



Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches

*Celebrating God's love for **all** people...*

JOIN US!

This is an exciting time to join the Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches (CCWC). Over the last four years, the Coalition has grown significantly in number, deepened our fellowship opportunities and expanded our resourcing and reach. We've turned out hundreds of marchers for recent Pride Parades, worked in the trenches for marriage equality and continue to advance a message of welcome and justice as we make history "standing on the side of love." (We credit our Unitarian Universalist colleagues with their deep and expansive missional statement which inspires us all!)

There are a number of benefits to belonging to CCWC, and your dues will impact our mission in a range of ways:

Publicity

The Coalition has a weekly ad in Windy City Times, and a very well searched website listing all partner congregations and linking to many resources for LGBTQ folks and allies.

Historically, our most visible annual witness is at the Pride parade. In recent years, we have had dozens of individuals from different denominations collaborate in planning these great success, and more than 400 of our members present in a prominent leadership placement in the parade! One very concrete financial benefit that comes with membership is that our ***churches do not need to pay for their own registration, but are included in ours.*** (This is also true of other festival events, which we occasionally - and frugally -- consider purchasing.) Also, our website calendar is increasingly used and our social media presence is expanding.

Programming Support

Activities for clergy and lay people support the vitality of our welcoming and inclusive churches. In the past we've hosted retreats, Bible studies and holiday gatherings. IN 2013, we hosted our first "welcoming pastors" retreat at Irving Park UMC. We helped to turn out a massive faith community witness at the March on Springfield for Marriage Equality, and our congregations have stepped up to make widely known our readiness to provide space and officiants for same-sex weddings. Other justice issues a number of our folks are collectively engaged in include transgender advocacy, LGBTQ homeless youth, immigration rights, LGBT refugees/asylum work and the intersections of racism and homophobia.

Additionally, we provide a listserv and common calendar at our website, chicagowelcomingchurches.org where members share their resources and events with one another. Programming initiatives of our member churches are enriched by engagement of others through our expanding social media tools.

There are two aspects to belonging in CCWC. One is that a church be an official member of their denomination's welcoming and affirming movement.* The other is a requested annual

donation of \$250, which is used to continue the mission of the Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches.

We do not turn anyone away due to finances. Some churches give more and some less. Also, some churches opt to take an annual special offering for this, and others send 2-3 smaller installments in throughout the year.

We expect partner churches to [join our email list](#). Currently this is a Yahoo Group, but will be upgraded in summer 2016. We also expect churches to name a lay person to promote Coalition activities to their congregation and vice-versa. Your whole congregation is encouraged to be involved!

The Membership/Response Form will allow you to indicate your approach if you proceed. When you're ready, please send that in with your dues or dues commitment.

This is a time of growth for us, and our Executive Committee has taken seriously its mandate to experiment, reflect and recommend best strategies for continued growth.

The entire team is reached by emails to info@chicagowelcomingchurches.org. We would be pleased to send a representative to greet your congregation, share about the Coalition, and learn more of your work of welcome. Please let us know if you would like to arrange that.

In solidarity! Christine Allender (Unitarian Church of Evanston); John Cheung (Northbrook UMC); Anthony Didato (Holy Covenant UMC, Chicago); Brent Holman-Gomez (Berry Memorial UMC, Chicago); Kevin O'Brien (achurch4me MCC, Chicago); Sarah Jones (University Church, Chicago); Rev. Stu Smith (Webmaster) Rev. Kevin Tindell (New Dimensions, Chicago)



Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches Recent Highlights

During the Pride Planning last year, leaders discerned a strong call “for such a time as this.” We named the need to celebrate LGBTQI advances, remain steadfast in witnessing to work undone, and courageously address the intersections of entrenched injustices (racism, transphobia, xenophobia etc) of our day. The painful divisiveness and backlashes of the electoral season – *already felt then* -- were named.

Over the last five years, we’ve collaborated in a variety of witness actions. We co-sponsored a vigil observance for Transgender Day of Remembrance with our member congregation achurch4 MCC in 2013 and 2014. You can read more in the [Windy City Times](#).

We were a rainbow for hope and justice at the Pride Parade in 2014 and 2015. Nearly 400 people represented faith communities each year. Our Pride Worship services at University Church (2014) and Lake View Presbyterian (2015) were energizing, diverse gatherings which deepened relationships AND reflection on what solidarity and love for all *really* look like. We were so proud of the multiple voices lifted, the deep cohesion of the service's proclamation, and the new grassroots relationships formed.

New collaborations to address LGBTQ youth homelessness continue to blossom.

New mission commitments to our LGBTQ immigrants and refugees were nurtured during the last couple years, and opportunities for service and support continue to unfold.

We rejoice in the marriage equality milestone in Illinois and our role in mobilizing faith communities in support of it. Some of our volunteers were among the state’s most active volunteers, and we filled buses for faith’s witness in Springfield. We want to help our churches make their commitments and availability to host ceremonies well-known.

We have enjoyed seeing the impact of new connections AMONG our churches, the fruit of volunteers engaging in "task" together and discovering companionship and additional potential for collaboration.

As we executed our witness and worship last year, we were mindful of a call to a larger call for capacity-building as a coalition. We sensed that the days of bearing witness on a single issue – LGTBQ inclusion – in a silo were over. We sensed that there is mission and collaboration strengthening to be done year-round beyond the seasonal efforts we’ve been able to staff in recent years. We take these conversations and longings into 2017, ready to engage in discernment and further planning. Watch for details on opportunities to participate in this later this winter.

We will continue to explore the best model for occasional nourishing gatherings for our pastoral leaders. Our next steps include engaging our members in further visioning.

For more information, visit chicagowelcomingchurches.org