

# First Congregational Church of Stratford

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## Open and Affirming Statement

öWelcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you.ö  
Romans 15:7

öAnd I have other sheep that are not of this fold: I must bring them also. And they will heed my voice, so there shall be one flock, one Shepherd.ö John 10:16.

öI will show love to those who were called unloved and to those who were called "not-my-people" - I will say "you are my people," and they will answer "You are our God."ö Hosea 2:23

öThere is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free person, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus.ö Galatians 3:26, 28

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**We of First Congregational Church of Stratford**, as a Christian congregation, declare that we are an open and affirming church.

**We are open** to all who seek to worship God, our creator, through the teachings of Jesus Christ, the creator of the greater church of which we are a part. The Gospels call upon us to follow God's will as revealed to us in Christ's teachings, foremost among which is his greatest commandment: that we love one another as we love ourselves. We know God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. We know our baptismal promise to love, support and care for one another is not conditional on one's identity at baptism or later.

**We therefore affirm** the following.

We welcome the total identity of each person regardless of diversifying factors such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical, mental or emotional challenges, ethnicity, education, or economic circumstance.

We regard each person who wants to worship with us as a beloved child of God, made in God's image and equally worthy of God's love.

We embrace diversity in our congregation and community, treating each person as entitled to dignity, respect and privacy.

We offer a safe physical, emotional and spiritual haven, where the person's whole self is accepted and need not be hidden for fear of physical, emotional or spiritual abuse.

Our welcome is an invitation to participate in the full spiritual and organizational life of our church and to share in its joys, privileges, sacraments, blessings and responsibilities.

We welcome all those who seek, by the grace and direction of God, to build lives and relationships based on personal integrity, compassion for others and faithfulness in human relationships.

We welcome seekers and those who doubt or question their faith, as we all share a perpetual state of spiritual development and appreciate each other's support and insights.

This statement reflects the collective heart of our church. We respect those whose prayerful and considered understanding of scripture and tradition has led them to conclusions that differ from this statement. We value their presence, gifts, companionship and contributions to further dialogue on these and other issues during our continuing journey of faith.