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**EMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
ADDS TO ITS LIST OF 'FIRSTS' WITHIN THE HANOVER FAITH COMMUNITY**

HANOVER, Pa. (March 18, 2019) — Emmanuel United Church of Christ, located at 124 Broadway in downtown Hanover, becomes the first Hanover area UCC Open and Affirming congregation. Open and Affirming (ONA) is the United Church of Christ's designation for congregations who choose to make a public covenant of welcome into their congregation and ministry with persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. EUCC will be celebrating this exciting new chapter in the church's history with a Worship Service at 10:30 am Sunday, April 7, followed by an Open House Reception.

"Our church may be over 250 years old, but our thinking isn't. We are proud of our legacy as a church of 'firsts.' We have a long history of accepting people or situations considered not the norm... divorcees, single parents, women pastors, and people from the LGBTQ+ community. Our church family believes we are all God's children," said the Rev. Russell D. Clark, Emmanuel's openly gay pastor.

In October 2018, Emmanuel held a congregational vote to become Open and Affirming, which passed overwhelmingly. "We have always been a church that truly welcomes all, but we now understand that the LGBTQ+ community has experienced churches where 'All Are Welcome' did not apply to them. Establishing our church as an Open and Affirming congregation sends a clear message to this community of seekers," said Brian Frederick, Consistory President.

Emmanuel United Church of Christ's history of 'firsts' within the Hanover faith community extends centuries, beginning as the first German Reformed church to hold services in English, first to call a divorced pastor, first to call a woman pastor, first to approve same-sex marriages and first to call an openly gay pastor. "Our church community, especially our families with younger children like mine, feel strongly about showing their children God's true acceptance and love for all," says Alec Sivel, church member.

For additional information about the April 7 service, contact the church office at 717-632-8281 or office@eucchanover.org. Visit online at www.emmanuelucc.org.

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About Emmanuel United Church of Christ

Emmanuel traces its origins to a plot of land along School Avenue and a group of Reformed Christians who bought land from Richard McAllister, Hanover's founder, in 1763. In 1798, the congregation moved from its original log church into a new brick building erected on the same land, and there the English language was introduced into the church. Today, that area is the location of the historic Emmanuel Reformed Cemetery. In 1856, Emmanuel built a brick church on Broadway, where the congregation is still located today. The present structure, designed by noted architect John A. Dempwolf, was dedicated Sept. 18, 1904. Of special note in the current sanctuary is the three-panel Resurrection window which was designed and manufactured by the studios of Louis Comfort Tiffany.