

# OPEN AND AFFIRMING COALITION: Workshops, Retreats, and Events for your Conference or Association

## WORKSHOPS

These workshops can be offered individually or in a series during your Conference or Association Annual Meeting, or at a regional ONA event in a local church or seminary.

### 1 ONA 101: Why and How?

**F**ear of conflict is often the reason churches hesitate to take their first steps towards an ONA commitment, and a poorly-planned or rushed ONA process can divide a congregation. But a carefully-planned ONA process can build consensus and rekindle a congregation's passion for the Gospel. Instead of dividing the congregation, a journey towards an ONA covenant can deepen relationships and open up new possibilities for evangelism, mission and ministry.

### 2 ONA and the Bible

**O**ut of 31,000 verses in the Bible, just a few are often a stumbling block for churches that want to welcome and support their LGBTQ members and neighbors. But what else does the Bible say about our relationships with each other and with God? How can the Bible help a church explore the basic values that inform a conversation about human sexuality and gender identity? And how can a congregation understand the few texts that are often cited to condemn same-sex relationships?

### 3 ONA 201: Best Practices for ONA Evangelism and Membership Growth

**A**n ONA covenant can help congregations grow in numbers and energy—but only if the church's commitment to LGBTQ inclusion is public and visible. This workshop shares the experience of growing ONA churches, with tips for marketing, advertising, communications and advocacy.



#### ABOUT ANDY LANG

Andy Lang, executive director of the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ, is available to lead workshops or one-day events in your church, Conference or Association!

A professional church communicator, Andy was a newspaper reporter and public relations specialist in Washington, D.C. In 1994, he founded the UCC's first national website at [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) and went on to lead the church's web and social media team. He has been the ONA Coalition's executive director since 2010.

Since Andy joined the ONA Coalition in 2010, the ONA movement has grown from 850 to more than 1,500 churches. His passion is to reach every congregation until the UCC is "100% ONA."

## RETREATS AND EVENTS

The ONA Coalition can help your Conference, Association or other setting develop regional ONA retreats or other events to (1) help prepare congregations for a healthy ONA process and (2) support existing ONA churches in ministry, mission and advocacy. These events, which combine workshops with panels led by local church members, are suitable as one-or two-day ONA events sponsored by your Association or Conference and hosted by a centrally-located ONA church or seminary. They can also serve as pre-events before your Conference annual meeting.

### Introduction to the Open and Affirming movement: First Steps

This one-day event can include workshops #1 and #2 above, plus a panel discussion with members of ONA congregations who tell their stories: how has joining an Open and Affirming church changed lives, and how has an ONA commitment transformed congregations and helped them grow? This event is suitable both for congregations considering first steps towards an ONA covenant, and churches who simply want to learn more about the ONA movement in the United Church of Christ.

**Goal:** help congregations build consensus and reduce the danger of conflict on their way towards an ONA commitment.

### What's Next for your Open and Affirming Church?

This one-day event includes workshop #3 above, plus an opportunity for congregations to use the Coalition's "Self-Evaluation Tool for ONA Churches." A presentation or panel discussion led by informed representatives of the transgender/genderqueer community is also recommended, or you may want to develop a panel on other issues.

**Goal:** help churches revive their ONA commitment and learn new ways to translate their ONA covenant into action.

#### CONTACT US

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**OPEN AND AFFIRMING  
COALITION**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



## TESTIMONIALS



**John Dorhauer**  
General Minister and President  
United Church of Christ

*Your sermon and keynote at the Southwest Conference Annual meeting were simply stunning, Andy. I was deeply moved by your words. Your presence inspired us all. Thank you for your leadership, your presence, and your wisdom on the journey!*



**Edith Guffey**  
Conference Minister  
Kansas-Oklahoma Conference  
United Church of Christ

*Andy was excellent: warm, engaging, and willing to share his own journey illustrating that he could hear and relate to people who may be wrestling with questions and fears about the ONA process. He listened carefully and responded thoughtfully. Those who attended his workshop were better informed and encouraged about the possibility of entering into a dialogue in their churches. I was so impressed that we are now exploring how we can continue to work with Andy to increase the number of ONA churches in Kansas and Oklahoma. I have no reservations in recommending Andy as a speaker and workshop leader. I am confident he will do a great job.*



**Freeman Palmer**  
Associate Conference Minister  
New York Conference  
United Church of Christ

*Andy has led several Open and Affirming workshops in locations throughout the New York Conference. All who attended have given him high marks for his intelligence, insight and passion. Recently I heard Andy preach at one of our churches, and was moved by his sharing and his testimony. Whether your congregation is already Open and Affirming or taking your first steps towards an ONA Covenant, there is education, wisdom and blessing to be found when Andy Lang ministers in your midst either as preacher or workshop facilitator.*



**Kurt Wieser**  
Pastor  
Grace UCC, Loyal Oak  
Norton, OH

*Our church's leadership participated in Andy's "Open and Affirming 201" webinar. It was fantastic! Grace UCC has been ONA for decades, but drifted away from its intentionality around ONA issues. Andy's webinar really made an impact. Immediately following the experience, we began an exciting conversation about how to revitalize our commitment to one of our core values. And we're growing: 31 new members and two to six new visitors every Sunday. I personally cannot wait to see where this new energy leads us.*