

# ONA: NOW, More than Ever

## Session 1 Workshops

- Coming Home: Supporting our Queer Youth and their Families
  - Leader: Johari Hunt (he, him)
    - This workshop will initiate the conversation of how to better support Queer Youth and those who love them coming into our spaces, engage with the grief that is our current reality, and connect with the joy that is building a queer future that is welcome to all.
      - Johari Hunt is a new arrival to the Saint Louis Area but has fallen in love with this Midwest city. He is passionate about bringing out the spiritual light of the LGBTQ community through academic study and community work. Johari is a Promise Scholar that received his Bachelor of Art degree in Religious Studies from the University California Santa Barbara in 2020. As the Coordinator of Faith Formation for 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational UCC of Webster Groves, Johari applies his skills to help children and youth develop an innate connection to God and life.
  
- ONA 101: The ONA Process
  - Leader: Barb Biedenstein (she/her/hers)
    - The public declaration of welcome by an Open & Affirming church sends a clear message to LGBTQIA people and their families that they have a safe home in that congregation. Achieving this process takes time and planning and needs to ensure that all voices in the church are heard. This process utilizes materials created by the ecumenical group “Building an Inclusive Church.” This workshop will outline the steps of the recommended ONA process and resources that are readily available.
      - Barb Biedenstein is a long-standing member of and serves as the secretary of Gateway ONA. She has

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attended and studied the Building an Inclusive Church training and serves as the ONA consultant for St. Louis and Eastern Missouri area churches.

- Gender Inclusivity
  - Leader: Jordan Braxton (she/her/hers)
    - This will be an eye-opening workshop focusing on a basic understanding of LGBTQIA+ terms. It will also explore and focus on gender expressions, gender identity, sexual orientation and the use of personal pronouns. It concludes with the importance of being an Ally.
      - Jordan Braxton has been active in the St. Louis LGBTQIA community for over 35-years, raising countless dollars and serving in many leadership capacities. Jordan is honored to be a member of the Board of Pride St. Louis, Inc. as the Director of Public Relations. Jordan is also the Vice President of Black Pride St. Louis and TransParent and the Chairperson of the Mayor's LGBTQIA+ Advisory Board. Jordan currently works at Vivent Health.
  
- Changing Hearts and Minds
  - Leader: Jeanette Mott Oxford (ze/zir/zirs)
    - Your uncle makes an offensive gay joke. Church members don't use another member's preferred pronouns. Your state legislator repeatedly files anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation. As a person of faith, an advocate for justice, and an ally of the LGBTQIA community, how do you respond? This workshop looks at techniques that have worked to break down prejudice and stigma for the sake of better relationships and just policies and practices in families, communities, and institutions. Participants will also be invited to role play some challenging situations so that we feel more confident when it's our turn to step up and speak out.

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- Jeanette Mott Oxford is Public Policy and Advocacy Manager at Paraquad, an independent living center for people living with disabilities in St. Louis. Ze is a member of Epiphany United Church of Christ, a graduate of Eden Theological Seminary, the first out lesbian to serve in the Missouri House of Representatives (2005-2012), and former executive director of two statewide not-for-profits advocating for the end of poverty.
  
- Biblical “Clobber Texts”
  - Leader: Rev. Dr. Deb Krause (she/her/hers)
    - There are biblical texts that are too frequently used by some to condemn homosexuality, in effect, to "clobber" LGBTQIA+ folks with the Bible. It is always an abuse of scripture when it is used as a weapon to hurt and demean others. Such abusive use of the Bible most often occurs when biblical texts are read apart from their historical and cultural contexts. This workshop will examine the "clobber" texts in their historical and cultural contexts in the ancient world and against contemporary understandings of human sexuality.
      - Rev. Dr. Deb Krause is Professor of New Testament and the President of Eden Theological Seminary in Webster Groves, Missouri. Her teaching and scholarship focus on methods of biblical interpretation and their roots in critical theory, theology, and politics. She helps others gain an understanding of what the Bible has meant in the history of the church, and to gain insight into what it means and how they can proclaim it today.

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## Session 2 Workshops

- Allyship: Tips & Tools
  - Leader: Jill Aul (she/her/hers)
    - This is a workshop about allyship, presented by an ally. It aims to invite, educate, and engage allies in the effort to create a world with equality for all. Learn what it means to be an ally and get some great tips and tools for being more supportive of your LGBT friends, family, and colleagues.
      - Jill Aul is the proud parent of a transgender son who facilitates meetings and speaks to community groups as a representative of the PFLAG St. Louis chapter. Jill is the founder of the St. Charles chapter and co-founder of Pride St. Charles.
  
- Songs for the Holy Other
  - Leader: Rev. Tom Baynham (he/him/his)
    - This workshop seeks to provide churches and their music ministries with a toolbox of hymns by and for those who identify as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, nonbinary, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, aromantic, two-spirit, and other sexual/gender minority (LGBTQIA2S+) community and their allies. Made in conjunction with The Hymn Society, this collection emerged from a desire to make queer hymns — hymns by, for, or about the LGBTQIA2S+ community — accessible to a wider range of congregations.
      - Tom Baynham has served at Friedens UCC, St. Charles, MO since 2018; first as their associate pastor, and currently as their senior pastor since 2020. Tom’s focus and gifts are in the areas of worship, music, and church vitality. A native of Richmond, Virginia, Tom has served churches across the US. He holds graduate degrees from Boston University School of Theology, Baptist Theological

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Seminary at Richmond, and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Tom is the father of two adult children who enjoys reading, conducting, the Dallas Cowboys...and the Chicago Cubs.

- Stories from the Front: Treasuring Our Transgender Children
  - Leaders: Matt Lechner (he/him); Karen Rudolph (she/her); Lisa Brennan (she/her), Nancy Slusarski (she/her)
    - Everyone has an innate desire to love and be loved in return. Accepted and loved by God, everyone desires that acceptance, love and understanding from all humankind. More than just a discussion on transgender issues, these are the stories of our children, our neighbors, and our extended family.
      - Matt Lechner, Lisa Brennan, Karen Rudolph and Nancy Slusarski are all parents of transgender children and active in the TransParent organizations of St. Louis & St. Charles. They each have unique stories of their child's coming out as transgender and their journeys as families.
  
- ONA 201 - Living into Your ONA Covenant
  - Leader: Rev. Dr. Katrina Roseboro-Marsh (she/her/hers)
    - We've voted, now what do we do? Come learn practical steps to take after becoming Open and Affirming. This workshop will emphasize that an ONA Covenant is not paperwork to be filed away or a plaque to hang on the wall but a vision to be lived into and announced boldly to the world.
      - Rev. Dr. Katrina Roseboro-Marsh is the executive director of the ONA Coalition of the United Church of Christ. She has served a UCC church and holds ministerial standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ – DOC) and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM). She holds degrees in psychology, social work and ministry, and

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maintains a private practice that includes counseling and spiritual direction.

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## Session 3 Workshops

- Harmony in Diversity: Crafting Inclusive Worship Spaces
  - Leaders: Rev. Tim Powers-Reed (he, him, his) & Rev. Michelle Torigian (she, hers)
    - In this session, participants will explore the art of creating truly inclusive, multisensory, worship experiences that celebrate diversity. We will delve into diverse worship styles, using culture and music to enrich worship. We'll create liturgy that resonates with and affirms everyone and discover the power that language has to unify. We'll discuss strategies, address challenges, and promote respect while delving into the specific considerations for LGBTQ+ inclusivity in worship. Join us on this inspiring journey to build open, affirming, and diverse worship spaces that reflect the beautiful tapestry of our communities and foster unity in our shared faith experience.
      - Rev. Tim Powers-Reed is the lead pastor at Trinity UCC Belleville, IL. Tim is the owner and author of [www.pastortalk.net](http://www.pastortalk.net); a virtual platform dedicated to discussions on faith and justice. Tim is President of Common Ground, the LGBTQIA+ organization at Eden Theological Seminary. Currently an Eden Seminary student, Tim is pursuing a doctoral degree focusing on the intersection of theology, activism, and inclusivity. As a proud member of the LGBTQIA community, Tim seeks to create a safe haven where people can find solace and spiritual connection.
      - Rev. Michelle Torigian is currently the senior pastor at St. Paul UCC in Belleville, IL. Michelle's writings have appeared in various books and on the religion page of the Huffington Post. She has also written various pieces for the United Church of Christ including for Worship Ways, worship elements for General Synod in 2015 and 2023, and the UCC Daily Devotional. Rev. Torigian regularly posts her musings on current events, justice

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issues, pop culture, and theology at [www.michelleorigian.com](http://www.michelleorigian.com). She enjoys woodburning and creating art as well as playing board games and traveling with her husband Aaron.

- Legislative Issues
  - Leader: a representative from PROMO Missouri
    - Given the current and fast changing political climate in this nation centering on the LGBTQIA community and its allies, it is difficult to keep track of what is going on and how to respond. This workshop will provide updates on LGBTQIA legislative issues at the local, state, and national levels.
      - PROMO Missouri is Missouri's statewide organization advocating for LGBTQ equality in the Show-Me State.
  
- LGBTQIA Aging and Spirituality at the End of Life: An Important Role for Open & Affirming Congregations
  - Leader: Sherrill Wayland (She/Her/They)
    - This workshop will focus on educational initiatives centering on how Open and Affirming congregations can help their LGBTQIA+ members find community support and discuss the importance of spirituality at the end of life.
      - Sherrill Wayland, MSW, is the Senior Director of Special Initiatives and Partnerships with the National SAGE organization. Sherrill was the founder of SAGE Metro St. Louis (now Missourians Aging with Pride of PROMO Fund) and led the local SAGE affiliate until 2015 when she joined the national SAGE team. Sherrill works remotely from her office in Crestwood, MO where she enjoys the company of her office mates Lilly the Chief Security Officer (4 year old Chihuahua Beagle Mix) and Nellie the Cuddler in Chief (3 year Yorkie/Jack Russel Terrier Mix). Sherrill and her wife Kim, recently



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celebrated their 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary and have dedicated much of the last 4 years to providing care and support to older lesbian friends and chosen family.

- Can I even say “Gay”? And other LGBTQIA+ language issues!
  - Leader: Krissy Avis-Rouse (they/them/she/her)
    - This interactive session will help to answer your questions and provide strategies for dealing with the ever-changing language of queerness! Bring your questions and struggles and an open mind.
      - Krissy Avise-Rouse is pastor of Epiphany UCC in St. Louis and chaplain at Every Child's Hope in St. Louis County. As an out transfeminine, nonbinary, genderqueer human, Krissy uses they/them or she/her pronouns and is married to a quogender middle school English teacher.