

## Where do I learn more about the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?

For more information about the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) go to [www.disciples.org](http://www.disciples.org).

For more information about the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance and a list of O&A Congregations go to [www.disciplesallianceq.org](http://www.disciplesallianceq.org).

You can also contact:

Rev. Mark Johnston, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Open & Affirming Ministry Program  
[mark@disciplesallianceq.org](mailto:mark@disciplesallianceq.org)  
317 721 5230

# Open & Affirming LGBTQ+ Ministries

Copyright © 2017 Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance

## A Church That Welcomes Everyone

### Questions and Answers about Open & Affirming Ministries

### What is an Open & Affirming Congregation?

Open & Affirming (O&A) churches strive to be welcoming places, places that welcome you whatever your skin color, accent, clothing, or the gender of your spouse. An O&A church seeks to welcome all people without judgment and to provide a welcome that honors and accepts the diversity that is the image of God in creation. An O&A church works to ensure that when we say 'all are welcome,' we truly mean everyone.

### What is the Open & Affirming Ministry Program?

The Open & Affirming Ministry Program started in the 1980s when a group of members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) gathered and began to dream of a church that welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people into the full

life and leadership of the church. Thus began the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance (Alliance Q) and the Open & Affirming Ministry Program.

## How does a church get placed

### on Alliance Q's list of O&A congregations?

In order to be placed on Alliance Q's list of O&A congregations, a church is expected to show its understanding of inclusive welcome in several ways. These include spending time in study, reflection and prayer on biblical and theological understandings of welcome and finally making a commitment to treat all its members and staff equally in the life and leadership of the congregation.

## So is this just about LGBT people?

Not at all. Because many people still believe that God rejects LGBT people, Alliance Q encourages congregations to start by examining their acceptance of LGBT people. However, Alliance Q understands that no one is truly welcome until we understand that God welcomes everyone.

## So who is everyone?

Good question. We've all known places where 'all' and 'everyone' doesn't really include 'people like me.' When it was first written down, the proclamation that 'all men are created equal' didn't include women and black people. An O&A church knows that we always

have more to learn about welcome. We strive to

continue naming and expanding this vision. In order to start, we name what we mean when we say

'everyone.' Each congregation finds its own way to express its welcome. Here's one example:

We welcome all God's children though differing in race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, physical or mental ability, political stance or theological perspective, and we affirm the faith, baptism and spiritual gifts of all Christians celebrating that all people are part of God's good creation. (Open & Affirming Statement of First Christian Church, Des Moines, IA)

## Is this just the Christian Church

### (Disciples of Christ)?

No, there are welcoming church programs in many denominations, such as the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists ([www.awab.org](http://www.awab.org)), Integrity (Episcopal) ([www.integrityusa.org](http://www.integrityusa.org)), the Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodist Church) ([www.rmnetwork.org](http://www.rmnetwork.org)), More Light Presbyterians ([www.mlp.org](http://www.mlp.org)), Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (United Church of Canada) ([www.ause.ca](http://www.ause.ca)), and the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ ([www.openandaffirming.org](http://www.openandaffirming.org)). You can find many others at [www.welcomingresources.org](http://www.welcomingresources.org).