

Thriving in Community – Elaine Pratt

There's something really meaningful about working together with a like-minded group of people to advance an important message of love and inclusion. As a part of the ONA team at Community Church of Durham, I've gotten to be a part of a dedicated group of people who each have their own connection to the LGBTQIA+ community. I am the mother of a gay son, and I am passionate about spreading the truth that God loves everyone.

The recently revitalized ONA team bonded quickly. We have dinner meetings using the model of breaking bread together. We began our work by each relating our personal stories and why the ONA mission is so important to us.

This is the only church I've belonged to that really 'walks the walk' when it comes to social justice. So many other churches say they are open and/or affirming, but they don't do much to put that statement into practice. Our ONA team has sponsored multiple workshops and events to increase understanding and awareness, we have marched in Portsmouth Pride and hosted a table, we have hosted a table at UNH U-Day, we painted the rainbow of hands by the side entrance, we have lighted the sanctuary windows in rainbow colors at night during the pride months of April and June, and we fly a rainbow flag outside. Our latest initiative was organizing a Seacoast ONA group of churches for mutual support and collaboration. And the recent dedication service for UNH trans student Van was the most meaningful service I have ever attended. ONA is certainly thriving in the community both internally at CCD and externally in the wider community! I am very proud to be a part of this important work.

And ONA is just one of many social justice initiatives of the Community Church of Durham!

In Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12 it says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help...And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken." We are stronger together; we can accomplish more together. We build each other up when we are discouraged. Our stewardship theme this year, 'Thriving in Community,' captures the many facets of our commitment to and involvement in advancing social justice, demonstrating Christian love, and promoting discipleship growth. Come join us and contribute your time, talent, and treasure, and just think what we can accomplish together!