



Self-evaluation tool for Open and Affirming (ONA) congregations

How to use this tool

The following questions can help you evaluate your congregation's ONA commitment and identify areas where you can grow in ministry, mission and evangelism.

You can answer the questions in two ways:

1. Y for Yes, N for No, NA for Not Applicable.
2. A number from 0 to 10 indicating a level of activity or commitment.

Remember that this is not a *test* but a *tool*. The purpose is to inform, not to “grade” your ONA ministry. There are no right or wrong answers! Take your time to think about each question. Some of them may not be applicable to your congregation.

It will be helpful if congregational leaders complete this form and meet to compare responses. Then, if you identify areas where your congregation can deepen its ONA commitment, develop an action plan. Remember that the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns is always ready to provide support and resources. Contact us, and we'll help!

Please note: the tool often uses the expression “LGBT/SGL.” LGBT means “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.” SGL refers to “Same-Gender-Loving”—an expression sometimes used in African American churches as an alternative to “LGBT.”.

Leadership

- ___ Is there an active Open and Affirming committee or ministry team in your congregation? If not, is your ONA ministry regularly on the agenda of another committee or team (e.g., mission and outreach, evangelism, spiritual life)?
- ___ Does your congregation have or has it had openly LGBT/SGL teachers in your Christian education program?
- ___ Does your congregation have or has it had openly LGBT/SGL moderators, treasurers, council or consistory members, deacons or other elected lay ministers?
- ___ Does your congregation have or has it had an openly LGBT/SGL music director, director of Christian education, youth minister or other paid staff?
- ___ Does your congregation have or has it had an openly LGBT/SGL pastor or other clergy?

_____ During the next leadership transition in your congregation, would a decision to call a qualified LGBT/SGL candidate for pastor cause conflict or bad feeling? Is it possible a search committee or your governing body might choose not to recommend a qualified candidate for this reason?

Transgender Inclusion

_____ If your congregation has not updated your ONA covenant to include a clear welcome to the transgender community, do you have a plan to amend the covenant after a period of study and dialogue?

_____ Does your congregation offer gender-neutral bathrooms? If not, are you planning a conversation about why inclusive bathroom facilities are important for your transgender members and visitors?

Evangelism through Mission and Outreach

_____ Does your congregation have a relationship with the LGBT/SGL community center in your town or city? Do you support the center financially and encourage your members to volunteer? If there is no community center, would you consider working with other welcoming congregations to organize one?

_____ Does your congregation have a relationship with LGBT/SGL groups on college campuses and with GSA groups (Gay-Straight Alliance) in public and charter schools?

_____ Does your congregation work with other welcoming congregations and the local LGBT/SGL community to hold public and charter schools accountable to anti-bullying policies?

_____ Does your congregation offer meeting space to LGBT/SGL groups in your community, e.g., recovery groups, safe space for LGBT/SGL youth, PFLAG?

_____ Does your congregation offer programs for LGBT/SGL seniors, e.g., a weekly coffeeshop and other social activities? Have you reached out to LGBT/SGL seniors in retirement communities and nursing homes? Has the congregation sponsored a public forum to learn more about the needs of LGBT/SGL elders?

_____ Do leaders of your congregation meet on a regular basis with other ONA churches and welcoming congregations of other traditions in your community?

_____ Is your congregation active in your Conference's ONA Ministry Network? If there is no ONA team or network in your Conference, are you willing to work with your Conference Minister to organize one?

_____ Does your congregation work with the LGBT-rights lobby in your state? Are you prepared to work with other ONA congregations to advocate for marriage equality, legal protection from discrimination in housing and employment, effective anti-bullying policies in schools, transgender rights, or other basic human rights for the LGBT/SGL community?

_____ Does your congregation have a relationship with the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns, and is an annual contribution to the Coalition part of your budget? Do you make Coalition pamphlets available in your entrance space, and do you encourage members to subscribe to the Coalition's newsletter?

Evangelism through Communication and Publicity

_____ Is your congregation a visible presence in local Pride events?

_____ Do you celebrate a public renewal of your ONA covenant every year on Pride Sunday, and is it widely publicized in your community?

_____ Does your congregation offer weddings and blessing ceremonies for same-sex couples, and have you shared this news with the LGBT/SGL community?

_____ Does your congregation display the official UCC Rainbow Banner or a rainbow sign on your building to proclaim your welcome in a way that passers-by can easily notice?

_____ Is the UCC Rainbow Comma displayed prominently on your website and Facebook page, along with a brief explanation of "Open and Affirming?"

_____ Does your congregation advertise in the local LGBT/SGL community newspaper, and does your advertising in other media publicize your welcome to the LGBT/SGL community?

_____ Does your congregation use opportunities for free publicity (in cafés and coffee shops, the LGBT/SGL community center, student centers at local colleges, public libraries, community bulletin boards) to communicate your welcome? Have you designed a colorful brochure or postcard displaying the UCC Rainbow Comma to distribute in these public spaces and at LGBT/SGL community events?

_____ Do you encourage and train your members to witness to your welcome with their friends, families and coworkers? Do your members wear the UCC Rainbow Comma pin or some other symbol to encourage conversation?

Worship

See questions on Pride Sunday and same-sex weddings under "Evangelism through Communication and Publicity."

_____ Do LGBT/SGL members serve as liturgists, readers, communion servers, deacons or other worship leaders?

_____ Does your congregation offer prayers in your liturgies that name LGBT/SGL persons and issues?

_____ Are anniversaries for LGBT/SGL partners honored or celebrated in the same way as the anniversaries of all other couples?

___ Does your congregation offer rituals for its LGBT/SGL members around coming-out, gender transitioning, and other life-cycle events?

Adult Education

___ Does your congregation include a session on your ONA covenant in your new-member classes?

___ Does your congregation offer adult forums on issues relating to LGBT/SGL inclusion and justice? How often? Are they well attended?

___ Does your congregation offer outside speakers or films on LGBT/SGL inclusion and justice? How often? Are they well attended?

Children's Education

___ Does your congregation offer curriculum for elementary age children on LGBT inclusion?

___ Does your congregation offer curriculum for junior high age children on LGBT inclusion?

___ Does your congregation include LGBT inclusion as part of your Confirmation curriculum?

___ Does your congregation offer curriculum for high school age youth on LGBT inclusion?

___ Do registration forms for Christian education list "Parent 1, Parent 2" instead of "Mother, Father?"

We can help you learn more about each of these opportunities for mission, outreach and evangelism!

UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns

phone: 216-861-0779

email: office@ucccoalition.org

Facebook: [facebook.com/ucc.coalition](https://www.facebook.com/ucc.coalition)

website: www.ucccoalition.org