

ONA  
Moment  
3/4/18

do not have  
to be baptized  
or even  
believe in  
Our God

*The following article was a Mission Moment, from on our August 28, 2016, worship bulletin. It is printed here to remind us to be welcoming to all who come to us—and to seek out others to encourage them to join us.*

### Open Table

In much of the United Church of Christ, we practice an “open table.” That is, our sacrament of Holy Communion is not limited to church members or those baptized by us. We welcome all ~~baptized~~ persons to share the bread and the cup. As a denomination, our Table of the Lord’s Supper is open to all.

Jesus, of course, as is his way, broadens that welcome. It’s not just that we are to make a place for everyone who comes to us but, he says, we must go out and invite everyone else, especially those who might not otherwise be invited. Jesus names the poor, the lame and the blind as prime invitees. It’s all about outreach to the weakest and the most unwelcome. And he means serious outreach. He means outreach that knocks on the doors of strangers and grabs them wherever they are. It’s a radical, extravagant, over-the-top, way beyond the norm kind of outreach. It means going to places where people are and not just mailing them an invitation.

In the United Church of Christ there are more than 1,200 churches that call themselves “Open and Affirming.” Since 1985, when the General Synod adopted its first resolution on the subject, we have been a denomination that has provided churches with the encouragement and resources to welcome lesbian, gay and bisexual people into our congregations and leadership. As we have added transgendered people to that list, our welcome has grown bigger and wider and more remarkable.

We are a denomination that has tried to follow the call of Jesus to reach into the world and invite those who have been named unacceptable or unwelcome or out-cast. Around the table of our extravagant welcome is where many of us have discovered who we are as a people of God and disciples of Jesus Christ. We are the people who will stop at nothing to invite you to our party. We will seek you out, no matter who you are, and wherever you are on life’s journey; we will chase after you and make sure you understand that you are welcome here.