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Dear Church,

We write to share information about the next steps in the Open and Affirming process for our church. Back in July, we shared the news that, in response to interest from members of the congregation, the church would begin a process towards becoming an *Open and Affirming* (or “ONA”) church in the United Church of Christ. You can read the text of our July email [here](#). That was followed by a chance to respond and converse about the process at the annual meeting. Now, we have an update on next steps.

The Open and Affirming process, as you may recall, involves a period of discernment, prayer, and conversation, after which the church may choose to write and vote on adoption of its own ONA covenant. (You'll find an example of an ONA covenant, written and recently adopted by the UCC church in Lincolnton, at the bottom of this e-mail.) In August, a number of us participated in a webinar that offered an overview of the ONA process and guidance on how to craft a robust, inclusive process — one that creates space for genuine discernment and honest conversation. That webinar can be viewed [here](#).

At our September meeting, Church Council appointed a core team to shape and lead our time of discernment and conversation. That group includes: Roberta Boczkievicz, Ginny Hilton, Ray Nualla, Kristi Pratt, Jane Saltsman, and Judith Sandven. We are grateful for their willingness to shepherd this process. Pastor Andi will serve as a resource to that core team.

The core team met in early October, and decided that a fruitful first step in this process would be to hold one-on-one conversations with as many of you as possible. Those conversations will be a chance for the team to *listen*: to hear your questions, to listen to your concerns, to find out what opportunities you see and what you find exciting about the process. Following those conversations, the core team will craft a plan for small-group conversations and learning opportunities that reflect the questions and topics that you identify in those conversations. Members of the core team will be contacting you to set

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With gratitude,

Church Council (Bobby Vagt, Helen Anderson, Bruce Boczkiewicz, Roberta Boczkiewicz, Andrea Hatch, Andi Lloyd, Linda Murray, Kim Smith-Tourles)

Example of an ONA covenant:

UNITED CHRISTIAN CHURCH, LINCOLNVILLE, ME

The United Christian Church in Lincolnville, Maine is an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ. We declare our openness and affirmation to all, especially to those who have suffered prejudice, bigotry, and oppression. God's love is for everyone.

We embrace diversity and affirm the dignity and worth of every person. To that end, we engage and support all people, whoever they may be and wherever they are on their spiritual journey. We intentionally and joyfully welcome people of every race, ethnicity, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, marital status, physical and mental ability, variety of thoughts and beliefs, socio-economic situation and faith background.

We welcome everyone to share in all aspects of our church life, as we believe that all people are blessed and loved equally by God. No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.



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