Report of the Open and Affirming Task Force

Early in 2010, a task force convened to facilitate congregational conversation on what it means to be “Open and Affirming” (ONA). Through nine meetings held January – April, the task force shaped a broad definition of ONA, revisited our current mission statement, and put forward 4 principles affirmed by Cabinet in May:

1) In Jesus Christ we are all children of God, through faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)

2) We believe that our value as human beings is given to us by God, and that God calls us to relate to each other as whole persons, with love, responsibility, accountability, trust, and mutual nurture; and to work for justice and wholeness in the world.

3) We recognize that our individual and collective fears or prejudices about other people are dispelled by the grace of God and the commandment to love our neighbors.

4) We are called to be servants of grace and ministers of reconciliation so that we foster community across every barrier and division.

August – October of 2010, the task force held Sunday lunch conversations with more than 42 participants overall. These conversations indicated agreement that we are open and need to become more affirming.

At its November 2010 meeting, Cabinet endorsed this Open and Affirming statement for congregational adoption at the Semi-Annual Meeting in January 2011.

As an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation of the United Church of Christ, Kent UCC welcomes ALL people of good will to our community of faith and affirms the full inclusion of ALL God’s people in the life and ministry of the church. As part of the body of Christ, we are children of God, all people are our brothers and sisters, and we are the parents of future generations.

Therefore:

1) We declare that the United Church of Christ, Kent, Ohio is an open and affirming congregation which does not discriminate on the bases of any differences—whether of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, economic class, marital status, or physical and/or psychological differences—and that we welcome all who would participate with us in Christ’s mission; and

2) We commit ourselves to the struggle against homophobia, racism, and all individual and systemic attitudes and acts of injustice, discrimination, violence, and hatred that work against peace and wholeness.

2 Excerpted from ONA Statement, First Church in Cambridge, MA. www.ucc.org