

Rocky Hill Congregational Church - United Church of Christ

“What is ONA (Open and Affirming)”

March 9, 2008

Presented by the ONA Committee's “What is ONA” subcommittee

Michael Bower

Mary Dean

Stephanie Heneghan

Bill Hoffman

Tom Rolfe

Wendy Ware

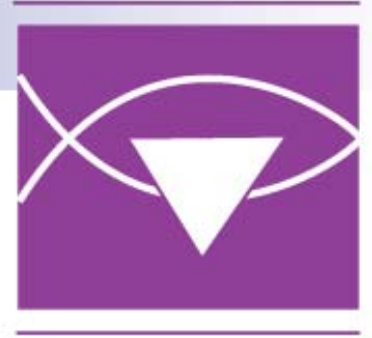
For more information on RHCC's ONA discussion, please visit the RHCC's website at www.rhccucc.org.

What is ONA?



Prayer

Opening Prayer



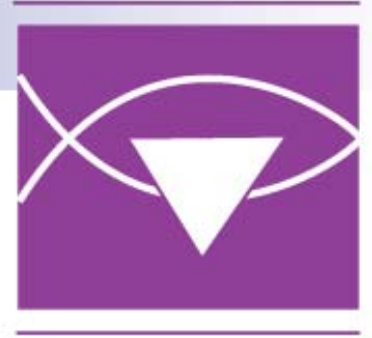
Oh Lord,
As we examine the meaning of Open and Affirming for our church and
for ourselves
Let our eyes be open to see everyone as God's child
Let our ears be open to hear and understand each other as we
consider this difficult and emotional issue
Let our minds be open and free of prejudices
Let our mouths open to speak with kindness and an awareness of
Your presence
And, most importantly,
Let our hearts be open to feel Your love, O God, among us
Amen

What is ONA?



Behavioral Covenant

Behavioral Covenant



In discussing difficult and sometimes divisive issues with one another, we have suggested using the following guidelines for a more productive and respectful discussion:

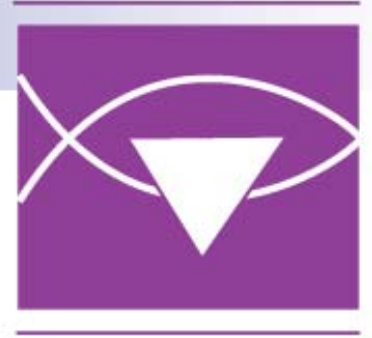
1. We will treat each other with caring and respect, as God's beloved children
2. We will take time for prayer
3. We will speak in the first person "I," and from our own experience
4. We will speak one at a time
5. We will listen for understanding, especially when we seem to disagree.
6. We will seek and speak truth in love
7. We will allow each other equal "air time"
8. We will ask questions for clarification, not judgement

What is ONA?



What Does the Term “ONA” or “Open and Affirming” Mean?

What is ONA?



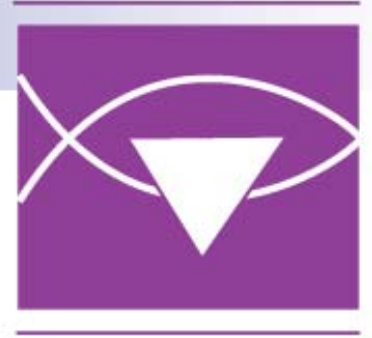
To say that a setting of the UCC (a local church, campus ministry, etc.) is "Open and Affirming" means that it has publicly declared that gay, lesbian, bisexual (GLB) people (or those of all sexual orientations) are welcome in its full life and ministry (e.g. membership, leadership, employment, etc.) It bespeaks a spirit of hospitality and a willingness to live out that welcome in meaningful ways.

What is ONA?



**Is There a Single
Definition of ONA
or Can We Tailor It?**

What is ONA?



There a single definition of Open and Affirming, as described in the previous question, which was put forth by the UCC. In expressing that a church is ONA, however, (in the constitution, in our mission statement, on our website, etc.) we can choose to word it in any way we like, as long as it still truthfully meets the definition of ONA.

What is ONA?



**Does ONA Include Other
Groups Traditionally
Discriminated Against
(e.g. different cultures, races
and religious beliefs)?**

What is ONA?



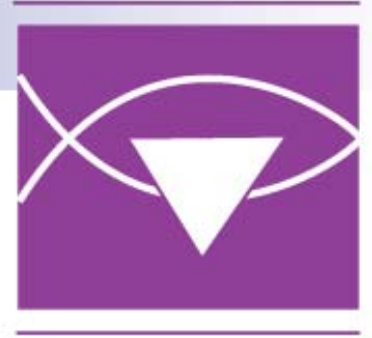
ONA does not include other groups that have been traditionally discriminated against. It focuses only on issues concerning the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered community. Some churches who have gone through the ONA process, however, have gone forward and explored issues concerning these groups if they had not in the past. But the process of identifying a church as ONA is limited only to this one issue.

What is ONA?



**How Many
Churches are
Listed as ONA?**

What is ONA?



There are currently 44 churches in the Connecticut Conference that are identified as ONA churches.

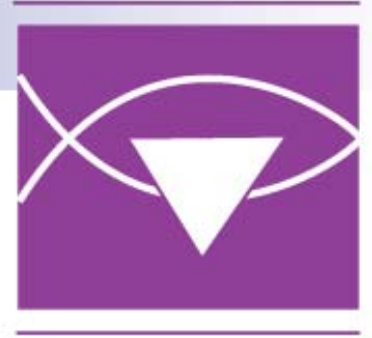
There are 253 churches in the Conference.

The Connecticut Conference voted recently
to declare itself an

Open and Affirming Conference within the UCC.

We do not currently know how many churches are in
the process of becoming ONA.

What is ONA?



When Did All This Talk of Open and Affirming Begin?

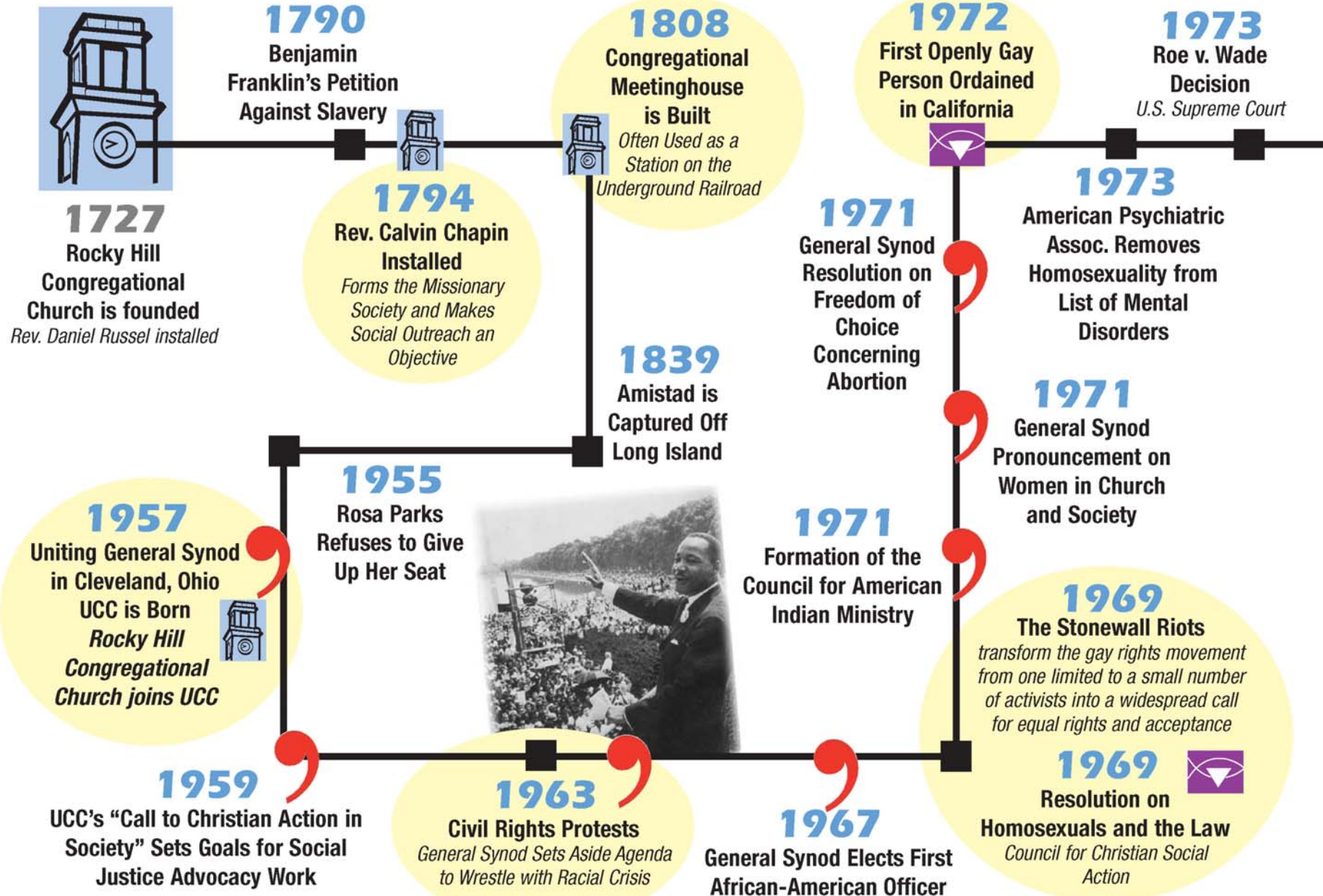
The following Time Line is meant to show the journey of social justice issues in the context of historical events and attitudes, and how the UCC has responded throughout its history to these issues.

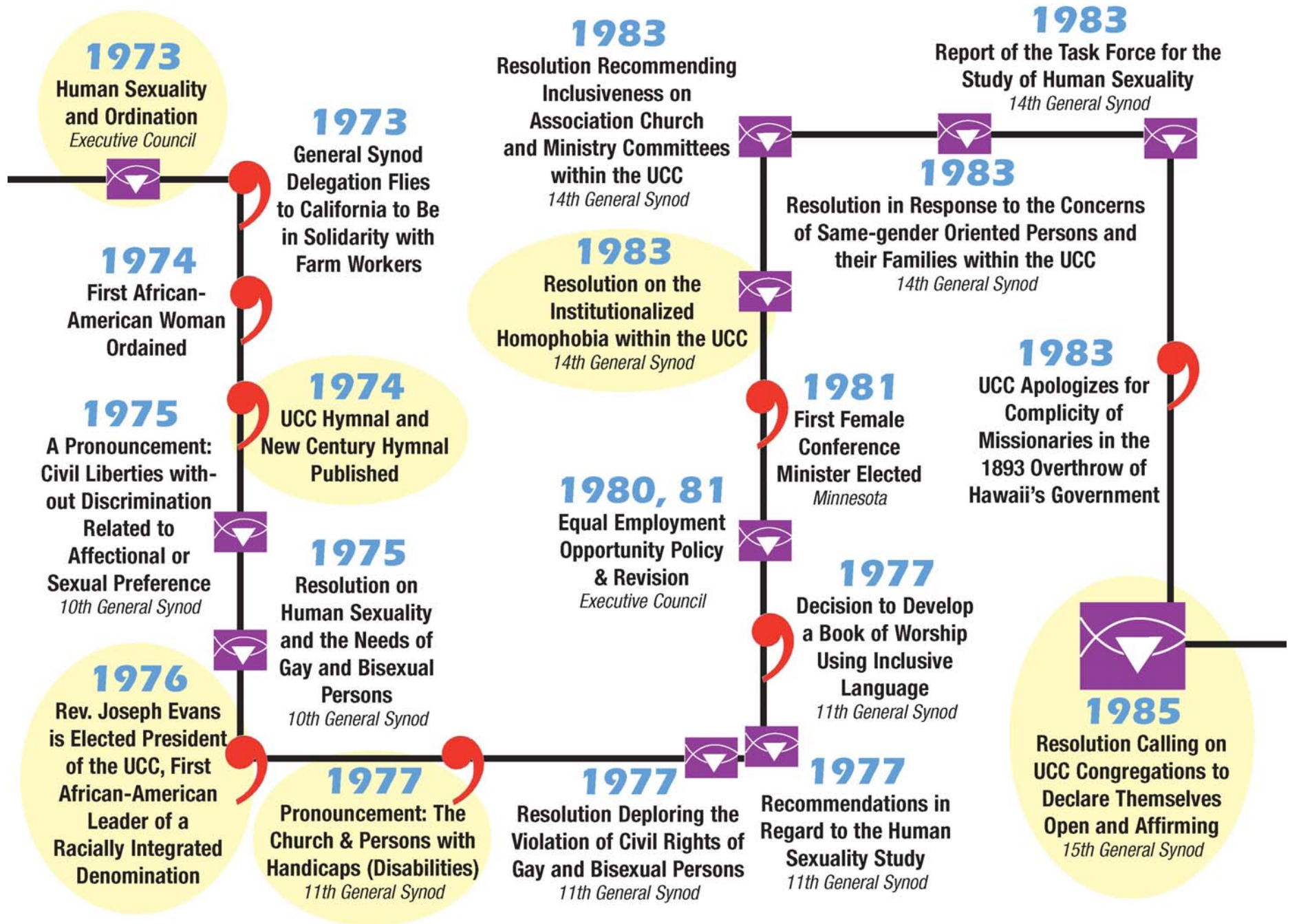
The UCC has made 29 Statements, Pronouncements, and Resolutions concerning Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues since 1969. They can be accessed at

<http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/statements.html>

or borrowed from the ONA Resources library in the church, where a copy is being kept.

Rocky Hill Congregational Church United Church of Christ - Social Justice Issues Timeline





1989

Pronouncement on the Relationship between the UCC and the Muslim Community
17th General Synod

1989

Resolution Deploing Violence Against Lesbian and Gay People
17th General Synod

1989

Pronouncement on the UCC's Ministry with Pacific Islander and Asian-American People
17th General Synod

1991

Resolution on Virginia Privacy Laws
18th General Synod

1991

Resolution on Affirming Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Persons and their Ministries
18th General Synod

1987

Pronouncement on the Hispanic Ministry of the UCC
16th General Synod

1987

First Native-American Woman Ordained

1987

Pronouncement that God's Covenant with the Jewish People Had Not Been "Abrogated" (annulled)
16th General Synod

1993

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender March on Washington

1993

Resolution Calling on the Church for Greater Leadership to End Discrimination Against Gays and Lesbians
19th General Synod

1993

A Call to End the Ban Against Gays and Lesbians in the Military
19th General Synod

1993

A Call for the UCC to Be a Multi-racial, Multicultural Church
19th General Synod

1987

Resolution on the Right to Privacy
16th General Synod

1987

General Synod Affirms the UCC as a Just Peace Church
16th General Synod

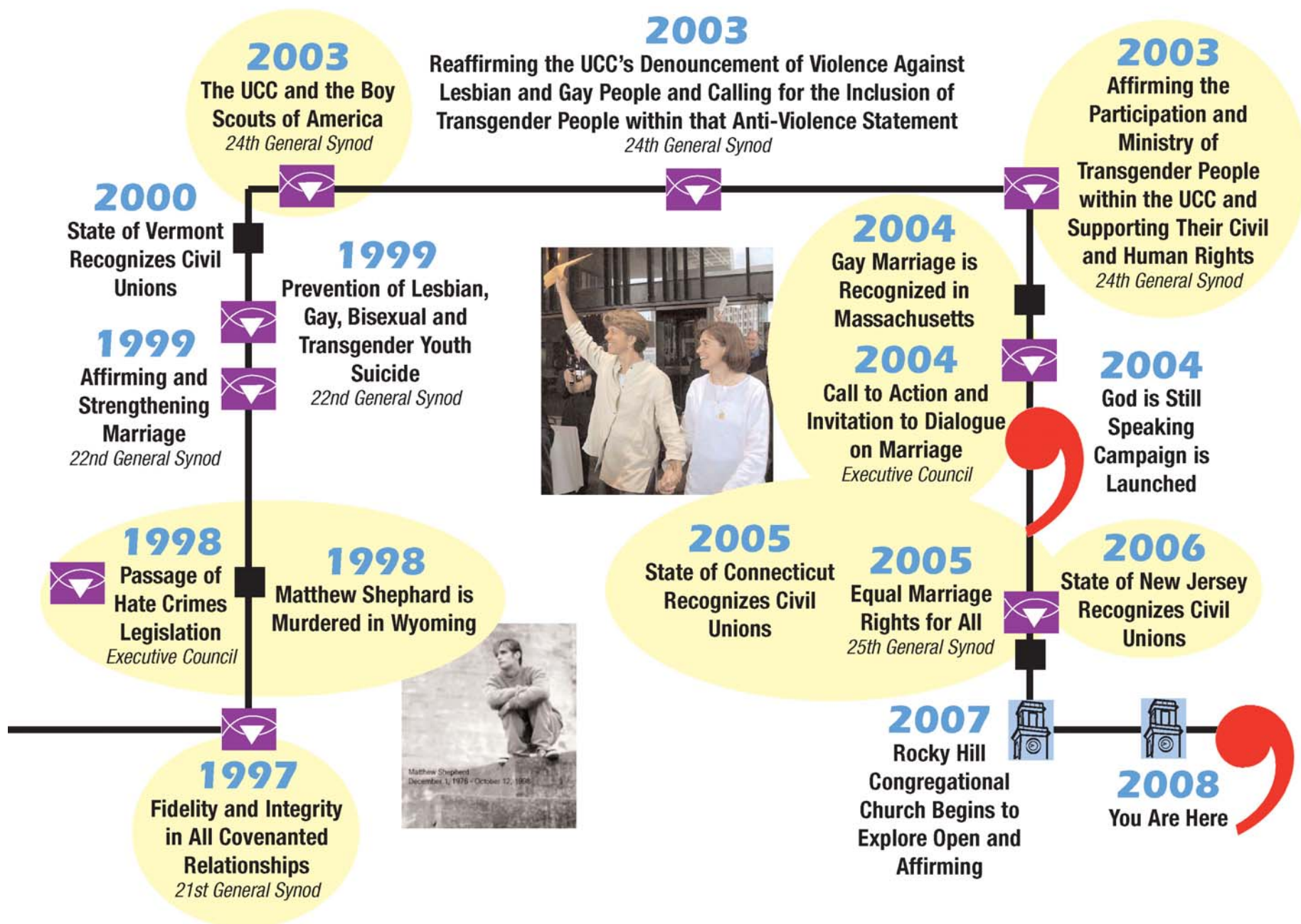
1996

Equal Marriage Rights for Same-Sex Couples
United Church Board for Homeland Ministries

1996

First Hispanic Conference Minister Elected



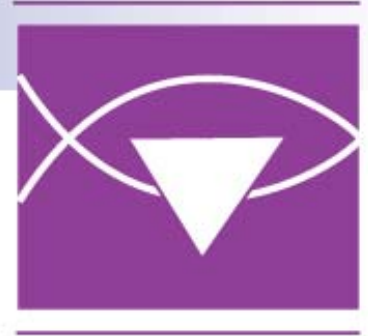


What is ONA?



Questions?

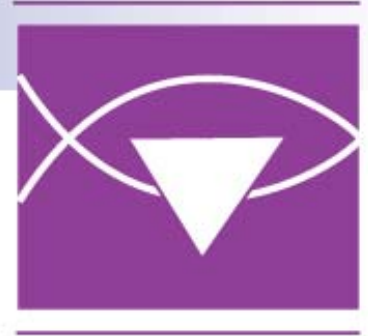
Questions



Following is a list of questions that were asked during the forum. We will try to address these questions in the future. Any further questions should be left in the ONA suggestion boxes or directed to members of the committee.

- Why is Rocky Hill Congregational Church so late in exploring ONA?
- What efforts are being made to reach out to those who are not here?
- Will it ever be a topic that will be included in Sunday worship?
- Are transgendered people going to be included? It sounded like they were not included in the original statement, but added later. My hope is that they would be included.
- Are churches outside of the UCC going through this process?
- Have there been studies that show correlation between going through this process and membership growth?
- Has anyone chosen to reverse this decision, after they went ONA?
- Wethersfield Church dropped out of the UCC as a result of this process – are there others who have left?
- Comment – “Welcoming and Faithful” website has a list.
- Clarification – Wethersfield did NOT engage in the ONA process! They left the UCC for a few reasons, and the decision was made from the top down.

Questions, continued



- Suggestion - UCC has a church directory with membership numbers. We could do our own research by looking at membership levels both before and after ONA process.
- Do we know the number of churches who have gone through this process and decided not to become ONA?
- UCC could send out a questionnaire about this process – Jonathan says they have.
- Comment - I don't know how many churches choose to go ONA or how many don't. I don't think this should effect our decision if it's the right thing to do.
- Comment - Bob, as a UCC delegate, says that while number of churches that are ONA seem low, compared to other social justice issues (Just Peace, Green Churches, etc.) this issue comes out on top for participation.
- Comment – By pointing out the Statement on the UCC and the Boy Scouts of America, we may have violated the Behavioral Covenant #5 (We will listen for understanding, especially when we seem to disagree) and we should speak carefully about this issue.
- Clarification – The UCC Connecticut Conference has voted itself an “ONA Conference.”
- Wouldn't every church want to welcome everybody?