



SELF-EVALUATION TOOL FOR OPEN AND AFFIRMING CHURCHES

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. You'll find resources at www.openandaffirming.org. Remember that the Open and Affirming Coalition is always ready to support your congregation on its continuing ONA journey. Contact us, and we'll help!

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 LGBTQ teachers in your Christian education program?
- Does your congregation have or has it had openly LGBTQ moderators, treasurers, council or consistory members, deacons or other elected lay ministers?
- Does your congregation have or has it had an openly LGBTQ music director, director of Christian education, youth minister or other paid staff?
- Does your congregation have or has it had an openly LGBTQ pastor or other clergy?
- During the next leadership transition in your congregation, would a decision to call a qualified LGBTQ 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 ministry

- Does your congregation have a relationship with the LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ groups on college campuses and with GSA groups (Gay-Straight Alliance) in local schools?
- Does your congregation work with other welcoming congregations and the LGBTQ community to hold local schools accountable to anti-bullying policies?
- Does your congregation offer meeting space to LGBTQ groups in your community, e.g., recovery groups, safe space for LGBTQ youth, PFLAG?
- Does your congregation offer programs for LGBTQ seniors, e.g., a weekly coffeeshop and other social activities? Have you reached out to LGBTQ seniors in retirement communities and nursing homes? Has the congregation sponsored a public forum to learn more about the needs of LGBTQ 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 Coalition (or ONA Ministry Team)? If there is no ONA Coalition in your Conference, are you willing to work with your Conference Minister to organize one?
- Does your congregation work with the LGBTQ-rights lobby in your state? Are you prepared to work with other ONA congregations to advocate for legal protection from discrimination in housing and employment, effective anti-bullying policies in schools, transgender rights, LGBTQ asylum-seekers, or other basic human rights for the LGBTQ community?
- Does your congregation have a relationship with the Open and Affirming Coalition, 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 email 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 for same-sex couples, and have you shared this news with the LGBTQ community?
- Does your congregation display the official UCC Rainbow Banner or any other rainbow banner, flag or sign outside 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 LGBTQ community newspaper, and does your advertising in other media publicize your welcome to the LGBTQ community?
- Does your congregation use opportunities for free publicity (in cafés and coffee shops, the LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ community events?
- Do you encourage and train your members to witness to your welcome with their friends, families and coworkers? Have you printed and distributed a welcoming business card with the UCC Rainbow Comma? Do your members wear the UCC Rainbow Comma pin to encourage conversation?

Worship

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

- Do LGBTQ members serve as liturgists, readers, communion servers, deacons or other worship leaders?
- Does your congregation offer prayers in your liturgies that name LGBTQ persons and issues?
- Are anniversaries for LGBTQ partners honored or celebrated in the same way as the anniversaries of all other couples?
- Does your congregation offer rituals for its LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ inclusion and justice? How often? Are they well attended?
- Does your congregation offer outside speakers or films on LGBTQ inclusion and justice? How often? Are they well attended?

Children and youth education

- Is LGBTQ inclusion part of Christian education for elementary age children?
- Is LGBTQ inclusion part of Christian education for junior high age children?
- Is LGBTQ inclusion part of your Confirmation curriculum?
- Is LGBTQ inclusion part of Christian education for high school age youth?
- Do registration forms for Christian education list “Parent 1, Parent 2” instead of “Mother, Father?”

Remember that your ONA covenant is the beginning, not the end, of your journey!

Additional resources

LGBTQ Bullying and Suicide Resources

www.openandaffirming.org/bullying

LGBTQ Seniors

www.openandaffirming.org/seniors

Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum for all ages

www.ucc.org/justice_sexuality-education_our-whole-lives

Transgender

www.openandaffirming.org/transgender

Advocacy against Discrimination

www.openandaffirming.org/discrimination

Advocacy for LGBTQ Asylum-Seekers

www.openandaffirming.org/international

Next steps for ONA churches

www.openandaffirming.org/ona/next

Evangelism for ONA churches

www.openandaffirming.org/evangelism

Free email newsletter for ONA churches

www.openandaffirming.org/subscribe

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