



News

## UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns Releases a [Strategic Plan for 2010-2013](#)

The UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Open and Affirming resolution by General Synod which launched the ONA movement in the United Church of Christ. It is a time of celebration and transition as Interim Executive Director of the Coalition Gwen Thomas shares, "This past year of transition has put us in the perfect position to reinvent ourselves based on what we know about our strengths and challenges. We have an opportunity to create a new vision to shape and form and share with the world, just as our founders did before us. But, visioning alone does not bring ideas into reality. A vision is merely a pipedream without definition and deadlines for actions."



With those words of encouragement, the Coalition released their **strategic plan for 2010 through 2013**.

([http://ucccoalition.org/fileadmin/news/Coalition\\_Strategic\\_Plan.pdf](http://ucccoalition.org/fileadmin/news/Coalition_Strategic_Plan.pdf)) It is a plan of commitment for immediate action steps as well as long-term goals and visions.

Founded in 1972, the Coalition is an independent but affiliated organization of the United Church of Christ. Its mission under the new strategic plan is living into Christ's call for love and justice by working to transform the United Church of Christ, Christianity, and society into an expression of God's extravagant welcome, especially for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and others who have felt excluded and alienated.

The work of the Coalition is guided by the core values of extravagant welcome, transformation, equality and justice, pastoral presence, courage, compassion, empathy, humility, and accountability.

The strategic plan identifies seven strategic directions that will focus the Coalition's work over the next three years:

1. **National Gathering**
2. Increase **intentional partnership with denomination staff** to deepen the connection between the ONA project and the denomination's focus on

- extravagant welcome to help bring ONA to scale.
3. Support **LGBT and questioning youth**.
  4. Support current **ONA congregations** to live fully into extravagant welcome.
  5. **Transgender inclusion** in new ONA congregational statements and support for current ONA congregations to live into the fullness of extravagant welcome.
  6. Extend **extravagant welcome** to the broader community.
  7. Enhance the Coalition's **organizational effectiveness and sustainability**.

To address these strategic directions, the following criteria help to guide and prioritize the work of the Coalition:

1. articulate and disseminate a **transformative worldview**
2. analyze and distinguish **policy and cultural issues**
3. attend to **local congregations** that are at different points in the ONA journey
4. **communicate** its plans and actions with its stakeholders in a proactive fashion

The Coalition's strategic plan is available online at:

[http://ucccoalition.org/fileadmin/news/Coalition\\_Strategic\\_Plan.pdf](http://ucccoalition.org/fileadmin/news/Coalition_Strategic_Plan.pdf)

## **Judge Rules Proposition 8 Unconstitutional**

Wednesday, August 4, was a historic day for supporters of same-sex marriage, as Judge Vaughn R. Walker's ruling that California's Proposition 8 is unconstitutional. His decision declared that Prop 8 violates both the due process and equal protection provisions of the U.S. Constitution, the first time the ban on gay marriage has been ruled unconstitutional under the U.S. Constitution. All previous court rulings have been limited to state constitutions.

In his conclusion, he said, "Proposition 8 fails to advance any rational basis in singling out gay men and lesbians for denial of a marriage license. Indeed, the evidence shows Proposition 8 does nothing more than enshrine in the California Constitution the notion that opposite-sex couples are superior to same-sex couples. Because California has no interest in discriminating against gay men and lesbians, and because Proposition 8 prevents California from fulfilling its constitutional obligation to provide marriages on an equal basis, the court concludes that Proposition 8 is unconstitutional."

Opponents of same-sex marriage will appeal this ruling to the U.S. 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. Judge Walker's ruling is most likely to be stayed pending appeal, which means that the ban on same sex marriages will remain effect pending the decision of the U.S. 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. That decision is expected to be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Challenging Proposition 8 is very much consistent with the resolution adopted by the 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the United Church of Christ, "**In Support of Equal Marriage Rights for All Resolution**," (<http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/in->

[support-of-equal-marriage-rights-for-all-with-background.pdf](#)) a resolution in support of equal-marriage rights for all people, regardless of gender. The adoption of that resolution in 2005 marked the first time that one of the nation's mainline churches expressed support of marriages for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons.

The General Synod of the UCC has joined an **Amicus Curiae** (<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/highprofile/documents/s1680xx-amcur-councilchurch-support.pdf>) brief (friend of the court brief) in this case with both California-Nevada Conferences, the California Council of Churches, and other religious organizations in support of the plaintiffs that Prop 8 should be ruled invalid.

To read the full ruling from Judge Walker, visit:  
<http://www.equalrightsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Prop8Decision.pdf> .

## **Bishop Senyonjo Visits New York**

Bishop Christopher Senyonjo, from West Buganda, Uganda, was hosted by Integrity USA (the Episcopalian LGBT advocacy and affinity organization) to visit numerous U.S. churches in June, followed by a similar tour in Europe. An outspoken advocate for human rights, Bishop Senyonjo has been a valiant straight ally of the LGBT community in Uganda. During his visit in New York, he spoke about the “homophobic and draconian anti-gay movement and legislation pending in Uganda.” He also participated in a consultation with U.S. faith leaders and representatives from the U.S. State Department and UN agencies on the best ways to act in solidarity in support of human rights in Uganda, particularly in light of the anti-homosexual legislation that is before the Ugandan parliament. Bishop Yvette Flunder (City of Refuge UCC, San Francisco, and The Fellowship) and the Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer (UCC Health and Wholeness Advocacy) also participated in the consultation.

One important way for faith leaders to act is by signing the Uganda Declaration and live the commitments it calls for. **To read and sign the declaration, visit:**  
<http://www.welcomingresources.org/uganda.htm>

In 2009, the Ugandan Parliament proposed a bill that would make homosexual behavior punishable by life imprisonment or death. Global Ministries, a partnership of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, has **responded to this proposed bill** (<http://globalministries.org/news/africa/sexual-discrimination.html>) and requested that the Parliament oppose this bill, as it is still on the table.

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## Events

### Believe Out Loud Power Summit : October 9-11, 2010

[REGISTER TODAY](#)

Believe   
**OUTLOUD™**  
POWER SUMMIT  
October 9-11, 2010 • Orlando

The **Believe Out Loud Power Summit** (<http://www.welcomingresources.org/BelieveOutLoud.htm>) is an advanced training for leaders in the Welcoming Church Movement, which will take place October 9-11, 2010, in Orlando, FL.

**The Institute for Welcoming Resources**

(<http://www.welcomingresources.org/index.htm>) is delighted to be a partner in the transdenominational **Believe Out Loud** (<http://believeoutloud.com/>) campaign. Believe Out Loud is a collection of clergy and lay leaders, LGBT activists, and concerned individuals, working together to help the Protestant community become fully inclusive of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Throughout this advanced training weekend, there will be:**

- Concrete skills-building in key areas of organizing and movement-building
- Action-planning within our denominations and in partnership with local and statewide secular efforts
- Dynamic worship
- Visioning about the world we want to leave for our children

**Tracks and Topics include:**

- Leadership Development/New Leadership
- Campaigns—Church & Secular
- Board of Directors
- Barriers and Resistance/Conflict
- External Communications

Throughout all the various tracks there will be tie-ins including scriptural affirmation, a look at race, bisexual and transgender inclusion, cultural power and political power, our different identities as individuals, and how we are connected to our local church, how we are part of our denomination, and our relationship to the larger Welcoming Church Movement.

**Caucuses:**

- Worship and the Arts
- Race
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Advanced Scripture

For more information and to register for this event:

<http://www.welcomingresources.org/BelieveOutLoud.htm>

## Upcoming "Building an Inclusive Church" Trainings

Perhaps you are a leader (lay or ordained) in a congregation that is considering becoming welcoming to LGBT persons. Perhaps you are committed deeply to helping other congregations in your denomination become more welcoming of LGBT folks. Either scenario means that this training will be very helpful to you in honing your skills and gaining more knowledge about how to help congregations through those tough conversations toward a more fully inclusive church.

These are ecumenical trainings and in addition to the UCC participants, they may include participants from the Reconciling Ministries Network of the United Methodist Church, Lutherans Concerned, and More Light Presbyterians. All are welcome, even if you are not a member of these churches or organizations. Look forward to an intense, spiritually enriching, and transformational weekend!

**Building an Inclusive Church training** is for lay leaders, clergy, denominational leaders, and members and leaders in denominational LGBT groups and organizations.

### The training includes:

- faith-based, community-organizing skills training,
- sound biblical and theological education,
- meaningful worship,
- discussion of bisexuality and transgender issues,
- and opportunities for faithful thinking and effective planning related to your context.

### Training Schedule

- September 24–26, 2010 — Spokane, WA
- September 30–October 2, 2010 — New York, NY
- November 5–7, 2010 — Chicago, IL
- November 12–14, 2010 — Houston, TX
- November 19–21, 2010 — Philadelphia, PA

For more information and registration, visit:



<http://www.welcomingresources.org/communityorg.htm>.

## Save the Date: Clergy Call 2011



Be sure to mark your calendars now for Clergy Call 2011, happening May 22–24, 2011, in Washington, DC. Now, more than ever, we need religious leaders to demand justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. To learn more about this event, go to [www.hrc.org/clergycall](http://www.hrc.org/clergycall)

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## In Action

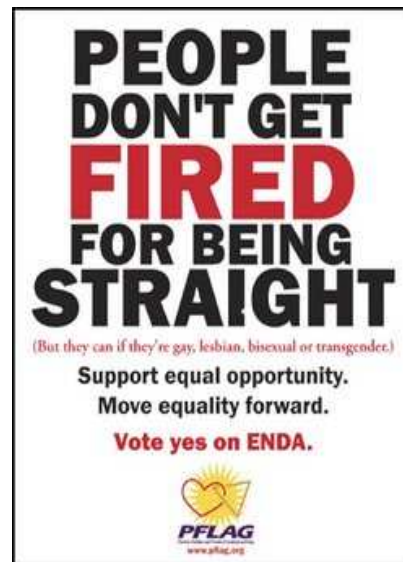
### Updates on ENDA (Employment Non-Discrimination Act)

Our stories matter and they change hearts and minds. The United ENDA coalition, in which the UCC Health and Wholeness Advocacy Office participates, has launched a new campaign to compile even more stories of discrimination in the workplace faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, and we need your help. If you have been discriminated against at work, please fill out the **brief questionnaire** (<http://bit.ly/9Q7w2Z>) and tell us about your experiences. Then, pass it along to your friends and encourage others to fill it out. The more stories we collect, the more compelling a case we can make.

If you complete the questionnaire and give your permission, you may be contacted for more details about your experiences. In some cases, we may be able to provide some resources or referrals to address the discrimination. No information will be released publicly without your permission and you can remain anonymous if you need to.

Help strengthen our collective efforts to pass ENDA and let your story be heard.

Please complete the questionnaire today and pass it along!



You can also take action in the following ways:

### **1. Take Action**

Take action through the JPANet, the UCC's Justice Peace Action Network: **Stand up against discrimination!** (<http://bit.ly/dv327E>) and use the United ENDA **toolkit** (<http://www.unitedenda.org/resources>) to support this important legislation.

### **2. In DC, make their phones ring!**

United ENDA is a coalition of hundreds of organizations, including the UCC Office for LGBT Concerns, working to get an ENDA that includes gender identity and expression. **United ENDA** (<http://www.unitedenda.org/>) is tracking the meetings to learn where this new Congress stands. Visit: [http://www.unitedenda.org/sites/default/files/United\\_ENDA\\_Visit\\_Report\\_Form.doc](http://www.unitedenda.org/sites/default/files/United_ENDA_Visit_Report_Form.doc) to go fill out the **Lobby Report Form** available from United ENDA. It's the best way to let us know how your meeting went and whether your Representative and Senators expressed support.

Call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and have them connect you to your Representative (based on your zip code). Tell them: "I am a constituent, a person of faith and I would like you to please tell Representative [your representative's name] that I strongly support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that would ban discrimination against all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people."

Then, call back and leave messages with your two Senators too!

Even if your local Senator or Representative has already shown support for ENDA, it is important to still call and let them know the importance of this piece of legislation. Every call and email counts!

### **3. At home, set up a visit!**

Request an in-person meeting for you and other community members with your two Senators and your Representative (or their staffs) in their home district offices. You can call the district offices to request these meetings, but they often want you to fax a meeting request. To find contact info for district offices, go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

### **4. Let United ENDA know about your meeting!**

## **Moving Forward with the Repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT)**

Earlier this year the House voted, 229 to 186, to pass the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which would approve more than \$700 billion for military programs and it contains an amendment overturning "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT). This action follows a vote for repeal in the Senate Armed Services Committee. The "DADT" policy prohibits openly gay and lesbian people from serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Hundreds of military personnel are discharged

each year under this policy.



The Senate Armed Services Committee approved the "Murphy Amendment" at the end of May, which would repeal DADT. The Murphy Amendment, which is supported by President Obama, allows Congress to vote on the repeal of the current DADT policy. If it's successful, the repeal would occur after the Pentagon Working Group study is finished, which is due on December 1, 2010. Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA), who gave the language for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) bill amendment, will also offer identical language as an amendment to the House defense bill.

"Tonight, Congress took a historic step toward repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell and toward ensuring that every American has the same opportunity I did to defend our nation. Patriotic Americans willing to take a bullet for their country should never be forced to lie about who they are in order to serve the country they love. I will not rest until the repeal of this discriminatory policy that hurts national security is signed into law," said Representative Murphy.

The final NDAA bill must be passed in both the House and Senate, then the two versions reconciled before being sent to the President for his signature. As of right now, the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate Armed Services Committee have voted. It now moves to the U.S. Senate to be voted on.

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirmed the full participation of gays and lesbians in the military in a 1993 resolution titled "**A Call to End the Ban against Gays and Lesbians in the Military.**"

(<http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/1993call.pdf>) Progress is being made in Congress, and, as people of faith, we are called to stand for fairness. Take action through the JPANet, the UCC's Justice Peace Action Network: **Stand for fairness!** (<http://bit.ly/cBGIA6>) Contact your members of Congress to urge them to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and have them connect you to your Representative (based on your zip code) and your two Senators!

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## Did You Know?

### Called Out! is on Facebook

Join the **Called Out!** (<http://bit.ly/aAmYhZ>) Facebook fan page today, where you can stay up-to-date on what is going on in the LGBT community and in the **Health and Wholeness Advocacy Office** (<http://www.ucc.org/lgbt>) .



**Missed an issue?**

Catch up on all of the previous issues of Called Out! Check out:  
<http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/called-out-eneews.html>