

## Where do I learn more about GLAD 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 GLAD and a list of O&A Congregations go to [www.gladalliance.org](http://www.gladalliance.org).

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## A Church That Welcomes Everyone

Questions and Answers about the Open & Affirming Ministry Program of the Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples Alliance of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

## 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 mean all.

## 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 Gay, Lesbian, and Affirming Disciples Alliance (GLAD) and the Open & Affirming Ministry Program.

## How does a church get placed on GLAD's list of O&A congregations?

In order to be placed on GLAD'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 sexuality, writing an O&A statement and committing to it, and making a commitment to treat all its members and its 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, GLAD encourages congregations to start by examining their acceptance of LGBT people. However, GLAD 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)), and the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns ([www.uccccoalition.org](http://www.uccccoalition.org)). You can find many others at [www.welcomingresources.org](http://www.welcomingresources.org).