

from Rev. Rick Wagner, Associate Conference Minister

One of the ways in which the Minnesota Conference UCC engages in **prophetic witness** is through the work of the ONA Team and the various ministries of our 35 "Open and Affirming" congregations. We invite you to join with those who affirm the gifts of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people within the Minnesota Conference at this year's "Open and Affirming" celebration which will be this Sunday, April 25th at Clark Memorial UCC, 779 15th Ave. N., in South Saint Paul. The afternoon's events include workshops beginning at 2:30pm and a worship service at 4:00pm. All are welcome. The building is wheelchair accessible. There will be refreshments following the worship service.

The preacher for the service will be the Rev. Dr. Anita Bradshaw, former National Field Organizer for the Welcoming Church Movement. Rev. Bradshaw now serves as Director of Judicatory Based Education for Eden Theological Seminary.

Two workshops will be offered at 2:30pm. **ONA 101** (Open and Affirming basics) is meant for those people beginning conversations within their churches. **Transgender Inclusion** will be offered to help churches expand their welcome to those of differing gender identities.

The "Open and Affirming" program within the United Church of Christ comes from a 1985 General Synod Resolution calling on all settings of the church to adopt statements of "openness" and "affirmation" towards gay, lesbian and bisexual people. A later General Synod in 2003 also called upon the church to acknowledge and celebrate the gifts transgender individuals bring to the church. A short video of our 35 "Open and Affirming" UCC congregations in Minnesota may be found [by clicking here](#).

Looking ahead to June, the Annual ONA Gathering will be held on June 10-11 at the College of St. Benedict, immediately prior to the Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference. The Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer, Executive of the Health and Wholeness Advocacy Ministry of the UCC in Cleveland will be the keynote speaker at the Gathering. The ONA Team, along with a number of co-signers, is also bringing a resolution to the Annual Meeting of the Conference (June 11-13) entitled, "Marriage Equality for Couples Regardless of Gender." To view the Gathering flyer, marriage equality resolution, or other Annual Meeting materials, visit www.uccmn.org/annualmeeting.

The Minnesota Conference is committed to prophetic witness. The work of the ONA Team is part of that witness.

Past *Mission Bites* can be found at www.uccmn.org