



*First Church of Christ (Congregational), UCC
549 Storrs Road, P.O. Box 36
Mansfield Center, CT 06250-0036*

Telephone: (860) 423-9008 Fax: (860) 423-6112

A DECLARATION OF OPENNESS AND AFFIRMATION

In keeping with the Covenant of our church we, the members of the First Church of Christ, Congregational (UCC) in Mansfield Center, Connecticut, respond to the call of the 15th General Synod of the United Church of Christ and the 122nd Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ by making the following Declaration of Openness and Affirmation:

We know that as Christians we are many members, but are one body in Christ (Romans 12:5), and Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39) without being judgmental (Matthew 7:1-2) or disparaging of others (Luke 18:9-14). Because we are all one, unified in Jesus Christ, we are called to be a caring community made up of, and open to, all persons. The United Church of Christ has historically affirmed a rich diversity in perspectives and actively sought social justice. This is evidenced in our rejection of racism and ethnic discrimination, in our efforts to be accessible to people with physical or mental handicaps, in our affirmation of the equality of women and men, and in our endeavors to honor all people equally, without regard to economic status.

We now commit ourselves to further caring and concern for our sisters and brothers by affirming that:

- Many persons of gay, lesbian and bisexual orientation are already members of the church through baptism and confirmation;
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual people share the worth that comes from being unique individuals and are welcome to join our congregation in the same spirit and manner used in the acceptance of all new members;
- We seek to include and support those who, because of our fear and prejudice, find themselves in exile from a spiritual community;
- We will strive to seek ways in which to address the needs and concerns of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in our church and in society.

Knowing that this affirmation poses a spiritual challenge, we will encourage each other gently in our struggle to understand and accept. We pray for the strength and courage to dispel our ignorance, fear and hatred. We choose to turn toward loving and away from judging since only God is capable of the impartiality needed to condemn or condone.

We join together to adopt the following non-discrimination policy and encourage the Executive Council to initiate appropriate programs and/or develop resources to enable the spirit of openness and affirmation to flourish, not only in regard to gays, lesbians and bisexuals, but to anyone who may be discriminated against. In the name of Jesus Christ we extend the hand of Christian love and welcome to all into the fellowship of this congregation.

INCLUSIVE NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

We do not discriminate against any qualified person, group or organization in hiring, promotion, membership, appointment, use of facility, provision of services or funding on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, economic status, physical ability, mental illness or developmental disability.

ADOPTED NOVEMBER 11, 1990