***Open and Affirming Covenant and Implementation Plan***

***Proposal for the March 26th Congregational Meeting***

**Proposed Covenant**

We, the members of the Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ, Bradford, Vermont, regard all people as beloved children of God.  We give thanks for the many and diverse gifts of God among us.

Jesus welcomed all. As First John says, “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them…. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.”

We declare ourselves to be an Open and Affirming congregation, welcoming and accepting into full membership and participation people of every age, gender, race, national origin, faith background, marital status and family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental and physical ability, addiction, economic and social status, and educational background.

We affirm all lives and all relationships founded on the principles of God’s love and justice. We pledge to work to end oppression and discrimination whenever we encounter them, and, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to help create the beloved community of God’s realm.

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.

*Please see the draft Implementation Plan on the next page.*

**Proposed** **Implementation Plan**

We will implement our Open and Affirming Covenant by:

* publishing our Open and Affirming covenant on our website and newsletter;
* posting it, along with our other covenants, in the church building, such as on a prominent bulletin board;
* having a sentence about it in the bulletin each week (for example, saying “An Open and Affirming Congregation” in the heading, or saying, “We are an Open and Affirming Congregation. Whoever you are, wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”);
* pasting the covenant on the inside cover of the hymnal and reading it in worship on appropriate occasions;
* putting the words “Open and Affirming” on the church sign;
* putting a small rainbow of some kind on the sign beside or below “Open and Affirming;”
* supporting groups like the local Gay Straight Alliance and/or anti-bullying efforts;
* supporting any other anti-discrimination efforts relating to race or ability or economic status or any of the other groups sometimes hated and treated as unequal or inferior;
* performing same-sex weddings;
* being completely open to having any qualified person in lay and ordained leadership, including LGBTQ;
* seeking ways to incorporate the spirit of our Open and Affirming covenant in our church life, including worship, mission, outreach and education.

*Please see the draft Covenant on the prior page.*