

COLLEGE AVENUE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
1341 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350

OPEN AND AFFIRMING COVENANT
Adopted May 31, 1987; revised June 10, 2007

We are called upon to love one another. In doing so, we are being faithful to God's revelation in Jesus Christ, who calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to be reconcilers and healers within the world and the church.

Jesus Christ sees, calls and loves us the way we are. Basic to our faith encounter with Christ is the knowledge and acceptance that who we are is a reflection of God's image in us.

Our sexuality is a gift of God, enriching our lives and deeply touching the reality of our own and others' humanity. It is a channel through which we experience the abundant life. We recognize that our Christian faith is the foundation of our values in human relationships. We seek to work together in the light of the Gospel to define principles of human relationships and behavior that are based on relating to each other as whole persons, with love, responsibility, accountability and trust.

Therefore, we reaffirm families, in all their diversity, that are founded on love and justice.

We believe that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are welcome in Christ's Church, but we also know that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people frequently are exiled from a spiritual community. We affirm that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are embraced within the fellowship and membership of College Avenue Congregational Church, upon making the same affirmation of faith and covenant that all make. Furthermore, as members of the Body of Christ and the fellowship of College Avenue Congregational Church, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are expected and encouraged to share in worship, fellowship, employment and leadership in our congregation.

All people are entitled to respect and justice. Living in Christ requires that we act so that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people will not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. Therefore, we stand with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people against the violence and injustice perpetrated against them, both within the Church and society.

As partners in an ongoing ministry of reconciliation, love and justice, we, the members and friends of College Avenue Congregational Church:

- declare openness in our fellowship, membership and ministry to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, welcoming them into our congregation in the same spirit with which all are invited;
- affirm, encourage and celebrate the diverse gifts and talents which gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, lay and ordained, bring to the ministry;
- will provide a safe place for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who will turn to us for refuge and strength;
- reaffirm the personnel policy of this congregation which forbids discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation or any other irrelevant factor;
- will address the needs and advocate the concerns of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their loved ones in our church and society;
- will provide ministry and programs which will confront homophobia and sexism, as we seek, with God's help, to be set free from prejudice and fear of each other;
- ask forgiveness from God and from one another when our failures bring hurt to our brothers and sisters in the Family of God.

In the assurance that we are indeed created by God, reconciled by Christ, and empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we affirm our calling as a covenant community and commit ourselves to the ministry of reconciliation which God has given us.

(Language about sexual orientation and gender identity changes over time. In this updated Open and Affirming covenant, we also include those who identify as queer, questioning, same-gender-loving, Two-Spirit, intersex, and any future self-identification terminology.)