



COVENANT OF INCLUSION Background & Summary Information

A non-constitutional committee, the Inclusion Team, was formed in the Summer of 2021. The committee consists of 18 members, including our Moderators, and Pastors. It is Co-Chaired by Rachel Shaw Callahan and Heidi Bonjean.

The goal of the team was to educate the church community about inclusion best practices and create a Covenant that explicitly states that we are an inclusive community that welcomes and respects all. While we are known for our hospitality, we want all to know they will be welcome, accepted, and safe at our church.

Over the past year, this team has met monthly and has participated in numerous outreach programs and individual conversations, with an estimated outreach of 150 members. These programs included:

- 10:12 Adult education session on inclusion (September)
- Inclusion Team Q&A Zoom discussion (November)
- Inclusion team annual meeting presentation (January)
- GenderCool presentation - supporting transgender and non-binary individuals (January)
- Plymouth Place and Inclusion Team discussion (February)
- Inclusion Team Round Table Discussions (three sessions held in March)
- John Rodgers LGBTQ+ and the Bible discussion (April)
- Conversations and covenant review with multiple small groups: Woman's Society, Moms in Faith, Men's Breakfast Club, Women's Book Club, etc.

In addition, the team published an Inclusion page on the church website with links to multiple resources, recorded 7 videos, and shared regular updates in the First Congo Happenings newsletter. Pastors and committee leaders also engaged in multiple 1-on-1 conversations.

The overwhelming response to these activities has been positive with a majority feeling now is the time for the congregation to adopt such a covenant.

Inclusion Team Co-Chairs provided the above summary and recommendation to Church Council on May 16, 2022. Church Council voted and gave preliminary approval to the Covenant of Inclusion with final approval pending a congregational vote on June 19, 2022. The Church Council vote also included an intention to submit the Covenant of Inclusion to the United Church of Christ in order to gain official status as an Open & Affirming congregation.

Inclusion Team Members

Heidi Bonjean, Co-Chair
Rachel Shaw Callahan, Co-Chair
Amy Baldwin, Moderator
Kathy Vega, Associate Moderator
Rich Kirchherr
Katherine Willis Pershey
Meredith Onion
Julie Beitz
Norm Braksick

Andrea Branz
Hannah Dunne
Clare Kralovec
Joy McAdams
Lisa McTigue
Marie Murrell
Car Notorangelo
Alexandria Onion
Nancy Sutherland