

ONA Committee
Final Report
April 7, 2009

In July, 2007 the Diaconate of the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, with the blessing of the Church Council, appointed a committee of fifteen (15) members to “study and guide” the Open and Affirming process for the Rocky Hill Congregational Church. Fourteen members accepted the Committee appointment and, over the last year and a half, the Committee has done that. We are now ready to report our findings and to give our recommendation.

Here is a list of the committee’s activities:

- Engaged in thirty-one (31) regular committee meetings
- Presented six (6) second hour programs
- Offered three (3) Bible Studies small group sessions
- Conducted seven (7) film screenings with small discussion groups on “What It Means To Be Gay”
- Included an article in each Church Mouse from the time of our appointment through this year
- Sent one Church wide mailing
- Created an “ONA at RHCC” web page which helped educate and disseminate information to the Church.
- Created a “Library” of ONA materials where members could review the work of the committee, browse resources on ONA, and borrow CDs and DVDs of events.
- Created “ONA Suggestion Boxes” for members to communicate with the committee anonymously.

Early on, the Committee divided its subject areas into themes. These were:

1. What is ONA?
2. Interpreting the Bible
3. What it means to be Gay
4. How ONA will affect us and our beloved Church

The first year was spent primarily on the first three themes.

The second year was spent on the last theme and follow up on questions asked early in the ONA discernment process.

The second year concluded with a final second hour program hosted by the “Grumpy Old Pastors,” a group of retired UCC ministers, who each spoke about their Churches’ experiences with ONA. A survey of area Churches which had undergone an ONA process, conducted by our own Pastors, was the final element of the Committee’s research and education on the topic. A final Church Mouse article will address the survey results and any outstanding questions asked of the Committee early in the committee’s

outreach process. A full rendering of the themes and the Committee's activities can be seen on the website at http://rhccucc.org/new_design/ona/index.html and in the ONA Library at the Church.

Because of our systematic, wide, and varied communication to and from the congregation over a significant period of time, we are confident that Open and Affirming is now a familiar topic to the congregation. We are likewise confident that the congregation is fully aware of what ONA means to the Church and to themselves as individuals within its walls.

We therefore feel that we have completed our work and, with that end, offer the following recommendations:

1. That a congregational vote on a statement of inclusion and diversity be taken as soon as is reasonably practical. Appended to this report, please find a draft statement which you can bring to the congregation for vote.
2. That the Diaconate or Council establish an ad hoc committee to further this (ONA) work in the future.
3. That the statement of faith in the constitution be expanded to include additional groups suffering from societal discrimination.

We are:

Gail Hall, Chair
Michael Bower
Laurel Cole
Mary Dean
Tim Dostie
Stephanie Heneghan
Bill Hoffman
Katie Hoffman-Fulda
Pat Howland
Bob Inderbitzen
Rob Robbins
Tom Rolfe
Steve Smith
Wendy Ware

Rocky Hill Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Open and Affirming Statement

Because we believe that all people are created in God's image and thus are blessed and loved equally by God, and because love is a unifying and strengthening force within our Christian faith,

We, the members of the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, hereby declare ourselves an Open and Affirming Christian community, actively expressing Jesus' inclusive embrace of all people.

We welcome all who seek to follow Jesus, including persons of every age, gender, race, national origin, faith background, marital status and family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental and physical ability, economic and social status, and educational background, to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings and joys of our church family.

Jesus teaches us to welcome all God's children into God's covenantal community. As we grow together in faith and love, we will strive to celebrate the diversity in which God has created us.