopting an ONA covenant, a congregation is taking seriously Saint Paul's admonition to "accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." (Romans 15:7, NIV)

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Contact the UCC Coalition; ask for our ONA Starter Kit and the name of an ONA consultant who will work with your church.

Gather interested people.

Read and evaluate study materials.

Plan a process of study and dialogue that will involve the whole congregation.

Study, listen, discuss and pray.

Draft an ONA covenant that welcomes people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

Adopt your ONA covenant.

Finally, register with the UCC Coalition, which will advertise your ONA status and connect you to the wider ONA community!

This makes you officially an Open and Affirming church! Now, get ready to share the good news!

SOME TIPS FOR THE JOURNEY

Be flexible. Adjust to new insights during your ONA journey. Each church is unique, so "one size" does not fit all!

Make it a process. Be thorough and give people enough time to assimilate new information.

Communicate continuously. Share information in various ways, so that you reach everyone and everyone is heard.

Listen as well as speak.

Include personal stories in your study and dialogue.

Create an environment of safety and respect for everyone.

Remember that your ONA statement is a covenant, founded on your church's relationship with God.

Trust that Jesus is walking with you on this journey.

SOME FACTS ABOUT ONA

In 1985, General Synod called on all UCC settings to adopt covenants of "openness and affirmation" welcoming gays and lesbians into the church. On this basis, the UCC Coalition launched the ONA program in 1987.

In 2003, General Synod adopted resolutions affirming the gifts and ministries of transgender people and advocating for their human and civil rights. The Coalition now requires that new ONA covenants welcome the transgender community.

Campus ministries, seminaries, Conferences, youth groups and new church starts have also adopted ONA covenants.

Your financial support for the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns grows the ONA movement, reaching more and more people with the life-saving message of God's unconditional love. To contribute, please use the donation page at www.uccoalition.org!