

Sharing a Welcoming Gospel

May 13 • 9am–3:30pm

First Congregational Church, 292 E Market St, Akron

Sponsored by the Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations of the United Church of Christ, this training is for church staff and congregation leaders in Summit, Portage, Medina, Stark, Wayne, and Tuscarawas counties. Along with neighboring UCC churches wishing to explore welcoming theology, we will worship together, explore information and issues of diversity, of established congregation and denomination values, and outreach skills. There will be breakout discussions, visual presentations, Q & A sessions, and shared lunch. We will wrap up by mid-afternoon.

Reserve spaces for your leadership team **by May 11** at eoawraucc.org/our-associations-at-work/open-affirming. We suggest a \$5 donation per person at the time of registration by credit/debit card, or cash at the training. Contact co-chairs Chaz Henderson (chazwhend@aol.com) 216-621-9530 or Rev. Erik Breddin (ebreddin@gmx.com) 319-504-2630 for more information.

The Open and Affirming Prophetic Witness Team of the EOA/WRA is planning this event.

Andy Lang, executive director of the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ, has more than 20 years of experience as a communications professional in the United Church of Christ. He was a daily newspaper reporter and a Congressional press secretary in Washington, D.C., before moving to Cleveland to join the UCC's national communications staff in 1993. Andy built the UCC's first church-wide website at ucc.org in 1994 and led the church's national web and social media ministry until 2004. Andy has been the Coalition's executive director since 2010: in that capacity, he leads the UCC's Open and Affirming Program. His passion is to reach the nearly 3,600 UCC congregations that have not yet adopted an ONA covenant. He is a member of Plymouth UCC in Shaker Heights. Andy's pronouns are he/him/his.



Alex Shanks is a 2010 graduate of Ohio Northern University, where he received a B.A. in organizational communication. Upon graduating he worked for a denominational body of the United Methodist Church where he created resources and trained leaders in youth and young adult educational programming, followed by a short stint in local church ministry where he developed and implemented curriculum. Most recently he made a shift toward LGBT advocacy work when he became the Ohio Field Organizer for Reconciling Ministries Network and the Faith Consultant for Why Marriage Matters Ohio. He is passionate about equipping leaders to engage in competent and compassionate advocacy, especially for the transgender community. Alex accomplishes this primarily through offering training opportunities for and promoting the voices of affirming faith communities, small business owners, educators, and corporate employee resource groups. Alex's pronouns of choice are he/him/his.

