



## ***Love is Love Love is Unconditional***

Open and Affirming (ONA), is a UCC designation for congregations that publicly affirm LGBTQ+ people and welcome them into their ministry.

In the process of developing our church's current vision and mission statement, it became clear we deeply value inclusivity and hope to be a place where all feel welcome. This led to the decision to work toward becoming an ONA church, and a committee has been formed to guide us through the process.

The Open and Affirming process will provide opportunities for discussion on how we can help our church be welcoming and inclusive for all. We strongly encourage everyone to participate, and invite open, respectful conversation on the topics being discussed.

Information on programs will be available in The Spire, and on the church's website under the News and Events section and the What's New at First Church section of the Home Page

You may ask why we need to go through this process when we have always considered ourselves a welcoming congregation.

Many churches denounce LGBTQ+ people, and they can't assume any church will be a safe and welcoming space for them and their families. Publicly stating we are an ONA church will send a clear message that we feel we are all God's children and should be treated with equal respect and dignity.

We invite you all to open your hearts to this process and keep in mind our church's vision statement, which says:

*Our faith – rooted in the compassion and teachings of Jesus Christ – is the foundation of our love for one another and service to the world around us. We offer a home for those seeking deeper meaning or purpose in their lives through the exploration of Jesus Christ's teachings. The love and compassion found in those teachings commit us to uplift each individual and celebrate our shared humanity.*

If you have any questions on the ONA process, please contact Kathy Filkins at [kathyfbooks@gmail.com](mailto:kathyfbooks@gmail.com).

*“Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” (Romans 15:7)*