

**First Congregation  
Church of Natick**  
United Church  
of Christ

2 East Central Street  
Natick, Massachusetts 01760



The Reverend Victoria Alford Guest  
The Reverend Summer F. Shaud

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Dear Sir or Madam:

In celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of our Open and Affirming covenant in October, our congregation was able to bring the exhibit of *Pioneering Voices* to Natick as a part of the Natick Open Studios weekend. In addition, we were joined on our anniversary weekend by the Reverend David Weekley, one of the individuals whose photograph was part of the exhibit. Reverend Weekley was our guest preacher on ONA Sunday. It was an amazing weekend.

We were especially excited to offer this exhibit as part of our current process of considering the addition of the words "gender expression" to our covenant to make more explicit our LGBTQ welcome. We will be voting on adding these words at our Annual Meeting in January. We have offered different opportunities for our congregation to learn more about the transgender community, but the exhibit was by far the most powerful experience. The personal accounts that accompanied each photo brought the struggle and the courage captured in those photographs to life.

But *Pioneering Voices* was more than a gift to our congregation. It really was a gift to the MetroWest community. Over 80 people from the wider community viewed the exhibit as part of Open Studios. Many stopped on their way out of the exhibit to say how much they appreciated that our congregation had opened its doors for an exhibit on this topic.

We are grateful for the foundation support that makes it possible for small churches to host exhibits like *Pioneering Voices*. Our ONA team organized a huge spring bake sale to supplement our budget so that we could bring the exhibit to Natick. We were also blessed with a few individual donations to reach our goal, but we never could have hosted this exhibit without foundation support.

The purpose of *Pioneering Voices* is to combat transphobia by breaking the silence, encouraging people of all ages to affirm and appreciate diversity, making the world a safer place for all individuals. Our exhibit did just that!

Yours truly,

The Reverend Victoria Alford Guest