

Open and Affirming Committee Meeting
Minutes
November 13, 2007

Present: Gail Hall, Chairman, Laurel Cole, Mary Dean, Tim Dostie, Katie Hoffman-Fulda, Bob Inderbitzen, Bill Hoffman, Pat Howland, Stephanie Heneghan, Ron Robbins, Tom Rolfe, Steve Smith, and Wendy Ware

Bill brought the meeting to order with a prayer at 7:30 pm.

Minutes of November 1st discussed and adopted.

Gail handed out a summary of the listing from the flip chart as well as messages found in the suggestion boxes from the second hour meeting on the November 11th.

The committee discussed the second hour/open forum. A sampling of the discussion topics include:

- Gail and others were disappointed that more people didn't show up. The Committee talked about reaching out to those who hadn't attended and how to reach out to them.
- Bill tallied how many came to the forum. Absent committee and pastors, 30 attended.
- We should provide child care for future meetings.
- Tim Dostie suggested that for future open forums ground rules for civility and discourse be set.
- Should we open up the discussion of being open and affirming from just sexual orientation to other target groups?

Sarah Verasco, from the UCC Conference Office was introduced.

- We asked her the following question: What has worked and what hasn't worked? How have other Churches had a successful, i.e. fully inclusive, process?

Her points:

Time is an important component.

- Patience, being able to calmly repeat things 101 times and to be able to communicate well with everyone.

- Don't throw in every discriminated group. She believes that doing so dilutes the point of the process.
- 42 ONA Churches in Connecticut.. 240 UCC Churches in CT.
- Think about what has worked here at the RHUCC before. What has been the hardest thing that we've ever done before as a Church? What did we do to get through it?
- Are we prepared to accept that the process might not conclude with an Open and Affirming Statement?
- Churches who do not vote in favor of an ONA process often come down to not voting because they have never come down publicly on any issue.
- Caution: Education is the easy part. Prayer and facilitating prayer in this process can be very difficult. How will you incorporate prayer in the process?
- We need to be conveyors of accurate information.
- Panel Discussions? Those representing the opposing view don't tend to represent themselves well. Biblical panel discussions work better, but are sometimes very stark. This is a good education process.
- For The Bible Tells Me So, a video, is a good resource. Web page: <http://www.forthebibletellsmeso.org/indexc.htm>

Gail thanked Sara for her insights.

Gail asked the Committee to consider the following for Homework assignments:.

Look at handout on the open and affirming charge.

Look at original ONA handout that Gail brought to the first meeting of the ONA Committee, "The Basics."

A suggestion was made that we run a chronology of our meetings and how many people attend them, etc. that could be posted on the public web space. Bill will draft something.

Next meeting December 11th.

Prayer volunteers: Tom will do opening prayer; Tim will do the closing.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 with a prayer from Bob.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Smith