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UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST VIEWS ON
ISSUES IN HUMAN SEXUALITY

By

Paul H. Landen

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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College of Arts and Letters

1992

ABSTRACT

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST VIEWS ON ISSUES IN HUMAN SEXUALITY

By

Paul H. Landen

Unitarian Universalism holds a unique place as one of the most liberal groups in the American Religious Community. Their beliefs are heavily influenced by a deep commitment to individual freedom and social justice. Their commitment to social change is evident in the Church's strong support of women's issues and their response to sexual issues.

This study examines the response of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to the issues of abortion, lesbian-gay concerns, and AIDS and the Church's commitment to women's issues. Extensive collection and review of historical documents was enhanced by interviews with key people in the UUA. While the Church has certainly been on the cutting edge of abortion rights and lesbian-gay concerns, the process has not been easy. There have been those who have disagreed with the prevailing views, and there has been a greater degree of unanimity on the pro-choice stance on abortion, than on the issue of lesbian-gay rights.

The examination of abortion, an outgrowth of the UUA's commitment to women's issues, covers several areas: 1) Resolutions and policies, as well as Religious Education materials; 2) The words and actions of clergy; 3) leadership by the laity; and 4) The writings of theologians within the

Church. These areas combine for a comprehensive view of the abortion issue from a U-U perspective.

There are several aspects of the movement for lesbian-gay rights within the UUA. The first is the early history of the lesbian-gay movement within the Church. Second, a look at the development of the Office of Lesbian-Gay Concerns and Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian-Gay Concerns illustrates the various views that have been taken on lesbian-gay issues. Services of Union, placement of lesbian and gay clergy, and the "Welcoming Congregation," are important activities of the movement today.

The issues illustrate a basic U-U commitment to progressive action and ideas. Within that basic commitment, however, there is often disagreement on specific issues. That disagreement is also part of the U-U tradition.

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1992

For the Teachers and Professors
Who Gave Me the love of Learning:

Mr. Terry Kureth	Mr. Daniel J. Smith
Ms. Datia Tracin	Ms. Cheryl Jennings
Dr. Ronald Dorr	Dr. Dolores Borland
Dr. John Greene	Dr. Paul Muller-Ortega
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INTRODUCTION

On May 11, 1961 the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations in North America (UUA) was formed. This date marked the merger of two smaller denominations, the Unitarians and Universalists, which had been operating in the United States since the Colonial period.

Both the Unitarians and Universalists grew out of theological reaction against beliefs held by much of Christianity. Unitarianism, which "represented a progressive liberalization of the Puritan Calvinist congregationalism,"¹ stressed the unity of God, and differed with the doctrine of the trinity because it emphasized the humanity of Jesus and his teachings, more than his divinity. The first church known to use the name Unitarian was founded in 1638 in Transylvania. In England during the 17th and 18th centuries a form of Unitarianism, though outcast, began growing. By the beginning of the 19th century, 20 churches calling themselves Unitarian had been established in England. The first Unitarian Church in the United States was established by Joseph Priestly, discoverer of Oxygen and a Unitarian minister. Priestly fled England after enduring much harassment for his religious views, and established a Unitarian Church in Philadelphia in 1794.² Early Unitarianism in America was influenced by such

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historical figures as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine.³

The spokesperson for Unitarianism in the 19th century was the Rev. William Ellery Channing. His theology was one of "supernatural rationalism." Channing believed in the scriptures, but examined scripture, and all religious phenomena "in the light of reason."⁴

The early Universalists believed in a loving, benevolent God who offered universal salvation. Universalism developed in Great Britain from a Methodist background.⁵ In England in 1759, Universalist John Rely published Union "which denied the Calvinistic doctrine of salvation for the few and claimed that all would be saved."⁶ John Murray, a follower of Rely brought Universalism to the U.S. in 1779. Murray became minister of the Independent Christian Church of Gloucester, Massachusetts, which became the first Universalist Church in America. In 1805, Hosea Ballou, Universalism's greatest proponent published Treatise on Atonement, which argued against the trinity and for a positive view of human nature.⁷

The two 18th century churches are characterized by Spencer Lavan, Dean of Meadville-Lombard U-U Seminary in Chicago, and George Huntston Williams, Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard University: "Both churches emerged indirectly from the Continental and English Radical Reformations of the sixteenth century, but particularly from liberalizing trends in English Presbyterian and Scottish

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nonconformist religious communities. Both churches were organized around congregational polity, according to which each congregation was responsible for calling its own minister and functioned without control by bishops or national organizations."⁸

The Unitarians and Universalists were among the most liberal religious groups of the day. Both movements brought to the religious community an openness to any question: "virtually every aspect of religion was fair game for doubt and debate."⁹ Both movements also became linked with issues of social justice such as slavery, women's rights, and social reform. Involved Unitarians and Universalists included Susan B. Anthony, Clara Barton, and Dorthea Dix. Both churches also engaged in outreach to the poor and the development of many cultural and educational institutions. Unitarians were very involved in the development of Harvard College, and Universalists in the founding of Tufts University. It was the common link between religious tolerance and religious questioning that brought the churches closer and closer together until their eventual merger.¹⁰ Both Universalism and Unitarianism were born out of religious protest -- a sentiment which continues to this day.

The Unitarians and Universalists were never large churches. In 1850 the Universalists had 529 congregations, and the Unitarians 246. In 1900, the Universalists had grown to 1000 congregations with about 50,000 members, and the

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Unitarians had grown to 455 congregations. By the 1950's, however, both churches had shrunk considerably -- the Universalists to 300 congregations, and the Unitarians to 357 congregations. Growth in the South and West in the 50's increased the numbers of Unitarians considerably, to about 100,000 by 1958.¹¹ Today the UUA is made up of 1020 congregations, with a membership of 147,250.¹² The denomination would be characterized as white, middle-class, and well educated. It is also one of few non-fundamentalist religious groups still growing.

Trying to define the Unitarian Universalists is a very difficult task. U-U's, like Congregationalists and Baptists operate with a congregational polity, meaning that every congregation is autonomous. The UUA serves a coordinating function, providing support and services such as religious education materials and ministerial settlement, to the churches. For administrative purposes, the UUA is divided into 23 districts. Because of the congregational nature of the U-U church, lay people play a particularly central role. The Rev. Judy Meyer, Vice-President for Program: "When looking at our movement I think it's important to have some sensitivity to the different shape that leadership takes when it's exercised by lay people and ministers, and not to underestimate the strength and the vision of the lay leadership."¹³

Like other religious groups with congregational polity the UUA makes policy through the use of General Assemblies.

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Each year representatives of the churches and fellowships throughout the country gather to debate issues and pass resolutions. The impact of resolutions is a topic for debate. Some people believe the resolutions are meaningless. Other people believe they are excellent tools for creating publicity or forcing the denomination to address an issue. Judy Meyer believes "the resolutions are a chronology of UU support for developments (on issues)."¹⁴ Since there is no central authority in the UUA, resolutions of the General Assembly are one of the few ways in which insight can be gained into U-U beliefs on a national level. Bill Schulz, President of the UUA, discussing the General Assembly resolutions: "while not totally reflective of the grass roots, they do reflect the predominance of views."¹⁵

In the 1984 and 1985 General Assemblies the UUA updated a document entitled "Principles and Purposes," the section of the UUA by-laws that attempts to define what U-U's believe. While neither doctrinal or dogmatic, the Principles reflect the views of a majority of U-U's:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- * The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- * Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- * Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- * A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- * The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- * The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;

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- * Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part;

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- * Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- * Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- * Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- * Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- * Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.¹⁶

The emphasis on freedom, reason, and the diversity of viewpoints in the Principles is very representative of U-U beliefs.

In "Meet the Unitarian Universalists," the Rev. Jack Mendelsohn, a prominent U-U minister, examines Unitarian-Universalist beliefs:

Those who differ with us argue that we must be directed by infallible religious guides, or else our frailties will corrupt and destroy us. But when we begin to examine closely the 'infallible' religious guides, what do we discover? The church which claims authority to dictate beliefs is a human institution, and its 'final truths' are no more than the conclusions arrived at by earlier human leaders. The same statement is true of the Bible. It was written by mortals. No creed exists that was not originally composed by human beings like ourselves. Churches, Bibles and creeds are the creations of those who once exercised their freedom to create. Is there any reason why we should expect

to do less? Thus the distinctive characteristic of the Unitarian Universalist is our insistence that we will not bind our present and future in religion to the tutelage of the past. We will attempt to learn all that the past can teach us, but we will do our own thinking about current matters of faith and belief.¹⁷

Meñdelsohn describes U-U's as being based on guiding principles, not doctrines. There are no creeds -- instead reason, experience, and conscience guide each individual to find her/his own truth: "The most fundamental of all our principles, then, is individual freedom of religious belief -- the principle of the free mind."¹⁸ Another central principle is the belief that each person is responsible for her or his own actions. Reason and the scientific method are central to an ethical sense of responsibility: "Unitarian Universalism, then, is an ethical rather than a doctrinal religion, with individual freedom as its method and reason as its guide."¹⁹ Also inherent in Unitarian-Universalism is the belief that truth is relative and multi-faceted. Accordingly, there is tremendous diversity within a U-U church. There can be Jews, Buddhists, Christians, Humanists, and Atheists all worshipping together, sharing one another's spiritual journeys. The belief in individual freedom is a hallmark of Unitarian Universalism. It is the foundation of the denomination's views on both abortion and lesbian-gay issues.

In 1974 Hugo Hollerorth, editor of many of the religious education programs for the UUA, tried to define Unitarian Universalism in Relating to Our World, a document exploring

the philosophy of religious education. He believed that there were a series of "resources" which both defined and enabled Unitarian Universalism. The first of these resources was the power of the human mind. He believed that humans used their minds to understand the world that surrounds them in a continuing search to know and comprehend, and that this search was an essential part of Unitarian Universalism.²⁰

The second resource identified by Hollerorth was "creative interaction with oneself, with other human beings, and with nature."²¹ Insight develops when people are able to interact with nature, one another, and in quiet contemplation within one's self. This insight or discernment was essential to Unitarian Universalism.

A third resource dealt with human interaction and Unitarian Universalism's emphasis on life-enhancing relationships based in freedom. Love, honesty, and adventurousness were essential elements: "In the experience of Unitarian Universalists, each of these, as a way of being with each other, enhances the possibility of human beings creating a fulfilling orientation to the world. Unitarian Universalism affirms, as a resource in the human situation, the potentiality of human beings to be with each other in a relationship of freedom, love, sensitivity, honesty, independence, and adventurousness."²²

The fourth resource was "the full range of human knowledge, including the heritage of all the world's

religions, as well as knowledge from the secular fields of human inquiry."²³ U-U's did not limit their knowledge to the religious. All knowledge and all ways of knowing were embraced. The fifth resource, the diversity of thought among humans, was closely related because diversity was not heresy. Instead it was the base of Unitarian Universalism: "It is the conviction of Unitarian Universalists that through disagreement -- articulated, shared and openly explored -- the possibility of creating a fulfilling orientation to the world is heightened."²⁴ The U-U commitment to individual freedom is evident throughout Hollerorth's resources.

For Hollerorth the five resources were "the process used by Unitarian Universalists to orient themselves, in a life-enhancing way, to a power-filled world which affect them as intellectual, moral, sentient, aesthetic, and mortal beings. It is into a community of people who have committed themselves to this process that Unitarian Universalists invite the peoples of the earth."²⁵

Eugene (Gene) Navias, Director of Religious Education at the UUA agreed with much of Hollerorth's description. He believed, however, that today we would need to broaden the ways of knowing beyond the mind, which Hollerorth tended to emphasize. Sense and intuition should be added to Hollerorth's resources. Navias also believed, like Hollerorth, that the naturalness of diversity is an essential aspect of Unitarian

Universalism. There's not one way of being; each person has the ability to find her/his own way.²⁶

There are several other characteristics of the Unitarian Universalist Church that make it unique. It is a church with many members who have left other religious organizations. According to Judy Meyer, Vice-President for Program, this has an effect on the church: "People usually have a powerful negative experience within their church of origin or religion of origin before they come to us. A lot of that negative experience can be related to women's issues, reproductive rights, AIDS, gay/lesbian...the opportunities are almost endless to be offended by what Orthodoxy has to say, and people are. They often feel as if, to be in organized religion is to hold those dehumanizing views, and then they discover, usually accidentally, that Unitarian Universalism does not hold those dehumanizing views and it totally reshapes and reorients them to organized religion. I think that's a very powerful process of conversion. Those people have a lot to say to us about where we should go."²⁷

U-U Women's Federation President Phyllis Rickter saw U-U as rejecting the notion of the minister as father: "that role image -- there's something to do with that being changed because families aren't the same as they were."²⁸ U-U theologian Betty Hoskins believed that churches don't look at themselves in the same way as they did in the past. There had been a shift in the 60's, she argued, from the male minister

pronouncing as a caring father to the minister as a confused person thinking out loud. U-U churches "were in agony over the turmoil" in the 60's. She believed that now people in U-U churches don't want to be told anymore -- people want an emotional experience.²⁹ This rejection of minister as father figure would be inevitable since the U-U's embrace a feminist consciousness.

The Rev. Robert (Bob) Wheatley, Director of the Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns from 1977 - 1986, believed strongly in the freedom of thought in the UUA, but believed it also had its drawbacks. He argued that U-U's had no theology to react to, and that theology is needed to have activity: "When other churches go against their theology they are dealing in human issues. Women have to be free. Gays can't be oppressed. You challenge the theology and the doctrine directly. We don't have that...We haven't learned to articulate the need for discipline. We are intellectuals but we are isolates, we're not engaged in a common discipline with each other."³⁰ He believed that part of the reason U-U's lacked a theology was the tremendous freedom: "There's so much freedom that language has not been found to express what we believe."³¹

Due to the strong commitment of Unitarian Universalism to freedom, individual conscience, and progressive social action, and because of the lack of dogma and creed, U-U's are sometimes seen by others as not believing in, or standing for, anything. That is not the case. The commitment to freedom, and

ack of dogma, is as clear and strong as other religious group's commitment to their beliefs.

In a sense the U-U's have an image or an intellectual ideal to live up to. Their commitment to progressive action is so strong that some may support an ideal such as lesbian-gay rights, because it is "the progressive thing to do." At the same time, they may not be ready to accept the reality of individual gay or lesbian lives.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Religious Education materials of the UUA make statements about what the Church believes. Bob Wheatley: "The education kits are statements of theology. They are as close to U-U statements as you can get."³² Unitarian Universalist Religious Education has a different focus than the materials of many other churches. The child is the focus of the program, not scripture or catechism. R.E. in many traditional churches teaches children about salvation, where U-U Religious Education is "founded on the conviction that human nature, rather than alienating us from God, actually binds us to the universe and all that sustains it....We believe that a child's religion grows out of normal experience. Religion is not something to be 'given' to a child, but something to be nurtured and encouraged in a child's unfolding life."³³

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William Ellery Channing, 19th century Unitarian minister and scholar characterized U-U Religious Education: "The great end in religious instruction...is not to stamp our minds irresistibly on the young, but to stir up their own; not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own; not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, which rest on no foundation but our own word and will, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment, so that they may discern and approve for themselves what is everlastingly right and good."³⁴

Hugo Hollerorth, in Relating to Our World described three objectives of the Religious Education program. The first was to help children understand the powers within themselves, and those powers that have an impact from the outside world: these include powers with which they are endowed as human beings, such as biological needs and psychological desires, as well as those powers in the form of cultural expectations, conditions and evolutionary inheritances which impinge upon them as they move about the world and interact with it."³⁵

The second objective was to help children understand the process that was U-U religion: "This includes helping them to discover and become skilled in the use of the human mind; to have a positive interaction with themselves, with other human beings, with nature; being with people in a relationship of respect, freedom, love, sensitivity, honesty, independence, and

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adventurousness; the employment of the full range of human knowledge; and the use of diversity of thought."³⁶

The third objective was to bring the first two together and help the children to understand how they were affected by the world, and how they could use their own skills to create meaning from existence.³⁷

The UUA implemented this philosophy of Religious Education through a series of programs or kits that addressed various issues. A majority of these programs were designed for youths, but some, such as the program on feminist theology, were designed for adults. Among the issues addressed in the programs were sexuality, homosexuality, feminist theology, sexual abuse, and AIDS. The same commitment to freedom evident throughout the UUA, undergirds the Religious Education program.

One of the most important programs was About Your Sexuality, initiated in 1967-1968. The churches around the country felt there was a serious need for a program about sexuality for high school aged youths. A team was assembled to instorm and create the program. Gene Navias, Director of Religious Education, described the process as being veryational. deryck calderwood(sic), who ended up authoring the program, was involved directly with the UUA in the planning process. The program, according to Gene Navias, turned out to be "very pioneering." A thorough field test was done and the participants were found to be very responsive. The UUA also

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d programs to inform parents. The original version came out about 1970. Gene Navias: "The response was excellent. A very high percentage but not all of our churches chose to use."³⁸ A thorough 16-18 hour (the most thorough ever developed by the UUA) training was provided on how to facilitate the program, and a trainer was set up in each U-U district. At first the UUA found that parents weren't prepared to use the materials in the program, so an introduction was developed. The program went on to be used widely in U-U churches and was revised in 1983. An AIDS packet was added in 1989.

The program was based on a four step model: Initiation, where the topic was introduced; Interaction, where participants explored what they already knew and felt about the topic; Investigation, where further information was gathered; and Integration, where participants internalized what had been learned and decided how to act on it. The program addressed a variety of issues including sexual behavior, homosexuality, bisexuality, transvestism, and transgender identity. The program was so controversial in its approach that the State of Wisconsin tried to have it banned from use. Sam (Bill) Schulz, President of the UUA: "The publication of the kit was so controversial...In fact in Wisconsin the public officials tried to prevent the usage of the kit. The litigation was in a court battle over there."³⁹

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Gene Navias addressed the world view expressed by the programs. He stated that no one within the UUA is in the same place, that people are at various theological points. He believed the UUA is even more diverse now than it was when the programs came out. He believed, however, that there were certain widely held principles. The "Principles and Purposes" of the UUA came to serve as a vision statement of the way UUA's believe in interacting with the world. The R.E. programs are now connected with the Principles, and the connections are in the curriculum leader's guides provided with each program.⁴⁰

Navias also believed that R.E. programs have a significant effect on the denomination: "R.E. can either support the status quo or challenge it by sounding a new vision."⁴¹ One way in which it can support the status quo is through silence -- by not raising issues. Accordingly the R.E. Department finds itself doing education for social justice. Gene Navias: "Religious Education and social justice are inextricably intertwined."⁴² The publication of the Invisible Minority program on homosexuality in 1972, and the inclusion of same-sex lovemaking in About Your Sexuality in 1970, are evidence of the R.E. Department's education of the denomination and its planting the seeds of social change.

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COMMENTS ON THE STUDY

Much has been written about religious views of sexuality. These works have varied by tradition and approach. From the Roman Catholic perspective, works such as Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought,⁴³ the report of the Catholic Theological Society edited by Fr. Anthony Kosnik, and the works of Charles Curran have had a major impact because of their careful consideration of such issues as abortion and homosexuality, despite disagreeing with the Church's official positions. Abortion and Catholicism: The American Debate by Patricia Beattie Jung and Thomas A. Shannon, explored the spectrum of views on the issue.⁴⁴ Likewise, The Vatican and Homosexuality by Jeannine Gramack and Pat Furey, explored the complexities of Roman Catholic views on homosexuality.⁴⁵

From the Protestant perspective, many general and denominationally specific works have explored both abortion and homosexuality. From fundamentalist to liberal, both issues have been the focus of major attention. From a fundamentalist perspective, a number of works have been written opposing both homosexuality and abortion, including The Anita Bryant Story: Survival of Our Nation's Families and the Threat of Instant Homosexuality,⁴⁶ and Homosexuality: Legitimate, Inmate Deathstyle by Dick Hafer.⁴⁷ Works opposed to abortion include: The Slaughter of the Innocent by David A.

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el,⁴⁸ Operation Rescue by Randall Terry,⁴⁹ and If I
ld Die Before I Wake... by Jerry Falwell.⁵⁰

During the last five years a new approach has been tried
writers condemning homosexuality and abortion. Works of
nce fiction have opposed both issues. In This Present
ness,⁵¹ and Piercing the Darkness,⁵² both by Frank
tti, and Angelwalk: A Modern Fable,⁵³ by Roger Elwood,
acters possessed by Satan or by demons, are all gay men.
Silly: the novel (sic), also by Peretti, a woman is haunted
he grave-marker of her aborted fetus.⁵⁴

There have also been works written by gay and lesbian
amentalist Christians who accept their sexual orientation.
xample of this is a series of books written by Dr. Paul
son in the early 80's: Gays and the New Right: A Debate
t Homosexuality,⁵⁵ Quotations from Chairman Falwell,⁵⁶
Gays and Fundamentalism.⁵⁷

There have been a number of other books written in
ort of lesbian-gay rights from a religious perspective. A
xamples include: Is The Homosexual My Neighbor?: Another
tian View by Scanzoni and Mollenkott,⁵⁸ Come Home:
iming Spirituality and Community as Gay Men and Lesbians
ris Glaser,⁵⁹ and Our God Too, the biography of Troy
founder of the predominately lesbian and gay
olitan Community Church.⁶⁰ Christianity, Social
nce, and Homosexuality, by John Boswell, which explores

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attitudes about homosexuality throughout the history of the church, won the 1981 American Book Award for History.⁶¹

There have also been several books which addressed the issue of abortion from a "pro-choice" perspective. Our Right to Choose, by Beverly Wildung Harrison, stands out as a particularly powerful feminist, religious analysis of the issue.⁶²

It would be inappropriate to study progressive approaches to issues of sexuality, whether abortion or lesbian-gay issues, without examining the contributions of the Unitarian Universalists (U-U's). U-U's addressed the abortion issue in 1953, many years before most other religious groups. On lesbian-gay issues, U-U's have an Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, passed resolutions supporting the settlement of lesbian and gay clergy, and sanctioned the performing of same-sex Services of Holy Union. The Unitarian Universalist Church has been on the cutting edge of sexual issues. Despite all that has been written about these issues from a religious perspective, the development of the U-U views on these issues has not been addressed. It is a history worthy of exploration.

This study examines the response of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to the issues of abortion, lesbian and gay issues, and AIDS. These issues are examined in allowing a consideration of the role of women in the UUA. An extensive collection and review of historical documents was conducted with interviews of key people within the UUA. The

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results show that while the UUA has certainly been on the cutting edge of issues such as abortion and lesbian-gay concerns, the process has not been easy, and there have been those who have disagreed with the prevailing views. It is also clear that there has been a greater degree of unanimity on the pro-choice stance on abortion, than on the issue of lesbian-gay rights.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Unitarian Universalism is very proud of its record on issues related to women. Both the Unitarians and Universalists numbered many of this country's fore-mothers among their membership. The St. Lawrence Association of the Universalist General Convention was the first ecclesiastical body to ordain a woman in this country -- Olympia Brown of Prairie Ronde, Michigan, in 1863.⁶³

Many of the women involved in the Unitarian and Universalist churches were known nationally: Louisa Maycott, Susan B. Anthony, Clara Barton, Emily Dickinson, Catherine Beecher, Margaret Fuller, Florence Nightingale, Julia Ward Howe, Beatrix Potter, and Lucy Stone. Others such as Abigail Henry Reinhardt, an early President of Mills College and moderator of the American Unitarian Association from 1940-1942, Emily Jennings Stowe, Canada's first woman physician, and Maria Mitchell, 19th century astronomer and advocate for

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women in academia, also had a tremendous impact on the world around them.⁶⁴

In 1988, in order to recognize these early Unitarian and Universalist women, the Rev. Dorothy May Emerson founded the Women's History Publication Project under the co-sponsorship of the U-U Women's Federation and the First Parish U-U of Watertown, Massachusetts. In 1990 the project changed its name to the Unitarian Universalist Women's Heritage Society. The Society is attempting to "recover and publish writings by early Universalist and Unitarian women in history, to promote understanding of the importance of liberal religion in the lives of women, to engage congregations in the preservation and publication of their women's histories, to foster education about Unitarian Universalist women in theological schools and universities, to stimulate research about liberal religious women."⁶⁵

The role of women in the U-U church has certainly not been limited to the historical. A July, 1984 article in The Washington Times -- "Women Reshaping Unitarian Church," explored the role of women in the church. The article pointed out that the women's movement in the Church had been responsible for the effort to update the "Principles and Purposes of the UUA," resulting in "eliminating 'patriarchal and exclusive language' from its statement of faith. In this sense, (the UUA) is at the forefront of such efforts in various other denominations."⁶⁶ The article went on to

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describe how the UUA had the highest percentage of women ministers of any denomination, and how women were responsible for ending the decline in membership experienced by the denomination in the 1970's.⁶⁷

Judy Meyer, Vice-President for Program, believed the U-U Church to be the best alternative for feminist women: "There are feminists who believe they can reappropriate the Scripture and live and be in a scripturally based religion but I am not one of them. I think Unitarian Universalism is the only religious community that offers a sense of that tradition without having to be held in any creedal sense, being able to move beyond it. I think women should be very attracted to this."⁶⁸ The individual freedom inherent in Unitarian-Universalism supports feminist women who want to explore feminist approaches to religion and spirituality in a way that other religious groups do.

Phyllis Rickter, President of the U-U Women's Federation, has seen a significant shift in the participation of women in the Church: "From the Federation's point of view, up until the time of the great anger (1969) we were the organization for women. There were over 500 affiliations in churches...this was where our UU women acted out their lives....they were the mainstay of the church."⁶⁹ As women entered the world, and some ministers and Church Presidents, women's groups shrunk. Part of this shift grew out of the chaos of the 1960's. The wave of feminism created an interesting situation for

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men in the U-U churches as well as for the churches themselves. Theologian Dr. Betty Hoskins: "My experience was mostly of turmoil. Churches barely knew who was going to get forced the next week or who was going to have an abortion...it was also the era when people started to choose to have an abortion, but to keep the child. That was quite unsettling."⁷⁰

The 1970's also proved to be an interesting era for U-U men. A 1977 article in the UU World described how many U-U's were involved in the fight for the E.R.A. UUA staffers, including Arlie Scott, Director of the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, were involved with both the National Organization of Women and the Religious Committee for the E.R.A.'s efforts in support of ratification. Social Action Committees of churches across the country participated in the E.R.A. effort, and the General Assembly passed resolutions on E.R.A.⁷¹

In 1977 the General Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on "Women and Religion":

WHEREAS, a principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to 'affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships,' and

WHEREAS, great strides have been taken to affirm this principle within our denomination; and

WHEREAS, some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued; and

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WHEREAS, children, youth, and adults internalize and act on these cultural models, thereby tending to limit their sense of self-worth and dignity;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist association calls upon all Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own religious beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs influence sex-role stereotypes within their own families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association to encourage the Unitarian Universalist Association administrative officers and staff, the religious leaders within societies, the Unitarian Universalist theological schools, the directors of related organizations, and the planners of seminars and conferences to make every effort to: (a) put traditional assumptions and language in perspective and (b) avoid sexist assumptions and language in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association to send copies of this resolution to other denominations examining sexism inherent in religious literature and institutions and to the International Association of Liberal Religious Women and the IARF; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly requests the Unitarian Universalist Association (a) to join with those who are encouraging others in the society to examine the relationship between religious and cultural attitudes toward women, and (b) to send a representative and resource materials to associations appropriate to furthering the above goals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly requests the President of the UUA to report annually on progress in implementing this resolution.⁷²

In a paper prepared for the 1977 General Assembly, Jack Sohn supported the resolution. He argued that changing language was not enough -- that the myth that underlies

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igion needed to be examined by the UUA: "Until underlying
 ns are identified, understood, exorcised and reprocessed,
 l liberation will not come....Resolution alone will not
 rcise the sexist myths that envelop our lives and religious
 titutions. The theological journey 'Beyond God and Father'
 ougher than many Unitarian Universalists, female and male,
 ortably embrace. The Women and Religion resolution would
 us into deeper waters, ecumenical and secular. It calls
 our denominational leadership to lead, religiously. It
 urages all of us to be spiritually transformed."⁷³

In 1980, the General Assembly of the UUA passed a follow
 resolution: "Implementation of Women and Religion
 ution." The resolution called upon the UUA to provide
 ities and materials for use by congregations in
 onting their sexist nature and heritage.⁷⁴ Two specific
 ams grew out of the two resolutions. The first was Cakes
he Queen Of Heaven, a ten week seminar for adults on
 ist "thealogy" ("thea" is Greek for Goddess). The second
 am was Cleansing Our Temple, an assessment and packet of
 rces to help congregations address sexism.

Cakes For The Queen Of Heaven is a program developed for
 partment of Religious Education of the UUA, by Shirley
 anck, focusing on feminist "thealogy." The program,
 ed to be done in ten sessions, explores women's
 ous history through a feminist lens. Issues around the
 ination and domination of women in Judaism and

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Christianity are explored, as well as the reclaiming of strong historical women and female images. Ranck also goes well beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition and looks at Goddess worship and Witchcraft as strong alternatives for women.⁷⁵

Ranck sees the freedom of choice in religion that she is providing for women as an essential part of Unitarian Universalism, which she describes as a "Mystic Religion": "To claim such freedom of choice means that we must look to no authority but that of our own experience. Ours is in many ways a 'mystic' religion...each person is forced back on her personal experience with the divine as the final authority for what is loving and just. The divine is usually experienced as present in oneself and in the natural world, and enlightenment is usually felt as a harmony with the process of life." ⁷⁶

Ranck believes that the journey to understanding female religious experience and women's experience in general, can be difficult: "For women, especially, to tap the power of authentic selfhood is to be painfully aware of the myriad ways in which society works against the expression of female experience. To express that experience is to be in conflict with almost everything in society -- language, the legal system, the government, the economy, the structure of the family, and the symbolism of most world religions, all of which were designed to express and enhance the experience of male." ⁷⁷

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To assist women in exploring these issues, the program includes sections on such issues as "Reclaiming Our Bodies," "Why Did It Happen: Shift From Goddess To God," "Witchcraft," and "Future Fantasies."⁷⁸

Gene Navias, Director of Religious Education at the UUA described the impact of the program: "That has been a life changing program for many, many women."⁷⁹ Navias stated that the response to the program has been "marvelous." It provided a bonding experience for the women involved. There have been questions about how men fit in the program, since it was designed for women. Navias believed it wasn't a program designed for men and that men should not participate. Women valued their privacy. Male participation has been discouraged by the Religious Education Department. Navias realized the need to develop other programs for men. He stated that there has also been "some reaction" to the presence of Witchcraft in the program.⁸⁰ There are very few religious groups that would encourage its members to explore Witchcraft/Wicca or other forms of Goddess worship, let alone publish the materials that enable such exploration.

Cleansing Our Temple: A Sexism Assessment for Unitarian Universalist Congregations, also grew out of the 1980 implementation of Women and Religion Resolution." The program provides resources and an assessment designed to gather information about sexist practices within a church. It is designed so that a congregation can administer it internally.

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The program is designed to look at five aspects of church life: 1) worship services 2) congregational, committee, and board meetings 3) staff and volunteer leadership 4) religious education programs and 5) religious education materials. A questionnaire is given to people involved in each area, and as many people as possible are encouraged to participate. Once data is gathered, the program suggests implementing needed changes through a variety of avenues: worship services, congregational meetings, discussion groups, involvement of the youth group, religious education, and information in the church newsletter.⁸¹ Also included in the packet are resources such as guidelines for avoiding sexist language and texts of the two resolutions on Women and Religion.

In a paper entitled "Toward A Feminist Re-Formation," the Rev. Dr. William (Bill) Schulz, President of the UUA, looks at the impact of feminism on the denomination. He begins the paper with his own journey into feminism, and the development of his own consciousness. He wrote that he now includes quotations from women in all sermons and speeches: "Since women constitute 60-70% of our members, they deserve to hear their sisters' voices and be inspired by their sisters' lives, so that the speaker be male."⁸² He is also proud that there has been an increase in the number of women on the UUA board from 22% in 1979, when he became Executive-Vice President, to 56% currently.

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Schulz sees two major impacts of feminism in "re-making religious faith."⁸³ The first impact has been the transformation of rational, dualistic, ideological faith into faith of balance, mutuality, and communion."⁸⁴ He believes that feminism has broken down some of the dichotomies that have existed, and exposed the pattern that underlies a system, that the whole can be seen: "Feminism begs us to appreciate the fluidity of male and female; the unity of human and natural; the interdependence of matter and spirit. From this rejection of dualism and embrace of the holistic, new political implications flow: That I and the Other need not be enemies for we are both held in the hands of the same creation; that ideology is an outmoded brand of politics; that life on the planet, not just human, has value unto itself; that power is to be shared and loyalty is to be to the universal."⁸⁵

The second gift of feminism is "a change in the locus of the Holy from the unseen to the seen."⁸⁶ The holy is found in everyday: "The gods and goddesses, whatever they in essence be, are accessible to us in the taste of honey and the touch of stone....feminism calls us back to an incarnated faith, to a love of the earth, to pleasure in our bodies, to joy in our relationships. Religion is not just a matter of faith in the unseen. The gods and goddesses show their faces in the richness of the world's exuberance."⁸⁷

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Schulz believes that Unitarian-Universalism is in the midst of a re-formation, and feminism plays a central role. He believes that because of feminism, Unitarian Universalism is becoming more global and intercultural, more relational, more willing to invite spiritual experience and not just talk about spiritual experience, more passionate, and more willing to appreciate Grace in balance with individual will.⁸⁸

The attitude towards women affects other issues within a church. If a church believes women to be subordinate to men, that belief will affect their views on abortion -- men control women's bodies not women. If a church embraces feminist principles, this cannot help but affect their views on abortion and lesbian gay issues -- women and men control their bodies and can make the best decisions for themselves.

It is clear that women and the women's movement have played prominent roles within the U-U Church. The commitment to social reform and women's rights serve as foundations for addressing issues such as abortion and lesbian-gay issues. Unitarian Universalism is a religion that has not only embraced the feminist ideal, but applies that ideal better than most other religious groups.

The emphasis on feminist beliefs, expressed through the focus on women's issues, abortion rights, and lesbian-gay issues, is an example of an attempt to deconstruct patriarchal structures. In order for this attempt to be successful, the UUA must maintain an openness to new

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stions, to new concepts of family, to a break with the idea "God the Father," and continue to build a new religious understanding.

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The role of lesbians is another topic central to women's issues. It is interesting to note that all early references to activity on lesbian-gay issues, refers to "Gay Caucus" or "Office of Gay Concerns." Bob Wheatley, former Director of the Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns, pointed out that the early debate was between the terms gay and homosexual -- the term lesbian was not part of the consciousness of the day: "It wasn't a point of issue anywhere."⁸⁹ It wasn't until lesbians began working for differentiation in the mid 70's that there was a change in terminology. Wheatley, who made the change from Office of Gay Concerns to Office of Lesbian-Gay Concerns in 1978, supported the change as soon as the issue was raised.⁹⁰

Richard (Dick) Nash, founder of the Gay Caucus, stated that women were involved from the very beginning of the caucus.⁹¹ Hal Lawson, an early member of the caucus, pointed to the creation of co-chair positions, one for a woman, one for a man, around 1973, as symbolic of the Caucus' commitment to working with lesbians.⁹²

One area where the response to Lesbians has been positive is in the U-U Women's Federation. In 1983, a Lesbian representative met at a Federation meeting in Vancouver. The President

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the Federation believed there needed to be more education on lesbian issues, and she reached out to the caucus. Since then, there have been a number of lesbian-non-lesbian dialogues. These dialogues, which were uncomfortable and tentative at first, resulted in a more positive, comfortable atmosphere between the lesbian and non-lesbian women.⁹³

There were a number of indications of this discomfort with Lesbians in the Women's Federation. In a 1986 Survey conducted by the Women's Federation. A question was asked about the most essential and least essential women's issues to be addressed. The least essential issue identified was "lesbian relations."⁹⁴ Phyllis Rickter, President of the Women's Federation, described a homophobic incident: "There was a group very distressed that the Women's Federation banner was used by a gay-lesbian group in a parade. People tend to think there are no lesbians even in large churches."⁹⁵

ISSUES

The U-U response to abortion, will examine several areas: 1) Resolutions and policies, as well as the Religious Education materials, will be examined; 2) The words and actions of clergy will be explored; 3) In keeping with Vice-President Judy Meyer's statement about leadership by the church, the responses of those in the churches will be examined; and 4) The writings of theologians within the church

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l provide insight into the diversity of views on the issue. These areas combine to give a comprehensive view of the ordination issue from a U-U perspective.

According to the Alyson Almanac: A Treasury of Information for the Gay and Lesbian Community, "The Unitarian Universalist Association has gone further than any other denomination to defend the rights of gay men and lesbians."⁹⁶ Considering the resolutions of the General Assembly that deal with issues such as ministerial placement for lesbians and gay Services of Holy Union for same sex couples, and civil human rights, the track record of the UUA is clearly the most progressive of any religious group in the country. Only the Friends General Conference (Quaker), Reform, Reconstructionist and Humanistic Judaism, and the United Methodist Church of Christ have begun to do some of things that the UUA has done. Gene Navias, Director of Religious Education for the UUA, states: "In terms of the rights of gay and lesbian people, the UUA took a prophetic stance."⁹⁷

Taking such a stance has not been easy, however. The struggle of lesbian and gay rights has proved difficult, often painful, particularly in the early years of the gay rights movement within the church, between 1970 and 1975. There has been an ongoing process of self-education within the church and within the church's lesbian and gay community.

There have also been major transitions within the church's lesbian and gay community, which mirror much of what

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going on in the lesbian and gay communities nation wide. In the gay men's movement, two views, also reflective of feminist schools of thought, have clearly surfaced. The assimilationists argue that gay men and lesbians are like straight people with the same wants and desires, and simply want the same rights. Others, such as the radical fairies, Queer Nation, and Act Up take a more activist, empowerment approach that says "queer" is good, "queer" is different. The message to make change is to "flaunt it." This difference in approach has been evident in the UUA. Earlier leaders in the lesbian and gay movement were more confrontational, while the current leadership, at least in the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns (OLGC), is more assimilationist.

There are several aspects of the movement for lesbian and gay rights within the UUA. The first is the early history of the gay caucus through the 1970's. Then a look at the OLGC, which was formerly the Office of Gay Concerns (OGC), and the Office of Gay Affairs (OGA), will illustrate the various views that have been taken on lesbian and gay rights. Services of the UUA, placement of Lesbian and Gay clergy, the "Common Prayer Book," and the "Welcoming Congregation," are activities of the movement today.

AIDS has been dealt with by the UUA in three primary ways. The first is through action on both the centralized level by the UUA, and on the congregational level. A second approach has been through the resolution process, whereby the

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has made public statements about AIDS. The third response
been educational. The Department of Religious Education
prepared a number of programs and information packets for
by congregations.

All three issues illustrate a basic U-U commitment to
progressive action and ideas. Within that basic commitment
ever, there is often disagreement on specific issues. That
agreement is also part of the U-U tradition.

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ABORTION

ON THE DENOMINATIONAL LEVEL

William Schulz, President of The UUA, believes that there is a close to consensus among U-U's in their views on abortion:

My guess is that of major public policy issues today abortion would be the issue around which U-U's would be most united; would have the largest consensus. This is just an intuitive sense of mine. If you contrast it with gay and lesbian issues...or certainly war and peace issues...in terms of the response I get when I take a position...the issue about which there is the least consternation within our ranks is the broadly construed pro-choice position. I think that's reflected in the fact that I can't name for you other than George (Williams) a prominent U-U leader who would identify as pro-life. Now within that very broad statement of what it means to be pro-choice, I'm sure is a question that would elicit a fair number of visions among us. I'm not sure that we, or even the pro-choice community itself, have thought thoroughly enough about the tremendous complexities involved, both psychologically and philosophically, in the decision to have an abortion and all the philosophical and theological implications of the act. In general I would say that that is an issue about which we are little divided.¹

For Schulz, the commitment to abortion rights is strong. He was recently elected to the Board of Directors of Planned Parenthood: "I am very pleased about that because it will be a direct link between the UUA and an organization with which many U-U's have had connections....the cooperation it will allow will be important."²

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The resolutions passed on the issue of abortion demonstrate a strong commitment to the 'pro-choice' view. The resolution was passed in 1963. It stated:

WHEREAS, we as Unitarian-Universalists are deeply concerned for dignity and rights for human beings: and

WHEREAS, the laws which narrowly circumscribe or completely prohibit termination of pregnancy by qualified medical practitioners are an affront to human life and dignity; and

WHEREAS, these statutes drive many women in the United States and Canada to seek illegal abortions with increased risk of death, while others must travel to distant lands for lawful relief;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: That the Unitarian Universalist Association support enactment of a uniform statute making abortion legal if:

1. There would be grave impairment of the physical or mental health of the mother;
2. The child would be born with a serious physical or mental defect;
3. Pregnancy resulted from rape or incest;
4. There exists some other compelling reason—physical, psychological, mental, spiritual, or economic.³

The 1963 resolution is particularly noteworthy given the context in which it came into being. One of the earliest national groups to deal with abortion, the Association for the Control of Abortion, did not come into existence until 1964, the year after the U-U resolution.⁴ That group focused on the education of physicians and other professionals. The first national lobbying group, The National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws, didn't have its first organizational meeting until February of 1969, by which time the UUA had already

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passed a resolution calling for abolition of anti-abortion laws.⁵

Asked whether either the Unitarians or Universalists had addressed the issue prior to the 1961 merger or the 1963 resolution, President Schulz replied: "My guess is it was too late...that concern for those types of issues was very limited, certainly in the pre-60's."⁶ Schulz believed there was a great deal of attention focused on birth control issues during that period. It is not surprising that the UUA addressed abortion before other religious groups, given its commitment to women's issues and creating social change.

A 1968 resolution, which passed by an over 2/3 margin,⁷ went even further by calling for abolition of all laws against abortion:

BE IT RESOLVED: That the General Assembly of the Unitarian-Universalist Association urges that efforts be made to abolish existing abortion laws except to prohibit performance of an abortion by a person who is not a duly licensed physician, leaving the decision as to an abortion to the doctor and his patient.⁸

These statements made very early in the pro-choice movement, indicated that the U-U's "pioneered in movements to eliminate restrictive laws regarding abortion."⁹ In Roe V. Wade, Marian states that in 1969 the U-U's "were the only Protestant denomination to have taken a strong stand on abortion."¹⁰

In 1969, a resolution was passed supporting the efforts of clergy involved in counseling pregnant women. This resolution was particularly timely given the involvement of

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clergy at that time in the Clergy Consultation Service on
 tion, a group committed to helping women obtain illegal
 tions:

BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1969 General Assembly of
 the Unitarian Universalist Association expresses
 its support for and encouragement of ministers who
 are participants in counseling services for women
 with problem pregnancies.¹¹

Besides these key early resolutions, eight others on
 tion have been passed by the UUA. In 1973, the UUA
 essed its support for the Roe V. Wade decision and its
 sition to efforts to create a Constitutional amendment to
 abortion. In 1975, the '73 resolution was reaffirmed, and
 UUA called on the Unitarians in Canada to do what they
 d for abortion rights. A 1977 resolution spoke out in
 of Medicaid funding for abortions, and in 1978 the UUA's
 ort for abortion rights was reaffirmed once again. A 1980
 ution supported the Religious Coalition for Abortion
 's "Call to Commitment A Religious Statement on Abortion"
 rged an increase in educational efforts to encourage
 nsible sexuality. In 1985 the bombings of abortion
 cs were addressed and in 1986 the National March for
 's Lives was endorsed. The most recent resolution, passed
 87 reaffirmed many of the stances taken previously (For
 of these resolutions please see Appendix A).¹²

In addition to all of the resolutions that the UUA has
 on the abortion issue, it has also become involved

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ally. In order to underscore its strong support for Roe V.
 e, the UUA joined an Amicus or Friend of the Court brief by
 Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights in the case of
Planned Parenthood v. American Coalition of Life Physicians. It has also joined
 briefs relating to the cases of Turnock v. Ragsdale which
 involves "unreasonable restrictions on clinics performing
 abortions"¹³ and Ohio v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health
 which involves parental notification for minors seeking
 abortion.¹⁴

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION- RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The issue of abortion was not included in the original
 version of About Your Sexuality (AYS). It was added to
 the program with the third edition in 1983.¹⁵ There were many
 people who felt that the issue needed to be addressed. Gene
 S., Director of Religious Education for the UUA, remembers
 there being little if any adverse reaction to the addition of
 the issue. It was in part because of the General Assembly
 resolutions that the Religious Education Department was able
 to address abortion- "the GA had passed a resolution affirming
 the right of women to choose....we didn't have a thing to
 worry about."¹⁶

In the 1983 edition of AYS, the issues of abortion and
 birth control are handled together. The introduction to
 the section states:

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The topic of abortion has been placed in this unit as the most appropriate place within the course. Its inclusion is necessitated in today's world by the mounting discussion of the pros and cons of abortion, the proposal of a Constitutional Amendment in the United States to prohibit abortion, the conviction of millions of women that they have a right to determine whether they shall or shall not give birth to a baby, and the mounting numbers of unwanted pregnancies by young teenage women. It is important that young people have the opportunity to explore these issues and their feelings about them. Leaders need to be prepared for this to be as emotional an issue for youth as it is for their elders.¹⁷

unit opens with the leader discussing what abortion is and

the various schools of thought are about the issue:

There is no single authoritative "right" position on abortion free of moral quandaries, emotional trauma and guilt, or of abuse by various individuals and groups. Any assertion about when human life begins is arbitrary. The issue is complex and is not a matter of those who oppose abortion choosing life and those who support abortion choosing death. It is necessary today for each person to arrive thoughtfully at a position which one believes is sound and in which one can have confidence.¹⁸

The activities are designed for the participants to express how they feel about the issue. It asks them to complete sentences like: "Abortion is...", "People who get abortions are...", "If my parents found out I {or my friend} had an abortion they would..."¹⁹ The activities help the participants in exploring a variety of views on the

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RESPONSE OF CLERGY TO ABORTION

The response of U-U clergy to the issue of abortion has been strong. Many clergy have felt called to support the pro-life position, the major exception being George Williams of Harvard Divinity School, who was founder of Americans For Life. There have been numerous sermons and papers delivered on the issue.

"Freedom Light" by the Rev. Kit Howell of the Unitarian Church of Ft. Lauderdale, FL is one such sermon. It is written in the tradition of Letty Russel and Phyllis Tribble who interpret the texts and the tradition to reveal the status of women. The sermon deals with what Rev. Howell sees as the following underlying issues in the abortion debate:

However, there is a key to the real issue in one of the letters I received. One pastor wrote, "God created women to bear children." And I think the key is there. I think the religious right's problem with abortion has very little to do with abortion. I think it has to do with women. I believe that on a very deep level, our culture, which is male dominated, has a pathology. It is afraid of women. Perhaps it is because women can perform the most essential creative act within the realm of our experience, that is, they can bear children. It is easy to see that our first religions were fertility religions worshipping the Great Mother Goddess. Of all the signs of the divine in life, the act of birth is the most accessible. So perhaps men have always felt somewhat intimidated by women who so obviously walked closely with the divine- at least intimidated enough to react by socially, culturally, and religiously controlling women.²⁰

It goes on to rethink the Adam and Eve story in light of its impact on women. "It tells us that women are to be kept in

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son."²¹ Childbirth, desire, and conception become the
 ls that enslave Eve. These walls imprison women to this
 , and anti-abortion forces are trying to maintain them.
 n a woman has control over her body and the decision to
 r children, the prison walls crumble: "Now Eve is out from
 er the thumb of the masculine God, or rather the thumb of
 e male dominated culture. And again, I believe this scares
 r culture to its very core.... Eve is out of her cage and
 y abortion has become the catchall for all the fear her
 eedom evokes."²²

Howell, while not "Believing in the killing of fetuses"
 not feeling "pro-abortion," strongly advocates the right of
 en to choose:²³

At a basic level this is not simply a moral or a
 religious question. It is a legal one. A woman must
 have the right to her own body. You may not like
 what she does with it, but it is her business. Pro-
 choice does not mean pro-abortion. It is when we
 somehow think that pro-choice and pro-abortion do
 mean the same thing that we confuse ourselves and
 give ammunition to those who want women to live in
 cages. Because either a woman has the right to
 choose or she doesn't. Either a woman has the basic
 fundamental right of a person in a free society or
 she doesn't. I speak, of course, of the right to
 one's own life. The right to one's own body. A
 woman is either a sexual slave or a free person.
 Eve is either in prison or out. The dividing line
 for this issue has become abortion. I wish it were
 a dividing line of less pain and less consequence,
 but it is not.²⁴

ell contends that the pro choice people need to "make a
 k." People need to start fighting for the fundamental
 doms of women. She is concerned that the danger of going

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to the era of back room abortions, where thousands of
 n died, is great:²⁵

{Women} are losing their right to make their own decisions about the single most crucial aspect of their own lives. These decisions cannot be made by self-righteous men in clerical robes or in legislative sessions. They cannot be made by rabbis, United States Presidents, ministers, brothers or even sisters. These decisions belong to the woman and her doctor. Talk about murder! To deny a woman this right, the right to a safe abortion, is to condemn her to darkness- to death. Physical death, cultural death, political death, spiritual death.

Right to life? Whose right, and to what kind of a life?

Without the freedom to choose, a woman has no life. As long as women get pregnant, there will be abortions. The question is will they be safe? And if not, who is condemned to the danger? The rich who can go where they will to get a safe abortion?- or is it the poor, condemned to coat hangers and home remedies.

I think we know the answer to that...

Life with hope. Life with freedom.

Life - and a woman's right to it.

Insist on it.

There is no other way. In a world without end, Amen.²⁶

In her paper "The New Scarlet Letter" Cynthia Frado
 ynd, at the time a U-U student at Harvard Divinity
 l, brings a very personal dimension to the abortion issue
 scribing her experience having an abortion, and how, for
 the scarlet letter 'A' has changed from adultery to
 ion:

As I endured a pregnancy which was hampered by so many physical complications and extenuating circumstances, I came to realize that pro-choice was pro-life. A very serious reality check informed

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my decision. It was the most life giving choice for myself and my family. That does not mean that it was without pain. Yet, once the decision had been made there was no turning back. I knew the feelings of desperation. Had the choice not been available to me, I would have done anything to end the suffering I was experiencing...anything!²⁷

described how she felt abandoned by people who had
wise supported her:

The shame and guilt that surrounded an already painful yet necessary decision were magnified beyond proportion. And the sad truth of the matter is that many of these remarks came from liberally "enlightened" people. You know those who know all the right words to say when being liberal really matters. Yes it is true that one can be pro-choice and not necessarily be pro-abortion. There is, however, a fine line where absurdity comes into play. We cannot carry our banners supporting a woman's right to choose and then not know her at the abortion clinic's door.²⁸

le must accept the choices that women make and not label
for exercising their freedom of choice.

* * *

The Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion was founded
ward Moody, a U.C.C.- Congregationalist minister from New
in the mid- 60's. While this was not an organization
ed by U-U's, it was not surprising given U-U commitment
cial action, that the involvement of U-U clergy was
cularly strong. Among the early ministers trained to work
the service was The Reverend Farley Willwright, a U-U
ter who was serving a church on Long Island at the time.
right subsequently moved to Cleveland where he organized

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new chapter of the Consultation Service and became its director.

Willwright described the functions of the Consultation Service on two levels. The first function was to find the names of doctors within a particular state who were willing to perform illegal abortions. The facility was then checked, and if it was thought to be safe the name of the doctor was passed to Services in other states. The second function referred to doctors in states other than their own, or to foreign physicians, for abortions. In many states there were laws forbidding referral of women for abortions, accordingly, by using physicians in their own states, the Consultation Service believed it would be on more solid ground, legally. The Service utilized the clergy's right to confidentiality to try to protect themselves legally. Willwright said: "We were taking chances -- no doubt about it." Despite this Willwright believed the Service was very vulnerable to prosecution. Indeed, the State of Massachusetts was in the process of prosecuting the Service when the Roe V. Wade decision was handed down.

In the years that Willwright was with the Service, he saw hundreds of women, described as mostly middle class, white, and about 40% were Catholic. The Service in Cleveland was based out of the U-U Church Willwright served. There were priests and ministers from a number of denominations involved in the service, including all 20 U-U ministers in the

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Cleveland area. The clergy would take turns consulting with women who wanted abortions. The ministers talked with the women about their options and what they wanted to do. "We made them sure they wanted the abortion and weren't being pressured by their family or husband."³⁰ If the woman was past the first trimester, abortion was not recommended. Willwright had some reservations about what they were doing, but described it as "a hell of a lot better than doing nothing....we didn't do this for abortion. We did it for the benefit of the women to prevent back alley abortions."³¹

The Service ended up being quite controversial and received a great deal of press coverage. Willwright himself appeared on the front page of the Wall Street Journal and had an article written about him in the tabloid The National Enquirer. The Service was also featured on Sixty Minutes. On one occasion a local woman died from an illegal abortion. Even though she was not a client, and not connected with the Service in any way, the Service, and Willwright in particular, were blamed for the death, and Willwright's life was threatened. ³²

Willwright described the UUA's involvement as being either supportive or unsupportive...There was nothing {they could do." ³³ It was the individual clergy who took action. At the time the UUA was very involved with the black civil rights and empowerment movements and much of its resources and attention were directed that way. Accordingly,

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UUA did not contribute financially to the Service. The
 gy, however, were very involved - "Wherever there was a
 ice you would have found U-U ministers there....we
 ainly took a lot of action."³⁴ The Service was a visible
 of the early abortion rights movement, providing women
 options, in a period when their options were limited.

ONSE AND ACTION BY THE LAITY

Phyllis Rickter, President of the U-U Women's Federation
 F), argues that resolutions are the work of the top, and
 on the work of the grass roots.³⁵ While acknowledging the
 rtance of resolutions for the press, outsiders, and as a
 for the Board of Directors, she sees action as the
 ntial component.³⁶ Likewise U-U theologian Betty Hoskins
 "Is the policy at all relevant?...{the choice movement}
 own on the sidewalk."³⁷ She believes it is the action of
 ocal churches and the local ministers that is essential.
 er, it is more important to do work than write
 utions. She describes it as an "eternal argument as to
 er resolutions of the General Assembly inform or in any
 direct individual congregations or individual
 ences."³⁸ Hoskins believes "It may affect how we are
 l in the world as they make the newspapers."³⁹
 ing to Rickter: "They issue press releases and people
 talk about it. But it's very removed from the grass

roots."⁴⁰
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s."⁴⁰ For Rickter the resolutions provide a foundation for the Board and for President Schulz to operate. Because of the resolutions on abortion, Schulz was able to go to Washington for the National March for Women's Lives. The resolutions also play a role in keeping the denomination from becoming too extreme by ensuring a thoughtful process that has to be worked through before a resolution can be passed. Reform-oriented resolutions are also important as public affirmations of U-U beliefs, and as ideals for individual congregations.

There are numerous stories about how U-U's became involved in the abortion rights movement. In a 1986 survey conducted by the UUWF, Abortion was seen as both the most essential women's issue and the one that respondents would be willing to work on.⁴¹ The following case of the Dallas church's involvement in Roe V. Wade, and the study of abortion in Madison, WI, are two examples of the U-U grass roots action.

In Roe V. Wade, Marian Faux devotes a large portion of a chapter to the support given the abortion case by the Unitarians in Dallas, Texas: "As nearly as any of the participants could recall, abortion reform in Texas began in fall 1969, when Virginia Whitehill, a Planned Parenthood member, responded to a request from the local Unitarian church for someone to speak to them about abortion. At the

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ve taken a strong stand on abortion"⁴²

In the previous year, the Women's Auxiliary of the Dallas
Unitarian Church had been studying the issue of abortion. This
incided nationally with the Women's Federation's vote to
ke abortion their number one priority.⁴³

Speaking with the U-U women, Whitehill from Planned
renthood stirred them to action. She spoke on a very
ersonal level and made the issue one which the women
ponded to strongly and very personally. "The Unitarian
en responded enthusiastically to her cry for reform...they
stered around Whitehill after her speech to ask what could
done. Someone suggested that they organize a new separate
up around the issue of abortion."⁴⁴

The group came to be known as the Dallas Committee to
dy Abortion. At its core were Whitehill, Ellen Kalina, then
sident of the Dallas U-U women's group and Pat White who
invited Whitehill to speak. The minister of the Dallas
arian church, Rev. Dwight Brown, proved to be one of their
anchest supporters, and offered the group a meeting room
an office in the church.⁴⁵

When beginning their work on Roe V. Wade, attorneys
ee and Weddington knew of no abortion reform groups
ing in Dallas or anywhere in Texas.⁴⁶ The fore-mentioned
p, founded by U-U women, became very central in the Texas
tion rights movement. The group became involved in

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lobbying religious organizations for support, and participated in public forums. It also created a speakers bureau and went door to door lobbying throughout Texas. The group had a significant impact on abortion rights in Texas by bringing attention to the issue, and constantly lobbying the Texas legislature. They were also able to bring several prominent Texans into the abortion movement.⁴⁷

* * *

At the request of the minister and Social Action Committee, the First Unitarian Society of Madison, Wisconsin undertook a study of abortion in 1979. The Society's report presented a very thoughtful, careful analysis of the abortion issue. It was also an excellent example of a lay group's effort to address social concerns.

The study was designed to look at five questions:

- (1) When is abortion justified? When is abortion not justified?
- (2) How do you compare the value and quality of life as they relate to the abortion issue?
- (3) At what level does the right/responsibility for decision exist? Is it a legal?-medical?-economic?-religious?-and/or individual question?
- (4) When does human life begin? And what relevance does that beginning have to the question of abortion?
- (5) Is it possible to make a rule (ruling) about abortion? Or is every potential abortion a unique situation?⁴⁸

Social Concerns Committee of the Madison church served as steering committee for the task force. It appointed a nine

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ber committee, with Marcia Bradley as Chair, to examine the
 ue. The task force report was designed to serve as an
 oing base for discussion of abortion within the church.
 the task force began to meet it "discovered that all
 bers of the task force felt that abortion on demand during
 first trimester of pregnancy is a choice that should be
 lable."⁴⁹

Despite this liberal base for agreement it found a wide
 iversity of views and many reservations among task force
 ers. The reservations included:

- a) Abortion is not the most suitable form of birth control.
- b) Abortion on demand may adversely affect the respect for life of our and future generations.
- c) Abortion forces one to place the value of one life above that of another.
- d) "Trivial" reasons for an abortion, such as for sex selection, may arise, and a screening mechanism may be justified.
- e) Whereas abortion on demand is now available, economic discrimination is a problem. Providing public assistance for abortion services may be offensive to a segment of the population which opposes abortion.⁵⁰

The report of the task force, dated March 1, 1980,
 ned a variety of issues. The report looked at: 1) The
 ry of abortion in the Unites States 2) philosophy of
 ion 3) abortion and the individual 4) abortion and society
) limitations on abortion. In the introduction the task
 identified a central theme that underlies all five of
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The task force concluded that decisions concerning abortion should be made with respect and reverence for the humanity of the fetus, the well being of the mother both physically and mentally, and the quality of life in our society. The need to respect life on all three of those levels is the theme that underlies most of the opinions expressed in this paper and will be referred to in following sections of the report.⁵¹

The first part of the Madison report gave an overview of the history of abortion in the United States. There were three distinct periods in the 1800's: 1) From 1800-1830 "abortions were regarded as physically safe, legally acceptable, and morally conscionable, provided the abortion took place before quickening."⁵² 2) From 1840-1860 the state took more interest in protecting the health of its citizens: "The rising demand for abortions by married women, some lurid court cases involving abortions, and the commercialization of abortion services, including advertisements in the public press, made abortion a public concern. This and the medical danger of the operation (more dangerous than childbirth at the time), made abortion the object of legislation for the public good."⁵³ This resulted in restrictions on doing abortions after quickening being passed in 20 states between 1840 and 1860, but restrictions, however, were placed on abortion practitioners, not on women. 3) The third period between 1861 and 1881, was when restrictive laws were passed banning abortions before quickening and penalizing women as well as the practitioner.⁵⁴ The report did not analyze why these changes occurred.

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In looking at the philosophy of abortion, the Madison report took a middle of the road position:

As a committee we found both the extreme conservative arguments and extreme liberal arguments showed a lack of respect for life in one way or another and therefore we arrived at a middle position. The extreme conservative position contends that the fetus is a person and therefore has as strong a claim to life as any person. To the conservative, then, having an abortion would be the same as murdering a person....On the other hand, the extreme liberal position is that the fetus is not a person or yet human and therefore there is no moral dilemma. Abortion can be justified in any situation. Most members of the committee felt uncomfortable with this position. Judging from the reservations expressed, most members of the committee felt that the fetus was human in some sense, either as an actual person or as a potential human and that humanity should be respected. Therefore, while the decision to abort a fetus should be an individual decision, it should not be an irresponsible or thoughtless decision.⁵⁵

and on these concerns, the committee adopted the view of
 rd Langerak, who argued "That the fetus may have some
 m to life but the mother's claim to life is stronger until
 fetus reaches a certain point in development at which time
 fetus will have the same rights or claim to life as any
 r person."⁵⁶ To Langerak, there are two essential
 s; implantation and viability. Prior to implantation the
 has very little claim to life, and the claim of the
 r is greater. At the point of viability the fetus has a
 to life that supersedes the needs of the mother. Between
 two points the respective claims vary.⁵⁷

In the section on abortion and the individual, the
 on report argued that the decision must ultimately be

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made by the mother. This position also meant that there needed to be an increase in availability of birth control and birth control information so that abortion does not become a means of birth control. The report goes on to look at various situations where abortion may be called for:

Although we agree that the fetus has no inherent claim on the mother, we do acknowledge the wonder and reverence of life. Thus we recognize that abortion is necessary under certain conditions. The following list is not meant to be a guide to others of when abortion is an appropriate course of action but only a list that we as a committee agreed upon.

1. for victims of incest or rape
2. for diagnosed fetal malformation
3. for unmarried women, especially young teenagers
4. for women with serious medical illness which has a high probability of significantly shortening her life
5. for a woman whose husband has a terminal illness
6. for women who already have several children
7. for women known to have a high risk of delivering a seriously handicapped child.

The committee feels that an individual might have more difficulty making a decision in the following situations:

1. abortion for convenience early in the marriage
2. abortion for a married woman with a small number of children and several years since the birth of her last child.

We believe that abortion for sex discrimination is wrong.⁵⁸

The committee also identified two considerations affecting the abortion decision. The first is that the abortion dilemma is often contemplated within the woman, not between the woman and the institution. The second is that guidelines are only somewhat helpful. Each abortion decision must be made on a case by case basis.⁵⁹

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The Madison report then turned to abortion and society. In this section, the issue of the individual's right to abortion was examined, taking into consideration "What sort of society it is that can allow abortion without risking the erosion of the high value placed on human life."⁶⁰ The argument was that "the perceived sanctity of a human life is augmented by the deliberateness of its creation and threatened by its abundance."⁶¹ The importance of developing family planning services and the hope that children are wanted is stressed: "In an ideal society one would like to have abortions performed as rarely as possible....society should strive to make abortions less numerous by reducing the need, through the program of sex education and family planning."⁶² The report also stated that family planning including abortion, must be available to all, regardless of financial situation.

The last section of the Madison report deals with limitations on abortion. The committee examined other religious groups' statements about abortion and state limitations on abortion. In terms of the other religions: "We as a committee found most of the religious statements on abortion too restrictive in that they did not take into account the consequences that unwanted pregnancies impose on individual women and families."⁶³ Looking at the role of the state in abortion, the committee wrote: "There was general consensus among the task force members that the state should

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to be in a position of determining the appropriateness of an early abortion, that the decision ultimately belongs to the mother. We did feel, however, that the state does have a finite role to play in setting some legal limits on the practice of abortion and those limits are important in maintaining our respect for individual human life.⁶⁴

The report concluded with the following: "Despite our observations, the task force agreed that Unitarian Universalists must provide community leadership for supporting individuals whose personal decision is to obtain an abortion. Further, members of the Society must be prepared to take action to support the conclusions they reach on the issue of abortion."⁶⁵

After its completion the paper was presented to the Madison congregation. The impact of the Report was two fold. There was some discussion about the possibility of it being adopted as a congregational statement, but that idea was rejected because the congregation did not want a single person to represent it. Marcia Bradley, Chair of the task force, believed the document came to be used mainly as a tool for reflection for individual church members.⁶⁶

The paper also went on to be used in an inter-denominational dialogue on abortion held among three churches in the Madison area. The Madison Unitarian Society joined a Lutheran and a Roman Catholic Church in a dialogue in the Fall of 1986. Each group was given the opportunity to present its

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sition while the other two groups listened. Only clarifying questions were allowed. There was no debate. Each of the three groups had reservations about its stance. The follow up report of the interfaith dialogue stated: "I think we all gained a greater respect for each other's views. We learned that while we hold differing views on abortion, we share many concerns and values. Perhaps if more groups were to discuss volatile issues in such a manner we would be less likely to engage in polarized debate that produces more heat than light."⁶⁷

While the stories of the Dallas and Madison churches are good examples of the work of congregations on the abortion issue, there is another side to this activity. Phyllis Rickter in her 1989 article "Webster Decision Stirs U-U Women to Action--But How Ambivalent We Are!" describes both tremendous energy around the issue and tremendous ambivalence. The uncertain future of abortion rights is once again bringing the issue forward: "In the years since Roe V. Wade, there has been little need to talk about reproductive freedom because many of us felt secure: the law was on our side. Now the Supreme Court has moved to limit the choice of abortion."⁶⁸ She found many women searching for information and trying to work on the abortion question:

The more I hear U-U women talk--the more opinions are expressed--the more I realize there isn't a single view of the question among us. As in most matters, women's views are based on their life experiences, and the experiences of U-U women differ widely. I do not believe there is one opinion, one viewpoint, one "party line" on the subject among U-U's. And yet I often hear the

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assumption that all U-U's are "for" abortion.... While I've never heard--yet--a U-U woman say, "Never an abortion any time any place," I have heard a lot of "Yes, buts." And it is this diversity of opinion which I think we must recognize in order to be united, open, and fair.... I think we lose our impact and our focus as a religious movement when we ignore how complicated the question of abortion is.⁶⁹

Rickter talks about the need for increased choices. While most U-U women agree that abortion should be available, other choices such as adoption and more information on birth control also need to be available and discussed. And women who choose to raise their babies should have the help they need.⁷⁰

She also urges U-Us to remember their role in the abortion issue. As religious people, U-Us need to speak out: "We cannot continue to let fundamentalist and Roman Catholic churches claim that their anti-abortion views are the only religious views."⁷¹

Overall, women report to Rickter "I don't know what I think about abortion any more, but I do know what I think about choice."⁷²

The ambivalence that Rickter perceives may have roots in a number of other factors. The first is class. Betty Hoskins believes that U-U's "have a white middle class privilege and we've never really grappled with the issues."⁷³ Phyllis Rickter similarly reports: "the truth is most of our people are middle class people. If they have to have abortions they can afford to go get them, and they will."⁷⁴ If these

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statements are true there may not be strong motivation for the women to get out and fight for abortion rights of others.

A second factor affecting the ambivalence is the number of people that come to the U-U Church from other faiths:

Catholics are leaving in droves and coming into our churches. It's a lot of repercussion for us. Because they have to overcome all of those childhood lessons about choice and about homosexuality too. I think some of them swallow hard. In their head they know the right choice is choice...but in their emotional stuff they think 'I'm not going to think about that.'...They'll support social justice people, they'll give contributions but it's not a done deal.⁷⁵

A third factor cited by Rickter is the social pressure on those who aren't pro-choice within U-U churches:

When there's a party line no one dares {to speak out}. You know and I know the people who are not for choice. But the way the atmosphere is you don't talk about that...because we're just not as open minded as we say we are....There's no way to oppose what the common opinion is without sticking your neck out and having to brush up against people who are not particularly congenial.⁷⁶

Given the above factors raised by Phyllis Rickter, and the liberal yet thoughtful nature of the Madison Report, there is no monolithic view of U-U's on abortion. At the same time, it is clear that President Schulz is correct in stating that an overwhelming majority of U-U's would be called pro-choice, even allowing for much diversity within that camp.

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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST THEOLOGIANS ON ABORTION

A significant majority of Unitarian Universalists are pro-choice. This includes the church's clergy and theologians. Among the U-U theologians, Dr. Betty Hoskins represents a clear, strong voice in favor of the pro-choice position. Even though he has never written about the issue, the Rev. Dr. James Luther Adams, Professor Emeritus at Harvard Divinity School, Unitarian Universalism's foremost theologian, is also pro-choice.⁷⁷ The Rev. Dr. George Huntston Williams, also of Harvard, is an exception, however. He is one of the very few U-U ministers, and the only U-U theologian opposed to the pro-choice stance. He is clearly a distinct minority. He is, however, one of Unitarian Universalism's foremost scholars, and he has published extensively on the issue. Accordingly, while his work is clearly an exception to the norm, it is representative of the diversity within Unitarian Universalism.

Professor Hoskins is the author of numerous articles on abortion. Trained as a Molecular Biologist, she has a strong interest in bioethics. She is an Associate Professor of Science at the Massachusetts College of Art.

In her 1989 article "Reflections On Theology And Ethics In The Struggle For Choices: Unitarian Universalist Reflections On The Abortion Debate," Hoskins examined how questions are looked at and decisions made regarding abortion. Hoskins believes that society in general is highly

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polarized, and that world views are moving further and further apart. Hoskins uses the ladder and the circle to symbolize the opposing views.

The ladder is seen as the symbol of most western theological and political thinking. It "assumes managers and subordinates, leaders and followers, working in a chain of command with a hierarchy of classes."⁷⁸ It is a system that breeds competition and assumes one person gains at another's expense. Religious and philosophical literature are based on these same hierarchical concepts. These structures work against any search for common ground and even against the possibility for dialogue since one person or group must be right and the other wrong.⁷⁹

The circle is the ladder's polarity. It symbolizes "affiliation, self esteem, for all individuals, multiple options, collaborative leadership, and abundance of resources."⁸⁰ There are threads of the circle that run through society, and it is those threads that can be used to reshape society and reform the questions so they can be addressed.

According to Hoskins, U-Us are in a particularly unique position to contribute to the social dialogue and move things to a circle paradigm:

Our pluralism and our respect for individuals speak to the dilemmas. And we have a long and respected history of political action for social justice in human rights....Unitarian Universalist goals include lifting up and respecting many points of view, encouraging Unitarian Universalists to

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participate as they choose, working knowledgeably in a public movement that calls forth and responds to all our being, moving toward consensus. Our goal is not one controlling norm for our congregations or our members....the goal is to expand thinking and caring in a way in which many people can and will embrace. The goal is a collaborative movement that displays the interdependent web of all being, a world that is ongoing and life sustaining and respectful of all life forms.⁸¹

people of all generations need to build bridges and share stories, experiences and assumptions, she concludes.

Looking at abortion, one must realize that the world has changed drastically in the 20 years since Roe V. Wade. At the same time, the dialogue around abortion has looked at the same questions, but they are questions which need to be re-formulated.⁸² Hoskins points to ten major differences in the abortion dialogue between 1969 and 1989.

The first difference is that there is a better understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the Roe Wade approach. The legal case was argued from a very hierarchical, patriarchal, adversarial, legalistic mode. It examined rights of the fetus vs. the mother and pitted them against one another. The issues are getting more complex with medical advances which will "only amplify the problems set up by pitting rights against each other."⁸³

second difference concerns developing a better understanding of the emotional component of procreative decisions. While people often have very difficult decisions about what choices to make, we know that people usually feel that they made the right choices:

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We also know how driven people can feel to prove their fertility. We know how unwelcoming the world can be, to a new child, even a chosen child. We know how deeply the anti-abortion people believe in the rightness of their cause, and that their stance must result from life experiences that left deep grief and rage."⁸⁴

The third difference, according to Hoskins, stems from a better understanding of how women choose. Because of Carol Gilligan, Mary Daly and others, more is known about how women find meaning through talking and arriving at mutually satisfactory decisions: "We reason within a surround, within an ethic of caring and responsibility."⁸⁵

A fourth difference relates to the role of men. There is an increased awareness of the role and responsibility of men in conception. Research in the past focused almost solely on women preventing pregnancy: "But we have not insisted that men take responsibility for their part in conception, channel their sexual and aggressive energies, and act as moral agents in concert with women."⁸⁶

Hoskins' fifth difference concerns the basis of misogyny. The root of much opposition to abortion has become clear over the last 20 years. "Women continue to be punished for being sexual, procreative, and powerful."⁸⁷

Sixth, along with misogyny, the role of religion has become more visible. Traditional "white European male ideology" reflects male experience and male lives. Religion has been used as a tool for one to have power over another. We are all born of woman, and much of religion deals with

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that uncomfortable thought....Ownership of wife, daughter, and cattle permits physical abuse and incest according to some readings of scripture. However, our religious roots also include healthful threads, which speak of living in harmony with nature and other creatures."⁸⁸

Seventh, the differently abled have had an impact on the abortion issue. There is increased visibility of those different from the norm. There may be an increase in compassion that affects abortion decisions, yet society still lacks a commitment to these individuals.⁸⁹

The eighth and ninth differences relate to the worldwide implications of birth choices and the definitions used. The impact of such worldwide issues as over population and uneven distribution of resources are better understood. At the same time, there is intense discussion about terms such as live, man, person, and sacred.⁹⁰

The last difference Hoskins examines is the complexity and ambivalence of life/death decisions. There is more awareness of such decisions. "The issues are life choices, self-determination, and caring for the earth, its communities and its individuals. We need new slogans. We need to attend to Merleau-Ponty's question, What am I to do about the creative power that is mine by virtue of being born male?"⁹¹

Hoskins also discusses context. She examines whether or not everyone needs to agree. Her answer is simply no. Each

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facet of the abortion debate- legal, social, political has a whole spectrum of views within it. Each of those views is an important part of the struggle. She believes that the pluralistic approach, although difficult, is most likely to provide clarity. There is room for both the reformer trying to reshape the system and the revisionist who wants to start over. That way there can be "polar positions from which we can compromise."⁹²

Her next point focuses on authority. Does there need to be someone in charge? Some believe in an absolute God. Some in absolute rules or law. Still others in their own reason and feeling. Hoskins advocates a pluralistic approach appropriate for U-Us: "if all the usual ways of questioning lead to muddy, unsatisfactory answers, change the question."⁹³ The concept of ownership and the fear of women's power must be examined: in order to visualize, shatter, exorcise or blot out (Nelle Barton's terms) destructive patriarchal images of ownership, alternatives must be stated."⁹⁴ Women and men must both share their stories of hardship and of difficult decisions, and tell new endings."⁹⁵ Choices must be recognized and celebrated and new rituals devised.

We must also recognize the interconnection of all ethical issues. The decision to abort or bring life into the world must be made in the context of scarcity, violence and hunger. Knowledge of the holocaust and other forms of brutality and inhumanity affect a woman's decision. A woman must

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thoughtfully see if she can covenant to support a particular potential life, and if she can assemble a supportive community. It seems an unwise use of resource, to raise a child for 18 or 19 years, then kill it in military actions or drug and alcohol related accidents...Much of our political theory begins with an assumption of scarcity...what a different society results if we assume the earth gives freely, we cooperate with it."⁹⁶

She also encourages the recognition that life is sacred. All life forms are on a continuum that stretches through all time. We must respect other life. Part of respecting life means choosing whether it is brought into this world. We also must respect the people in the anti-abortion movement. Their experience and fear must be heard: "I think our religious beliefs require us to listen to them, to hear them into speech rather than into vituperation, to avoid shouting down each other's points. To try to grasp why our opponents are as they may be a positive strategy."⁹⁷

Hoskins concludes her article with a description of U-U realism:

- We aspire to:
- Listen to other's stories, hearing each other into speech.
 - Operate with clusters of values.
 - Support every individuals life choices.
 - Welcome each child that arrives, supporting her or him in community.
 - Be empowering.
 - Form coalitions.
 - Reduce the either/or, deal with things in their full moral complexity and with assumption of abundance.

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-Be participants, held within the interdependent web of all being.

This is our current opportunity to live fully in this world, to apply our religious principles and purposes to life-- let us grasp it!⁹⁸

* * *

The Rev. Dr. George Williams is Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard University and a U-U minister. He is also Founding President of Americans For Life, a legally oriented group that Williams says argues more reasonably than other right-to-life groups.⁹⁹

He has written numerous articles about abortion. In "Religious Residues And Presuppositions In the American Debate On Abortion," Williams envisions the creation of a "sacred condominium" or co-sovereignty where the progenitor and the state each exercise its co-sovereignty over the fetus.

A relationship exists, he believes, among the potential parents, society, and the fetus, and that the rights of all three must be examined:

Authority over unborn life can best be understood as a primordial condominium with preponderance shifting now to the state, now to the progenitor, depending upon the circumstances. Unless indeed we continue to insist on this implicitly sacred and inherently indissoluble condominium, one can foresee in some future society, in effect statist or feminist, that the state alone could demand eugenic or even demographic abortion on the one hand, or on the other that the mother could acquire by legal concession that complete control over the fruit of her womb which was once exercised in patriarchal society alone by the sire. She would, moreover, be facilitated in the assimilation of arrogation of virtually sole control by the increased availability of chemical abortifacients which would enable her, if she so willed, to act

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without the approbation of her doctor or even her mate. Both of these extremes, statist and feminist, are abhorrent for most Christians to contemplate. But a completed Christian theory of the politics of abortion should recognize the rights alike of the mother, the fetus, and society at large.¹⁰⁰

argues that the most humane way must be found to balance the rights of the fetus, the mother, and the state. Both the state and the parents have a stake in the matter. The state, while recognizing that individuals have some right to privacy, also protects the family and the individual, and has a major role through education and other social institutions. The state also reserves the right to intervene to protect children in cases of abuse.¹⁰¹

He describes this progenitorial political condominium as being the potential for being:

a uniquely American contribution to establishing a balance between individual and professional autonomy and general social control. In the ideal situation the authority of the progenitor(s) and of society would be balanced in the normal presumption of mutual concern (personal and abstract) for the prospective child as heir and citizen. But in certain instances...the state could find occasion to withdraw from the condominium to allow the mother or the parents together to make a self-sacrificial decision in accordance with their ideals (religious or other). In other instances, the state could feel obliged to maximize its role or prevail in the condominium to protect, sometimes the fetus from the parents, sometime the mother from the imperiling fetus (if she calls for help).¹⁰²

Once the condominium is set up, disputes would be handled by a medical court established in the hospitals performing abortions. Under typical circumstances, the mother and the fetus would each be represented by a medical magistrate. The

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state's magistrate would serve as "advocate and defender of the fetus," while the mother's magistrate would aid in protecting her rights as "limited sovereign."¹⁰³ In cases such as rape, or when the woman is under the age of majority, situations where the sovereignty of the woman has been violated, a form of "regency" would be set up to assist the woman and act on her behalf.¹⁰⁴

The medical magistrates would be assisted by a variety of professionals including lawyers, psychiatrists and social workers, and clergy. Lawyers, who would specialize in medical law, would serve as moderators and arbiters for the medical court. They would establish any necessary contacts with outside institutions, such as the courts. In addition, they would expedite the cases and keep the records. Psychiatrists and social workers would be responsible for providing background information and social insight. The clergy would serve as counselors for the parents and as ethicists.¹⁰⁵

Williams writes: "all these persons, professional and otherwise, are not to be thought of collectively either as a panel of specialists seeking some consensus or as a court to appear with judge, jury, and advocate seeking a verdict, but rather as a confrontation of two sovereigns, clarifying and assessing their respective rights and duties with professional support from various quarters."¹⁰⁶

The condominium would be used if there is doubt whether abortion should be allowed. Williams believes there are

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several cases where an abortion would be acceptable, upon action by the condominium. The first is to save the life of the mother.¹⁰⁷ The second is in the case of rape. Here the condominium would determine whether the charge of rape was valid. If it was, it would be up to the mother to decide whether to carry the fetus to term. In the case of incest, he believes that society should take precedence and the fetus aborted to protect society and the family.¹⁰⁸ In the case of a problem with the fetus, he believes the condominium would be particularly useful in both protecting the parents, the fetus, and preventing a situation where the value of life is decided by handicap or birth defect.¹⁰⁹ In an instance of statutory rape, if the woman could not have known that her body would produce a fetus, through either being too young or mentally retarded, then the pregnancy could be terminated.¹¹⁰ A final situation where abortion might be warranted is in adulterous pregnancies. "In terms of both moral offense and psychological stress an adulterous pregnancy is for the husband the closest equivalent of rape for the woman....after being satisfied by blood tests in order to rule out a deceptive charge or claim, and then leave the sole authority with the legal partners, in this case with the offended husband-father in the prevailing role."¹¹¹

Williams sees his sacred condominium as being able to deal with "difficult problems in this area without repudiating venerable Judeo-Christian and humanistic tradition in law,

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icine, and religion concerning the right to protection of the unborn fetus, now understood never so clearly before as a complete human being from the moment of the setting of the genetic code in the first fusion of the successful sperm and the waiting ovum."¹¹² He believes the condominium would allow situations to be dealt with while defining and limiting situations where abortion would be acceptable:

the vaster number yearly reported or surmised of cases of abortion or attempts at abortion for any less compelling reasons would not fall outside the concept of the condominium. They would instead be constrained by it. Society, becoming automatically a partner in every new condominium as soon as life is conceived, should be ever more vigilant in its duty through its representatives (jurists, doctors, social workers, and clergymen (sic)) to safeguard the life of the innocent fetus lest the perceptible moral evolution toward increased concern for unborn life over more than two millennia of our civilization be suddenly reversed, all in the name of human dignity and freedom, by a technologically potent, affluent, and strangely harsh generation, which would presume to dismiss as "sectarian" in the context of legislation or judicial appeal the immense testimony of our common past.¹¹³

While the idea of the sacred condominium was first presented 20 years ago, and differed greatly from the pro-mist, pro-choice views of a majority of U-U's, the views Professor Williams on abortion have changed very little. He believes that his theory of the "sacred condominium," "would be well before the forces set to change or overturn Roe V. ...I regret that some legislator didn't pick up on that interesting model."¹¹⁴ He continues to believe in the tension between the rights of mother and state: " I can see the most

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same way, most reasonable because there are two rights
...one could argue it both ways. I think the argument
about the fetus, the mother, and society is fundamental
because it's part of our very being. We're shaped this way
from the start."¹¹⁵

While Prof. Williams's name continues to be on the
letter-head of Americans United For Life, he does not agree
with all that the right-to-life movement has done in recent
years. "I am emotionally distressed {by the tactics of many
right to life groups}. I think it should be argued more
thoroughly. I think both sides could improve their
presentations, but I guess there is nothing comparable on the
pro-choice side to the, I suppose you would call it violence
of the, the very rigorous protests as in Wichita."¹¹⁶ He also
disagrees strongly with the analogy of holocaust used by some
right to life groups, but not with the idea behind it. He
studied at his junior year (1934-1935) at the University of Munich.
He saw Hitler first-hand, and because of that experience, he
would not use the term holocaust in reference to abortion. To
do so is "an affront to all those who have suffered, Jews in
particular. The whole world has suffered from that holocaust,
I don't endorse the use of that term. The concept is not
foreign to me because it's the setting aside of certain aspects
of the human race or certain human beings as sub-human, and I
think that is what is argued in that metaphor of holocaust."¹¹⁷

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Professor Williams is also concerned with the separation of church and state and with women's rights. He believes that the state can go too far in preventing birth. He is particularly disturbed by the Chinese government which requires abortion.¹¹⁸ In addressing women's rights, he points out that he does not put the wall in the abortion issue at the expense of the life of the mother- "I find in my sacred condominium model for legitimating several kinds of violences against women."¹¹⁹ Professor Williams perceives himself as liberal, even though it's difficult to comprehend his views on choice as liberal:

Pro-choice really means wanting to preserve a choice for the child. It doesn't mean that will happen. Today it really means women's rights. I feel that the liberalism to which I fall heir...I'm a part of that. In many respects I would be called a liberal. I would like to feel that my concern here is embraced within the range of what liberals stand and fight for....I feel that it's unfortunate that women's rights surged at the same time as this concern....I believe therefore the sensibilities of society were involved, not only the little child emerging, but the nurses the doctors, the expectant mother herself. I believe there is a partial denial of something...that is ultimately the very feminine, that's the very center of a woman's being. It can be suspended in the drive for women's rights, which I endorse, and have been part of. I think there's a confusion about women's rights...In the tradition of the race men fought and they died in large numbers...and the corresponding sacrifice was childbirth. That is not a great danger today....I'm also opposed to women fighting. I believe the distinction of genders is important."¹²⁰

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it's important for society, for the church, the synagogue the religious communities to...rethink and rid ourselves of the patriarchalism and all the other oppressive features of the family life. It's just incredible what's been permitted in the name of all the laws of the Scripture in terms of women's suffering. But the solution is not necessarily the exact opposite- making almost men out of women.¹²¹

* * *

Williams agrees with Bill Schulz, President of the UUA, that abortion was not discussed much within the Church prior to the 1961 merger. Birth control was a more visible topic.¹²²

Professor Williams stated that there is an organized movement in the UUA against abortion that until four years ago published a newsletter. Williams said "I believe it's a small group."¹²³ William Schulz also believes it to be a small group: "there may be a small group of U-U's, a relatively informal group, that supports the so called pro-life position, other than George (Williams) I don't know other ministers or well known leadership people."¹²⁴

George Williams is clearly in the significant minority among U-U's in general, and certainly among clergy and theologians, on the abortion issue. Nonetheless, he writes as a second generation Unitarian minister from within the U-U Church as an opponent of abortion. He is symbolic of the wide diversity of opinions within the UUA on many issues.

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THE FUTURE OF THE ABORTION ISSUE

The possibility that Roe V. Wade will be overturned is of great concern to the UUA. In his 1989 Presidential Report, William Schulz wrote:

We are poised today on the verge of a Supreme Court decision which may be as regressive in our day as the Dred Scott decision was in its. We are already seeing a court which is rendering devastating blows to affirmative action hiring. And now that court threatens to limit a woman's right to a safe and legal abortion. Well let it be known here and now that if Roe V. Wade is overturned, Unitarian Universalists will do all we can to see that women still have access to safe abortions even if it means, as it did before 1974, engaging in civil disobedience in the name of women's rights and religious liberty. We shall never turn back!¹²⁵

Schulz believes the focus of the pro-choice movement must be separation of church and state. The essence of religious liberty is on the line:

Abortion rights and religious liberty go hand in hand; it is as simple as that. As President of a denomination which has consistently supported both, I am here to warn the judges that they cannot renege on Roe V. Wade without becoming mired in religious partisanship. To accept the contention of the Missouri law that full human life begins at the moment of conception is to write one narrow theological position into American jurisprudence just as surely as if the Court outlawed all forms of birth control, or criminalized the eating of pork, or required all public school children to recite the Apostle's Creed....The fact is that this terribly complicated religious question must be left up to each individual woman, for God speaks through many voices, not just George Bush's or Richard Thornburgh's or William Rehnquist's. If Roe V. Wade is reversed or diluted, the Supreme Court will in effect be saying that God speaks through only one voice on this question and, if the Supreme Court says that, it will be violating everyone's religious liberty.¹²⁶

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In the event that Roe V. Wade is overturned, the UUA will continue or increase its involvement in the abortion debate and be prepared to take action. William Schulz stated:

Should Roe V. Wade be reversed or overturned, I think the denomination will be prepared to be very actively engaged...in doing what we can to mitigate the effects of the ruling. We have considered, and all of this is totally theoretical at this point, helping to organize with others something like an overground railroad, should Roe V. Wade be overturned so that those women...and poor women in particular who happen to live in a state where abortion will be outlawed, will be able to have assistance to be transported to a state where it would remain legal....I'm not in any sense saying we were prepared to do it yet. It's certainly something we would consider.¹²⁷

Schulz also said the denomination would consider providing counseling for women in states where counseling would be mandated. If that occurred, Schulz hoped the counseling provided by U-U churches would take pressure off clinics performing abortions to provide such counseling. If abortion rights are cut back, he said, the U-U's will increase collaboration with other liberal denominations and other groups to "move as we can to help offset the effects of the reversal."¹²⁸

Similarly, Vice President for Program Judy Meyer, believes that the UUA will serve a leadership role in the event Roe V. Wade is overturned: "there will be a major organizing of U-U social justice and feminist energy converging on the issue....It's not just U-U's who count on the taking leadership in that area. It's people outside the U-Community too. Should that happen I think we will take a

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leadership role in protesting it."¹²⁹ Given active U-U involvement in the Religious Coalition For Abortion Rights and presence of UUA President Bill Schulz at the 1986 and 1992 marches for Women's Lives, the UUA will continue to provide leadership for the pro-choice position.

Betty Hoskins believes two factors will move women to act if abortion rights are threatened. The first is the knowledge that abortion is tied to the issue of the oppression of women. The second factor is the shock the restriction would bring: "I have daughters who didn't grow up with abortion being illegal. They were shocked when the erosion began to take place. There are just a whole lot of young women; career women, home women, who cannot imagine what it was like to have legal abortions."¹³⁰

The UUA has a strong commitment to abortion rights. On the grassroots level -- denominationally, and among clergy, the laity and theologians -- there is near consensus on the issue. While not all U-U's agree on the specifics of the abortion debate, they would agree that the decision should be primarily that of the mother. With the exception of George Williams, the pro-life message has been consistent and clear.

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LESBIAN AND GAY ISSUES

LY HISTORY

In 1970, the UUA took a prophetic stance on lesbian and rights and became one of the first denominations to support gay civil rights and recognize the presence of lesbian gay clergy. In a resolution passed by the General Assembly (A.), the denomination spoke out against discrimination:

RECOGNIZING THAT:

1. A significant minority in this country are either homosexual or bisexual in their feelings and/or behavior;
2. Homosexuality has been the target of severe discrimination by society and in particular by the police and other arms of government;
3. A growing number of authorities on the subject now see homosexuality as an inevitable sociological phenomenon and not as a mental illness;
4. There are Unitarian Universalists, clergy and laity, who are homosexuals or bisexuals;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

1. Urges all peoples immediately to bring an end to all discrimination against homosexuals, homosexuality, bisexuals, and bisexuality, with specific immediate attention to the following issues:
 - a. Private consensual behavior between persons over the age of consent shall be the business only of those persons and not subject to legal regulations;
 - b. A person's sexual orientation or practice shall not be a factor in the granting or renewing of federal security clearances, visas, and the granting of citizenship or employment;
2. Calls upon the UUA and its member churches, fellowships, and organizations immediately to end all discrimination against homosexuals in employment practices, expending special effort to assist homosexuals to find employment in our midst consistent with their abilities and desires;

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3. Urges all churches and fellowships, in keeping with changing social patterns, to initiate meaningful programs of sex education aimed at providing more open and healthier understanding of sexuality in all parts of the United States and Canada, and with the particular aim to end all discrimination against homosexuals and bisexuals.¹

This resolution, which is still very progressive more than 20 years later, resulted from a very intensive lobbying effort by a small group of U-U's. It was led by the Rev. Jim Stoll and by the Rev. Richard (Dick) Nash. The resolution on gay rights did not initially make the final agenda for the 1970 General Assembly because it had not received significant support in the parish poll which determines the agenda for the General Assembly. It was through the efforts of Stoll, Nash, and the other gay activists that the resolution came about.²

The Rev. Jay Deacon, Director of the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns (OLGC) from 1986-1989, says of the period: "There was a heroic and very important effort in 1970 to really force the first vote. It was kind of an historic moment, and those who were responsible for it are little remembered but they ought to be better remembered. Richard Nash was the principle person we had to thank....It was a gutsier time."³

Bob Wheatley, Director of the OLGC from 1977 to 1986, described the context of the resolution as coming in the wake of the black power movement. The lesbian-gay movement, which took its cues from the black movement, learned early on how to work the system. Since resolutions did not need to be approved prior to the General Assembly, the gay caucus: "learned to

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manipulate the system through the resolution process...Gay people learned their lessons well early on. {Resolutions are} one way of doing social change."⁴

Only three years earlier, in 1967, a survey by the UUA Committee on Goals showed a strongly negative attitude towards gay issues among U-U's. In the survey, a mere 0.1% believed that homosexuality should be encouraged and 80.2% felt that it should be discouraged through education.⁵ Between 1967 and the 1970 resolution, events, such as the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, (a riot at the Stonewall Bar in Greenwich Village, marking the first time a large group of gays fought police harassment) which signified the start of the gay rights movement, and the UUA's struggle with the black power movement, and civil rights in general, brought about an increased openness to the issue. Because of the UUA's responsiveness to social movements and commitment to progressive change, the denomination was ripe to begin addressing lesbian and gay issues in the context of the civil rights movement.

Prior to the 1970 Resolution, the situation for lesbians and gay men seemed to vary church by church. Dick Nash said that there was little mention of gays or lesbians prior to the resolution. The gays and lesbians that were in the churches were invisible, and didn't even talk to one another.⁶ Hal Lawson, founder of the Detroit Chapter of the Mattachine Society, one of the earliest gay-lesbian groups, and an early

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Caucus member described the situation in the churches in the 60's: "some seemed accepting, others didn't."⁷ Lawson described his experience as a gay man in the Detroit Church as very positive. The minister in Detroit had helped with his efforts with the Mattachine Society, and had allowed the Metropolitan Community Church, a predominately lesbian and gay organization, access to the Church facilities.⁸

After the 1970 resolution, a Gay Caucus was formed within the church. It's first coordinator was the Rev. Dick Nash. An early task of the caucus was to find the gay and lesbian people in the denomination and to increase the coverage of gay and lesbian issues in the UU World, the denomination's publication.⁹

The Gay Caucus issued a series of four documents in 1971 addressing the relationship between gay U-U's and the church. The four documents "How Do Homosexuals Feel About The Denomination," "What Are Denominational Attitudes Towards Homosexuals," "What Do Gay U-U's Want," and "How Are Gay U-U's Going To Get What They Want," painted a picture of the situation of lesbians and gay men within the church at that time. The four were distributed at a gay liberation table at the 1971 General Assembly.

The document "How Do Homosexuals Feel About The Denomination" described a very different atmosphere than one would believe in a denomination that had passed a gay rights resolution a year earlier. The tone is of ostracism and

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disapproval. Gay people described coming out and being hurt: "The risk is always theirs. Finally the only way to find out is to do it. And the results have more often than not been disastrous. The dynamics of the situation, therefore, encourage gays to remain underground even after they would not have to. All gay UU's are confronted by the dilemma of whether they dare be honest."¹⁰

The document also described gay and lesbian contributions at all levels in the denomination, but on a very secret basis. If it had been known that a person was gay "his accomplishments are forgotten and his respect is lost."¹¹ The document encouraged others to join the few who had decided to challenge the denomination and create change: "The church, more than any other institution of society should be the place to which people bring all that they are and participate as whole people."¹²

Another document prepared for the 1971 G.A. was entitled "What Are The Denominational Attitudes Toward Homosexuals." The document used quotes gathered from churches responding to requests to use space by gay groups. Interestingly, the issues haven't changed much in the 20 years since this document. Issues addressed included homosexuality as illness, homosexuals as driving away young families, and the desire for homosexuals to be invisible. It is also interesting that the responses to the document from the gay caucus are very similar to, and foreshadow, themes in today's lesbian-gay rights

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movement. Consider this statement and response about driving away heterosexuals:

"Very frankly, I don't want homosexuals to feel welcome here. I'm trying to attract young married couples, and if gay people come in any numbers, the couples will not."

This statement was made by the minister of a prominent Unitarian church in the West at a meeting called to deal with the controversy which developed after a request by a gay group to use church facilities. What he said is an example of the most basic oppression faced by all gay people. It is the oppression of making gays suffer for the hangups of heterosexuals. If the minister's reasoning were correct (and this might be disputed), the next question is why? Are homosexuals such terrible people that they would scare away heterosexuals or did the heterosexuals he wanted to attract have problems? He had to agree it was the latter. And we were left with the question: Then why do you want to make us suffer? Homosexuals have long accepted this discrimination quietly and have had their morale undermined, their self-esteem challenged, their humanity eroded. Some are beginning to say: No more! The first step of our liberation is to refuse to accept this injustice!¹³

This exchange is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, the issues have changed very little. Second, while this does not reflect well on the U-U church of that day, the issues are still raised today in all but a few of the most liberal religious organizations. It appears that the U-U's have progressed because they were dealing with these issues twenty years ago.

A third document prepared for the '71 G.A. was entitled "What Do Gay Unitarian Universalists Want?" The document discusses how the gay U-U's want to be integrated into the UUA without assimilating: "It is abundantly clear that the denomination will not of its own accord take those steps which

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would make it possible for its minorities to be fully integrated. At this late date it still confuses integration with assimilation. It still asks people to abandon their minority ways and accept the ways of the majority as a condition for acceptance. In our case this means that people wish that we could be "cured" or at least that we'll keep our "peculiarity" to ourselves and not parade it in public."¹⁴

The caucus argued that it didn't want to be assimilated into the society as it is. The sexual repression in both the society and the denomination was unacceptable. It oppressed women, gays and children. They hoped that the church could move towards acceptance and liberation and allow its members to be whole people. The Caucus wanted gays to participate in all aspects of church life: "We want to function honestly as homosexuals at the church's social activities...we want to meet and socialize with willing partners of the same sex in church organizations...we want our relationships celebrated by the church, recognizing that there is as much disagreement in our community as in the heterosexual community about whether marriage is the way to do that. We want to be included, both at the planning and executive levels, when any program, conference, or other denominational activity deals with homosexuality. We want to serve in positions of responsibility. We want to serve as ministers, without the harassment we have received from colleagues and denominational officials. If eventually we are able to participate honestly and

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meaningfully, it will be one mark of a humanized church."¹⁵
 In 1971, they cited religious education materials as the best effort to create change, made within the denomination.

A fourth document from the 1971 G.A. called "How Are Gay U's Going To Get What They Want," described in a very clear, direct manner how the gay community planned on affecting change. Gay men and lesbians saw themselves as being ignored, as if people wanted them out of sight. That attitude was not going to be tolerated by the Caucus. The more they were ignored, the more they were going to confront, escalating the situation, making it harder for others to ignore them. The authors confronted and challenged the denomination to live by its words and recognize its gay members:

A minority of gays will begin to participate openly and freely because they will act out of inner resources encouraged and supported by others in our community. We do not intend to adopt a stance of begging. We will not ask for acceptance. We will act as though that is our right. We will not ask for reforms to be made, such as putting an end to UUA official harassment. By our own action we will bring them about. We will not fear moving too fast and making heterosexuals up tight. We will expect them to find ways of dealing with whatever problems they have in regard to our being free. Finally, we will welcome cooperation in tackling problems common to us all when that cooperation is offered by people who understand the agenda on which they are operating and our agendas come together.¹⁶

The four documents were available to those attending the 1971 General Assembly. The Caucus hoped their presence and the information would raise people's consciousness and improve the situation for gay men and lesbians in the denomination. An

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important impact of the documents was to increase visibility and bring new members into the Caucus.

Two years later, in February of 1973, Dick Nash, a minister and Head of the Gay Caucus examined the status of gays and lesbians within the denomination in an article called "How Are Gay Unitarian Universalists Discriminated Against." He described how discrimination varied widely by church, in both form and intensity. In general he pointed to five forms of discrimination prevalent at the time. The first focused on treatment received by gays and lesbians because of myths: the idea was that gays and lesbians were ill, or if not ill, that they should change or be discouraged because of societal oppression. Nash found this kind of bias particularly common in the UUA, "where the older views of sin are denied or soft-pedalled and where another basis is needed to justify people's prejudice."¹⁷ Nash pointed out that even if it didn't result in condemnation, it often resulted in a condescending stance. Many gay and lesbian U-U's found themselves in "miserable" situations forced to bear their oppression in silence: "I think of the gay people who are insulted and the misinformation about us put forth in many sermons I've heard. I think of the people who have been counselled to see a psychiatrist because they are gay. I think of the people who have been rejected as LRY advisors or church school teachers because they were gay....non gays as well as gays suffer from the false stereotypes of us."¹⁸

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Discrimination also had an impact on the availability of church services. While some ministers at the time already performed Services of Union, others refused. The entire social function of the church, such as meeting others or establishing relationships, was not open to gay church members. This was particularly true for gay youth.

A third form related to lack of representation of their uniqueness. The needs of the majority were the basis of planning and taken for granted. Gay writers and gay culture, just emerging at the time, were ignored. This was further enhanced by a total media black out of gay issues. Nash pointed out that the special needs of gay members went largely unaddressed, so gay churches were a strong draw because they offered the culture that the U-U's weren't willing to give.

The fourth oppression dealt with strong pressure to be sexual neuters, stay invisible, and not flaunt gay life in public. There was no recognition of the double standard inherent in the freedom of heterosexual expression. In addition, people who had come out found they were treated differently, and that they were regarded as no longer capable of carrying out their previously delegated responsibilities.

The last injustice Nash described was how gays and lesbians suffer from the prejudice of other's, particularly the way in which gays get blamed for heterosexual discomfort. Lesbians and gay men are at fault if a heterosexual couple is uncomfortable with them, and chooses not to return to the

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church. The injustices Nash described are the same injustices faced by lesbians and gay men 20 years later. While little has changed within society in general, the U-U Church has attempted to address some of these issues.

Another attempt to explain the situation of gays and lesbians in the U-U church was undertaken by Sandra Szelag, co-coordinator of the Gay Caucus in the mid-70's. In her essay "Unitarian-Universalist Gays: An Analysis of A Religious Dilemma," Szelag described a series of double binds faced by lesbian and gay U-U's. The first dilemma is that of openness: "If the person opts for a hidden gay identity, he or she is an incomplete participant by 'self restriction.' If the person chooses an open identity, he or she becomes an incomplete participant through 'other restriction.' It might be said that the invisible gay bears the entire burden of his/her alienation and acts according to its hidden demands, whereas the publicly declared gay has made an attempt to share this burden with his/her religious community in the hope that it will eventually be eliminated."¹⁹

Like Nash, Szelag pointed out several areas where lesbians and gay men were excluded from church life. She categorized the discrimination as "two categories of distress." The first related to freedom of access and dealt with such issues as: pastoral care and counseling from the minister, having positive interaction with other church members, access to traditional rites and ceremonies, and the

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level of recognition of outside contributions for social action for gay rights. The second category resulted from the restriction on participation. Such issues as participation in lay leadership positions, professional leadership positions, the ability to share one's own story, and the lack of representation of gay and lesbian figures in literature and philosophy, highlight this category.

She explained that lesbians and gays had four options. The first was to join a gay-lesbian oriented church. Since the main lesbian-gay church was, and is, the Metropolitan Community Church, which tends towards an evangelical Christian world view reflective of its Baptist roots, this option was not comfortable for many religiously liberal U-U's. Second, they could work to change the U-U church from within, addressing such issues as access and contribution. Third, they could move towards creating a liberal gay religious community, or fourth, they could leave religion, which, Szelag pointed out, many did.

Szelag called on the U-U church to fill the void left for many lesbians and gays and "play a special role in the search for wholeness."²⁰ She argued that if the U-U church did not address the needs of gays and lesbians, its tradition would stand in judgment against it. She quoted David Bonyum of the church in Ottawa: "In a religious community which openly advocates freedom, difference, community and love, and, furthermore, which states that an individual must define

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himself (sic), it is unconscionable that homosexuals be left to look inward and remain invisible and unaccepted."²¹ Bridges needed to be built, she suggested, between the gay and straight aspects of the common church life. She quoted a statement Elgin Blair, one of the founding members of the Gay Caucus, made to his congregation in Toronto:

But we are overcoming our fear of you, just as you must overcome your fear of us. If building a new kind of society is what the Unitarian Universalist movement is all about, you must allow us to be complete persons here in this congregation, not leaving part of ourselves at the front door when we come in, participating fully in the life of the congregation, with the full knowledge that we are here. It has been said that this congregation is a community. I do not feel that spirit of community embraces me or others like me. But I hope that together we can change that in the years ahead.²²

Two prominent figures in the early gay movement in the U-U church, Jim Stoll and Dick Nash were also active in the wider gay movement. Rev. Jim Stoll spent much of 1970 on a national speaking tour to promote gay rights. He had resigned his ministerial position to "devote himself fully to breaking down the barriers in society between people."²³ The Honolulu Star--Bulletin wrote about him "And if anyone is successful in changing the image of the homosexual as 'flaming faggot' it could well be this dedicated revolutionary who is a behavioral scientist and a Unitarian Universalist minister."²⁴ Similarly the San Francisco Examiner reported "A well known advocate of the rights of homosexuals and practicing bisexuals, Stoll spoke on 'Homosexuals, Revolution and Ecology,'...Stoll said

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the Gay Liberation Front is just one of many disenfranchised groups in this society 'trying to change a lot of things.'"²⁵

The Rev. Dick Nash was also very visible in the press for a different reason. He was arrested on July 17, 1971 for prostitution. In a day when very few people were willing to risk retribution, Nash decided to fight back against police entrapment. He was initially advised not to fight by attorneys, but he found a civil rights attorney willing to assist him: "In addition to saying that the police report of the conversation is totally false we will want to take the offensive in the trial and expose vice squad methods of using decoys to entrap people who have done nothing wrong."²⁶ The Advocate in June of 1973: "Assistant City Atty. Tom Smotrich offered Nash a plea bargain of 'whatever I wanted it reduced to,' Nash said, but he said such a 'cop-out' plea was 'Totally inconsistent...with my philosophy, and I don't think anybody can expect that to happen.'"²⁷ Two years to the day after his arrest, charges against Nash were dropped. The California State Supreme Court had agreed to hear the case, and Nash believed that the city was concerned that their tactics would be found unconstitutional, so the case was withdrawn.²⁸

By the mid-70's a major backlash occurred against the lesbian-gay rights movement of the early 70's. Anita Bryant and others like her successfully blocked or repealed gay rights ordinances in several places including Dade County (Miami), Florida, Eugene, Oregon, Wichita, Kansas, and St.

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Paul, Minnesota. The UUA came out against Bryant in a 1977 Resolution called "Gay Human Rights":

WHEREAS, the bigotry and misinformation presented by the forces of the "Save Our Children" movement led by Anita Bryant encourage violations of the civil rights of gay people; and

WHEREAS, human rights are not an issue on which there should be a vote by which the majority can deny rights to a minority; and

WHEREAS, the false propoganda using a religious basis for persecution strikes at the very foundation of the basic tenet of the Unitarian Universalist Association, to seek the truth and support the worth of all humans;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls on all Unitarian Universalists to use their efforts in stopping such biased persecution and intolerance for the gay minority.²⁹

Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" was one of the strongest threats to lesbian-gay rights of the 1970's. Since the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969, gays and lesbians had made significant progress in their fight for rights. Bryant was a powerful threat to that progress. Because of her use of religion as a tool against lesbian and gay rights, it was particularly important for progressive groups like the UUA to oppose her. In 1977, while cities across America were overturning gay rights' ordinances, the UUA also changed its by-laws to include affectional or sexual orientation as part of its anti-discrimination policy.³⁰

One of the major issues of the 70's was the UUA Office of Lesbian-Gay Concerns. Its creation, continued funding, and focus, were all controversial.

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Dick Nash, certainly a major force in the creation of a place for lesbians and gay men in the UUA, characterized the period: "My sights were higher than the administration was willing to move....Not bad in retrospect that they moved as far and as fast as they did....we accomplished an awful lot in a few years." Nash believed that his expectations were very high. The early people in the movement were more radical and confrontational. They wanted a great deal, perhaps more than the UUA was able to give at that time. By the mid-70's a more "assimilationist" group had taken over. Nash: "They were more into respectability."³¹

THE OFFICE OF LESBIAN-GAY CONCERNS AND UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS
FOR LESBIAN GAY CONCERNS.

For many years there have been two organizations working within the UUA on issues of concern to lesbians and gay men. The Office of Lesbian-Gay Concerns (OLGC) is an official part of the UUA, and maintains an office at UUA headquarters in Boston. Unitarian-Universalists for Lesbian Gay Concerns (UULGC), which started out as the Gay Caucus, is an organization made up of Lesbians, Gays and their supporters, which works within the denomination on the concerns of its members. The two organizations since their inception have had an intertwined history and function.

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Initially, what became the OLGC, was referred to as the Office of Gay Affairs (OGA). The idea for the OGA originated with Dick Nash and Leo Laurence in Los Angeles in April, 1972. They drafted a resolution for presentation at the 1972 General Assembly. Subsequently, it was decided by members of the U-U Gay Caucus, including the drafters of the resolution, that it would be better to wait until 1973 so that a full scale, wide reaching effort could be undertaken to ensure the resolution's passage.³²

In order for the resolution to get on the 1973 G.A. agenda, the Caucus needed support from five church or fellowship boards. They thought they had support from five boards, but one did not report its support to the UUA in Boston, so the resolution did not make the initial agenda. The resolution did reach the final agenda through another route, however, by getting at least 150 U-U signatures from ten different societies. In fact they ended up with over 400 signatures from 45 societies.³³

In December, 1972, the Gay Caucus, whose newsletter went to numerous churches and individuals not in the Caucus, published an article entitled "Why an Office of Gay Affairs." The article focused on six primary reasons for creation of the Office. The Office would assist the denomination in addressing its own prejudice. The Office would serve as a symbol of welcome for lesbian and gay U-U's and as demonstrative of a real commitment on the part of the denomination. The third

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reason was to enable the participation of gays at all levels of the denomination. The Office would serve as a resource for the denomination and the fifth was to assist local societies as they dealt with issues. The last reason for the Office was to assist lesbian and gay U-U's focus their energy.³⁴

In the process of getting the resolution to the General Assembly, the resolution went through some changes. Originally it had specifics on money and staff, but that idea was dropped "in an effort to discourage people from concentrating their attention on amounts of money rather than the desirability of establishing an Office."³⁵ The issue of money was particularly problematic because at the time the UUA required that any resolution specify the source of funding. The Caucus was concerned about alienating anyone if it identified a source for the money, so it chose to disregard the rule and request funding without a specific source.³⁶

Shortly before the General Assembly was set to begin, Nash received a copy of the resolution with a statement from the UUA Board of Trustees indicating their unanimous opposition to the resolution. This decision had been made without any contact with the Caucus, and without informing the Caucus of the Board's decision. The Board stated in a document entitled "Creation of an Office of Gay Affairs," that it objected to the resolution. The Board believed the 1970 Resolution and the denomination's good track record, particularly around the development of educational materials,

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were sufficient. The second objection was financial. The resolution did not explain where the money would come from. The Board also objected because by creating an office, lesbians and gays would be singled out as a minority group with special representation that blacks or women did not have. The Board stated: "Secondly, a gay office would relate to only one of the minorities discriminated against. A women's office, a non-Caucasian office, an office for the elderly, are examples of other possibilities."³⁷

Nash and the Caucus disagreed strongly with the Board's reasoning. In three years they saw little in the way of implementing the 1970 resolution, and the Caucus saw the OGA as a way of coordinating the resolution's implementation. The Board, in its defence of the denomination's track record on gay issues also cited Nash's appointment by his District to a specialized ministry to the gay community. Nash pointed out that the initiative for that appointment came solely from the gay community, and that the Board had not responded to the appointment in any way.³⁸

In Nash's opinion, the behavior of the Board in addressing the proposed 1973 resolution was an example in itself of the necessity for the creation of the Office: "It was immediate and clear for all to see. One of our handouts at the GA argued for the OGA in terms of the necessity to deal with the vulgar sentiments in the Board statements."³⁹

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When the General Assembly was held in Toronto, 23 or 24 Caucus members committed to working for the passage of the resolution. In preparation, the Caucus set up information booths and decided which meetings they would concentrate on during the week. Caucus members met with several other groups including the Liberal Religious Youth (high school aged), the Student Religious Liberals (College aged), and the Fellowship for Renewal, which was a coalition of blacks, gays, young people, women, and anti-war people, who supported minority rights. All three of these groups supported the Gay Caucus' effort.⁴⁰

By Thursday of General Assembly week, it had become clear that many delegates were concerned about the request for funding in the resolution. The proposed resolution asked for a funded office, with the source of funds to be the responsibility of the denomination in cooperation with the Caucus. The Caucus resisted removing funding from the resolution because "we wanted to test the commitment of the denomination to its gay members. It would be easy to approve a non-funded office and save face. Clearly that was the easy way out of the embarrassing situation our resolution had put the denomination in."⁴¹

Because of the size of the GA, delegates were broken down into mini-assemblies. On Thursday and Friday, the mini-assemblies took up the issue of the OGA resolution. Only one of the mini-assemblies passed the resolution, and only after

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eliminating funding. The Caucus, however, was pleased to note that the support had increased on Friday, so they felt that their literature was having an impact. The Program Committee announced on Friday that they had recommended that the OGA resolution go to the floor on Saturday, the last day of the General Assembly, with funding eliminated.⁴²

On Friday night, a "reliable source" informed the Caucus that an alternate resolution was going to be introduced. The alternate resolution was allegedly the position of the administration of the UUA. Nash wrote: "This was the administration position we were told. The alternate resolution commended 'those local societies who have taken an active role on behalf of gay people and the UUA for its initial positive efforts.' It urged the denomination 'to continue and broaden (its) efforts in support of gay empowerment,' and it encouraged the Caucus to apply as an Affiliate member of the UUA and called upon the Board to approve such a membership."⁴³

The Caucus was infuriated by the alternate resolution:

This was the ultimate insult! The alternate resolution gave lip service to empowerment while it pulled out all the props from empowerment. Again, no effort was made to contact the Caucus in preparing this alternative. This unilateral action showed no appreciation for gay empowerment or self-determination. The alternate resolution asked us to relate to the UUA in a different way than the one we'd chosen; namely as an affiliate member instead of being integral to the headquarters office. In effect, it said that somebody else knew what was best for us. In addition, the plan was to spring this on us without notice at the last minute. Our anger was intense. Immediately we began meeting to

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plan our response to this latest stab in the back.⁴⁴

Members of the caucus confronted UUA President Bob West in his room that night, but he refused to discuss any issues with them. Overnight and the next day, Caucus members discussed strategy about who would speak for the OGA resolution, and how they would deal with the substitute resolution.⁴⁵

After a period of debate about the OGA resolution, a proponent of the substitute resolution brought it to the floor for consideration. The Caucus members asked the group or individuals supporting the resolution to identify themselves but no one did. After the caucus explained its opposition to the alternate resolution, it came up for a vote, failing, 216 for and 277 against. Immediately after the failure of the alternate resolution, the OGA resolution came up for consideration.⁴⁶

In the end, the resolution was passed without a funding provision by a 2/3 majority. The final resolution read:

WHEREAS, it is among the purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association to affirm, defend and promote the supreme worth of every human personality; and

WHEREAS, the 1970 General Assembly passed a resolution urging all peoples immediately to bring an end to all discrimination against homosexuals, homosexuality, bisexuals, and bisexuality; and

WHEREAS, the Association since then has established no mechanism by which this resolution might be implemented within our churches, fellowships and denominationally related organizations; and

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WHEREAS, second class status keeps all oppressed minorities disabled and robs everyone of their potential contributions;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the 1973 General Assembly urges the Board of Trustees of the UUA to create at the denominational headquarters an Office on Gay Affairs. The office shall be staffed by gay people and it shall have the full benefit of the experience, talent, and status of the UUA in developing sources of funding outside the denominational budget. Would such sources be unavailable, the UUA will not be further responsible for funding the Office.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the functions of the Office be a resource to the denomination at all levels in all matters pertaining to gay people and the gay community. The office shall initially make a 30 day study of the immediate needs of gay Unitarian Universalists and ways of developing an outreach into the gay community. Results of the study shall be distributed to all churches, fellowships and denominationally-related bodies with recommendations for implementation.⁴⁷

One of the things that swayed the voters towards passage of the resolution was the negative tone of the debate against the resolution. Bob Wheatley, Director of OLGC from 1977 to 1986, described a turning point in the debate when a minister from a large social action oriented church in New York compared homosexuality with bestiality: "There was this gasp. This shock at (his) comments. It made everybody vote for it."⁴⁸ The comment was an affront to the progressive U-U world view.

The Gay Caucus Newsletter, published immediately after the General Assembly read: "The resolution is the culmination of two years of work and effort within the denomination...many non-gay and some gay delegates were amazed that the resolution

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passed at all. What is not generally known is that many Gay Caucus members all over the continent, some still not up front, had been conducting their personal and private campaigns in their districts, churches and fellowships, to convince others that Gay people had special needs not being met by the denomination."⁴⁹

The article pointed out that there were still serious problems to overcome. Funding was an issue left unresolved by the resolution. The Denomination was in very difficult shape economically, and support for the Office was uncertain. There was also a great deal of resentment and "mutual hostility" between the Caucus and the Board of Trustees. Following the General Assembly, a new Board was seated, and the Caucus had hopes of improved relations with it.⁵⁰

The issue of funding came up again the following year. At the 1974 General Assembly, the Caucus pushed the issue of funding and the following resolution to fund an Office of Gay Concerns (OGC) (the name was changed allegedly because of the double meaning of "gay affairs"⁵¹) was passed:

WHEREAS, the General Assembly 1973 voted as a business resolution to urge the UUA Board of Trustees to create at the denominational headquarters an Office of Gay Concerns; and

WHEREAS, money was not available for the Office and the full benefit of the experience, talent, and status of the UUA to seek sources of funding outside the denominational budget was urged by the General Assembly and in its resolution; and

WHEREAS, a \$600,000 grant of which \$300,000 is in unrestricted program funds has since come to the denomination above the basic budget approved by the

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1973 General Assembly and yet the Office has not been included in the items approved for funding from that grant;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the UUA Board be urged to include in the Grants Section of the 1974-1975 UUA Budget an item for \$38,500 to establish the Office of Gay Concerns, such funds to take precedence over two items presently listed in the Grants Section: \$24,000 from the Research Program and \$14,500 from the Publicity and Television/Radio item; and

FURTHER RESOLVED: That such Office be established in accordance with the proposal developed by the UUA Board and Administration in consultation with the UUA Gay Caucus' Advisory Committee and as revised by the UUA Board at its meeting on June 24, 1974.⁵²

The issue of funding for the OGC did not end there. At the 1975 General Assembly, a resolution was introduced to discontinue the funding of the OGC, which had begun six months earlier. It read:

RESOLVED: That the General Assembly requests the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Association to discontinue immediately that funding of the Office of Gay Concerns voted by the Board October 12, 1974, with full provision of severance pay for any employees affected; and that the goals of the Office of Gay Concerns be transferred to the Department of Education and Social Concern, and that the Department urge individual congregations to secure all rights of homosexuals.⁵³

The resolution was defeated by a vote of 402 to 257. A proponent of the resolution, Rev. Irving Murray, described the issue as one of priorities for use of limited funds, not ethics or morals. In a report by the Board of Trustees, however, members of U-U congregations were quoted as being concerned that continued funding of the OGA sanctioned

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homosexuality.⁵⁴ Some people also felt that the Board itself was opposed to the Office. Bob Wheatley stated: "The Board didn't want anything to do with this gay stuff."⁵⁵ Following the defeat of the resolution the delegates endorsed the Board's decision to extend the Office for an additional 18 months at a cost of \$64,000.⁵⁶ Given that the Board made such a recommendation, it is unclear where the Board stood on the issue.

In a letter to the UU World (Unpublished) in March of 1975, prior to the defeat of the resolution, the Co-coordinators of the Gay Caucus, Susan Cogger and Joseph Norton and Caucus Liaison to the UUA administration, John Harrison, outlined their opposition to the resolution. They did not believe that the effort to discontinue the OGA was without prejudice. They argued that the funds to create the Office had come from a grant for new programs. The OGA was the only new program to be affirmed by the General Assembly twice. To not fund it would clearly be prejudicial. They also blamed then President Bob West for much of the controversy. Shortly after the establishment of the OGA by the Board, he made a front page statement in the UU World opposing the Office: "He has continually frustrated the establishment of the Office...such actions seem out of form in terms of good communications with minority leadership and are viewed by gays as clearly prejudiced."⁵⁷ Hal Lawson, an early Caucus member agreed with the assessment of West: "Bob West was one of our worst

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oppositions. Bob West just would not budge."⁵⁸ In the time between the publication of his letter opposing the OGA, and the resolution to abolish it, West changed his position, and opposed the abolition resolution.

In the end, a resolution supporting the OGA was passed at the 1975 GA. It read:

BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1975 General Assembly:

1. Commends the Board of Trustees for its action of October 12, 1974 in implementing the General Assembly's resolution to fund the Office of Gay Concerns; and
2. Endorses the action by the Board of Trustees in including continued funding for the Office of Gay Concerns in the grants section of the proposed UUA budget for 1975-1976.⁵⁹

In January 1975 Arlie Scott was chosen to be the first Director of the Office of Gay Concerns. She was described by the leaders of the Caucus as "An exceptional person...She not only has a brilliant record in working for legislative reform concerning prejudice toward gays but also has been a prominent leader in the National Organization for Women."⁶⁰

Within the Caucus there was mixed reaction to the appointment of Scott. In a letter from Joe Norton, an early Caucus Co-director, to the Caucus Executive Council, Norton described the reaction of several Caucus members: "(A woman in the Caucus) on hearing of the appointment, expressed the strongest dismay, as (she) has not seen Arlie as an up-front lesbian, and feels this is just the type Bob West would select to hold back progress of the Office. However, Nathan Rockwell

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of the National Gay Task Force says Arlie is not one to be held down by anyone, and both of the (men who interviewed her from the Caucus) were impressed, as was (a woman in the Caucus), one of our recommended candidates...The advisory committee will meet with Arlie as soon as possible to see that things get done."⁶¹ People were also concerned that Scott was not U-U. She was a United Methodist, and people thought that she was selected because she did not know how the U-U system worked. They were also concerned that qualified U-U's were turned down for the position.⁶²

Arlie Scott was the full time Director of the OGC until early in 1977. Although her tenure was short, and she operated in a restricted environment, "she embarked upon an active program for support of major gay political issues in the United States."⁶³ Some believed, however, that she pursued a stronger women's agenda than a gay or lesbian agenda. Hal Lawson: "At first things worked out well, but little was coming out of the Office. We found out that she was spending much of her time on N.O.W. business."⁶⁴ One event she did undertake was to go to Miami to speak out against Anita Bryant and her anti-gay crusade.⁶⁵

In October of 1977 Robert Wheatley became Director of the Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns, which was housed in the Department of Social Responsibility at the UUA. He was given a half time appointment in OLGC and half time in an Office on Aging. Wheatley described the OLGC as a one person operation

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at the time. He and current UUA President Bill Schulz, then Director of Social Responsibility, were the entire professional staff of Social Responsibility, and relations between the two of them were often strained. At one point Schulz asked Wheatley to develop a theology of homosexuality, which Wheatley was not able to do, because he believed there was no theology of sexuality on which to build. This, combined with an apparent lack of agenda and direction on Wheatley's part, resulted in difficulty between the two.⁶⁶

Wheatley's position was made worse by the fact that the Gay Caucus fell apart around 1977-1978. The Caucus saw organizing as its responsibility, but as it disintegrated, Wheatley felt as if responsibility for the entire operation fell on him. He attributed the lack of support on the part of the Caucus to the fact that lesbians and gay men were busy creating new, open lives: "In the late 70's people were living their own lives for the first time. This whole business about being gay and being open was just a first time experience everywhere." ⁶⁷ Wheatley described the situation as one where he was given little direction either by the administration of the UUA or the Caucus. In addition, Wheatley felt as if he was less effective than he could have been because there was too much work to do.⁶⁸

Wheatley believed that part of the reason the Lesbian and Gay community within the UUA was able to accomplish what they did was because they were feared by the administration:

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"Straight people just don't know gay people. They just have this they-them {attitude}...I worked that to the hilt."⁶⁹

In the early 80's the Caucus rebounded and it had become the Unitarian-Universalists for Lesbian Gay Concerns (UULGC). In order to keep the momentum, the UULGC decided that it needed more than one national meeting a year, which previously had been held at General Assembly. It was decided that there would also be a Convocation every year in February. The first Convocation was held in Houston in 1984. Wheatley always found working with both the OLGC and the UULGC awkward: "The dichotomy was always hard to work with. What was the Office and what was the Caucus?"⁷⁰

Wheatley was fired by the UUA in 1986, when Bill Schulz became President. Wheatley felt that he had not been able to do an effective job because of the lack of direction from the UUA, and that he could not deliver to Schulz' level of expectation. The issues that had developed between the two men when Schulz had been Director of Social Responsibility had never been resolved.⁷¹

In 1983-1984 UULGC changed its focus to homophobia and moved away from homosexuality. They saw homophobia as a "distinctly different subject and one which should enable the churches and fellowships to deal more directly with their prejudices and negative feelings that lead to discrimination and oppression of lesbian and gay male people."⁷²

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In 1985 the Task Force on Social Responsibility of the UUA recommended that the OLG no longer be funded. The recommendation stated that "OLG's functions could be assumed by the UU gay and lesbian constituency...(the Task Force) wanted to see, in place of "specialists" like a Director of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, "generalists" who would work with numerous issues."⁷³

At its convocation in February of 1986, the UULGC came up with a response for the Board that disagreed with the recommendation. They proposed that the position be filled for two years with a full time director. They also acknowledged that the financial situation had deteriorated and recognized that the UULGC would need to increase its financial support for the Office. The UULGC wrote:

The UULGC feels strongly that closing the OLG can only send an unfortunate message, to supporters and opponents alike of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and other sexual minorities, that the denomination is retreating from its position in the face of AIDS and the current homophobia epidemic. The existence of the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns in the UUA is an absolutely essential statement by the denomination and its gay and non-gay members that we will not retreat on this issue....We also recognize that the financial situation requires hard choices and that we must undertake more of the support of the Office directed to our needs.⁷⁴

There was some disagreement within the UULGC about how best to handle the recommendation about the dissolution of the OLG. The Michigan District of the UULGC wrote a position paper which supported the abolition of the Office: "After much discussion, we find ourselves by and large in agreement with

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the report of the Task Force on Social Responsibility. While a staffed Office may have been necessary in the past, we are uncertain as to its continued usefulness; perhaps the elimination of the Office would allow better use of the funds currently used to maintain that Office."⁷⁵ They instead advocated a district based, representative organization that would support the lesbian and gay community through local organizations.⁷⁶ A majority of those in the UULGC did not feel that there was the financial capability to organize such an effort, and that it would be too risky for many lesbians and gay men who were not openly lesbian or gay in their congregations.⁷⁷

It does not appear that homophobia was behind the recommendation to abolish the Office. On the surface, the UULGC was organizing and expanding, but it would have been damaging to the progress made on lesbian and gay issues to abolish the Office. The UULGC was not ready to assume the kind of coordinating role that the Office was providing.

Another recommendation at the UULGC 1986 Convocation was that a "Common Ground" effort be undertaken to do assessment and planning. The "Common Vision" committee to explore issues for lesbians and gay men grew out of this recommendation. As a result of the dialogue between the UUA and the UULGC, the Rev. Jay Deacon was hired as a half-time Director for OLG. ⁷⁸

Deacon was in a slightly different position than Wheatley. In keeping with its commitment to increase

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financial support, UULGC funded about another 1/3 of Deacon's time when he was Director of UULGC. He was working for both the UUA and the UULGC.⁷⁹

Deacon and the UUA were not always in agreement on how he should perform his job. He believed that activism on behalf of gay and lesbian people was needed in the UUA. "I put a good deal of focus on the March on Washington (for lesbian and gay rights). I'm perfectly aware that that was not appreciated and is still not understood by the administration. I wish they could understand why that was important. In fact it led to...a whole surge of new UULGC chapters after that. It may be that a lot of our straight friends, and in many ways allies, will never understand why that is."⁸⁰

Deacon described how the United Church of Christ had an office on race where the staff member is in a prophetic, advocate role. The person is there to be an activist. He believed that the UUA needed something similar: "I think the prophetic dimension is something UU's are scared of and not too sure what to do with, even though often we fill a prophetic role."⁸¹ Deacon's work was rooted in service to the lesbian-gay community. He believed in advocacy on behalf of his constituents, and was perceived as being confrontational. While this may help the lesbian-gay community, it alienated many within the administration of the UUA.

Deacon stated that he was constantly fighting attempts to abolish the office: "I was constantly fighting that. I would

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find out I was zero funded in the budget. I never knew if I was going to have a job or if we were going to be able to do anything. We got, more than once, zero funded and had to fight our way back....I didn't have any travel budget while I was there...We were always under threat. One of the recommendations under common vision was that the office be made permanent."⁸²

It is clear that the vision of the UUA for the Office, and the vision of Deacon, were not the same: "I was told that I wasn't there to run the Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns, I was there to run a consensus process to assess the present and make proposals about the future. You can't not run OLGC, and I ran OLGC and we had zillions of inquiries and requests for help all the time. We were doing that as well as the other process. I don't think that has been very much appreciated either...There was no expectation on the part of the administration that there was going to be a full blown OLGC in the three years I was there."⁸³

The vision of the UUA for the Office was clearly implemented by Deacon's successor, Scott Alexander. There was a clear, strong shift in focus between the tenures of Alexander and Deacon. While Deacon focused on working with the lesbian and gay community within the UUA, Alexander focused on working with U-U congregations on lesbian or gay related issues: "The job here is to serve congregations and to change people within the congregations and to make the congregations

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different than they are now. Not to go charging off and being pissed off at everybody, or saying that gays and lesbians can't find a safe place in a predominately straight congregation. I don't accept that."⁸⁴ Hal Lawson, from the UULGC saw the change of focus as a sign of the times: "I can see why Scott was doing that because it became more important for the churches (to address) homophobia."⁸⁵

The change in focus of the OLGC changed the relationship with the UUA. Alexander described the relationship between the two as excellent. The adversarial relationship no longer existed: "Even though it was an in house office, it was in an adversarial relationship with its own institution."⁸⁶ It is Alexander's belief that his predecessors fought too much with other people, and didn't try hard enough to educate. Their politics were problematic. The personalities of Deacon, Wheatley, and Alexander had major impacts on the Office. The direction and impact of the Office was person specific.

Alexander did not see his job as working with UULGC or the lesbian-gay community: "The Office director is not to serve gay and lesbian people. He or she is to serve the congregations. That's what the office is about. It's about serving congregations. We're an association of congregations ...Jay wanted to serve individual gay and lesbian people, but that's not the job."⁸⁷ Alexander believed that helping congregations change helped the lesbians and gays in the congregations.

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The relationship between Alexander and the UULGC had not always been as smooth as it was with the past Directors. He saw the OLGC and the UULGC as having very different purposes and roles: "{UULGC's} role is to make a nurturing environment for gay and lesbian individuals, and to lobby the Association and the Office for things they think they want. That's why it's important they be differentiated. The roles of UULGC are sometimes at cross purposes with OLGC. When your mission is to serve congregations you look for ways to effectively work with people."⁸⁸ While Alexander saw himself as supportive of UULGC, he was "not there to serve them."⁸⁹ The OLGC kept the UULGC data base and supported the Newsletter and other functions.

Alexander did not at all agree with Deacon's calls for activism: "The gay and lesbian community needs to control its anger about being oppressed. It doesn't change people. You shake fingers at them, they stop listening....You create an environment of relational moments where they know we don't eat children and dogs. Once they get that then change starts to occur."⁹⁰ Alexander believed that because of this change in attitude, the OLGC had become a mainstream program instead of a marginalized one: "The office has become integrated as a respected non-marginalized entity."⁹¹

The conflict between the styles of Alexander and Deacon reflect the debate between assimilationism and activism in the gay community and among feminists. Deacon was an activist. He

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was confrontational, and to some, radical in his views. Alexander operated within the political structures, and was far more subtle in approach. Deacon was an outsider fighting for a cause, while Alexander was an insider gently pushing. Deacon ministered primarily to the gay and lesbian community. Alexander created a better place for the lesbian and gay community, by educating the non-gay and non-lesbian community, while doing little to minister to the lesbian-gay community. It is unclear why an individual would be unable to do both.

President Bill Schulz supported the changes in focus that occurred within the OLGC:

The UUA's principle job is to support congregations and ministers. Our job is not principally to support individual U-U's. That is after all why we have churches....I think Scott is right. Some of the previous directors saw themselves as conducting a ministry to individuals, and perhaps at that stage, where we were denominationally, that was important. In many cases, and still today, but particularly in the 70's and early 80's... individual gays and lesbians were fairly isolated within their congregations. That is still true in some places but I think that's beginning to change. I think Scott's vision is that what the UUA can do best is not necessarily help individual X out in Phoenix with his or her personal issues or needs, but rather try to provide a resource so the congregation in Phoenix can do that better themselves, or so the minister has the resources whether it be materials for Services of Union or counselling resources or resources around AIDS, or whatever the thing may be to help minister to the individuals involved.⁹²

Schulz also believed that it was necessary for the UULGC to be strong to meet the needs of the lesbian and gay communities: "I think it's important for some kind of

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organization like UULGC to be as strong as it can be. So that there is that network of UU's who are gay or lesbian...who have a mutual connection with one another."⁹³

Jay Deacon was concerned that the UULGC was too weak. It had become too spread out and its membership had shrunk. He believed it needed coordination from the Office in Boston, and that a spark was needed to get things going. He believes it is essential to have effective lay leadership: "I'm alarmed by our lack of sense of mission and urgency... {there is} too much trust that our good liberal administration is going to do the right thing for us. Without pressure they never will and they never do."⁹⁴ Hal Lawson is also concerned about the UULGC: "UULGC doesn't have any real goals. We don't have anything to fight for."⁹⁵

Looking at the future of the OLG, Bill Schulz hoped to see the Office become more independent of the Denomination: "Our major concern is to figure out what the most effective ongoing structure would be for preserving what's been accomplished and extending it. My personal inclination has been that if UULGC could itself grow strong enough as an organization, as the Women's Federation has, to take on more of the ownership and responsibility for what is still principally a denominationally sponsored Office. That would be a way to have a far broader impact even than we are able to have."⁹⁶

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Schulz would like to have seen the UULGC become strong enough that it could take over operation of the OLGC. He did not believe that UULGC was strong enough for that kind of transition to occur: "UULGC just wasn't strong enough organizationally to undertake that. I don't know when they will be. Until then, at least as long as I'm President, we will maintain our commitment to the office."⁹⁷

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In 1972 the UUA issued The Invisible Minority: The Homosexuals in Society, a program dealing with homosexuality. The program included a three part filmstrip and a series of questions for discussion. In the introduction, churches presenting the program were encouraged to contact local speakers from lesbian-gay organizations. The philosophy underlying the program was exceptionally progressive for its day:

It is difficult to exaggerate the fear, confusion and hostility related to homosexuality in the United States. Far too many individuals in our society--particularly males--grow up without resolving guilt feelings and misunderstandings regarding fantasies about, affections for, or experimentation with individuals of their own sex. Self-doubt severely limits all their same-sex relationships. Accurate information and open discussion can clear away crippling misconceptions and build a foundation for self-confident psychosexual development toward whatever sexual orientation is natural for the individual. It is hoped that THE INVISIBLE MINORITY: THE HOMOSEXUALS IN OUR SOCIETY may play a part in such education.⁹⁸

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Gene Navias, Director of Religious Education at the UUA, stated that the program was originally designed for the public schools. Deryck Calderwood, the author of The Invisible Minority was told by the publisher that the program could not be changed enough for them to publish it for the schools. Calderwood then took it to the UUA. There, a group that included Dick Nash, then director of the Gay Caucus, viewed the program. They made some suggestions for change, and the UUA published it. Navias stated that UUA President Bob West really believed in the project and "went out of his way to find money to publish it," despite difficult economic times for the UUA.⁹⁹

Navias remembers there being little if any backlash from the program, even though a few people did tell him they felt the program went "too far." The program ended up winning an award from the National Council on Family Relations. Navias described the program as seriously outdated for use today. Some pieces of it have been incorporated into the About Your Sexuality program.¹⁰⁰

There is a significant amount of material related to gay and lesbian issues in the About Your Sexuality program. The approach used is revolutionary, in and of itself. One of the central pieces of the program is called "Lovemaking: Heterosexual, Bisexual, and Homosexual." It treats all forms of sexuality comparably. The objectives of this portion of the program blend all forms of sexuality:

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1. To help young people clarify their attitudes about lovemaking and intercourse.
2. To acquaint young people with the manner in which artists have dealt with love and sex.
3. To explore the meaning and significance of lovemaking to the human being.
4. To provide accurate information to young people about heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual lovemaking.
5. To help young people clarify their feelings about lovemaking.
6. To help young people explore the role of love making in their lives.
7. To help young people make responsible decisions about their sexual behavior.¹⁰¹

A major purpose of the program is to give the student participants an opportunity to discuss the issues of sexuality that aren't discussed in the schools, and that many parents have difficulty discussing. The unit clears up misconceptions and misinformation, and attempts to help the student clarify her/his values about the issues. The unit gives the facilitator the choice of interweaving homosexual, heterosexual and bisexual lovemaking or covering them separately based on the readiness of the group.¹⁰²

To help the students examine their sexual histories, a questionnaire called "Personal Sexual Experience" can be used by the participants. The questionnaire has one form for females and one for males and each is divided into two sections. It asks participants to check off their sexual experiences with both their own gender and with the opposite gender. It also divides the experiences at age 12. The form for males, for example, has a list of activities ranging from hand holding to intercourse, with two columns marked male and

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female. The participant checks off which activities he has engaged in with each gender. There is no value placed on whether the activity is heterosexual or homosexual.¹⁰³

Lesbian and gay issues are also covered in the section entitled "Sexual Minorities in Society." The stated objective is to increase acceptance of not only lesbians, bisexuals, and gays, but also of transsexuals and transvestites. Strong emphasis is placed on homophobia and the depth to which homophobia runs in our culture. The introduction for the group leaders cites anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer:

Among the generality of Americans, homosexuality is regarded not with distaste, disgust, or abhorrence, but with panic; it is seen as an immediate and personal threat...nobody is sure he might not succumb. Under normal circumstances all relationships between American males are colored by this panic fear of their own potential homosexuality. It is to demonstrate to themselves that this fear is groundless that they must so insistently display their interest in women; and the warmer the relationship with the other man, the more important it is for both that they shall keep prominently displayed their heterosexual interests. The lives of most American men are bounded, and their interests drastically curtailed, by this constant pressure to prove to their fellows, and to themselves, that they are not...homosexuals. It is difficult to exaggerate the prevalence of this unconscious fear.¹⁰⁴

The exercises include cassette tapes of people talking about their experiences of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, or a transvestite, followed by questions. It also includes exercises to help the participants get in touch with their feelings about being different.

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The progressive treatment of homosexuality by AYS was not without its critics. In addition to the legal action by the State Of Wisconsin, which tried to block use of the program, some people within the UUA also objected. In late 1974- early 1975, there was an exchange of letters between Hugo Hollerorth, Director of Curriculum Development for the Department of Education and Social Concern at the UUA, and Rev. Neal Ferris, of the First U-U Church of Orange, NJ. In his second letter to Hollerorth, dated January 16, 1975, Ferris wrote: "I would say to anyone who is interested, and to our adolescents when the issue is being dealt with, that some UU's think that homosexuality is inevitably the result of unresolved emotional conflict, and that, while it affords some pleasure, it cannot be an expression of optimum health. I don't think this is a horrendous putting people down. I think it is facing facts. Those of you who feel differently are entitled to your view. But I don't think you have the right to promote it alone in a course for all of our kids."¹⁰⁵ Ferris advocated a view that while homosexuality is not "abnormal," it is not optimal.

The About Your Sexuality and Invisible Minority programs had a significant impact on the people who participated in them, and on the denomination. Gene Navias described the programs as preparing "a climate which reached out to gay and lesbian issues from at least a segment of every congregation." Similarly Jay Deacon stated: "I'm certainly aware of the fact

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that it was very formative in the minds of a lot of young UU's who are now leadership people in congregations and in the denomination."¹⁰⁶ Deacon believed the programs were confirmation of the progressive sentiment within the UUA, and that they were something to be proud of.¹⁰⁷

Bob Wheatley believed that since the UUA had no stated theology, the programs are as close to statements about a U-U theological view of sexuality as were available. One can take the viewpoint presented in the kits and infer what the UUA believes about sexuality, from them.¹⁰⁸ Wheatley believed the programs "undoubtedly played a role in loosening people up at the local congregational level."¹⁰⁹ Clearly the UUA was considerably ahead of its time in creating these programs. They have had a significant impact on the openness of individuals to lesbian and gay issues, and on the general environment of the churches themselves.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

SERVICES OF UNION

On June 28, 1984, the UUA became the first major denomination to affirm the Service of Union for lesbian and gay couples. The General Assembly overwhelmingly passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Unitarian Universalist Association has repeatedly taken stands to affirm the rights of gay

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and lesbian persons over the past decade; and

WHEREAS, legal marriages are currently denied gay and lesbian couples by state and provincial governments of North America; and

WHEREAS, freedom of the pulpit is a historic tradition in Unitarian Universalist societies;

BE IT RESOLVED: That the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

1. Affirms the growing practice of some of its ministers in conducting services of union of gay and lesbian couples and urges member societies to support their ministers in this important aspect of our movement's ministry to the gay and lesbian community; and

2. Requests the Department of Ministerial and Congregational Services:

- a. distribute this information to Unitarian Universalist religious professionals and member societies;
- b. develop printed material for ministers to assist them in planning and conducting services of union for lesbian and gay couples;
- c. develop a pamphlet intended for lay persons which describes services of union for gay and lesbian couples and is distributed to member societies.¹¹⁰

In the News Release that followed the passage of the resolution Eugene Pickett, President of the U.U.A. at the time, said "This is an important part of the Unitarian Universalist affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of every person...We believe it is important to respect the commitment of two people to each other in a ceremony which has personal and religious significance, even if it doesn't have legal validity."¹¹¹

Current UUA President William Schulz said that the reaction to the resolution was generally positive: "It

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provided clear support for our ministers who were themselves comfortable and willing to do that. It inevitably raised the question for ministers who had not considered it or were uncomfortable...it is also inevitably controversial among a certain segment, I think a minority,...of some of our more conservative congregations who are simply not comfortable to this day with that kind of public ceremony."¹¹²

Jay Deacon believed the reaction to the resolution was mixed. The amount of press coverage the resolution received resulted in many local congregations reacting: "some of them liked it, some of them hated it. Some of them were nervous, some of them excited...They're basically o.k. with it."¹¹³

During the debate about the resolution, Kenneth L. Orton of Waltham, MA argued for the resolution: "I suspect many of you have some emotional difficulty thinking of gays and lesbians as weddable to each other, as married couples, as joint owners of real estate, bank accounts, life insurance and personal property. You who feel that way, I would challenge: If you can walk up to me right now, look me in the eye and tell me my love for Robert Winkley is less deep than your love of your own family, that my commitment to him is less strong and that we do not deserve equal treatment before God, then vote against this resolution."¹¹⁴

Robert Wheatley, who was Director of the OLGC at the time of the resolution, wrote two articles for "Ethics and Action," a supplement to the UU World that dealt with social

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responsibility. The first, published in February of 1983, described Services of Union as one of the two major places where homophobia was prevalent within the UUA (the other was Ministerial Settlement). He wrote: "I think non-gays tend to believe that we who are lesbian/gay are not or cannot be serious enough in our emotional attachments to make commitments equal in depth or meaning to those made in a heterosexual couple's marriage ceremony. After all, aren't gays pre-occupied with sex? Aren't our liaisons merely venial? And temporary?"¹¹⁵ Wheatley described the nature of the relationship of those seeking Services of Union:

The motivations, the feelings of love and caring and commitment, seem to me to be identical with those of heterosexual couples ("mixed marriages" as I now sometimes jokingly call them) whose services I also conduct from time to time. Invariably present are the same joy and exuberance in each other's company, the same obvious sense of happiness and well-being, the same eagerness to want to let everyone know (If that were only possible!), the same feelings of having someone to love to whom you wish to make public--and sacred--commitment for the foreseeable future.¹¹⁶

There are a number of issues that surround the services of holy union. How, for example, does the service compare with a wedding. In his second article for Ethics and Action Wheatley addressed this issue:

As for the ceremony called a wedding, is it only a legal act? Can it happen if it isn't legal? Is a wedding desirable only in order to protect the future of children that comes out of the bonding? What if there aren't any children? Can bonding take place without the ceremony? In view of the unrealistic expectations imposed upon the concept of marriage, does it still have meaning and merit? Of course it does. Its meaning and intent has

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little or nothing to do with the history of those who have tried and failed. Most try again- try, that is, to make a go of their announced best intentions to love someone, care for and protect them, respect them, support them, endure them at times, enjoy them at other times, share themselves with them, trust them. Are these feelings and sentiments exclusively the prerogatives of heterosexuals? Absolutely not!¹¹⁷

Wheatley also addressed the nature of the vow. If it isn't legal, what is it?: "It isn't legal, and they understand and accept ceremony and its content, as words, the vows exchanged which, in typical UU fashion, the couple often write themselves. No acceptance here by the larger society, with its supportive mechanisms and lifestyles models, its approving companions everywhere around them in similar bonds, its easy indulgence in open affectionate displays. No, here in this small or private company, the words are said and the meaning taken to heart in order to fortify against the still unaccepting world outside. '...by the authority vested in me as a minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church, I recognize you as being spiritually united...' An extending of blessing and a strengthening of courage."¹¹⁸

Wheatley believed that the Service of Union was grounded in U-U theology and belief and that it was one of the most exciting of the resolutions passed: "We were way out there. This is typical. This is why I learned the value of resolutions}."¹¹⁹ The U-U Church is one of the few places where an issue of this nature can be addressed. He is disappointed to find that some clergy either do not perform

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the service or, if they do perform it, they do not allow it to be done in the sanctuary.¹²⁰

The Services of Union have been an issue in the UUA since the early 70's. A September 1973 bulletin from the Arlington Street Church in Boston raised the issue. The minister, Dr. Mwalimu Imara, had been approached by a gay couple to do a "wedding." His response to the couple: "This religious community, this church will give formal blessing and sanction to life affirming commitments made between any two people with a ceremony called 'Celebration of Love' or 'Celebration of Union'. However, we reserve the use of the ritual called 'marriage' for those unions fundamental to the continuity of that biological invention known as human culture."¹²¹ The minister invited responses from the congregation.

Another minister of the Arlington Street Church, Richard Carpenter, began performing Services of Union in 1973. In an interview with The Boston Phoenix he described his early experience: "I performed my first gay union ceremony in 1973, and I remember it more clearly than my first heterosexual union...It was actually a lesbian union, and when I sat down with the two women I said 'I'll be up front with you. I've never done one of these before. I'm uptight and uncomfortable with it, but if you're prepared to bear with me, we'll go ahead, and I'll probably ask some stupid questions and make a fool of myself.' Well I did ask some stupid questions like 'Which one of you is the bride?', but otherwise it went off

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without a hitch, a standard Protestant ceremony, which makes perfect sense for a gay or lesbian union."¹²² Carpenter who went on to do many other Services of Union, counsels lesbian and gay couples as he would heterosexual couples, with one exception. He talks with them about the public disapproval they may face because of their public statement.¹²³

In August of 1984 Rev. Frank Schulman gave a sermon at the Emerson Unitarian Church in Houston that opposed Services of Union. Schulman was one of the very few (5 of 1200 according to Jay Deacon) delegates who voted no on the Union resolution. Schulman, who considers homosexuality "deviant behavior," opposed Services of Union because they have no theological standing and they sanctify homosexuality.¹²⁴ He saw the Services of Union as missing "Crucial elements," including the lack of legal standing, a lack of theological standing, and a violation of the tradition of the church. He also stated that Services of Union violate his own conscience: "I cannot say that such a union has equal standing with a marriage. It does not entail the same responsibilities or the same commitments."¹²⁵ He is also concerned that parents will feel confused and need to protect their children. Near the conclusion of his sermon he summed up his view:

Society has the duty to protect itself and to set the standards which time has shown insure the happiness of the common good. Society has said no to marriages other than monogamous heterosexual commitments. There is a message here for Unitarians. If we are to fulfill our mission, we had better decide what standards we intend. I hope our religion will advocate the use of reason, the

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service to humanity and the worship of God. I hope we will adhere to the strictest standards of virtue and morality. It is always appropriate to rethink our values, but they should be thought through, not subjected to pressure groups, not to whims and fads that surely mark us as bankrupt in our behavior and shallow in our thinking.¹²⁶

It is difficult to assess how many people within the U-U Church feel the same way as Rev. Schulman. The survey for the "Common Vision" report, asked how people felt about the statement: "I think my church or minister should offer ceremonies of union to gay, lesbian, or bisexual couples."¹²⁷ The response was that approximately 550 strongly agreed, and another 275 agreed. Those who strongly disagreed numbered approximately 100, and another 215 disagreed.¹²⁸ Given the almost three-to-one support for the Services, and that the Services are performed widely throughout the denomination, it is likely that many if not most would disagree with Schulman, and would see the Service of Union as being more in line with the U-U tradition than his assessment of the situation.

THE COMMON VISION REPORT

In 1986, the Convocation of the UULGC called for a "period of processing and assessment" to examine the relationship among the UULGC, the OLGC, and the UUA. This followed a 1985 recommendation from the Task Force on Social Responsibility that the OLGC be abolished. Rev. Jay Deacon was hired on a half time basis to serve as Director of the OLGC,

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and a 12 member committee was appointed to gather information and make a report to the Board of Trustees of the UUA. The committee was chaired by Rev. Leslie Rebecca Phillips. The committee used a survey and held 23 'envisioning' events across the U.S. and Canada where people shared their hopes and concerns about lesbian and gay issues.¹²⁹

The group proposed that a mission statement be adopted to unify the U-U message about Lesbian and Gay issues. The statement read:

The Unitarian Universalist mission regarding lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons is to affirm and support the living and celebrating of the affectional and sexual truths of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, through whose combined vision, spiritual growth and healing strength a future may be realized in which all persons can live with wholeness and integrity.¹³⁰

The committee also outlined a series of goals about the overall U-U effort, the OLGC, the UULGC, and the UUA. Among the main recommendations was the development of the "Welcoming Congregation." This program was designed to assist in the creation of churches receptive to lesbian and gay members and their gifts and talents. Another recommendation was that the OLGC continue to be funded (For a complete list of the recommendations, see Appendix B).¹³¹

An integral part of the report of the committee was a survey of U-U's nation-wide. Responses from 2362 surveys provided insight into views on issues related to lesbians and gay men. The responses of those who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were not figured into the results. The

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following figures represent the 2012 respondents (86% of surveys received) who identified as heterosexual. Among the questions and responses were (all figures are approximate because they are taken from bar-graphs):

Question 16- "I would have a difficult time voting for an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual ministerial candidate for my congregation."

Strongly Agree - app. 310 Agree- app. 200

Strongly Disagree- app. 340 Disagree- app. 180

Question 18- "I don't like the idea of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals being involved in children's religious education programs."

Strongly Agree - app. 195 Agree - app. 100

Strongly Disagree- app. 390 Disagree - app. 200

Question 21- "I wish I knew more gay, lesbian or bisexual UU's."

Strongly Agree - app. 150 Agree - app. 200

Strongly Disagree app. 200 Disagree - app. 550

Question 23- "Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are fully integrated in my congregation."

Strongly Agree - app. 250 Agree - app. 240

Strongly Disagree - app. 210 Disagree - app. 330

Question 24- "I feel uncomfortable around gay, lesbian, and bisexual people."

Strongly Agree - app. 110 Agree - app. 290

Strongly Disagree - app. 380 Disagree - app. 250

Question 31- "Gay, lesbian and bisexual people represent just another special interest group in the UUA."

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Strongly Agree - app. 430 Agree - app. 300

Strongly Disagree - app. 200 Disagree - app. 230

Question 33- "I think gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual people can benefit from knowing more about one each others' lives."

Strongly Agree - app. 725 Agree - app. 350

Strongly Disagree - app. 40 Disagree - app. 180 ¹³²

The data suggests an interesting combination of views about lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. There does not seem to be the overwhelming fear of interaction between the lesbian and gay community and children that seems so prevalent in society. At the same time, nearly half are concerned about having a gay minister. There is a ten-to-one belief that both lesbians and gays and heterosexuals would benefit from knowing one another, yet over half believe that lesbians and gay men aren't integrated into the congregations. The fact that so many see gay men and lesbians as a special interest group may have some effect on these views.

Both supportive and unsupportive views were included in the comment section. The vehemence of some of the unsupportive comments was a shock to some in the UUA. Among the quotes were: "I loathe them regardless. They actively prey upon young people, have multiple sex partners daily and do spread AIDS. Sex is the overriding concern in their tawdry lives; all else is meaningless. Many...are hate filled anti-straight."¹³³ "We can and should help society by trying to stamp our recognition

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and publicity for these perverts... certainly they should not be role models."¹³⁴ "Sounds to me that there are too many faggots in the GA...May God continue his wrath of AIDS on this scum and garbage. Hitler knew how to deal with them. Anyone who gasses and burns 1/2 million faggots can't be all bad, can he?"¹³⁵

The negativity of comments such as these should be viewed carefully, according to former OLGDC Director Scott Alexander. While Alexander believed the quotes to be accurate, he did not believe them to be representative: "The bottom line in my view is, of course, when you ask a denomination of 140,000 adults you can get 40 horrible quotations. Of course, you can. Some of the people who are really sick about this stuff are the one's who fill this in. It doesn't give an accurate picture in my view."¹³⁶

Similarly, former Director Bob Wheatley believed the negative comments not to be representative of the views held widely in the UUA: "I don't believe that. I don't think that's a true survey in the sense that I hadn't seen any signs of it and there had been opportunities for people to get that kind of ugliness out. There was no control over who it went to....anybody could have gotten it. Anybody could have answered it."¹³⁷

On the positive side, comments included: "My denomination has gone beyond a paper endorsement of gay rights to a living endorsement in each member's heart of a fellow person's right

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to an equal quality of life."¹³⁸ "I would like to see one's sexual preference become immaterial, just like (maybe, finally, someday) the color of one's skin...The fact that in our society love may be expressed only with a person of the right gender, at the right time, in the right place, and in certain forms is an outrage."¹³⁹

Jay Deacon, Director of the OLGc when the report was completed, was not surprised by the results. He was, however, surprised that some people were shocked by the negative comments: "It was a bombshell to some...There's a twin reality. On the one hand, we're way ahead of society in general and certainly the religious world on these issues, but second, so what. It doesn't do any good to coast on that fact. We have a great opportunity, but we have a long way to go to realize that opportunity. I wish that more UU's could be turned on by the vision of that challenge fulfilled, that possibility made real, of a kind of society that we would love to create. I think the U-U Universe is a wonderful place to start."¹⁴⁰

Deacon believed the report has been neglected since its publication.¹⁴¹ Scott Alexander suggested that the report had a negative lens to it, and that it was more adversarial than it needed to be.¹⁴²

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THE WELCOMING CONGREGATION

One of the major results of the "Common Vision" report was the recommendation for the creation of "The Welcoming Congregation." The program was designed by the OLGc at the request of the 1989 General Assembly, and its purpose was to create a more welcoming atmosphere for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in congregations all across the nation. The words "Welcoming Congregation" identify the program and the resource manual designed to create the program. It is also what a church that completes the program calls itself.

Jay Deacon, Director of the OLGc, stated: "{The Welcoming Congregation resolution} was important because beyond the issue of what states should do on the matter of civil rights, it said what congregations should do. It authorized a program to let congregations do it...the overwhelming sentiment was yes. The major fear came through in the debate...people don't understand bisexuals. They think bisexuals are people that have twice as much sex with twice as many people. {The resolution} was a good sign that at least on the intellectual level, UU's were on board."¹⁴³

In Attachment A of the 1989 resolution, the program is defined and the behavioral objectives are spelled out. The definition begins:

A Welcoming Congregation is inclusive and expressive of the concerns of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons at every level of congregational life, in worship, in program, and in social

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- a. A Welcoming Congregation does not assume that everyone is heterosexual. Vocabulary of worship reflects this perception; worship celebrates the diversity of its people by inclusivity of language and content.
- b. An understanding of the experience of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons will be fully incorporated throughout all programs. It will be fairly represented in Religious Education.¹⁴⁴

A Welcoming Congregation also has a non-discrimination clause, does outreach work in the lesbian and gay communities, offers Services of Union and other ministerial and congregational services, welcomes same sex couples, nurtures dialogue between lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals and heterosexuals, and advocates the rights and dignity of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (for the complete text see Attachment Three).¹⁴⁵

The Welcoming Congregation, a 160 page resource manual for churches wanting to affirm lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, was released in September of 1990. At the core of the manual is a ten session study guide with accompanying readings: "The ten workshop sessions (which can be used in a variety of formats and configurations) are educationally designed to help religious adults examine their attitudes, beliefs, experience, and emotions about sexual orientation minorities- and move toward greater acceptance, affirmation, and understanding. It is a positive, non-judgmental curriculum that affirms its participants even as it challenges them to new and more inclusive perspectives."¹⁴⁶

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The program is voluntary and very flexible. It is for churches which have intentionally chosen to reach out to the lesbian, bisexual and gay communities. Scott Alexander, who designed the program, stated: "It's a simple hands on manual for laity and clergy who want to start getting into stuff. It's being widely used...{the manual} suggests things they can do to make a change in terms of the way their place feels to gay and lesbian people."¹⁴⁷ The Welcoming Congregation is one of the UUA's current best-sellers.

Once a congregation has worked through the program and taken action to implement it, it can register with the OLG as an official Welcoming Congregation.

The Welcoming Congregation program is aimed at educating people in U-U churches across the country. It gives churches something concrete they can do to address homophobia. It reflects the emphasis first given by Scott Alexander to address lesbian and gay issues at the congregational level.

MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT

The settlement of gay and lesbian clergy is another issue that has been prominent in recent years. The treatment of gay and lesbian clergy by the UUA has not always been positive. Both of the ministers involved in the earliest part of the lesbian-gay movement, Jim Stoll and Dick Nash, left the

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church. More accurately, one was asked to leave, the other felt harassed out.¹⁴⁸

According to Dick Nash, Jim Stoll was asked to leave the U-U ministry shortly after Stoll came out in 1970: "The Department of Ministry said there was no room for him...the denomination was effective in silencing him."¹⁴⁹ Within one year of his coming out as a gay minister Stoll was no longer in the ministry.

Nash felt that the harassment he received was more subtle. He was preaching in New York in 1973, when a member of the congregation he was preaching to told him that a member of Nash's former congregation in Chicago had accused Nash of molesting the member's son. On another occasion, another minister told the Director of Ministry, George Spencer, that Nash had admitted to him that Nash was lying about the circumstances of his arrest for prostitution, and that Nash was, indeed, guilty. Nash strongly denied both of these allegations, and in both situations the people who repeated them refused to reveal their sources, so he could not confront the accusations. He stated that the combination of a former parishioner and a colleague both trying to sabotage his work resulted in his decision to work solely in the gay community and leave the U-U ministry: "There was still a considerable amount of ill feeling about gay people in the denomination."¹⁵⁰

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The situation has changed considerably since Nash's day. In 1980, the U.U.A. passed a resolution that addressed Ministerial Opportunities for lesbians and gay men:

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1970 passed a resolution calling on the UUA and its member churches, fellowships, and organizations to end discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons in employment; and

WHEREAS, the UUA has distinguished itself by its repeated support of the employment rights of minority groups; and

WHEREAS, many of the UUA member societies which have considered openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual candidates have been unwilling to accept the candidates because of their sexual orientations; and

WHEREAS, the hiring of religious leaders by Unitarian Universalist member societies is a matter of local conscience;

BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1980 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urge the UUA and its member churches, fellowships, and organizations to renew their commitment to end discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons through educational programs at the local, district, and continental levels and calls upon the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and the UUA Department of Ministerial and Congregational Services to lend full assistance in the settlement of qualified openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual religious leaders.¹⁵¹

The issue of ministerial settlement is confusing. Each church has the right to call its own minister. The U.U.A. serves in a coordinating function with respect to settlement. In 1980 the Ministerial Settlement Representatives from each of the districts within the UUA met with Bob Wheatley. While all of the representatives supported placement of lesbian and

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gay clergy, they felt the churches they represented would react overwhelmingly negatively to the idea.¹⁵²

The representatives believed it would be difficult for lesbian or gay clergy to get fair consideration, to get their resumes read, and that there may be a surface acceptance, but a deeper resistance. The major concern was that gay or lesbian ministers would focus on a single issue. The representatives were also concerned about whether they would be able to do marriage counseling and other forms of counseling, and how the local community would react.¹⁵³

In an article in Ethics and Action, Bob Wheatley addressed the concerns about gay clergy. Lesbian and gay ministers, he wrote, need to be honest about who they are. Their sexuality is part of them, and part of the gifts they bring to ministry. He challenged the assumed universality of heterosexuality and the way in which heterosexuality is taken for granted: "the usual assumption is that we are all...heterosexual. But if those of us who are not try to break from that assumed identity, we are accused of flaunting our sexuality. Yet, heterosexually identified persons seem completely unaware of how they flaunt their sexual identity or how much they take for granted, without thinking of how they impose themselves on thousands of others all around them."¹⁵⁴ Wheatley also challenged people to confront their own bias: "I do not ask you to be responsible for my sexual behavior. That is my responsibility only. But you must accept your share of

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responsibility for the ignorance that still surrounds the subject of sexual orientation, which is neither behavior or lifestyle."¹⁵⁵

In his 1987 Annual Report to the General Assembly, UUA President William Schulz addressed the issue of lesbian and gay clergy:

At the moment our values and principles are being sorely tested: not just by prejudice from outside our doors but by homophobia from within. Let me put it directly as I can: far too many of our congregations are choosing not to call or even to consider gay or lesbian ministers solely on the basis of their affection orientation. When we hear questions like these posed about gay or lesbian candidates-- "But will she talk about anything other than homosexuality? But will we become a gay church? But will he be able to counsel heterosexuals? But will the community accept her?"--when we hear questions like these, we know we are in the grip of a profound terror...I beg us to understand that if such fear is permitted to control us, we will be in violation of everything which Unitarian Universalism stands for in the world.¹⁵⁶

As a result of the difficulty in placing gay and lesbian clergy, the UUA implemented an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action. The program is grounded in Section C-2.3 of Article II the "Principles and Purposes" of the UUA By-laws which "encourages the full participation of persons in all of its and their activities and in the full range of human endeavor without regard to...affectional or sexual orientation."¹⁵⁷ Vice-President for Program, Judy Meyer stated: "We have an equal opportunity, non-discrimination clause in our by-laws now so we've institutionalized non-discrimination and equal opportunities for lesbian and gay ministers."¹⁵⁸

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There have been two primary developments in this area. The first is an educational program for churches engaged in the ministerial search process. The program entitled "Beyond Categorical Thinking" focuses on diversity, including lesbian-gay issues. The second development was to list as a non-equal opportunity employer those congregations which refuse to consider candidates who are gay, lesbian, female, of color, or which refuse to participate in the "Beyond Categorical Thinking" program. A church can also have its ministerial placement services delayed or denied by the UUA.¹⁵⁹

While no church has had that happen, Judy Meyer stated: "If a congregation refused to be in compliance with the by-law and refused to participate in the "Beyond Categorical Thinking" program, to look at its own discrimination, there would be a period of withholding of services from the UUA."¹⁶⁰

A church that refuses the program or refuses to practice non-discriminatory practices can also have that fact noted in the list of congregations seeking ministers, published in the UU World. President Schulz, who has been a strong backer of these actions, stated: "I argued that if a congregation was prepared to be discriminatory and to not undertake any kind of remedial efforts, then it ought to be willing to advertise itself as a discriminatory congregation. The interesting thing is that...that notation has never had to be used."¹⁶¹

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Scott Alexander reported that the reaction to the workshops has been very positive. While he recognized that many of the most biased congregations did not sign up for the program, he believed the programs have had an impact. He supported the fact that a number of biases including sexism, ageism, and ministers in recovery, are also covered. All bias is linked, he said, and all biases need to be addressed.¹⁶²

A 1989 resolution entitled "Equal Opportunity In Ministerial Settlement" provided focus for the program:

WHEREAS the Principles and Purposes adopted in the Bylaws of the UUA specify that:

"We the member congregations of Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote The inherent worth and dignity of every person; Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;" and

WHEREAS equal opportunity calls for ministerial settlement procedures without discrimination because of race, color, disability, sex, affectional or sexual orientation, age or national origin; and

WHEREAS we are concerned that some member congregations have not practiced equal opportunity in the calling of ministers; and

WHEREAS we are aware that some ministers have been discriminated against by some member congregations because of race, color, disability, sex, affectional or sexual orientation, age, or national origin; and

WHEREAS such discrimination is inconsistent with the Principles and Purposes of our covenant together;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 1989 General Assembly of the UUA:

- A. Requests the Department of Ministry provide assistance to our member congregations

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- in achieving equal opportunity in the ministerial selection process;
- B. Urges our member congregations to accept such assistance when it is offered; and
 - C. Supports the Department of Ministry in its long-standing policy of sending to congregations candidate lists meeting equal opportunity criteria; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 1989 General Assembly urges the UUA Administration to further develop and to implement programs to combat such discrimination at the local society and district levels.¹⁶³

In May of 1991 Scott Alexander published a guide for lesbian and gay clergy seeking ministerial settlement entitled: "Practical Strategies and Suggestions for Openly Gay, lesbian & Bisexual Ministers Seeking Settlement in a Unitarian Universalist Congregation." Alexander provided some suggestions for preventing some of the discrimination gay and lesbian clergy face. He suggested that people be thoughtful in choosing when and how they come out during the ministerial selection process. He did not recommend, for example, using the information packets sent to congregations seeking ministers, as the place to state that one is gay or lesbian. Many congregations may not interview a candidate based on such information, but may still hire a lesbian or gay candidate if they were able to see the candidate face to face before learning the candidate's sexual orientation. Alexander advocates waiting for the "pre-candidating weekend" (when a congregation has a candidate come in for a weekend to meet with the search committee and deliver a service at a neutral church) to discuss sexual orientation because it gives the

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search committee an opportunity to meet the person first. Beginning to build a relationship before coming out may inhibit some of the more blatant forms of discrimination. Alexander also emphasized that it is important to be honest about one's sexuality. It should be described as one aspect of who the person is, he suggested, to lessen the fear that a person would have a single issue ministry. Alexander suggested that lesbian and gay candidates try to address concerns the congregation may have, and help them to see that there are other qualifications that should be considered in choosing a minister.¹⁶⁴

These recommendations from Alexander have not met with universal agreement from lesbian and gay clergy. Bob Wheatley: "This is just a weird recommendation to me...the whole issue of outness is up in the air right now."¹⁶⁵ Jay Deacon also took issue with the recommendations: "I Know {Alexander} is trying to help gay and lesbian ministers get jobs but it also troubles me some. I must say that when he talked to the ministers in San Francisco about that there was a reaction. They felt that something of their integrity was being threatened. There are U-U's who are excited about the idea of somebody who is determined to be themselves because that's the religious message you're trying to get across....It's a shame to silence or domesticate a gay or lesbian person. It shouldn't be done. We should have a certain amount of channeled and mobilized rage. We have to be agents of change

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and we have to care about our own people and our own community or what good are we."¹⁶⁶

Overall, the UUA is making progress on the settlement of lesbian and gay clergy. There is some debate as to how much progress, however. William Schulz: "It is certainly true that there are far far more openly gay or lesbian ministers settled...I think we've made some notable progress."¹⁶⁷ At the same time, Schulz noted that there are still dramatic examples of discrimination. He cited a church in New York, which regarded itself as socially activist. The church had the search committee call a lesbian minister, only to have the congregation turn her down. He added that the church had come a long way in the 2-3 years since that incident.¹⁶⁸

Judy Meyer stated: "I think more ministers are out of the closet. It's better for them. I think it's better for congregations. There's less fear, there's more conversation, there's more opportunity. It's just that what we don't have is full equal opportunity...even though institutionally with that program in terms of ministry and other programs, in terms of Welcoming Congregations, that we are probably doing as much as a program can do."¹⁶⁹

Jay Deacon agreed with Meyer about the commitment to the placement of lesbian and gay clergy: "I admire the Department of Ministry's integrity in demanding a non-discriminatory search process in local congregations. I give them a lot of credit...they do their best. They really do."¹⁷⁰ Deacon also

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believed that lesbians and gay men are earning the positions they are securing: "Gay and lesbian ministers have a darn good reputation in this denomination. And when you see that kind of growth that congregations have experienced with gay or lesbian ministers, I should think we would be in great demand."¹⁷¹

Scott Alexander agreed that progress has been made: "The resolution made a difference. The Department of Ministry began to look at practical strategies for improving the situation and we started making visits to search committees ...It made a difference. Things began to change. We've come a long, long way...It is much easier. But we still have a ways to go. There is still a lot of discrimination going on."¹⁷²

Bob Wheatley raised an issue that may also affect ministerial settlement. It is hard to delineate when it's homophobia and when it's a mismatch in personalities between the ministerial candidate and the congregation. He believed "the outgoing vivacious ones do fine. The introverts have a harder time."¹⁷³ Scott Alexander was not convinced that the denomination has come far enough, to base decisions solely on personality.¹⁷⁴

There are two very distinct viewpoints on how lesbian and gay ministers can be most effective. Scott Alexander argued that "it's crucial for gay and lesbian leaders to be people who have been institutional, who work within institutions and don't fly off the handle when someone says something homophobic or when something doesn't happen right away. All

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change is evolutionary."¹⁷⁵ Jay Deacon, agrees with Alexander with regrets. He would like to see another kind of lesbian-gay ministry: "The people who get the jobs, if they're out are the fairly quiet, domesticated straight gays....If you looked at an African-American minister or leader who had no involvement in the civil rights movement you wouldn't respect them much, but the way U-U's look at gay and lesbian ministers, the very opposite is the case. They're scared away by people who have done the things that I think you should expect a gay or lesbian person should do and you shouldn't respect them if they don't do."¹⁷⁶

It is difficult to gauge how far lesbians and gay men have come in the struggle for equal opportunity. Clearly things are getting better, and more lesbians and gay men are being called. It also appears that Scott Alexander is correct when he stated "They want a minister that happens to be gay," as opposed to a gay minister.¹⁷⁷ It appears that there is little room for the activist in the U-U ministry.

LESBIAN AND GAY CHURCHES

Recently the issue of whether the UUA should have ministries targeted towards the gay and lesbian communities has been discussed. In an article in the August, 1991 UULGC World, Rev. Jay Deacon, former Director of the OLG, argued for the creation of such churches. There is little outreach

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done to the lesbian and gay community, he wrote, and too many gay and lesbian people are still educating their congregations. The UUA has done outreach to African Americans in a number of cities, and the same need exists in the lesbian and gay communities: "Meanwhile we continue to overlook both a need and an opportunity of the first magnitude. Unitarian Universalism still holds a serious spiritual alternative for gay and lesbian people. We continue to need a spirituality that makes sense to us and makes sense of us. Our community needs the UU balance of intellect, intuition, and respect for ancient wisdom without the imposed authority of Leviticus and Paul."¹⁷⁸

Deacon did not believe that enough U-U churches meet the needs of their gay and lesbian parishioners: "Until an awful lot of U-U congregations have made some more progress, your basic UU congregation isn't going to be the kind of place it ought to be for a gay or lesbian person...I know that people have had wonderful experiences at U-U congregations. They have had help coming out. They have had help working with many life issues, but I think this happens on a far smaller scale than it ought to."¹⁷⁹ It is the calling of the U-U church, he said, to create a safe spiritual place for lesbian and gay U-U's: "This is the only major religious body in this country that doesn't have to deal with the freight and baggage of St. Paul and the Levitical holiness code and that means that we

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have an obligation and a calling and a mandate. We've got to respond to that calling and take it very seriously."¹⁸⁰

Deacon suggested that the development of a ministry for the gay community is something only U-U's can do. He pointed out that the Extension Department of the UUA, which is responsible for creating new churches, is doing extensive outreach to the African-American community. He is angered by the fact that an African-American outreach is being done in San Francisco, but not a gay outreach: "I feel kind of betrayed by that."¹⁸¹ Given the UUA's commitment to lesbian and gay rights, a stronger commitment to outreach to the lesbian and gay community would be very appropriate.

Scott Alexander, however, did not support the idea of gay and lesbian congregations: "I think we need congregations where gay and lesbian people can integrate, so I disagree with Jay pretty fundamentally."¹⁸² The idea of increasing outreach or creating lesbian and gay targeted churches does not preclude encouraging congregations to integrate their lesbian-gay and non-lesbian - non-gay communities.

AWARD FOR SERMON ON HOMOPHOBIA

There have been many sermons about homosexuality over the years. Probably the best known within the UUA is one delivered in Farmington Hills, Michigan on October 2, 1983. The Rev. Joan Kahn-Schneider decided that it was time for her to speak

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out and share what she had learned in 30 years of having gay and lesbian friends, and experiencing their pain and oppression: "And so, as I have wished males and Christians would address my issues, as a heterosexual, I must address the issues of the homosexual community."¹⁸³ Her sermon went on to be recognized with the Skinner Sermon Award for 1984, given by the UUA to the preacher of a sermon that best expresses U-U social principles.

In the conclusion of the sermon she sums up her view:

I'm proud our denomination has taken an official position, and that our churches are beginning to call openly gay clergy--but it is only a beginning. We must consider our own attitudes-- our own homophobia.

I recently spoke with a woman who had just learned that her eldest son was gay. "How was that for you?" I asked.

"Oh," she replied, "I was so relieved. I thought there was something wrong with him!"

No, there is nothing wrong with him-- there is still much wrong with society. The closets are full of men, women, and children who have committed no sin, done no wrong, hurt nobody--yet are forced by our culture--our homophobia--to live double lives--to keep part--a very important part of themselves a secret.

We are the guilty ones-- we who live our lives ignoring the pain of this large minority.

The sin is not that we love someone of the same sex.

The sin is that we love no one at all.¹⁸⁴

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CONCLUSION

The UUA has come a long way in its treatment of lesbians and gay men. The early activists within the church met with strong opposition. Indeed the two most prominent figures in 1970 had both left the Church completely by 1973. Since then, through the efforts of people like Bob Wheatley, Jay Deacon, Scott Alexander, and Bill Schulz, the Church has come a long way. It has the best educational material on lesbian and gay issues of any religious organization. Very few other religious groups sanction Services of Holy Union for lesbians and gay men. It has funded an Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns and created the Welcoming Congregation. There is still room for growth, however. There is still the issue of placing lesbian and gay clergy, particularly for those inclined towards activism, and the issue of outreach to the lesbian-gay community.

Judy Meyer, Vice-President for Program, believed the UUA was going to stay in the forefront on lesbian-gay issues: "I think we're going to stay in the vanguard too. I think there's no turning back for us. I don't see why U-U is not the religion of choice for anyone who wants to be gay positive or feminist in our culture. I don't!"¹⁸⁵

The UUA began addressing lesbian-gay issues in 1970. That, in itself, is unusual. There has been a constant effort at change and growth since then. The denomination is committed

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to addressing homophobia and that commitment is recognized in progressive circles. Bob Wheatley: "We were always the point people among religious denominations on homosexuality. As Elaine Nobel said here, she was the openly lesbian Representative in the {Massachusetts} State House. Elaine said from the State House point of view, if the Unitarian Universalists were on, we knew that was something we should look at. It had significance."¹⁸⁶

It is also clear that the addressing of homophobia is a process that is nowhere near completion. Scott Alexander on the current situation: "Mixed bag- better than anywhere else and a long way to go...people are moving and coming. People have to be patient, {change} is steady -- it's accelerating. More and more congregations are saying this is something we want to pay attention to...People resist any change."¹⁸⁷

Jay Deacon also believed there was a ways to go: "In every city there is a large population of potential U-U's who go ignored by U-U congregations. {Metropolitan Community Church} congregations very often fill sanctuaries that belong to U-U congregations and on Sunday night -- they fill them. On Sunday morning they're very sparsely attended at the U-U service in some urban areas. Were missing a very important ministry opportunity. At the same time, the fear is real by a straight person, a family oriented person, that a gay minister wouldn't understand me, I couldn't get close to somebody like

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that. It wouldn't work. Well that's how a gay person feels about a straight minister too."¹⁸⁸

Scott Alexander believed that the publicity about U-U stances on lesbian-gay issues had brought a small increase in lesbians and gay in the Church.¹⁸⁹ Jay Deacon believed the effect has been more dramatic: "We've gained more people than ever we have lost. I think that is little perceived. I was minister in Bangor, Maine, one of the most conservative places there is...there was a certain fear we would lose people because I was there. We gained people, straight married people, who were refreshed and excited....there was only one place they could go if they had a vision of a larger possibility or a more human kind of world. I think that has so much to do with our growth. I think it's the reason we're the only denomination other than the fundamentalists that's growing....we have to win over adults one by one and we do it."¹⁹⁰

The denomination's views on lesbian and gay issues has not had the strongly negative response that it has in some denominations. Bill Schulz points out, for example, that no church has ever left the denomination over this issue: "I can't think at least in recent decades of any church leaving the UUA over any political issue...It has not caused that kind of reaction."¹⁹¹

The fact that the UUA has a large number of people who come from other faiths may have an impact on issues such as

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lesbian-gay concerns. Jay Deacon: "In a subtle kind of way it helps us. They pride in not being like where they came from."¹⁹²

Deacon also finds the interaction between lesbian and gay people and non-lesbian and gay people, within the church, interesting: "When it comes to forging a community of solidarity with gay and straight. Unitarian Universalism is an interesting laboratory. I don't know very many others."¹⁹³

In looking at the overall place of lesbian and gay men in the Church, Judy Meyer is very optimistic: "I feel very very good about the UUA record on both {lesbian-gay issues and abortion}. I think we've been way out ahead of the other denominations and we've got a lot to be proud of in terms of our own social witness and openness to change. It doesn't mean that we've been perfect but I feel very good about it."¹⁹⁴

Theologian Betty Hoskins is concerned about whether the trend toward lesbian and gay rights will continue: "There are more people who know they have a gay person in their families and they know that they don't have to feel quite so 'did I do something wrong' in raising them...Now we're in a conservative era. It's very quick and easy to do gay bashing or to really turn very quickly against the lesbian gay community."¹⁹⁵

Bill Schulz summarized where the denomination was at on lesbian-gay issues:

From my point of view, the fact that the UUA was so far in front on gay and lesbian rights, out in front of other denominations at least, is a point of real pride. Still today while many of the other

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denominations have certainly come a good way, I think the UUA still has an important leadership role to play in that area. Other than the Metropolitan Community Churches, you would be hard pressed to find a church that has taken such a consistently liberal position on all those issues. As the first church to establish a formal headquarters Office, very early to endorse Services of Union, very early to support the ordaining of gay and lesbian clergy, and now the Welcoming Congregation program. Which is not to say that there is no resistance to that or that there is no homophobia within U-U. There certainly is. Again, unlike the abortion issue I still with some regularity will get a letter from some U-U outraged that we are so deeply involved or identified with that issue. In fact one of the reasons the Welcoming Congregation program was regarded as important is while we have cleaned house pretty well at the continental or international level, or here at our headquarters operations. In terms of ...impact on local level it is much harder way to go.¹⁹⁶

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AIDS

AIDS is a recent phenomenon. For the last ten years the medical community and society in general have been grappling with this modern day plague. The religious community has also begun to address the impact of the disease itself, and the issues it raises. The fact that sexuality, already a difficult issue for many religious groups, has become central to the AIDS crisis, has complicated the religious response. Some religious groups see AIDS as more than the health crisis it is. They have seen the disease as linked to gay men and drug users, and have addressed the moral issues instead of the medical concerns. In addressing the UUA's response to the AIDS crisis, the issue will be examined separately from any other issues.

The UUA's response to AIDS has been molded by three factors: 1) the congregational nature of the Church -- the response has been centered primarily in the churches; 2) the lack of funds at the central level -- the UUA's outreach has been through education and resolutions, two ways of reaching large numbers of people with less cost; and 3) The progressive, lesbian-gay positive nature of the denomination -- there has certainly been no "rath of God" statements about AIDS coming from U-U congregations or the UUA headquarters.

In an unpublished paper prepared at Harvard Divinity School, Elizabeth McMaster examined the UUA's response to

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AIDS. In 1985, the UUA established an AIDS Advisory Panel, of which McMaster was a member, to investigate what action was being taken by U-U congregations in response to AIDS. The Panel sent a questionnaire to all societies within the UUA, and received a variety of responses. One church withdrew its hosting of a gay men's group out of fear, only to reinstate following an educational effort by the minister of the church. Other churches had established ministries for Persons With AIDS.¹ As a result of the questionnaire, a resource list was provided to all congregations.

Of the 133 respondents to the questionnaire, 87% were already involved with AIDS work and 34% were involved primarily in self-education. The churches delivered sermons on AIDS, used Religious Education materials, or had forums on the topic. A full 50% of responding congregations were involved in community work around AIDS. The survey found that very few congregations were involved in community work without having first undergone a self-education process.²

In April of 1986, the Board of Trustees of the UUA, asked the Advisory Panel to develop further plans for a denominational response. This was done in the context of limited staffing and limited funds on the part of the UUA. In October, 1986, the Panel recommended that teams be established in each of the UUA's 23 Districts over a three year period to:

- Provide referrals to local resources;
- Suggest Information on program resources and speakers;
- Present programs to local societies and district conferences;

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- Consult with ministers and lay-persons on ministry to persons with AIDS and their families;
- Work with congregations to plan appropriate responses to local service and program needs; and
- Recognize and respond to other needs as they arose.³

The Panel also recommended that the UUA Department of Social Justice convene workshops, and that the Panel itself be formed into an AIDS Action Working Group.⁴

Between August of 1987 and Spring of 1988, the AIDS Action Working Group prepared two mailings to congregations, helped develop workshops in a number of districts, updated the resource directory, and continued the development of District Teams. Back up for the Action Working Group was provided by Jay Deacon, Director of the Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns.⁵

The UUA also became involved in the AIDS National Interfaith Network, which was initiated by the United Church of Christ, and included the Metropolitan Community Church and the American Jewish Committee.⁶

An example of the kind of action that was undertaken by local congregations was the University Unitarian Church in Seattle. The church purchased a house after raising over \$30,000, refurbished it, and created a residence for people with AIDS. The house, which held up to seven people, was for individuals with AIDS who could still live independently, but were in need of low cost housing. As of November 1988, it was the only facility of its kind in Seattle. The house is named after the Rev. Mark DeWolfe, the U-U minister at Mississauga, Ontario, who died of AIDS in 1988.⁷

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Jay Deacon, Director of the Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns, saw the action by the Seattle Church as setting an example for the denomination: "An example of what I would like to have seen done was University Unitarian Church in Seattle. A member pushed for a group home for people with AIDS who were still ambulatory and able to take care of themselves and could pay a low rent. That congregation bought this house and was housing more people with AIDS than three AIDS action committees of Boston were at the same time with millions of dollars of state money. That was a beautiful example of what a congregation can do. So often its an issue of leadership. There was leadership."⁸

Congregational involvement was clear with the appointment of Joe Chancey to a voluntary AIDS ministry at the U-U Church of Atlanta. Chancey was appointed by the Board of the Church in December 1985, to an Affiliate Ministry specializing in AIDS related issues. He made presentations on the topic, helped people within the church find ways of getting involved with AIDS related work, performed memorial services, and interacted with persons with AIDS and their families.⁹

There was also a call for action around AIDS by one of Unitarian Universalism's greatest scholars and theologians. James Luther Adams, recognized on the 350th anniversary of Harvard University as one of its most distinguished faculty, wrote an article on palliative care for persons with AIDS. He addressed what could be done to help persons with AIDS.

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Adams wrote that often people try to understand why they are suffering -- why has God done this to them. Adams pointed out that these unanswerable questions are a net in which the patient can get trapped: "Whether the patient is fully aware of it or not, he/she wants a more fundamentally human response than a resolution of the imponderable questions. He longs for the reaffirmation of life, the response of caring."¹⁰ It is essential that judgment on the part of the care-giver be released. Judgment brings distance between those suffering and those caring for them: "What is needed, also in palliative care, is the courage to care, and to show it. There is nothing judgmental in this sort of caring. This is not the time for judgement...but a time for compassion."¹¹

Adams examined the AIDS situation in the light of early Christian- Judeo concepts of caring. Diakonia is a form of service: "Diakonia is a service rendered by people living in a sisterhood or brotherhood. One is not alone in serving: and, besides, the serving is not only a service; one should say rather that it is a response to the loving power of God. Therefore, we must say that the person who offers care for the sufferer of AIDS is one who responds not only to the sufferer but also to divine power, a transforming, community-forming power. This response is clearly something quite different from 'explaining' the suffering to the sufferer, itself a quagmire to be avoided through Diakonia (caring)."¹²

Metanoia, or repentance or conversion, is another concept

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with relevance to AIDS. Adams described it as a turning inward by the suffering person to encounter a deeper self. There is a sense in which the person encounters the divine as co-sufferer, and as compassion. God is also able to respond to the person's suffering.¹³

The last concept is that of Kairos. Kairos is a unique moment in time: "This is the moment when the person living with AIDS recognizes that death is at hand. The one engaged in palliative care does well to recognize this kairos, for it is the moment when the sufferer can think of loved ones and also of final arrangements, things to be taken care of. It is a moment not so much of resignation as of the need for strength, for the recognition of a resource hovering over the Kairos, a divine resource beyond human contriving."¹⁴

Adams concluded by pointing out that institutions needed to be transformed. He believed that social responsibility called for institutional implementation of these concepts: "Without institutional change our institutions can become a prison. Metanoia is required for institutions as well as for individual persons, a process ever changing, ever encountering new kairos."¹⁵

Adams provides a sensitive, humane approach for dealing with the emotional care needed by a person trying to reckon with dying of AIDS. Given the tremendous fear of AIDS, and the status of those with AIDS as today's lepers, this is even more essential. The article is made even more noteworthy since

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Adams was nearly 90 at the time of its publication.

Another way in which the UUA has demonstrated support for the AIDS crisis has been in the form of resolutions. There have been two passed that deal with AIDS. The first, "Opposing AIDS Discrimination," was passed in 1986:

BECAUSE, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association covenant to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and to promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; and

BECAUSE, we are members of the interdependent web of existence and therefore responsible for one another and for the society in which we live; and

WHEREAS, on Friday, June 20, 1986, the US Department of Justice, Office of Legal Counsel, concluded that an employer's fear of the spread of AIDS, whether reasonable or not, constitutes grounds for dismissal; and

WHEREAS, this opinion is clearly contrary to the spirit of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the September 1985 ruling of the US Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Disease Control and other experts and researchers working with AIDS have repeatedly and emphatically stated that the HTLV III/LAV/HIV virus cannot be transmitted by casual contact; and

WHEREAS, there have been no documented cases of AIDS transmitted to co-workers, health care workers, family or friends in routine contact with persons with AIDS or persons tested positive for the HTLV III/LAV/HIV antibodies; and

WHEREAS, the Justice Department opinion is a gross violation of civil rights and could apply to as many as two million Americans who currently would test positive for the HTLV III/LAV/HIV antibodies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1986 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association opposes discrimination based on AIDS, the fear of AIDS, or the presence of the HTLV III/LAV/HIV

antibodies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a copy of this resolution be sent immediately to the President of the United States, the US Attorney General, and all members of Congress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Canadian societies study the parallels in Canada, and take action in a manner consonant with the intent of this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the UUA, its member societies and affiliate organizations be urged to promote programs which provide education about the cause of AIDS, how AIDS is transmitted, the real risks of casual contact and which generally increase community awareness about AIDS; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: That the UUA, its member societies and affiliate organizations be urged to support such action as will ensure the civil rights of persons with AIDS and those who test positive to the HTLV III/LAV/HIV antibodies.¹⁶

In 1989 a second resolution was passed that rejected "superstitious or punitive notions of this or any disease as divine punishment," called for U-U's to care for those suffering with the disease, opposed mandatory HIV testing and discrimination against persons with AIDS and their partners and families, and supported increased sex education and expedited drug research.¹⁷ The primary effect of the two resolutions was to create awareness within the denomination.

The UUA has also addressed the AIDS crisis through education. In November, 1985, a supplement on AIDS appeared in the UU World. It carried stories from churches across the country which had been affected by AIDS. Churches such as Topeka, Kansas, which supported long time member Toby Scanlon

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through his illness and death, or Littleton, Massachusetts, which had one member die, and another member was very ill. Other stories talked of how local congregations could get involved, or how people learn about life through death.¹⁸ The last article in the supplement was a memorial homily given by the Rev. Charles A. Howe at Fourth Universalist in New York City: "We give thanks that they were -- and are -- a part of our lives -- their goodness, their courage, their love woven into the very fabric of the larger, ongoing Life of which they -- and we -- are all forever a part."¹⁹

In January 1986 (Updated June 1988), the Religious Education Department of the UUA released the AIDS Packet. The philosophy underlying the materials embraced AIDS education for all ages. Materials were provided for children in the form of stories, for youth, and for adults.²⁰ The materials also addressed both feelings and facts. Gene Navias, Director of Religious Education at the UUA: "Education about AIDS needs to be holistic. Because AIDS is not only a health crisis but a crisis of fear."²¹ Also included in the packet was information for parents about being AIDS educators, information on safer sex, and resources for additional assistance.

In 1989, a supplement on AIDS for the About Your Sexuality program was released. The approach of the supplement was that sex is good, but the HIV virus must be avoided: "Our sexuality is unhealthy only when expressed in irresponsible,

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unprotected, and uncaring ways."²² The supplement provided materials for infusion into other parts of the curriculum, such as "Lovemaking" or "Sexually Transmitted Diseases."

In late 1991, the UUA published, AIDS and Your Religious Community: A Hands-On Guide for Local Programs, a manual on creating ministries for persons with AIDS. The manual provides 27 models, from support groups to sponsorship of a group house, that can be utilized by congregations. It also provides information on social action issues such as AIDS research and funding. The manual is designed to assist local congregations in providing what is needed to address AIDS in their community.²³ Scott Alexander, past Director of the Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns and editor of the book states: "Individual congregations around the continent are doing a great deal, I keep hearing about them -- but as a whole movement, together, I think were kind of behind the eight ball and haven't done enough. We're tiny and doing what we can. It's been a respectable response given our size...We're trying to get it to be more and encourage congregations to do more. That's what the book is about, It's very hands on and practical -- how to start a ministry."²⁴

Bill Schulz, President of the UUA, summarizes the denomination's response to AIDS: "This is a relatively uncontroversial issue for us... we simply struggle to figure out what the most constructive response could be beyond being of support to those with AIDS and their families. Some churches,

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notably in Seattle, have provided the homes and support systems there. Others have worked with families. We have certainly been involved in the political efforts to put pressure on the government to provided appropriate funding....it's really been a matter of keeping it before our consciences and trying to devise ways in which a non- medical response can be constructed."²⁵

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CONCLUSION

The belief in individual freedom is a hallmark of Unitarian Universalism -- a church born out of religious protest. When combined with a strong commitment to social reform, it serves as the foundation of the denomination's views on women's issues, abortion, lesbian-gay concerns, and AIDS. The commitment to freedom, and lack of dogma, is as clear and strong as other religious group's commitment to their beliefs. The U-U's have a creed of no creed. Due to the strong commitment of Unitarian Universalism to freedom, individual conscience, and progressive social action, and because of the lack of dogma and creed, U-U's are sometimes seen by others as not believing in, or standing for, anything. That is not the case. Strong independence and commitment to a very progressive religious, and often political, world view, and a strong belief in social reform, are characteristic of most Unitarian-Universalists. The freedom of religious belief is so pervasive that it would be very difficult for a traditional Christian or Jew, or someone not committed to a progressive agenda, to feel comfortable in many U-U churches.

Because of this diversity, within the liberal context, U-U churches vary by congregation in approach, and in belief. In New England there is often a liberal Christian approach. In the West there is more of a Spiritualist or New Age flavor. In the mid-west there are a number of large churches strongly

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rooted in Humanism. This broad range of spiritual beliefs simultaneously creates, and is created by, the diversity within the UUA.

Because of the congregational nature of the church, and the lack of central authority in the UUA, resolutions of the General Assembly are one of the few ways in which insight can be gained into U-U beliefs on a national level. The reform oriented resolutions, in particular, are important as public proclamations of U-U beliefs, and as an ideal for individual congregations.

Another way in which U-U's state their beliefs, and their commitment to individual freedom, is through Religious Education materials, one area in which few denominations have made the strides that the UUA has. Their historic commitment to social change has resulted in them addressing many issues other religious groups will not address. Gene Navias commented about the materials from other denominations: "We found absolutely nothing of the openness and scope of our programs, nothing. Every few years we have checked again to see if there are programs that have come along that were as open and inclusive. There may be now, but we have not found them."¹ He stated that censorship seems to be common in the materials of other denominations. The publication of programs such as the Invisible Minority on homosexuality in 1972, and the inclusion of topics such as same-sex lovemaking and abortion in About Your Sexuality are examples of the R.E. Department making

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clear statements of belief, educating the denomination and planting the seeds of social change.

The belief in individual freedom is further expressed in the UUA's strong support of women's issues. It is clear that women and the women's movement have played prominent roles within the U-U Church. Unitarian Universalism is a religion that has not only embraced the feminist ideal, but applies that ideal better than most other religious groups. The individual freedom inherent in Unitarian-Universalism has supported feminist women in exploration of feminist approaches to religion and spirituality in ways that few religious groups would even consider.

The commitment to social reform and women's rights also serves as a foundation for addressing issues such as abortion and lesbian-gay issues. Because of this commitment, it is not surprising that the UUA addressed abortion before other religious groups, or that it has taken the lead in lesbian-gay concerns.

Addressing these issues, particularly lesbian-gay concerns, has not been easy. There is always disagreement and divergent opinions in U-U churches and these issues are no exception. It is clear that there has been a greater degree of unanimity on the pro-choice stance on abortion, than on the issue of lesbian-gay rights.

The UUA has a strong commitment to abortion rights. On every level -- denominationally, among clergy, the laity and

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theologians -- there is near consensus on the issue. While not all U-U's agree on the specifics of the abortion debate, most would agree that the decision should be primarily that of the mother. Among theologians, Betty Hoskins and James Luther Adams are both pro-choice. George Huntston Williams is the lone exception to the pervasiveness of the pro-choice stance. He is one of very few U-U ministers, and the only U-U theologian opposed to the pro-choice stance. He is clearly a distinct minority. His work, while an exception to the norm, is representative of the diversity within Unitarian Universalism.

The diversity of views within the pro-choice stance was also evident in the Report on Abortion done by the U-U Society of Madison, Wisconsin. The Society's report presented a thoughtful, careful analysis of the abortion issue. It was also an excellent example of a lay group's effort to address social concerns.

The current threat to Roe V. Wade will bring increased involvement from U-U's. Given U-U commitment to social action, active U-U involvement in the Religious Coalition For Abortion Rights, and the presence of UUA President Bill Schulz at the 1986 and 1992 Marches for Women's Lives, the UUA will continue to provide leadership for the pro-choice position.

The UUA has also provided leadership by addressing the concerns of lesbians and gay men. Because of the UUA's responsiveness to social movements and commitment to

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progressive change, the denomination was ripe to begin addressing lesbian and gay issues in the context of the civil rights movement in the early 70's. However, such attention to lesbian-gay issues has met with controversy.

Although the UUA has come a long way in its treatment of lesbians and gay men, early activists met with strong opposition. Indeed the two most prominent figures in 1970 had both left the Church completely by 1973. Since then, the Church has changed a great deal. It has excellent educational materials on lesbian and gay issues. Very few other religious groups sanction Services of Holy Union for lesbians and gay men. It has funded an Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns and created the Welcoming Congregation. There is still room for growth, however.

There is still the issue of placing lesbian and gay clergy. It is difficult to gauge how far lesbians and gay men have come in the struggle for equal opportunity in ministerial placement. Clearly things are getting better, and more lesbians and gay men are being called. It also appears that there is little room for the activist in the U-U ministry.

Outreach to the lesbian-gay community has also led to some controversy over whether the UUA should sponsor lesbian-gay targeted churches. Given the UUA's commitment to lesbian and gay rights, a stronger commitment to outreach to the lesbian and gay community would be very appropriate. The idea of increasing outreach or creating lesbian and gay targeted

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churches does not preclude encouraging congregations to integrate their lesbian/gay and non-lesbian/non-gay communities.

There has also been conflict over whether the lesbian-gay movement in the Church should be assimilationist or activist in nature. The conflict between the styles of Scott Alexander and Jay Deacon in the Office of Lesbian Gay Concerns, reflect the debate between assimilationism and activism in the gay community and among feminists. Deacon was an activist, Alexander an assimilationist. Deacon was an outsider fighting for a cause, Alexander was an insider gently pushing. Deacon was grounded in lesbian-gay politics and service, Alexander was not. It is unclear why efforts have not been made to incorporate the two views, and do both ministry to the lesbian-gay community, and education.

In many ways the UUA was ahead of the rest of society with their concerns for lesbian-gay issues. The statements made by early Gay Caucus members 20 years ago criticizing their place in the Church are very similar to those made by lesbians and gay men today. The injustices Dick Nash described are the same injustices faced by lesbians and gay men 20 years later. While change has been slow within society in general, the U-U Church has attempted to address some of these issues. It appears that the UUA has progressed because they were willing to deal with these issues, when very few groups, religious or otherwise, were willing to do so.

The UUA's response to AIDS grows out of the same beliefs as the response to abortion and lesbian-gay concerns. That response has been molded by three factors: 1) the congregational nature of the Church -- the response has been centered primarily in the churches; 2) the lack of funds at the central level -- the UUA's outreach has been through education and resolutions, two ways of reaching large numbers of people at a lower cost; and 3) The progressive, lesbian-gay positive nature of the denomination -- there has certainly been no "Rath of God" statements about AIDS coming from U-U congregations or the UUA headquarters.

* * *

This examination of the UUA raises a question about religious groups in general. If a religious group approaches the issue of abortion, will it also be drawn into a consideration of lesbian and gay issues? It seems as if both subjects strike at the core of what a group believes. If an organization fundamentally believes that procreation is central, that the continuance of a pregnancy supersedes the needs of the mother, then it would not support lesbian or gay lifestyles because they are often non-procreative. If a group fundamentally believes in individual conscience and freedom, then it would seem that the group would support choice on abortion and lesbian-gay rights. To examine one or both of these issues calls into question the fundamental moral and ethical structure of an organization.

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Clearly the links between women's issues and abortion are strong. The freedom of women to make their own choices, whether about career, marriage, or pregnancy, is at the heart of the women's movement. Feminism has had a major impact on the UUA. Jay Deacon: "The women's movement and the U-U movement have had close links all along. The recent growth of Unitarian Universalism in the last five or six years has a lot to do with feminism."² Deacon believes, and rightly so, that the presence of feminist women in the ministry has made Unitarian Universalism more gripping and compelling.

More subtle are the links that have developed between feminism, abortion, and lesbian and gay rights. Often the agendas of abortion rights, women's rights and lesbian gay rights confront the same issues, and work for change within the same patriarchal structures. They are all breaking the back of the devaluation and oppression faced by women. All are asking new questions, and demanding new social structures. The issue of the freedom of choice underlies them all. Judy Meyer: "I believe that regularly deals are made between the lesbian and gay political movement and the women's movement. 'We'll support you if you'll support us'....It is a collaborative effort. It just makes sense to me that where the freedom of individual choice and the affirmation of the dignity of that expression is upheld, then you have both of these concerns lifted up as central."³ Betty Hoskins believes that both abortion and lesbian gay issues address not only sexuality,

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but what it means to be male and female -- that they fall under the same umbrella.⁴

There has been support for one another's agendas between the UULGC and the Women's Federation. Jay Deacon: "Perhaps the strongest and most resounding endorsement of the Welcoming Congregation program and other things that were being proposed....came from the Women's Federation."⁵ Likewise Deacon reported that almost the entire UULGC was pro-choice and supportive of a pro-choice agenda.⁶

The UUA has not operated in a vacuum when it takes stances on these issues. While it is certainly exceptionally progressive on abortion and lesbian-gay rights, other religious organizations have also taken progressive positions. Three other major religious groups could be put at the same progressive end of the spectrum as the UUA: The Friends General Conference, Reform Judaism, and the United Church of Christ -- Congregationalist.

On abortion, Reform Judaism has taken a strongly pro-choice stance. In 1969 (reaffirmed in 1975) the National Council of Jewish Women, a secular Jewish organization, stated: "It is resolved...to promote public understanding that abortion is an individual right and to work to eliminate any obstacles that limit this right."⁷ In 1975 the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) stated: "We affirm the legal right of a family or a woman to determine on the basis of their or her own religious or moral values whether or not

to terminate a particular pregnancy. We reject all constitutional amendments which would abridge or circumscribe this right."⁸ The pro-choice stance has also been supported by Conservative Judaism, and by some Orthodox Jews who, while often not supporting the actual choice for an abortion, see the issue as one of separation of church and state.

The United Church of Christ at its Eighth and Eleventh General Synods affirmed a pro-choice position: "RESOLVED: that the Eleventh General Synod (July, 1977) affirms the right of women to freedom of choice with regard to pregnancy expressed by the Eighth General Synod and interpreted as a constitutional right."⁹

Attempting to define a Quaker (Friends) position is problematic at best. Quakers operate on a system of consensus. An individual meeting will consider a topic, and a group of Friends will discuss it, and a consensus may or may not be reached. Even if a consensus is reached, it only reflects the views of the Friends present at that time. Accordingly, statements must be taken in that context. In 1969, the American Friends Service Committee, an organization separate from the individual Friend's conferences, did issue a statement on abortion: "Mindful that it does not speak for all Friends...(the Board of Directors) arrived at the view that it is far better to end an unwanted pregnancy than to encourage the evils resulting from forced pregnancy and childbirth...We believe that no woman should be forced to bear an unwanted

child."¹⁰

In addition to these groups, the UUA has been involved with the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights for many years. It is interesting that most religious groups did not even discuss abortion until the late 60's to mid-70's. Because of its commitment to social reform, women's issues, and a progressive agenda, the UUA began to address abortion in 1963.

On Lesbian-Gay Issues, the same three groups have also been very progressive. The Friends Home Service Committee in London published Towards a Quaker view of sex in 1963, seven years before the UUA started dealing with lesbian and gay issues. The authors of Towards a Quaker view of sex wrote: "Surely it is the nature and quality of a relationship that matters: one must not judge it by its outward appearance but by its inner worth. Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection, and therefore we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse."¹¹

In the United Church of Christ, the Tenth General Synod (1975) came out in favor of lesbian-gay rights: "recognizing that a person's affectional or sexual preference is not legitimate grounds on which to deny her or his civil liberties....proclaims the Christian conviction that all persons are entitled to full civil liberties and equal protection under the law."¹² The U.C.C, which first ordained an openly gay man in 1972, passed a resolution in 1983 stating that homosexuality was not grounds for barring ordination.¹³

Reform Judaism adopted a resolution supporting equal rights and encouraging education in synagogues on lesbian-gay issues in 1979.¹⁴ In June of 1990, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) passed a resolution accepting lesbians and gay men into the rabbinate: "All rabbis regardless of their sexual orientation, be accorded the opportunity to fulfill the sacred vocation which they have chosen."¹⁵ The action brought a strong negative reaction from the Orthodox movement, and disagreement from the Conservative movement. The small Reconstructionist and Humanistic movements already had lesbian and gay rabbis.

One denomination that should be mentioned in any consideration of religious views on lesbian-gay issues is the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). Founded in Los Angeles on October 6, 1968, by the Rev. Troy Perry, the MCC ministers specifically to the lesbian and gay community. The church, which is evangelical in theology, has grown to about 30,000 members in 200 churches.¹⁶

It is also important to look at another aspect of context. The development of the U-U views on abortion and lesbian-gay issues occurred in the 60's and 70's, at the height of social unrest in this country. The civil rights movement, the women's movement, the anti-war movement were all in full swing. It would be impossible to separate the impact of each of these movements on the movements within the UUA. It is clear, however, that the UUA is very responsive to social

movements, and this period in history played a role in U-U involvement in abortion and lesbian-gay issues.

The U-U commitment to the pro-choice position on abortion, and to the rights of lesbian and gay people, is clear and strong. The UUA has been years ahead of most other religious groups addressing these issues and implementing change. The process, particularly around lesbian-gay issues has often been painful. The denomination has not always been open to lesbians and gay men, but its commitment to change has been genuine.

Sometimes the UUA is regarded as reacting to social concerns without thought. That is not the case. Whether one examines the thoughtful and thorough approach of the Madison Report on abortion, or the theological report on Feminism by Bill Schulz, or the systematic way in which the denomination has opened to lesbians and gay men, there has always been a degree of caution and an assessment about how any new action fits in the U-U liberal tradition.

It is also the case that there have been exceptions to the majority views on both abortion and lesbian gay issues. George Williams, one of the church's finest scholars, is opposed to the predominant view in favor of choice on abortion. In terms of lesbian-gay issues, there have been those who have spoken out against the changes in favor of lesbian and gay rights each step of the way. That diversity of opinion is one of the hallmarks of Unitarian Universalism.

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Wade Clark Roof in Community and Commitment, examined the decline in membership among mainstream denominations through the 1970's. Roof observed a "crisis of plausibility" in the churches that he believed to be the root of the problem.¹⁷ He believed that liberal religion had been unable to provide a "meaningful and compelling faith congruent with modern culture."¹⁸ Clark believed that the future of the liberal tradition depended on "how successfully the churches can retain, and capitalize upon, a distinctive theological heritage in a time when winds of change are blowing in a more conservative direction. If they can do this, there is the possibility of forging a new cultural synthesis attractive to a larger segment of contemporary society."¹⁹

There is no doubt that Unitarian Universalism provides a distinctive theological heritage. The Church is growing at a time when many of the liberal mainstream churches are shrinking. It will be interesting to see the role it will play in the future of religion in this country.

ENDNOTES

1. Gene Navias, interview by author, Tape recording, Boston, 12 August 1991.
2. Jay Deacon, interview by author, Tape recording, Boston, 13 August 1991.
3. Judy Meyer, interview by author, Tape recording, Boston, 13 August 1991.
4. Phyllis Rickter and Betty Hoskins, interview by author, Tape recording, Boston, 14 August 1991.
5. Deacon, interview by author.
6. Ibid.
7. "The Abortion Debate," Journal of Current Social Issues (Spring 1978): 74.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 75.
10. Ibid., 74.
11. Alaistair Heron, ed., Towards a Quaker view of sex (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1963), 41.
12. "The Church and Homosexuality," Journal of Current Social Issues (Spring 1978): 81.
13. "Church Policies on Gay Concerns," in The Alyson Almanac (Boston: Alyson Books, 1990), 196.
14. Ibid., 193-194.
15. Ari L. Goldman, "Reform Judaism Votes to Accept Active Homosexuals in Rabbinate," The New York Times, 26 June 1990, A1 and A 21.
16. "Universal Fellowship Today," Los Angeles: Universal Fellowship Press.
17. Wade Clark Roof, Community and Commitment (New York: Elsevier, 1978) 6.
18. Ibid.

19. Roof, 216-217.

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

RESOLUTIONS ON ABORTION

"Abortion - 1973"

WHEREAS: there are well organized efforts of letter writing, petitions, and a Washington Office for lobbying to amend the US Constitution to overturn the US Supreme Court decision on abortion;

BE IT RESOLVED: That we support the US Supreme Court ruling on abortion and its implementation.

"For The Right To Abortion - 1975"

WHEREAS, every female should be accorded the right to decide whether or not she should bear a child;

WHEREAS, contraceptive methods are not perfect and do not absolutely protect against pregnancy ; and

WHEREAS, abortion can be a relatively simple and safe way to terminate pregnancy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the delegates at the 1975 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association reaffirm the right of any female of any age or marital or economical status to have an abortion at her own request upon medical/social consultation of her own choosing; and urge all Unitarian Universalists in the United States to resist through their elected representatives the efforts now under way by some members of the Congress of the United States to curtail that right by means of constitutional amendment or other means;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That we urge all Unitarian Universalists and all Unitarian Universalist societies in Canada through the Canadian Unitarian Council to strive for making these rights available in Canada;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly deplores the legal persecution by the Canadian authorities of Dr. Henry Morgenthauer for his courageous fight for the abortion rights of

Canadian women and his willingness to assist them in exercising those rights. We deplore particularly the attack by the Crown prosecutor on the jury system, which has twice acquitted Dr. Morgenthaler; the mistreatment of Dr. Morgenthaler in prison after his second acquittal; the shocking ruling of the Canadian courts that an Appellate Court can declare a defendant guilty after he has been acquitted by a jury; and the announced intention of the Crown prosecutor to carry on ten more prosecutions of Dr. Morgenthaler for past abortions. The General Assembly commends the Canadian Unitarian Council for its support of Dr. Morgenthaler and requests the CUC to convey the concern of the General Assembly to the Prime Minister of Canada and the Prime Minister of Quebec, and to request the Prime Minister of Canada to procure for Dr. Morgenthaler a royal pardon.

"Abortion - 1977"

WHEREAS, attempts are now being made to deny Medicaid funds for abortion and to enact Constitutional Amendments that would limit abortions to life-endangering situations and thus remove this decision from the individual and her physician; and

WHEREAS, such legislation is an infringement of the principle of the separation of church and state as it tries to enact a position on private morality into public law; and

WHEREAS, such anti-abortion legislation would cause the revival of illegal abortion and result in the criminal exploitation of women who are without money or influence, forcing them to resort to unsafe procedures; and

WHEREAS, we affirm the right of each woman to make the decisions concerning her own body and future and we stress the responsibilities and long term commitment involved in the choice of parenthood;

WHEREAS, the majority of the Supreme Court has ruled on June 20, 1977 that the states are not obligated to expend Medicaid funds for elective abortions, and has also ruled that public hospitals are not obligated to perform abortions;

WHEREAS, there is a strong national movement to have two-thirds of the state legislatures request Congress to convene a Constitutional Convention for the purpose of proposing a Constitutional amendment to prohibit abortion;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association expresses its dismay and its regret at the June 20, 1977 decision of the Supreme Court as seriously jeopardizing the right of legal abortion won in the Supreme Court decisions of January, 1973; opposes the denial of Medicaid funds for abortion and any Constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion and urges members of the societies of the Unitarian Universalist association to write or wire their senators and representatives in Congress and state legislatures to inform them of our position on these issues.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly positively affirms its respect for the responsibilities and joys of parenthood, and the member societies of the UUA are encouraged to develop workshops and other programs on parenthood and parenting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly urges that federal funds be invested in research to find more effective and safer methods of birth control.

"Abortion: Right To Choose - 1978"

WHEREAS, religious freedom under the Bill of Rights is a cherished American right; and

WHEREAS, right to choice on contraception and abortion are important aspects of the right of privacy, respect for human life and freedom of conscience of women and their families; and

WHEREAS, there is increasing religious and political pressure in the United States to deny the foregoing rights;

BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1978 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association once again affirms the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States on abortion and urges the Association and member societies and individual members of member societies to continue and to intensify

efforts to insure that every woman regardless of her financial means, shall have the right to choose to terminate a pregnancy legally and with all possible safeguards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the 1978 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist association urges the Unitarian Universalist Association, districts, and individual Unitarian Universalist societies to continue and, where possible, increase their efforts to maintain right of choice on abortion, including increased cooperation with the Religious Coalition of Abortion Rights, the National Abortion Rights Action league, and other groups seeking maintenance of this right; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the 1978 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association strongly opposes any denial or restriction of federal funds, or any Constitutional amendment, or the calling of a national Constitutional Convention to propose a Constitutional amendment, that would prohibit or restrict access to legal abortion.

"A Religious Statement on Abortion: A Call To Commitment"

WHEREAS, the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, an organization supported by 27 religious bodies, including the Unitarian Universalist Association, has issued a "Call To Commitment: A Religious Statement on Abortion"; and

WHEREAS, in order to provide a unified approach, five of the religious bodies have already passed resolutions endorsing this statement and many others will it at meetings shortly; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian universalist Association has endorsed the statement and encourages similar endorsements by wider representation in our denomination;

BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1980 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association endorse "A Religious Statement on Abortion: A Call to Commitment" prepared by the Religious Coalition on Abortion Rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the 1980 General Assembly urges that educational programs and efforts be pressed forward to foster responsibility in sexual conduct in the interest of reducing

unwanted pregnancies.

"Resolution On Abortion Clinic Bombings - 1985"

VOTED: That the terrorist bombings of family planning agencies and abortion clinics throughout the United States are attempts to deny the right of free choice and to prevent the exercise of that right through intimidation.

This breakdown of law and order is deplored by the Unitarian Universalist Associations's Board of Trustees.

We call on federal, state, and local authorities to protect our citizens' constitutionally guaranteed rights.

"National March For Women's Lives - 1986"

WHEREAS, the principles of religious liberty require the protection of conscience in reproductive matters as deeply religious and personal decisions; and

WHEREAS, actions of the religious right minority, and the current US Administration, increasingly threaten access to safe and legal family planning services and abortion, not only in the United States, but also in developing countries throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, the National Organization for Women has invited the Unitarian Universalist Association to co-sponsor The National March for Women's Lives-East Coast/West Coast, the first massive march to preserve safe and legal birth control and abortion since 1973 Supreme Court Roe v. Wade decision; and

WHEREAS, since 1962 the Unitarian Universalist Association has repeatedly addressed the issues of family planning and abortion rights through passage of public policy resolutions by its General Assemblies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of Trustees of the UUA endorses and co-sponsors The National March for Women's Lives- East Coast/West Coast; commits the Association to organize

delegations to participate in the marches, in Washington D.C. on March 9, 1986, and in Los Angeles, CA on March 16, 1986; and calls upon UU districts and congregations to mobilize Unitarian Universalists to join in these marches to preserve reproductive freedom, and in community observances supporting the rights affirmed in the 1973 Supreme Court Decision.

"Right To Choose - 1987"

BECAUSE, Unitarian Universalists believe that the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the right of individual conscience, and respect for human life are inalienable rights due every person; and that the personal right to choose in regard to contraception and abortion is an important aspect of these rights; and

BECAUSE, we believe in tolerance and compassion for persons whose choices may differ from our own; and

BECAUSE, we believe not only in the value of life itself but also in the quality of life; and

WHEREAS, pain, suffering, and loss of life were widespread prior to the legalization of abortion in 1973 by the US Supreme Court (Roe v. Wade) and the 1969 amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada;

WHEREAS, the issue of abortion is morally complex, abortion must remain a legal option; and

WHEREAS, attempts are now being made to restrict access to birth control and abortion by overriding individual decisions of conscience, and attacks in legislatures, courts, and the streets often result in depriving poor women of their right to medical care; and such legislation is an infringement of the principle of separation of church and state in that it tries to enact private morality into public law; and

WHEREAS, there is a movement to re-criminalize abortion both for women and their health care providers which could bring back dangerous alternatives to clinically safe abortions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1987 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association reaffirms its historic position, supporting the

right to choose contraception and abortion as legitimate aspects of the right to privacy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

1. Individual Unitarian Universalists educate themselves, their congregations, and the public about the new moral understandings emergent in the works of feminist theologians and social ethicists; and

2. Unitarian Universalist oppose any move to deny or restrict the distribution of government funds as a means of restricting access to full contraceptive and abortion counseling and/or services, at home or abroad; and

3. Unitarian Universalists actively oppose all legislation, regulation, and administrative action, at any level of government, intended to undermine or circumvent the Roe v. Wade decision; and

4. Unitarian Universalist communicate their opposition to such attempts to their legislative representatives and to the electorate; and

5. Unitarian Universalists expose and oppose bogus clinics and other tactics that infringe on the free exercise of the right to choose; and

6. Unitarian Universalists promote legislation funding safe abortions for low-income women; and

7. Individual Unitarian Universalists, congregations, and the Unitarian universalist Association open discussion with those of different mind, and seek opportunities to work productively from shared values to promote family planning and education for responsible sex; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: That we reaffirm the right to choose contraception and abortion as a legitimate expression of our constitutional rights.

¹. Text Of All Resolutions From: "Women's Rights Resolutions," Resolutions And Resources Handbook (Boston: UUA, 1990) 269 - 280.

APPENDIX B

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMON VISION PLANNING COMMITTEE

Mission and goal statements, below, crafted by the Common Vision Planning Committee, are proposed for adoption:

I. A Mission Statement for a unified and integral Unitarian Universalist effort toward gay, lesbian and bisexual inclusion and outreach.

The Unitarian Universalist mission regarding lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons is to affirm and support the living and celebrating of the affectional and sexual truths of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, through whose combined vision, spiritual growth and healing strength a future may be realized in which all persons can live with wholeness and integrity.

II. Goal statements for a unified and integral Unitarian Universalist effort toward gay, lesbian and bisexual inclusion and outreach.

1. Preserve, honor and celebrate the rich and unique experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual culture as a source of truth and knowledge.
2. Prophetically voice opposition to homophobia within the Unitarian Universalist community.
3. Bear witness to the world of larger possibilities for justice, inclusion, and the inherent worth and dignity of all.
4. Design inclusive programs to affirm and promote the worth

and dignity of every gay, lesbian and bisexual person.

5. Minister to families of gay, lesbian and bisexual people.
6. Achieve equal opportunity in ministerial settlement, employment and congregational leadership.
7. With the Unitarian Universalist Association, bring our Unitarian Universalist institutions into harmony with the Principles and Purposes of the Association.

III. Goal Statements for the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns (OLGC)

1. Develop, implement and administer the Welcoming Congregation Program.
2. Educate, advocate and liaison with UUA departments, districts and congregations.
3. Coordinate the activities of the various UUA departments and programs in regard to gay, lesbian and bisexual people.
4. Raise and interpret to the Unitarian Universalist Association issues relating to gay, lesbian and bisexual people.
5. Provide appropriate services to Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (UULGC).
6. Represent the Unitarian Universalist Association in the larger gay, lesbian and bisexual community, together with Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (UULGC).
7. Provide information and referrals.

IV. Goal Statements Proposed for the Membership Organization, Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (UULGC).

The planning Committee proposes to UULGC the following Goal Statements, to be adopted and prioritized by a vote of the membership.

1. Create a climate of support, care and affirmation for gay, lesbian and bisexual people and their families.
2. Increase visibility of gay, lesbian and bisexual people within our community of faith.
3. Foster gay, lesbian and bisexual spirituality.
4. Organize, encourage and support district and local groups.
5. Provide communication with members and chapters.
6. Represent together with the Office of Lesbian and Gay concerns (OLGC) a liberal religious presence within the gay, lesbian and bisexual community.

V. Specific Recommendations.

To the UUA:

1. Adopt the Welcoming Congregation program, proposed in this report.
2. In view of a) the urgency of the proposed Welcoming Congregations Program in light of the severely disturbing level of homophobia clearly apparent in the Common Vision survey findings, b) the ongoing need for the customary services of the Office of Lesbian Concerns, c) the need

for development of new educational, program and resource materials, and d) the need for more effective coordination of efforts beyond OLGC toward gay, lesbian and bisexual inclusion and outreach, we urge the funding of the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, including a full-time Director and a full-time support staff position.

3. Because of the overarching nature of our mission and its implications for every department and instrumentality of the Association, and toward the goal of a consistent and coordinated Unitarian Universalist effort toward inclusion of and outreach to gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons, we recommend that the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns be structured so as to relate formally with the departments and other programs, staffs, committees, and operating units of the UUA. We recommend that it be accountable to the Executive Vice President for its responsibility as liaison, advocate and educator with these departments, programs, staffs, committees and operating units.
4. Fund adequately the Equal Opportunity Team program. This program is a model effort, working with apparent effectiveness on the front lines in congregations in the search process. With boards, search committees and congregations, it confronts the fears, misapprehensions and resistance of UUs regarding gay, lesbian and bisexual

persons and specifically addresses the issue of gay, lesbian and bisexual ministers. Yet funding for the project is inadequate to the unique opportunity, and it has been necessary to decline many requests for congregations for such programs. Further, it was noted by the committee that the gay and lesbian settled ministers who are called upon to preach and lead workshops in this program receive no remuneration, a situation that takes advantage of their commitment without honoring the value of their work.

5. Respond favorably to a UULGC application for Associate organizational status.

To UULGC, OLGC and all departments:

Adopt measurable objectives for the implementation of specific relevant goals, and announce these publicly.

To UULGC:

1. Through by-law revision, restructure the Continental coordinating committee so that, rather than the present at-large composition of members elected at the annual meeting at General Assembly, it consist of regional or district representatives who are elected at grass-roots, locally by the region or district UULGC membership, as well as some at-large members elected by the annual meeting.
2. In place of the current arrangement of two simultaneous co-chairs, one male and one female, consider adopting a

structure similar to that in effect within the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association, in which the chair or president serves with a vice-chair or vice-president who, as chair-or president-elect, automatically succeeds as chair or president. These must alternative between male and female.

3. Hire a part-time executive funded by the membership.
4. Participate in gay, lesbian and bisexual interfaith activities alongside Dignity, Integrity, MCC, Affirmation, the gay synagogues, and other membership organizations.
5. Because of the significant numbers of persons identifying themselves in the Common Vision survey as bisexual and because this underacknowledged minority has called upon OLG and UULGC for fuller inclusion and greater attention to its specific issues, we recommend that UULGC include in its name and in its publications and programs the word, "bisexual."
6. Apply for the status of Associate organization, a change from the present Affiliate status, which would serve symbolically to affirm the major significance, continent-wide, of the gay, lesbian and bisexual constituency to the entire Unitarian Universalist population, and to recognize the reality that lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are and will continue to be part of the life and ministry of every Unitarian Universalist society.

To OLGC:

1. Adopt the development, implementation, and coordination of the Welcoming Congregations Program as its major priority for the next decade.
2. We recommend that the fulltime Director of OLGC divide her/his time equally between the present functions of OLGC and the new Welcoming congregation program for the foreseeable future.
3. Because of the substantial numbers of persons identifying themselves in the Common Vision survey as bisexual and because this underacknowledged minority has called upon OLGC and UULGC for fuller inclusion and greater attention to its specific issues, we recommend that OLGC include in its name and in its publications and programs the work, "bisexual." ²

² "Recommendations" Report and Recommendation of the Common Vision Planning Committee (Boston: UUA, 198) 2-4.

APPENDIX C

GUIDELINES FOR A WELCOMING CONGREGATION

In 1988, the UUA Board of Trustees formed the Common Vision Planning committee to create a program for congregations interested in becoming more inclusive. No set of guidelines can address the diverse needs of the wide range of Unitarian Universalist congregations, but the following Commitments to inclusiveness and Actions for achieving those Commitments were adopted by the delegates of the 1989 General Assembly as the outline for The Welcoming Congregation. Please remember that these guidelines are not a precise blueprint, but rather a suggestive road map for congregations beginning the journey toward becoming truly welcoming.

Commitments

1. A Welcoming congregation is inclusive and expressive of the concerns of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons at every level of congregational life—in worship, in program, and in social occasions, welcoming not only their presence but the unique gifts and particularities of their lives as well.
 - a. A Welcoming congregation does not assume that everyone is heterosexual. Vocabulary of worship reflects this perception; worship celebrates diversity by inclusivity of language and content.

- b. An understanding of the experience of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons will be fully incorporated throughout all programs, including religious education.
2. The bylaws and other official documents of a Welcoming Congregation include an affirmation and nondiscrimination clause affecting all dimensions of congregational life, including membership, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals.
3. A Welcoming congregation engages in outreach into the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities, both through its advertising and by supporting actively other lesbian, gay, and bisexual affirmative groups.
4. A Welcoming congregation offers congregational and ministerial support for services of union and memorial services for gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons, and celebrations of evolving definitions of family.
5. A Welcoming congregation celebrates the lives of all people and welcomes same-sex couples, recognizing their committed relationships; and equally affirms displays of caring and affection without regard for sexual orientation.
6. A Welcoming Congregation seeks to nurture ongoing dialogue between gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual persons, and to create deeper trust and sharing.
7. A Welcoming congregation encourages the presence of a

chapter of the Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns.

8. A Welcoming Congregation affirms and celebrates gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues and history during the church year (possibly including Gay Pride Week, which is in June)
9. A Welcoming congregation, as an advocate for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, attends to legislative developments and works to promote justice, freedom, and equality in the larger society. It speaks out when the rights and dignity of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are at stake.
10. A Welcoming congregation celebrates the lives of all people and their way of expressing their love for each other.

Actions

1. Form a broad-based Welcoming congregation committee to offer programs and monitor progress.
2. Adjust congregational bylaws and other relevant documents to include an affirmative nondiscrimination clause concerning membership, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals.
3. Use inclusive language and content as a regular part of worship services, and provide worship coordinators and speakers with guidelines on inclusive language.
4. Promote participation by the congregation's minister,

- religious education minister or director, president, and/or moderator in the Welcoming Congregation program.
5. Offer religious education that incorporates gay, lesbian, and bisexual life issues.
 6. Celebrate and affirm gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues and history during the church year (possible including Gay Pride Week in June).
 7. Participate in and/or support efforts to create justice, freedom, and equality for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in the larger society.
 8. Provide main worship space and ministerial services for gay, lesbian, and bisexual rites of passage, such as services of union and dedications of children.
 9. Welcome gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons in the congregation's brochure.
 10. Ensure that publications, public information, and programming reflect the requested status of any individual as s/he see appropriate; recognize lesbian and gay couples in directories and other publication as they desire.
 11. Offer a congregation-wide workshop program, with follow-up opportunities for study and reflection.
 12. Establish and maintain contact with local lesbian, gay, and bisexual groups to offer support and promote dialogue and interaction.
 13. Use the curriculum About Your Sexuality.

14. Advertise in the local press and/or other media that reaches the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community.
15. Provide use of building space on an equivalent basis with other UU organizations when requested by members for programs and meetings of a Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (UULGC) chapter and/or UU Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (UUFFLG).³

³ Scott Alexander, ed., The Welcoming Congregation (Boston: UUA, 19) 5-6.

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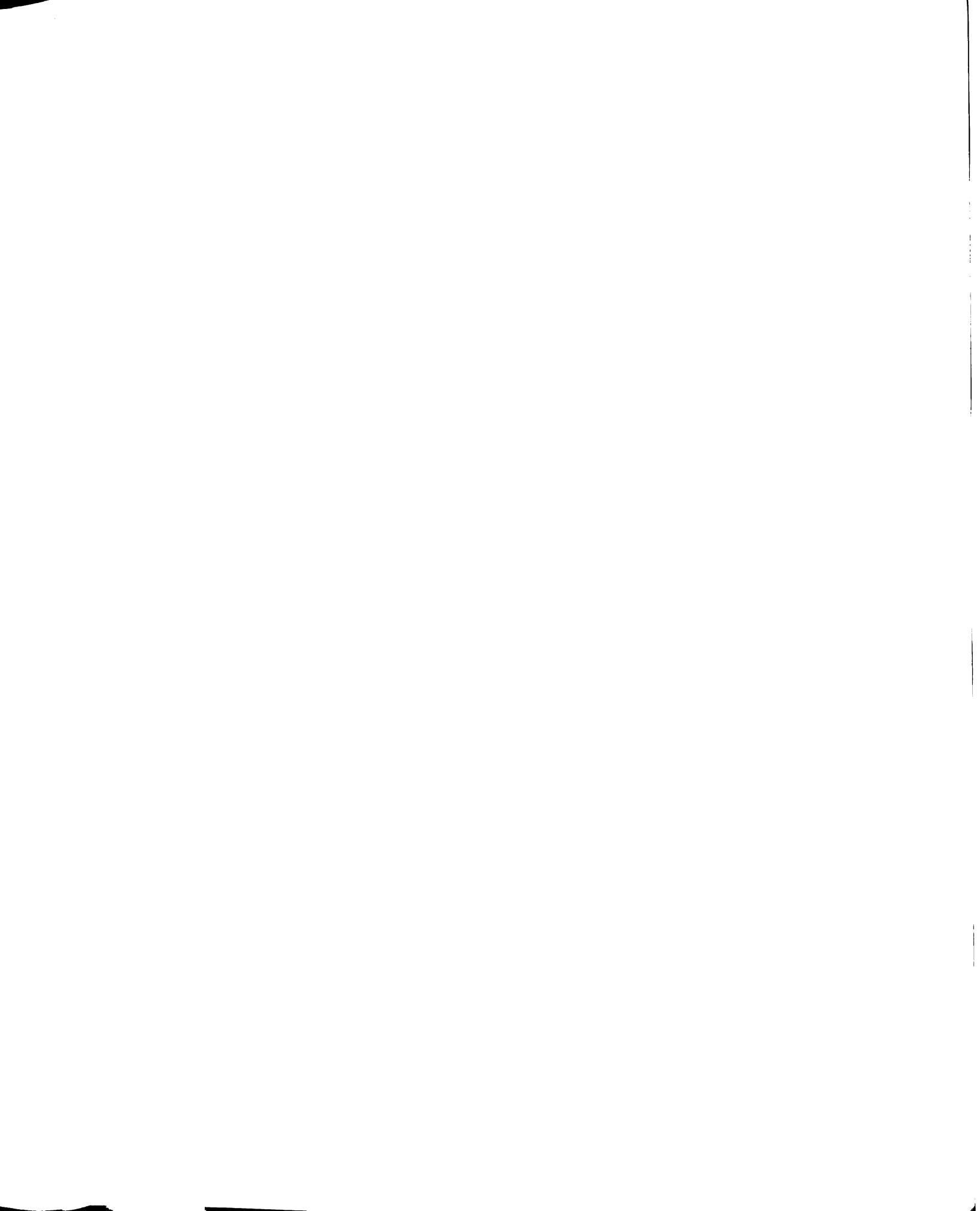
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