

## RELIGION

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Lawrence District, which governs several congregations throughout New York and Northern Pennsylvania. Ms. Bush said that there are about 20 people committed to the group right now. The group is trying to gather more people and will create a steering committee to set up how the Olean congregation will work, Ms. Bush said. The congregation is currently looking for space.

The congregation is working on getting its non-profit status and becoming a recognized congregation by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, Ms. Bush said. This congregation will bridge the gap between the

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Chautauqua, which meets at the Chautauqua Institution, and the Hornell-Alfred Unitarian Universalist Society which meets at 198 Main St. in Hornell. There is already an interest in the area as some people from the Olean area attend services in Chautauqua County, Ms. Bush said.

Unitarian Universalists have traditionally been involved in social justice movements, including the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and the current Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender rights movement. Many congregations are labeled "welcoming congregations" and are specifically trained on how to wel-

come people of various sexual orientations, Ms. Bush said.

"The idea is that you embrace everybody and that everybody has value," Ms. Bush said.

Different congregations work differently based on the spiritual needs of the community, Ms. Bush said. Some are led by a minister while others are led by a lay person in the community. Congregational services draw from a variety of faiths. Although many of the faiths have opposing ideologies, there is no need to reconcile the differences, Ms. Bush said.

"I think you respect the fact that each person pursues their path in a way that makes sense to them and

that there are many paths to God, not just one," she said.

The idea is to keep an open mind and help each other along the various paths of spirituality, Ms. Bush said.

"You can learn from everybody and you can grow from everybody," she said. "When you get into a rigid way of thinking I think that's when you stop growing."

For more information on the Olean Unitarian Universalist Community, visit [oleanuu.org](http://oleanuu.org), e-mail [oleanuu.org](mailto:oleanuu.org) or visit the groups page on [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

(Contact reporter Brian Lothridge at [blothridge@olean-timesherald.com](mailto:blothridge@olean-timesherald.com).)