



A TIME TO BUILD

CREATING SEXUALLY HEALTHY FAITH COMMUNITIES

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Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing



RELIGIOUS DECLARATION ON SEXUAL MORALITY, JUSTICE, AND HEALING

Sexuality is God's life-giving and life-fulfilling gift. We come from diverse religious communities to recognize sexuality as central to our humanity and as integral to our spirituality. We are speaking out against the pain, brokenness, oppression, and loss of meaning that many experience about their sexuality.

Our faith traditions celebrate the goodness of creation, including our bodies and our sexuality. We sin when this sacred gift is abused or exploited. However, the great promise of our traditions is love, healing, and restored relationships.

Our culture needs a sexual ethic focused on personal relationships and social justice rather than particular sexual acts. All persons have the right and responsibility to lead sexual lives that express love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent, and pleasure. Grounded in respect for the body and for the vulnerability that intimacy brings, this ethic fosters physical, emotional, and spiritual health. It accepts no double standards and applies to all persons, without regard to sex, gender, color, age, bodily condition, marital status, or sexual orientation.

God hears the cries of those who suffer from the failure of religious communities to address sexuality. We are called today to see, hear, and respond to the suffering caused by violence against women and sexual minorities, the HIV pandemic, unsustainable population growth and over-consumption, and the commercial exploitation of sexuality.

Faith communities must therefore be truth seeking, courageous, and just. We call for:

- Theological reflection that integrates the wisdom of excluded, often silenced peoples, and insights about sexuality from medicine, social science, the arts and humanities.
- Full inclusion of women and sexual minorities in congregational life, including their ordination and the blessing of same sex unions.
- Sexuality counseling and education throughout the lifespan from trained religious leaders.
- Support for those who challenge sexual oppression and who work for justice within their congregations and denomination.

Faith communities must also advocate for sexual and spiritual wholeness in society. We call for:

- Lifelong, age appropriate sexuality education in schools, seminaries, and community settings.
- A faith-based commitment to sexual and reproductive rights, including access to voluntary contraception, abortion, and HIV/STD prevention and treatment.
- Religious leadership in movements to end sexual and social injustice.

God rejoices when we celebrate our sexuality with holiness and integrity. We, the undersigned, invite our colleagues and faith communities to join us in promoting sexual morality, justice, and healing.

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The **Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing** was created at a two-day meeting of 20 theologians in May 1999 that was sponsored by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). I am grateful to SIECUS for their support of its development and for allowing the Religious Institute to come into being.

These 20 outstanding thinkers and writers created the **Religious Declaration** through listening, deliberations, suggestions, editing, and more listening. I am thankful for their willingness to volunteer their time to create the Declaration; I am even more grateful to have had the opportunity to participate with them in its creation. Their names are listed on page 6.

This Guide is dedicated to those who have walked with me on my path to ministry. I am grateful beyond words to Dr. Doug Kirby for introducing me to the Unitarian Universalist Association one long ago Mother's Day Sunday; to Rev. Dr. Bill Stayton, Bishop David Richards, and Rev. Dr. James Nelson for modeling a life committed to ministry and sexual health; Dr. Rossella Fanelli for asking me the question that finally led me to the seminary full time; to the Unitarian Universalist Church in Westport, CT, for being my spiritual home for the past 14 years; to the 1995 SIECUS Board of Directors for the opportunity to take a sabbatical at the Yale Divinity School; and to the faculties at the Yale Divinity School and Union Theological Seminary for encouraging and supporting my desire to write and think about sexuality in my divinity school studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is God's life-giving and life-fulfilling gift. We come from diverse religious communities to recognize sexuality as central to our humanity and as integral to our spirituality. We are speaking out against the pain, brokenness, oppression, and loss of meaning that many experience about their sexuality.



The Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing is a clarion call to the nation's religious denominations, congregations, and clergy. It calls for a sexual ethic focused on personal relationships and social justice rather than particular sexual acts.

The **Religious Declaration's** positive vision of the relationship between sexuality and spirituality, grounded in the core teachings of the historic faiths, also emphasizes healing the pain that comes from sexual oppression and exploitation. It urges religious leaders and faith communities to provide comprehensive sexuality education, advocacy for sexual and reproductive rights, and assurance of the full inclusion of women and sexual minorities in congregational life, denominations, and society at large.

More than 2,100 clergy and theologians from more than 35 faith traditions endorse the **Religious Declaration**.

The **Religious Declaration** challenges congregations to be sexually healthy faith communities. A sexually healthy faith community promotes the integration of sexuality and spirituality in worship, preaching, pastoral care, youth and adult religious education, and social action programs in the community. It makes a commitment to a sexual ethic that is not based on double standards and understands that dealing with sexuality is

an issue of spiritual wholeness. A congregation that addresses sexuality openly and holistically models that sexuality and spirituality are inextricably connected.

A Time to Build was developed to help clergy and congregations create sexually healthy faith communities.

A sexually healthy faith community:

- Has religious leadership that has experience and training (pages 14 to 16) in worship and preaching (pages 17 to 19) as well as counseling (pages 20 to 21) about sexuality issues.
- Offers sexuality education for children and youth (pages 22 to 25) and a variety of services and programs to support the sexuality needs of the adults in the community (pages 26 to 28).
- Welcomes all people and all types of families into the faith community as full participating members and values diversity (pages 30 to 31).
- Has explicit policies against sexual exploitation or harassment of any kind within the faith community (pages 32 to 33).
- Works for sexual justice at the denomination level as well as in the society at large (pages 34 to 36).



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Organizations are listed for
identification purposes only.

RELIGION AND SEXUALITY

Our faith traditions celebrate the goodness of creation, including our bodies and our sexuality. We sin when this sacred gift is abused or exploited. However, the great promise of our traditions is love, healing, and restored relationships.



Our religious traditions affirm that sexuality is a divinely bestowed blessing for the purposes of expressing love, generating new life, and providing companionship and pleasure. They recognize the unique role that a faith community can play in helping adults live in a manner that reflects the holiness within each person and within relationships. They celebrate the goodness of creation, including our bodies and our sexuality. They affirm that we are co-creators of a world that affirms justice, love, and rightful relations. They are committed to “understanding sexual pleasure as a moral good rooted in the sacred value of our sensuality and erotic power.” (Nelson, 1992) They teach that it is in our relationships with others that we understand God’s love for us, and it is in our experience of our sexuality that we come closest to being revealed to others.

The theological foundation for the **Religious Declaration** draws on a broad range of sources: scripture, religious tradition, denominational policies, human experience, science, and reason. The creators of the **Religious Declaration** were not trying to develop a new sexual theology, but rather to articulate an extant theology about sexuality that is grounded in religious tradition and thought. The box on pages 11 to 12 includes sections of reports on sexuality from many denominations. (The Reading List on page 27 contains important

books on the theology of sexuality. The questions in the study guide on page 29 will help readers explore these theological concerns.)

Every faith community in America—whether progressive or conservative, liberal or evangelical—is called to address the sexuality needs of their congregants. All clergy counsel parishioners who are struggling with sexual issues. Almost every faith community understands that the sacred gift of sexuality can be abused or exploited: they have witnessed domestic violence, adolescent pregnancy, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, homophobia, sexism, and sexual exploitation. Almost all have recognized the importance of sexuality education for their teenagers; some have made a commitment to lifelong sexuality education. Denominations in America have struggled with issues related to sexual orientation, with a few voting to ordain gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered clergy and to perform same-sex unions. Many denominations have been roiled by cases of sexual misconduct by clergy. The reality is, in the words of Reverend Cynthia Breen, that “sexuality is simply too important, too beautiful, and too potentially dangerous to be ignored in a religious community.” (Gibb, 1999)

Religion and sexuality are central to the lives of most adults in America. More than eight in 10 American adults say that religion is important in their lives and more than six in 10 say that it is

very important to them. More than four in 10 Americans attend a worship service weekly and six in 10 do so monthly. A third of adults participate in religious education programs, and a third do community volunteer work through their congregation. (The Pew Forum, 2001)

Sex and sexuality are no less central to Americans. We are surrounded by sexual messages in the television we watch, the movies we attend, the music we hear, and the constant use of sexual images in advertisements. The vast majority of American adults, whether single or married, heterosexual or homosexual, are sexually involved: only 10 percent of men and only 13 percent of women did not have partnered sex in the past year. Ninety-seven percent of men and 86 percent of women think about sex at least a few times a week or a few times a month or more; nearly half of men and one in five women report thinking about sex every day or several times a day. (Laumann, 1994)

Religious leaders recognize that they need to do

more. Clergy are supportive of increased involvement in sexuality issues. According to a 1998 survey of nearly 500 clergy by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, 95 percent agree that individuals can benefit from dialogue within the congregation about sexuality issues, and 85 percent agree that it is appropriate to speak about sexuality from the pulpit. Ninety-eight percent agree that it is appropriate to speak about sexuality in adult education settings, and 95 percent think it is appropriate for religious schools or youth groups. Seventy-five percent consider the lack of religiously based sexuality education a serious problem in their faith community. (Margulis, 1998)

Moreover, people want their religious institution to help them with sexuality issues. For example, in a study conducted by the United Church of Christ, more than eight out of 10 members said they looked to their church as a resource on sexuality-related decisions and concerns. (Gibb, 1999)



DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL HEALTH

“Sexual health is the experience of the ongoing process of physical, psychological, and socio-cultural well being related to sexuality. Sexual health is evidenced in the free and responsible expression of sexual capabilities that foster harmonious personal and social wellness, enriching individual and social life. It is not merely the absence of dysfunction, disease, and/or infirmity. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, it is necessary that the sexual rights of all people be recognized and upheld.”

—Pan American Health Organization, 2000

“We must understand that sexuality encompasses more than sexual behavior, that the many aspects of sexuality include not only the physical, but the mental and spiritual as well, and that sexuality is a core component of personality... Sexual health is not limited to the absence of disease or dysfunction, nor is its importance confined to just the reproductive years. It includes the ability to understand and weigh the risks, responsibilities, outcomes, and impacts of sexual action and to practice abstinence when appropriate. It includes freedom from sexual abuse and discrimination and the ability of individuals to integrate their sexuality into their lives, derive pleasure from it, and to reproduce if they so choose.”

—Surgeon General of the United States, 2001



HEALING THE SUFFERING

Sexual diseases and sexual dis-ease plague America. Too many Americans experience suffering related to sexuality rather than experiencing it as a life-fulfilling gift. These data, primarily from the 2001 Surgeon General's *Call to Action* on sexual health in America, unless otherwise noted, provide a brief snapshot of that suffering. (*The Surgeon General's Call to Action*, 2001) These are national statistics, but they are likely mirrored in most communities.

Nearly one half of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended.

Seven percent of young people in grades 9 through 12 have been pregnant or have gotten someone pregnant.

There are 12 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases each year.

Five of the 10 most commonly reported infectious diseases are sexually transmitted.

Every year, three million teenagers become infected with a sexually transmitted disease.

More than 400,000 people have died of AIDS in the United States.

More than 250,000 children, adolescents, and adults are living with AIDS.

As many as 900,000 Americans are infected with HIV, with approximately 40,000 new HIV infections occurring every year.

Eight in 10 gay people have been harassed because of their sexual orientation.

God hears the cries of those who suffer from the failure of religious communities to address sexuality. We are called today to see, hear, and respond to the suffering caused by violence against women and sexual minorities, the HIV pandemic, unsustainable population growth and over-consumption, and the commercial exploitation of sexuality.

Anti-homosexual attitudes are associated with psychological distress for homosexual persons, including a greater incidence of depression and suicide.

43 percent of American women and 34 percent of American men report that they have experienced a sexual dysfunction. (Laumann, 1999) Sexual dysfunctions have been correlated to lower quality of life measures and to such health problems as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and depression.

One in 10 men and one in six women were sexually abused as children.

22 percent of women and two percent of men have been victims of a forced sexual act. (Michael, et al., 1994)

Violence by an intimate accounts for 21 percent of the violent crime experienced by women and two percent of the violence sustained by men.

There are an estimated 104,000 children who are sexually abused each year, and approximately 8 percent of women in current relationships are victims of domestic violence.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

*T*his guide contains the building blocks for a sexually healthy faith community. It includes sections on sexually healthy religious professionals, pastoral care, worship and preaching, safe congregations, youth and adult education, welcoming and affirming congregations, and social action. It offers ideas and suggestions congregations can adapt within their own theology and traditions.

Throughout the guide, the reader will find assessment tools to evaluate the congregation's current policies and programs as well as resource boxes for more information. Each area includes lists of organizations, web sites, curricula, and manuals that may prove helpful. The Resource List on page 37 is a guide for more information.

Becoming a sexually healthy faith community is a process. A congregation may not feel it is ready to hold after-school sessions for teenagers to examine their sexual questions. It may, however, feel ready for an evening program for parents on handling sexuality issues in their homes in the context of the faith tradition. Individuals may experience surprise to hear the minister or the rabbi address a sexuality issue from the pulpit; preaching about creation and embodiment is often a good starting point.

There are a number of ways that a congregation leader or clergyperson can use this guide. An individual alone can initiate some of these

activities. Ministers or rabbis, for example, do not need permission to offer pastoral counseling on a sexuality issue or to preach about a sexuality topic. Other areas, such as implementing a new sexuality education program or developing policies addressing sexual harassment, will probably need the support of the board or important lay committees, such as the social action committee, religious education committee or youth committee. Not all of the suggestions will make sense for every faith community. Look at what's useful; discard what is not. Feel free to adapt any material.

Some congregations have developed a steering committee on sexuality issues to conduct an overview assessment and develop a plan to improve the sexual health of the congregation. A group of lay and professional staff could receive training in sexuality to become "Sexuality Resource Persons" or the "Sexuality Task Force." This could be a new committee with the goal of fostering sexual health in the congregation. It could also have a specific function such as to offer programs on religion and sexuality within the congregation or survey congregation members on their interest and commitment to becoming a sexually healthy faith community. They could also lead a worship service or adult education program.

Ultimately, a commitment to developing a sexually healthy faith community needs to permeate every

aspect of the community. The clergy, religious educators, the Board, key committee members, the parents, the youth, indeed every member of the community, must share the commitment to sexual and spiritual wholeness. Sexual health is not limited to the adult or youth education

program or the clergy's willingness and ability to discuss sexuality issues. These are important, but not enough. We are called in community to promote sexual morality, justice, and healing. This guide is offered to assist congregations in that process.



DENOMINATION STATEMENTS ON SEXUALITY ISSUES

Many denominations have adopted formal theological statements about sexuality. Below are such statements from a range of religious denominations. Despite differences, they are remarkably similar in their understanding of the goodness of creation, our bodies, and our sexuality as well as the potential for misuse and abuse. The reader is encouraged to read the statements to gain insights into the broad theological support that affirms sexuality as a central, sacred part of human life as well as to understand the position of one's own tradition.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

"Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others."¹

Church of the Brethren, 1983

"Sexuality is elemental in human beings... This sexuality enriches human relationships in ways that are basic to God's own nature. Furthermore, it offers human beings partnership with God in holy creation and re-creation. In their enjoyment of these privileges concomitant with sexuality, God's people are to be responsible. The church identifies love and covenant as two guidelines for sexual responsibility."²

"Sexuality is God's good gift. It is a spoilable gift. Who among us does not regularly need God's grace to restore this gift that we have abused so that it again beautifies and deepens human relationships? These problems that arise for ourselves and our generation are to be faced and confessed, but this need not turn our attitude toward sexuality into a tangle of negatives. God's grace is real. Sexuality remains for us, as it was for *adham*, God's antidote for human loneliness and the answer to the human need to have a counterpart, to be one with someone, and to be in love."³

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1996

"Sexuality is a mysterious life-long aspect of human relationships. Through sexuality, human

beings can experience profound joy, purpose, and unity, as well as deep pain, frustration, and division. Human sexuality was created good for the purposes of expressing love and generating life, for mutual companionship and pleasure. Yet, it has been marred by sin, which alienates us from God and others. This results in expressions of sexuality that harm persons and communities."⁴

"Christians are called to: respect the integrity and dignity of all persons, whatever their age, gender, sexual orientation, or marital status; discern and provide guidance for what it means to live responsibly as sexual beings; support through prayer and counsel those facing questions about their sexuality; heal those who have been abused or violated, or whose relationships are broken."

Reconstructionist Judaism, 1993

"Jewish tradition speaks of sexuality as *simchat ona*: the joy of sex, and *simchat ishto*: rejoicing in one's partner... In Judaism, physical pleasure and sexual responsibility are inextricably

continued on page 12

linked. Jewish tradition has always regarded sexuality as a powerful force that needs self-regulation. The expression of sexuality must take place in light of the values and norms that shape its proper place in human life.”⁵

Reform Judaism, 1998

“Sexuality and sexual statement are integral and powerful elements in the potential wholeness of human beings. Our tradition commands us to sanctify the basic elements of the human being through values that express the Divine in every person and in every relationship. Every Jew should seek to conduct his/her sexual life in a manner that elicits the intrinsic holiness within the person and the relationship.”⁶

The Lutheran Church in America, 1970

“Human sexuality is a gift of God for the expression of love and the generation of life. As with every good gift, it is subject to abuses, which cause suffering and

debasement. In the expression of human sexuality, it is the integrity of our relationships, which determines the meaning of our actions. We do not merely have sexual relations; we demonstrate our true humanity in personal relationships, the most intimate of which are sexual.”⁷

Mennonite Church General Assembly, 1987

“We affirm that sexuality is a good and beautiful gift of God, a gift of identity, and a way of being in the world as male and female. We affirm that we can feel positive about our bodies and our sexuality because we are created in God’s image and know our Creator.”⁸

Seventh Day Adventists, 1998

“Sexuality is a loving gift of the Creator to humanity. The Gospel calls believers to an appreciation for and stewardship of their sexuality in harmony with the divine purposes.”⁹

The United Methodist Church, 1996

“We recognize that sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons. We believe persons may be fully human only when that gift is acknowledged and affirmed by themselves, the church, and society. We call all persons to the disciplined, responsible fulfillment of themselves, others, and society in the stewardship of this gift. We also recognize our limited understanding of this complex gift and encourage the medical, theological, and social science disciplines to combine in a determined effort to understand human sexuality more completely. We call the Church to take the leadership role in bringing together these disciplines to address this most complex issue. Further, within the context of our understanding of this gift of God, we recognize that God challenges us to find responsible, committed, and loving forms of expression.”¹⁰

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Three (The Life of Faith), Section 2, Article, 6, “The Sixth Commandment”, www.ziplink.net/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/kerygma/a.pl

² Church of the Brethren, Action of 1983 Annual Conference, “Human Sexuality From A Christian Perspective,” 1983, found at www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/human.htm

³ Church of the Brethren.

⁴ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “Sexuality: Some Common Convictions,” adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on November 9, 1996.

⁵ “Homosexuality and Judaism: The Reconstructionist Position—The Report of the Reconstructionist

Commission on Homosexuality,” 1993, p. 14 - 15.

⁶ Ad Hoc Committee on Human Sexuality, *Report to the CCAR Convention*, June 1998.

⁷ The Lutheran Church in America, “Social Statements,” adopted by the church’s Fifth Biennial Convention, June 25–July 2, 1970.

⁸ Adapted by Mennonite Church General Assembly, July 8, 1987, reported on Mennonite Connections on the web, August 1, 1997.

⁹ “What We Believe,” September 1998, found at www.adventist.org/pages/main_stat37.html

¹⁰ The United Methodist Church, “The Book of Discipline,” 1996, paragraph 65G, page 90, found at www.umc.org/abouttheumc/policy/nurturing/sexuality.htm

THE BUILDING BLOCKS

Faith communities must be truth seeking, courageous, and just.



A sexually healthy faith community is committed to fostering spiritual, sexual, and emotional health among the congregation and providing a safe environment where sexuality issues are addressed with respect, mutuality, and openness. The questions on this page will help you assess the sexual health of your faith community

ASSESSMENT

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SEXUALLY HEALTHY FAITH COMMUNITY

Does your faith community:

- Treat each person with dignity and worth and affirm relationships based on mutuality and respect?
- Offer an age-appropriate sexuality education program throughout the lifespan?
- Assure that clergy, religious educators, and lay professionals have training and supervision in sexuality issues?
- Support the family as the primary source of moral and sexual education?
- Offer pastoral counseling and support by trained counselors to those with sexuality issues?

- Utilize inclusive language in community celebration and worship, providing for the inclusion of males/females; different cultures; sexual minorities; and disabled persons?
- Welcome and affirm gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people as full participating members?
- Offer support groups on a wide range of sexuality issues?
- Recognize sexual justice as an important component of social justice and advocate at the local, national, and global level for sexual rights?
- Clearly articulate and post sexual harassment policies for clergy and congregants, adults and youth, and youth interactions?
- Actively support sexuality education in the local schools?
- Periodically address sexuality issues in worship and liturgy?
- Post information about community referral sources on sexuality issues and include resources on sexuality in the congregation library?

SEXUALLY HEALTHY RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

One of the most important building blocks for a sexually healthy congregation is a staff of sexually healthy religious professionals. Sexually healthy religious professionals—clergy, religious educators, and pastoral counselors—are comfortable with their own sexuality, have the skills to provide pastoral care and worship on sexuality issues, and are committed to sexual justice in the congregation and the society at large. The self-assessment on pages 15 to 16 identifies many of the characteristics and qualities of a sexually healthy religious professional.

Ideally, clergy and religious educators would have formal graduate level training in human sexuality. According to the Pan American Health Organization, professions that address sexuality issues should have certain basic training. This includes “basic knowledge of human sexuality, awareness of personal attitudes towards one’s own and other people’s sexuality which should include a respectful attitude towards persons with different sexual orientations and sexual practices, and basic skills in identifying, and if necessary, referring to the appropriate professional, problems of sexual health.” (Pan American Health Organization, 2001)

Unfortunately, few seminaries prepare their clergy to handle sexuality issues, and many

clergy provide sexuality counseling without the benefit of formal training. According to a review by the Center for Sexuality and Religion (CSR) of sexuality training offered by more than 400 religious and theological schools of higher education, there were almost no courses on sexuality and religion. Practicing clergy are aware that they were not trained adequately in seminary to address the sexuality concerns of their parishioners. In studies, 50 to 80 percent of clergy thought their training in pastoral counseling was inadequate to help them deal with marital issues. More than 80 percent of Protestant seminary students reported that they had had no hours in seminary covering family planning, and two thirds indicated a desire for more training on this topic. One study found that the most common problems clergy deal with in counseling involve marital difficulties and sexual dysfunction. (Conklin, 2000) Another found that although 94 percent of clergy offer premarital counseling, almost two thirds do not feel comfortable talking about sexuality in marriage (*Faith Matters*). Nearly half of all referrals made by clergy involve marriage and family problems.

Religious leaders are encouraged to use the self-assessment on pages 15 to 16 to identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan to address where they need help.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Characteristics of Sexually Healthy Religious Professionals

On a scale of "1" to "5" (with "5" being the highest possible score), rate yourself on these characteristics of a sexually healthy religious professional. Notice if one area needs strengthening and develop plans to address it.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Sexually healthy religious professionals:

- have examined their own personal sexual history.
- have explored their own sexual attitudes and confronted their own limitations and biases about sexuality.
- have listened to the attitudes of others about sexuality, which are different from their own.
- are knowledgeable about human sexuality, including sexual behaviors, sexual response, sexual and gender orientation, and relationships.
- undertake theological reflection regarding the integration of sexuality and spirituality.
- model ease and comfort in discussing sexual issues.
- interact with people of all genders and ages in respectful and appropriate ways.
- affirm their own sexual orientation and gender identity and respect the sexual orientation and gender identity of others.

- recognize and affirm family diversity.
- have personal relationships that express love and intimacy in ways congruent with their own values about sexuality.
- seek ongoing opportunities for education and information regarding sexuality.

Total

Score Range 11 to 55

A lower score in this area indicates the need for structured opportunities to explore personal attitudes and feelings about sexuality in one's own life and in others' lives. It may also be helpful to speak with colleagues, staff, trusted congregants, or advisory committee members about their perception of you in this area. A sexuality course for religious professionals or a graduate level course in human sexuality could prove helpful.

CONGREGATIONAL SKILLS

Sexually healthy religious professionals:

- have good individual, family, and couples counseling skills.
- recognize and respect their own personal limitations and boundaries for handling sexuality issues.

continued on page 16

- are familiar with sacred texts on sexuality and theological affirmations of sexuality and how to share them when appropriate in a counseling setting.
- know when and where to refer someone who has a sexual issue that they are not prepared to handle.
- use power justly and constructively and recognize the potential for abuse of power.
- understand that sexual feelings for congregants may arise (and vice versa) and know how to deal with them appropriately, including consulting with a supervisor or colleague.
- have examined the impact of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia in ministry.
- are knowledgeable about educational techniques, including how to present knowledge, help explore attitudes, and develop personal skills.
- have conflict management and mediation skills.
- are comfortable and skilled in preaching about sexuality-related issues, including knowledge of sacred texts.
- identify ethical dilemmas when they arise and seek help when needed.

Total

SCORE RANGE 11 to 55

A lower score in this area can be addressed by graduate-level courses in education or counseling or through supervision by a more experienced colleague. Every pastoral counselor

should have a local referral list of mental health professionals who are recommended as high quality marriage, family, and sex therapists. In addition, each clergy should have either a ministerial relations committee or a clergy network to which they can turn to for help with difficult situations involving power or ethics.

COMMUNITY AND DENOMINATIONAL SKILLS

Sexually healthy religious professionals:

- are knowledgeable about their denomination's policies on sexuality.
- are knowledgeable about their religion's sacred texts on sexuality.
- are knowledgeable about church history's teachings on sexuality.
- are skilled in community advocacy for sexual justice issues.
- challenge and work to change sex-negative values in the faith community and denomination.
- speak out regularly for sexual justice and seek opportunities to work in collaboration with others on these issues.

Total

SCORE RANGE 6 to 30

A lower score in this area indicates the need for research on both the denomination and sexuality issues. Throughout this guidebook, there are references to denominational policies and resources that may help. Many denominations are struggling with how to deal with sexuality issues; they need your leadership. The section on social action may also provide ideas.

WORSHIP AND PREACHING

People are often surprised to hear clergy preach about sexuality issues from the pulpit. In one survey, almost all clergy felt that sexuality issues could be addressed from the pulpit. (Margulis, 1998) Such discussion can help congregants understand that sexuality is a sacred gift; that sexuality can be talked about in a respectful and serious manner; that clergy are comfortable talking about sexuality issues (and therefore open to discussing these issues in pastoral counseling); and that there is a prophetic voice on sexual justice.

The **Religious Declaration** suggests numerous topics for worship and preaching. Services could include such themes as sexual justice, HIV/AIDS, sexuality education, parenting, reproductive health and choice, the changing family, and sexual orientation. Topics (or sermon titles) suggested by the **Religious Declaration** for sermons might include:

- Sexuality: God's Life Giving and Life Fulfilling Gift
- The Goodness of Creation and Our Bodies
- Love: The Foundation for Intimacy
- What Makes Sexuality Religious and Moral?
- Faithfully Celebrating Pleasure in Our Lives
- A Religious Duty: Stopping Violence Against Women and Sexual Minorities
- The Religious Challenge of HIV/AIDS
- Religious Stewardship of God's Creation: Population, Family Planning and the Environment
- An End to Sexual Exploitation and Commercialization
- What Does the Bible Really Teach About Families?
- Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, and Transgendered People in Society, in Our Congregation
- A Religious Responsibility: Sexuality Education in Our Congregation, in Our Schools
- The Faithful Search for Social and Sexual Justice
- Religious Choices about Reproductive Health
- Ancient Wisdom and New Reproductive Technologies
- Celebrating Sexuality with Holiness and Integrity



SCRIPTURE READINGS ON SEXUALITY

Partial list of texts for worship or Bible study

Genesis 1:27-28	2 Sam 1:26	John 4:16-30
Genesis 29-30	Isaiah 62:4-5	John 8
Genesis 2:18-24	Song of Solomon	Acts 8:26-39
Genesis 17:11-13	Ruth 1:1-18	Galatians 3, 5
Leviticus 17-26	Ecclesiastes 3:5	First Corinthians 7, 13
Deuteronomy 24:5	Matthew 19:12	Ephesians 5
Judges 11:37-39	Mark 3:31-34	1 John 2-4
1 Sam 18:1	Luke 7	

Special times during the year provide another opportunity for addressing these issues. This could include services near:

- January 22, the anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision on abortion
- February 14, Valentine's Day
- March, Women's History Month
- April, Child Abuse Awareness Month
- May, National Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Month
- Mother's Day or Father's Day (Sundays can become "wholly family services" which celebrate families of all kinds)
- June, Gay Pride Day
- August, Women's Suffrage Day
- October, National Family Life Education Month
- December 1, World AIDS Day

Clergy can integrate sexuality-related issues into their community's worship life. They might want to conduct candlelight remembrance services for people with HIV/AIDS as well as services for people who have had miscarriages or have been sexually abused. They may also want to include sexuality-related issues in classes that prepare youth for coming-of-age ceremonies. The congregation can offer celebrations of puberty; ceremonies for divorce, remarriage, and adoption; and services honoring those in middle age (some congregations have had "crone" services for women in menopause) or elders. Baptisms, namings, and dedications can celebrate new life, diverse families, and commitment to children.

Clergy have many hymns, songs, and responsive readings from which to choose in developing a service or program on sexuality-related issues. A Responsive Reading based on the **Religious Declaration** (available for reproduction and use without permission) is on page 19. There are also many scriptural texts that provide opportunities for exegesis on sexuality issues. The box on this page provides some Hebrew Bible and New Testament texts that may be appropriate for sermons on sexuality-related issues.



A RESPONSIVE READING BASED ON THE DECLARATION

Sexuality is God's life giving and life fulfilling gift.

We celebrate our sexuality as central to our humanity and as integral to our spirituality.

We suffer because of the pain, brokenness, oppression, and loss of meaning that too many experience about their sexuality.

We celebrate the goodness of creation, our bodies, and our sexuality.

We suffer when this sacred gift is abused or exploited.

We celebrate sexuality that expresses love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent, and pleasure.

We suffer because of discrimination against people because of sex, gender, color, age, bodily condition, marital status, or sexual orientation.

We celebrate when we are truth seeking, courageous, and just.

We suffer because of violence against women and sexual minorities, and the HIV pandemic.

We celebrate the full inclusion of women and sexual minorities in our congregation life.

We suffer because of unsustainable population growth and over-consumption, and the commercial exploitation of sexuality.

We celebrate those who challenge sexual oppression and who work for sexual justice.

Together: God rejoices when we celebrate our sexuality with holiness and integrity.



Clergy and other pastoral counselors must be prepared and skilled in handling the sexuality-related needs of their parishioners. This can include a wide range of issues, such as couples struggling with issues of sexual dysfunction, infidelity, or divorce; parishioners seeking support for the decision to come out as gay or lesbian; families dealing with teenage pregnancy or a gay child; and men and women trying to overcome a legacy of childhood physical and sexual abuse. Every clergy and chaplain can think of times that sexuality issues have been raised in their private offices.

The PLISSIT counseling model is one model that may prove useful for pastoral care providers. (Annon, 1974) It was developed almost 30 years ago for health care providers who are not psychiatrists, psychologists, or sex therapists but who address sexual needs and concerns in their work. PLISSIT is an acronym for Permission, Limited Information, Specific Suggestions, and Intensive Therapy.

PERMISSION GIVING means letting the congregant know that it is normal to have all sorts of sexual thoughts and feelings. Permission from clergy to enjoy and accept one's sexual feelings may prove quite powerful for those who have understood their sexual feelings as sinful, bad, or immoral. People can be counseled on the difference between having a sexual feeling

and acting upon it, and on the fact that a sexually healthy adult differentiates between sexual behaviors that are life enhancing and those that might be harmful to one's self or others. Permission giving is not the same as telling someone what to do. It is giving congregants an opportunity to talk about their feelings and their decisions about their sexual behaviors. The clergy's comfort in addressing sexuality issues from the pulpit may also give congregants permission to bring up these issues in counseling sessions.

Clergy are not expected to violate their own religious beliefs and give permission for behaviors that are counter to them; however, they do have an obligation to be honest with a congregant if their beliefs differ from the majority of sexuality professionals.

In cases of a parishioner revealing a history of sexual abuse, each state has different laws protecting the confidentiality of clergy/parishioner counseling sessions. As many as 14 states now require clergy to break a parishioner's confidence in order to prevent a serious crime or to report knowledge of child abuse. It is important to know the state law on these issues as to whether such disclosure must be reported. If the congregant reveals beliefs or practices that are harmful to themselves or others (and not just different from one's own), it is appropriate to point out the consequences of those beliefs and refer the

person to a professional who specializes in sexuality issues. (See Intensive Therapy below.)

LIMITED INFORMATION involves sharing with the parishioner information about the denomination's policies in the area of sexuality, scripture, or church history. Many people incorrectly assume, for example, that scripture teaches that sexuality is bad; pastoral counselors can share scriptural passages with parishioners that affirm sexuality as a positive part of life to use wisely. For example, gay men and lesbian women may be reassured to know that there is a welcoming movement in the denomination and to learn about resources on homosexuality and the Bible. Limited information may also mean providing some information about sexuality, such as anatomy or sexual response, but only if the counselor is knowledgeable about such areas.

Many people's concern about their sexuality are often summed up in one question: "Am I normal?" It is important that the congregant understand that the answers to these questions are highly variable and there is no "right answer." Individuals and couples must decide, alone or with their partner, what behaviors, what frequency, and what fantasies are acceptable to them, and whether their sexual decisions and behaviors are congruent with their own values. For every couple, it is appropriate to address such ethical issues as consent, mutuality, non-exploitation, honesty, protection, and pleasure when counseling about relationships.

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS means offering simple solutions to clients about common sexual problems. This is sometimes beyond the skills of most clergy and pastoral counselors, who might feel uncomfortable discussing the use of lubricants with middle-age couples or start-stop techniques for rapid ejaculation. Nevertheless, they can make specific suggestions to individuals and couples who are seeking more information. Pastoral care providers can recommend specific books or marriage workshops in the area. They can certainly suggest to couples

who say they have no time for sex that they set up specific dates or help couples struggling with frequency issues express their needs. They can address the anger and intimacy concerns that frequently appear as sexual desire problems. More directly, they can suggest specific scriptural or denomination policies for reading that may help alleviate a person's guilt and shame about sexuality that may impair sexual functioning and intimate relationships.

INTENSIVE THERAPY is beyond the scope of pastoral care and counseling, not only for sexuality issues but also for mood and anxiety disorders as well as mental illnesses. Pastoral care providers know that they need a well-developed referral network of mental health professionals and services in the community. Emergency procedures also need to be in place. It is important to include sexuality, marriage, and family counselors in that referral network. A list of national hotlines that deal with a wide range of sexuality issues is found in the box below. The American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists provides a list of certified sex counselors and therapists by state; they can be reached at www.aasect.org or 804-644-3288.



National Hotlines on Sexuality Issues

AIDS Hotline 800-342-AIDS
Centers for Disease Control Rape
Hotline 800-344-7432
Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-SAFE
Emergency Contraception Hotline 800-584-9911
Intersex Society of North America www.isna.org
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
800-230-7526
National Abortion Federation 800-772-9100
National Adoption Clearinghouse 301-231-6512
National Child Abuse Hotline 800-4A-Child
National Gay and Lesbian Hotline 888-843-4564
National Herpes Hotline 800-227-8922
Nutrition and Eating Disorders Hotline
800-366-1655 www.edreferral.com
National STD Hotline 800-227-8922
Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network
800-656-HOPE, www.rainn.org
Transgender support and referrals
www.gendertalk.com

EDUCATION FOR YOUTH

*We call for... sexuality education...
throughout the lifespan...*



Religious institutions have a unique role to play in reaching children and youth with sexuality information. After all, religious institutions serve more teens than any other organization in a community except for the public schools, and they are the only ones specifically empowered to offer values to children outside the home. More than eight in 10 teens say that religion is important in their lives, and more than half attend religious services weekly. (National Campaign, 2001) More than six in 10 of teens participate in a program at a church or synagogue at least once a week besides a worship service. (*Faith Matters*, 2002)

Participation in a religious setting may actually protect young people against premature involvement in sexual behaviors. In a review of more than 50 studies of the impact of religion on sexual behavior, Dr. Brian Wilcox and colleagues concluded “more frequent religious attendance is associated with later initiation of sexual intercourse for white males and for females across racial/ethnic groups... more conservative sexual attitudes and a decreased frequency of sexual intercourse.” (National Campaign, 2001) Sexually active African-American teenage girls who attend church frequently, pray, and partake in other religious activities are less likely to engage in sexually risky behaviors than their less religious peers. Religious teen females were 50 percent more likely to wait to have intercourse and 80 percent

more likely to use a condom the last time they had sex than their less religious peers. (Reuters, 2001) Teens are twice as likely to cite their “morals, values, and religious beliefs” as affecting their decision about whether to have intercourse than any other single factor. (National Campaign, 2001) In a study of more than 600 congregations, youth from those that include information about contraception as part of the religious education curriculum report virtually no instances of pregnancy. Almost all practicing Jewish youth who are having sexual intercourse use a contraceptive method. (*Faith Matters*, 2002)

Unfortunately, most studies also indicate “religious youth... were less likely to use contraception at first intercourse.” Disappointingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, only six percent of teens say that ministers, rabbis, or other religious leaders influence their decisions about sex. (National Campaign, 2001) Only 14 percent of clergy say that their congregation offers a reasonably comprehensive approach to sexuality education, while 37 percent say the congregation does almost nothing. Fewer than one in six religious youth say that their faith-based institution offer them significant information on birth control, STD prevention, HIV prevention, rape, or homosexuality. (*Faith Matters*, 2002)

Teens and clergy disagree about the sexuality education that is offered. Although 73 percent

of clergy said that their congregation portrays sexuality in a positive and healthy way, only 46 percent of the teens in those same congregations agreed. And while clergy and religious advisors rate their sexuality education programs as fair to good, youth in these programs rate them as poor. (*Faith Matters*, 2002)

The good news is that three quarters of adults and teens believe that churches and other faith communities should do more to help prevent teen pregnancy. (National Campaign, 2001) Many denominations *have* made a commitment to sexuality education for young people. Several have passed policies that encourage their congregations to include sexuality education in the religious education program. These include:

- American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- Central Conference of American Rabbis
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Episcopal Church
- Mennonite Church
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Unitarian Universalist Association
- United Church of Christ
- United Methodist Church
- United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

Indeed, more than 30 years ago, the National Council of Churches, Commission on Marriage and Family, the Synagogue Council of America's Committee on Family, and the United States Catholic Conference called upon churches and synagogues to become actively involved in sexuality education within their congregations and their communities.

Many denominations have produced sexuality education curricula; the majority are aimed at adolescents. Many are easily adaptable for other faith communities. There are also national organizations that have produced curricula for use in an interfaith setting. (See the box on pages 24 to 25 for a list of religious sexuality education curricula.) The leaders of sexuality education programs need specialized training in teaching the

curricula and responding to the sexuality needs of young people. Several of the denominations provide specialized training along with their curricula. If such training is not available, consider using volunteers from within the congregation who already have professional backgrounds and experience working with young people: health educators, teachers, psychologists, and social workers, among others.

Sexuality education programs for young people should always include a parent/grandparent component. Make sure that there is a session for parents and guardians where they can review the curriculum, meet the group leaders, view the audio-visuals, and have their questions answered. Programs that regularly include homework assignments for children and parents have been found to increase parent/child communication about sexuality. Most programs recommend having parents sign permission slips before the program begins.

It may be that adopting a comprehensive sexuality education program, kindergarten through high school, is not yet possible for the congregation. Still, there are less intensive activities that the congregation can offer to support the sexual health and development of youth. Consider:

- Using an outside consultant periodically from the health department, local AIDS organization, or local Planned Parenthood to speak with the youth group about sexuality issues.
- Facilitating youth group members' participation in community activities that relate to sexuality issues. For example, young people can volunteer at a family planning clinic, AIDS organization, children's hospital, adoption agency, or hotline for young people.
- Providing support groups for young people, including groups for those whose parents are going through divorce or dealing with sexual orientation issues, with eating disorders and

body image issues. Make certain that leaders of “drop in” programs have experience and training handling teen sexuality issues.

- Including pamphlets about sexual health services in the youth center space and hanging posters for young people from such organizations as the National AIDS Clearinghouse, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, and Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).
- Training members of the high school youth group to provide education about peer pressure on dating, drugs, drinking, and sex to the middle school students and pre-adolescents. Modeling safe behaviors will benefit both groups.
- Having movie nights with such themes as relationships, adolescence, marriage, friendships, and sexual orientation. Consider making them intergenerational evenings and facilitating a discussion afterwards with youth and adults.
- Providing small group sessions or worship services for high school and middle school youth that focus on such issues as body image, peer pressure, relationships with parents, and friendships. Give young people an opportunity to talk among themselves and with trained leaders about the pressures they face.
- Providing a Bible study group for teens that focuses on stories with sexual themes and lessons.
- Offering programs for parents and middle school students on adjusting to the challenges of puberty and adolescence, as well as maintaining communication through the teen years.
- Working with youth ministers and religious educators from other congregations to develop community programming.
- Opening youth programming at the church to youth in the surrounding community.



SEXUALITY EDUCATION CURRICULA FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES

PRE-SCHOOL In God's Image

Janet Neff Brewer

A program for parents and their children ages three through five. (Presbyterian) 1998; *Children's Book*, \$14.95; *Guide for Parents*, \$7.95; *Guide for Congregations*, \$6.95; *Presbyterian Distribution Service*, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396; Phone: 800-524-2612; Fax: 502-569-8030; Web site: <www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub>

ELEMENTARY Benziger Family Life Program: Grades K–8 Third Edition

Curricula including teachers' and students' guides for each grade level, kindergarten through eighth grade. They also have an implementation manual and a video for parents. Call for exact prices. (Catholic) *Glencoe/McGraw-Hill*, P.O. Box 543, Blacklick, OH 43004-9902; Phone: 800-334-7344; Fax: 614-860-1877; Web site: <www.glencoe.com/benziger>

Created by God: About Human Sexuality for Older Girls and Boys

Dorlis Brown Glass

A six-session curriculum for older elementary school children. (United Methodist) 1999; *Leader's Guide*, \$6.95; *Student Book*, \$3.50; *Cokesbury*, 201 Eighth Avenue South, P.O. Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202-0801; Phone: 800-672-1789; Fax: 800-445-8189; Web site: <www.cokesbury.org>

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Ages 5–8 Kathryn Goering Reid Ages 9–12

Kathryn Goering Reid with Marie M. Fortune

These two curricula provide information about sexual abuse and prevention. (UCC) 1994, *Ages five through eight*, \$9.95; 1989, *Ages nine through 12*, \$11.95; *United Church Press*, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100; Phone: 800-537-3394; Fax 216-736-3713; Website: <www.ucc.org>



MIDDLE SCHOOL/ HIGH SCHOOL

Dating: The Art of Respect

Debbie Eisenbise and Lee Krahenbuhl

A middle school and high school curricula. (Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite Church) 1998; \$14.95; *Faith & Life Resources*, P.O. Box 347, Newton, KS 67114; Phone: 800-743-2484; Fax: 316-283-0454; Website: <www2.southwind.net/~gcmc/flp>

God's Gift of Sex

Carol Duerksen

A seven-session course for teenagers. (Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite Church) 1998; \$13.95; *Faith & Life Resources*, P.O. Box 347, Newton, KS 67114; Phone: 800-743-2484; Fax: 316-283-0454; Website: <www2.southwind.net/~gcmc/flp>

In God's Image: Male and Female

Patricia Martens Miller

A human sexuality program for grades five through eight. Teacher's manuals, videos, student and parent worksheets, and additional materials are available for each grade. (Catholic) 1989; *Teacher Manual*, \$10.00, each manual; Call for pricing of additional materials; Flannery Company, 13123 Arrowspace Drive, Victorville, CA 92394; Phone: 800-456-3400; Fax: 800-284-5600.

Keeping It Real: A Faith-Based Model for Teen Dialog on Sex and Sexuality.

A seven-session program for teenagers developed by The Black Church Initiative of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. It consists of a facilitator's guide and a teen activity book. 2000; *Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice*, 1025 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 1130, Washington, DC 20005; Phone: 202-628-7700; Website: <www.rccr.org>

Let's Be Real: Honest Discussions About Faith and Sexuality

Duane A. Ewers and M. Stevens Games, Editors

This non-denominational Christian curriculum is designed for adolescents in middle school and high school. It consists of six sessions that discuss anatomy, decision-making, relationships, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, as well as media and culture. A parent resource is included. 1998; \$20.00; Abingdon Press, 201 Eighth Avenue South, P.O. Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202-0801; Phone: 800-251-3320; Fax: 800-836-7802; Website: <www.abingdon.org>

Love—All That and More

A program for high school and college youth, it includes a six-session curriculum and three videos as well as separate facilitators' guides for Jewish and Christian youth. 2000, \$285, *Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence*, 2400 N. 45th Street, Suite 10, Seattle, WA, 98103, Phone: 206-634-1903, Website: <www.cpsdv.org>

A Course of Study for Teenagers

Revised and Updated

Rebecca Voelkel-Haugen and Marie M. Fortune

This curriculum for teenagers covers sexual abuse and harassment. (UCC) 1996; \$8.95; *United Church Press*, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100; Phone: 800-537-3394; Fax 216-736-3713; Website: <www.ucc.org>

Some Body! Fast Lane Bible Studies for Junior High Youth

Steve Ropp

A middle school curriculum. (Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite Church) 1998; \$9.99; *Faith & Life Resources*, P.O. Box 347, Newton, KS 67114; Phone: 800-743-2484; Fax: 316-283-0454; Website: <www2.southwind.net/~gcmc/flp>

True Love Waits 2001: Pure Joy:

God's Formula

An abstinence-only-until-marriage campaign for teenagers and college students. (Southern Baptist) 2001; \$4.95 *Lifeway Christian Resource*, Customer Service Department, P.O. Box 113, Nashville, TN 37202-0113; Phone: 800-458-2772; Fax: 615-251-5933; Website: <www.lifeway.comstores>

LIFESPAN/ADULT EDUCATION

Created in God's Image: A Human Sexuality Program for Ministry and Mission

Overview: Faith A. Johnson and Gordon J. Svoboda, II

Leader's Manual: Eleanor S. Morrison and Melanie Morrison

Participant's Book: Melanie Morrison and Eleanor S. Morrison

A Manual for Ministry in the Congregation: Mary Ellen Haines and Bill Stackhouse

This program is written for college students and adults. (UCC) 1993; Available with training, contact Ann Hanson for more information, 216-736-3282; Division of the American Missionary Association, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1110.

Our Whole Lives (OWL): A Lifespan Sexuality Education Series

OWL is a comprehensive lifespan sexuality education series developed jointly by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ Board for Homeland Ministries. The series includes OWL Grades K through 1, OWL Grades 4 through 6, OWL Grades 7 through 9, OWL Grades 10 through 12, OWL Adults, a parent guide, advocacy manual, and accompanying guides on OWL and faith for each grade level. Information about the program is available at the web site of the Unitarian Universalist Association. (Unitarian Universalist Association and United Church of Christ) Call for prices for each level. Unitarian Universalist Association, UUA Bookstore, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108; Phone: 800-215-9076; Fax: 617-723-4805; Website: <www.uua.org>

ADULT EDUCATION

Sexuality education is a lifelong process. Our needs for education and information about sexuality change throughout our life. A single 25 year old has different sexuality needs than a 50 year old who is recently divorced and dating again. A couple who has been married or partnered for 25 years has different needs than a new couple considering a commitment ceremony. Seniors have needs for different information than those in midlife or those in young adulthood. People with small children have different needs than those whose children have returned to live at home after college.

Current life situation is not the only factor affecting our adult experience of our sexuality. Many adults have experienced brokenness and suffering about their sexuality, often for decades. Survivors of childhood sexual abuse carry issues into their adult lives; for example, 20 percent of women who have been forced to have sex report that they are depressed compared to 12 percent of women who have not. (Laumann, 1994) Many adults struggle with issues related to their sexual orientation or the orientation of their children and spouses. Many of our congregants live in marriages that are experiencing sexual difficulty; estimates are that as many as four in 10 couples experience sexual dysfunction and four percent are no longer having sexual relations. (Laumann, 1994) Unfortunately, most congregations are silent on

these issues, while the people in the pews struggle alone, often without the support of their faith community. But some congregations do offer both formalized sexuality education to their adult parishioners as part of their adult education programs as well as support groups on a variety of sexuality topics.



THE BLACK CHURCH INITIATIVE

In 1997, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice launched The Black Church Initiative to “break the silence” about sex and sexuality in African-American churches. The initiative “assists African American clergy and laity to address teenage pregnancy, sexuality education, and reproductive health within the context of African American religion and culture.” It holds an annual National Black Religious Summit on Sexuality, hosts the African-American Clearinghouse on Sexuality, and has developed two sexuality education curricula, one for adults and one for teenagers. To learn more about how to involve a congregation, write the Black Church Initiative, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, 1025 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 1130, Washington, DC 20005, www.rcrc.org.

There are few denomination resources on adult sexuality education. The Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries have jointly published a sexuality education curriculum for adults. The 12 sessions cover values, communication, sexuality and spirituality, sexual attraction, relationships, love, diversity, family issues, aging, and sexual health. The sessions can be completed in a workshop setting or at a weekend retreat. The framework could easily be adapted for use in other denominations. The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice has published a nine-week sexuality education program, *Breaking the Silence*, for adults in African-American churches. Its focus is on helping adults work with youth on sexuality issues, but it also includes sessions to “engage African American

congregations in a biblical theological and ethnological exploration of human sexuality.” Both of these programs might provide a template for the development of an adult education program in a wide range of congregations.

Many congregations have found that an easy and non-controversial way to begin talking about sexuality in a congregation is to host programs for parents on talking about sexuality with their children. More than eight in 10 parents believe it is their job to provide sexuality education to their children, yet few actually do so beyond a single talk in early adolescence. (Haffner, 2001) Consider inviting a local sexuality educator with experience in parenting programs to co-lead the group with a religious educator. A single session course could cover communication with



A CORE LIBRARY ON SEXUALITY AND RELIGION, SCRIPTURE, AND THEOLOGY

- D. Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (California: University of California Press, 1997).
- K. B. Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: Womanist Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999).
- M. Ellison, *Erotic Justice: A Liberating Ethic of Sexuality* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).
- M. Fortune, *Does No Harm: Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us* (Virginia: Continuum International, 1998).
- C. Heyward, *Touching Our Strength* (California: Harper and Row, 1989).
- P. Jung, M. Hunt, and R. Balakrishnan, *Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives From the World's Religions* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001).
- K. Lebacqz and D. Sinacore-Guinn, *Sexuality: A Reader* (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1999).
- J. Nelson, *Body Theology* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992).
- E. Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).
- W. E. Phipps, *The Sexuality of Jesus* (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1996).

children about sexuality; a multi-session course would cover child sexual development at each stage, parent values, teachable moments, opportunities to talk about faith and sexuality, and communication tips.

Discussion groups about sexuality issues provide another opportunity for adult sexuality education. This could include book groups, which might discuss one of the non-fiction books listed on page 27 or fiction that deals with sexuality and religion, such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Film groups could view and discuss such videos as *The Last Temptation of Christ* or *Boys Don't Cry*. Consider holding a study group on the **Religious Declaration**. A possible list of questions is found in the box on page 29.

Hosting support groups on a variety of topics is a helpful way to address the particular sexuality needs of congregants. A minister, social worker, or psychologist in the congregation can facilitate support groups. Self-help groups can also prove effective: these have no leader but are co-facilitated by people in the group who share the issue in their lives. In the case of a self-help group, the minister, rabbi, or congregation coordinator identifies a time for the meeting, one or two people to facilitate the group, and a place and time, and then posts the announcement in the newsletter or bulletin. The group then runs on its own.

There is also an informal sexuality education that takes place in every congregation. Start by thinking about the gender, age, family formation, and sexual orientation of the clergy, director of religious education, the president of the board, the board of trustees, and the Sunday school teachers. Is there gender diversity? Age diversity? Family diversity? Whether one gender, age, or marital status dominates certain types of positions or whether there is diversity sends a subtle message about sexuality. Is there a way the leadership of the congregation can become more inclusive and diverse?

Congregations can also more directly provide information about sexuality and local sexual health services. Pamphlets about such topics as contraception, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual orientation can be in the pamphlet racks in the foyer or social hall. Make certain that there are pamphlets from community organizations that provide sexual health services. Be sure that there are books on sexuality and spirituality in the congregation library. (See the Box on page 27 for a core library of books on sexuality and religion.) The congregation can also sponsor an annual health fair for members of the congregation that includes community-based sexuality services, such as HIV testing and counseling centers, family planning clinics, adoption agencies, sex therapists, and marriage and family counseling.



IDEAS FOR SUPPORT GROUPS ON SEXUALITY ISSUES

- Single adult group or one for each age group (singles 25-35, 35-55, over 55)
- Divorce group
- Survivors of sexual abuse
- Marriage preparation groups
- Marriage/relationship enrichment groups
- Engaged couples
- HIV-positive groups
- Parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgendered children
- Gay and lesbian support groups
- Parents as sexuality educators



STUDY GROUP ON THE RELIGIOUS DECLARATION

Consider holding an adult education study group on the Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing. Develop a list of questions that your group might use, or adapt the following questions for the group to consider:

What does it mean that sexuality is one of God's most life-giving and life-affirming gifts?

How has sexuality been a blessing in your life? How have you experienced your sexuality as broken? How have you experienced it as healing?

Does the sexual ethic presented in the **Religious Declaration** make sense to you for your own life? How would it need to be modified to become a personal ethic?

The **Religious Declaration** identifies violence against women and sexual minorities, the HIV pandemic, unsustainable population growth and over-consumption, and the commercial exploitation of sexuality as places where sexuality has caused massive suffering. Decide as a group which of these topics to study in greater depth or have each group member choose a topic to research and present. What are the religious and spiritual issues present? Should your faith community address these issues? What could you do?

What are your denomination's positions and policies on sexuality issues? Sexual orientation? Sexuality education? Sexual harassment? HIV/AIDS? Abortion? Find and read the statements together. Do you agree with them? Do they go far enough or do they go too far? Is the position or policy reflected in your community life?

React to this sentence from a report on sexuality from the Episcopal Church.

Biblical views about sexuality are thoroughly enmeshed in cultural and historical circumstances and describe some considerable diversity of practice. Polygamy, for example, is not only known but at times presented as quite acceptable. Women and children are virtually or actually treated as property in highly patriarchal cultures... Sexual mores are governed or influenced by various taboos and concerns about ritual purity which are believed to be important, sometimes for health reasons, and also in order not to confuse lines of inheritance and the bloodlines of clan and group. Procreation and the continuation of the people are, understandably, important concerns.

How does this affect your view of sexuality in the Bible? How does it affect your understanding of what scripture teaches about sexuality for us today?

1 John 4:19 says: "We love because God first loved us." What are the different types of love in our lives? What role does romantic and sexual love play? Can sexuality be integrated into our love of God?

In 1 Corinthians (6:19), Paul says that the body is a temple. What are our obligations to take care of all the parts of the body, including the sexual parts? What responsibility does society have to see that that is possible?

Consider this quotation from Rabbi Elliot Dorff about why God created Adam before Eve:

The reason seems to be that God wanted the first person to experience, not just to imagine, what it is like to have everything but nobody. After Adam had experienced the pain of aloneness, only then would he be ready to appreciate the need for companionship and interdependence as the essential path of personal fulfillment. For him, and for us, his descendants, this is the human norm. (Dorff, 1996)

Reread Genesis 2. Do you agree that God created man and woman to give each other companionship and pleasure?

Discuss what you think the purpose of sex is. Consider this quote:

If sex is not exclusively, primarily, or necessarily for procreative purposes... then what is it for? If it is for pleasure and/or relational purposes, how can this be articulated in different moral contexts in ways that are women friendly, safe, religiously faithful, and culturally appropriate across a range of traditions. (Jung, 2001)

Does age matter? Marital status? Sexual orientation? Gender orientation?

What is our responsibility as a community to become involved in sexual justice issues? Is sexual justice only a social action issue or does it have meaning for our life in the faith community?

WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATIONS

We call for... full inclusion of women and sexual minorities in congregational life, including their ordination and the blessing of same-sex unions.



*I*t is easy to forget that less than 30 years ago, many denominations were embroiled in debates about whether women could be ordained clergy. Although some denominations have ordained women for more than 100 years, many began doing so only in the recent past. The first Episcopal women were ordained in the mid 1970s; the Presbyterians first ordained women in 1965; today, nearly all mainline Protestant denominations ordain women. The first Reform and Reconstructionist women rabbis were ordained in the early 1970s. The first Conservative women rabbis were ordained in 1985.

For many denominations, the controversies around ordination have now largely shifted to gay, lesbian, and bisexual clergy, and, for a few denominations, transgendered clergy. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) voted to “lend full assistance to the settlement of openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual religious leaders” in 1980 and ordained their first transgendered clergy in 2000. The United Church of Christ (UCC) passed a policy that “affirms, celebrates, and embraces the gift of ministry of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons” in 1991. The United Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches has been dedicated to providing a religious home for people who are sexual minorities since its founding in 1968.

Nearly every mainstream denomination has produced reports on sexual orientation during

the past 20 years. Policies range from the “hate the sin and love to the sinner” views of such denominations as the Southern Baptist Convention and the Roman Catholic Church to the pastoral policies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the full affirmation and acceptance as demonstrated by the national policies and programs of the UCC and the UUA.

Some denominations support the civil rights of gays and lesbians and condemn violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, many are now currently studying and debating ordination and commitment ceremonies. These include the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Episcopal Church.

Reform and Reconstructionist branches of Judaism welcome gay and lesbian members into their communities and ordain them as rabbis. The Central Conference of American Rabbis voted to perform same-sex union ceremonies in March 2000.

But the reality is that many gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) members do not feel welcome in all types of faith-based communities. In extreme cases, GLBT people and their families have been told they are not welcome or face overt discrimination; in others, homophobia is much more subtle. Even congregations that have voted to become open and affirming may

hesitate, for example, to call an openly gay clergy person or religious educator.

A sexually healthy faith community welcomes all and includes the concerns of GLBT people “at every level of congregational life—in worship, in program, and in social occasions. It welcomes not only their presence but the unique gifts and particularities of their lives as well.” (Alexander, 1995) There are many ways that a congregation can demonstrate its commitment to being a sexually inclusive congregation. Use the Assessment on this page to determine how welcoming the congregation is to GLBT individuals. Identify the areas of strength and those that are easily addressed—and those that will require more discussion and education.

Many faith communities have found it helpful to develop a committee to begin to educate the congregation on issues related to sexual orientation before broaching the possibility of changing policies and procedures. Sessions where people can examine their own attitudes as well as obtain information about sexual orientation and homophobia are often helpful. The Reconciling Congregation Program of the United Methodist Church has published a seven-session adult education program called “Claiming the Promise: An Ecumenical Welcoming Bible Study Resources on Homosexuality” (www.rmnetwork.org) that might provide a helpful template for a curriculum.

Use the resources from the denomination and allied organizations on how to become a welcoming and affirming congregation. Learn the denomination’s policies on sexual orientation, ordination, and same-sex unions. Almost every denomination now has an organization that is working for full inclusion of GLBT people in congregational life. They are listed on page 38. In addition, five U.S. denominations jointly publish a magazine for welcoming and affirming congregations. *OPEN HANDS* is published quarterly; a subscription is \$20. (Subscribe online at www.rmnetwork.org/openhands)

ASSESSMENT

Characteristics of a Sexually Inclusive Congregation

- Does worship include diverse family forms and orientations in its language and content—where “spouses and life partners,” for example, are used in place of “husbands and wives” or where one says “marriages and committed relationships?”
- Do the bylaws and hiring practices explicitly state that no one is to be denied employment or recognition on the basis of sexual and gender orientation?
- Is there the possibility of commitment celebrations or same-sex union ceremonies as well as memorial services for GLBT persons and their partners and families?
- Are same-sex couples welcomed to share their lives and stories during worship or programs for adults?
- Does the social action committee work to end discrimination of GLBT persons in the community, state, and nation?
- Is there an opportunity for dialogue between GLBT persons and heterosexual members of the community?
- Does the religious education program for youth address sexual orientation, beginning with an appreciation of family diversity in the primary grades and expanding to full inclusion in programs for high school youth?
- Does the community regularly celebrate GLBT issues and history, such as Gay Pride Day or National Coming Out Day?
- Are there support groups for GLBT persons and families with GLBT members?
- Are GLBT persons and the commitment to sexual inclusiveness explicitly mentioned in the congregation’s brochure and newsletters?
- Does the congregation have relationships with local GLBT organizations for referrals and support of members?
- Does the congregation seek new members from the GLBT community through outreach to that community, including notices in targeted media?
- Do clergy and laity from the congregation advocate at the denominational level for full inclusion of GLBT persons?

SAFE CONGREGATIONS

*I*n too many congregations, people have had their sexuality broken by the very people who minister to them. Tens of thousands of women, men and children have experienced such violation by a trusted religious leader in congregations of almost every denomination.

According to the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, “civil court judgments against congregations and denominations have cost millions of dollars since the mid-1980s.” (www.cpsdv.org) In the spring of 2002, as this guide was written, there were financial settlements of over \$100 million to victims of clergy sexual abuse. Sexual contact between clergy and a parishioner or between a pastoral counselor and a client or between a youth advisor and a teenager is a clear violation of professional ethics.

At a minimum, a sexually healthy faith community should have written policies on sexual harassment and the prevention of abusive relationships between ministerial and religious education staff and those parishioners to whom they minister. There needs to be a clear statement that sexual contact by clergy, pastoral care providers, religious educators, and youth leaders with parishioners/youth in a professional relationship is not only inappropriate but also actionable. There should be a written policy on how to handle complaints at the local through the denominational level as well as on the services available to the victim and

the clergy. Congregations should be aware of denominational or professional resources that are available to help the congregation in the event of a sexual abuse case. These policies should be reviewed annually and shared with the congregation through newsletters, bulletins, and annual reports.

Screening for all volunteers and paid staff who work with children and youth as well as developmentally disabled adults is also important. The sad fact is that many people who are pedophiles seek work and volunteer opportunities to gain access to children. Many congregations conduct interviews and background checks, including police checks, on all people who work with vulnerable populations. The application form for both volunteers and paid staff can ask if the person has ever used a different name as well as for several years of home and employer addresses. It can also specifically ask such difficult questions as “Have you ever been convicted on any crimes against a person, including rape, incest, sexual exploitation of a minor, sexual or physical assault of a minor?” Such questions and knowing that a police check will occur will likely deter many inappropriate applicants.

Congregations can provide an annual training workshop on issues, policies, and procedures relevant to sexual/physical abuse. They can then ask volunteers and staff to sign a covenant that

they will abide by church guidelines forbidding sexual contact or inappropriate verbal exchanges as well as requirements on disclosing abuse to the minister or designated board person. Knowing the law in the state about reporting suspected child physical and sexual abuse is essential; having at least a referral agreement/relationship with the domestic violence and sexual assault programs in the area is also critical.

Clergy and pastoral care providers also need training to respond to both victims and offenders who come to them for help. When they seek help for past abuse, many people will turn to their minister, priest, or rabbi. According to the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, “an informed, compassionate pastor, priest, rabbi, or religious leader can contribute to the healing process of a victim of battering, child abuse, or rape” and sexual abuse and assault.

Every congregation needs education about sexual harassment and a commitment to being a faith community where sexual harassment does not occur. Although sexual harassment is often only thought of as “quid pro quo harassment”—to get a promotion, keep a job, or obtain a valued volunteer assignment sexual favors must be offered—it is often actually much more subtle. Unwanted sexual conduct also includes repeated sexual advances, any touching of a sexual nature, graffiti of a sexual nature, sexually offensive gestures, pressure for sexual favors, unwanted sexual jokes, and talking about one’s sexual activity or the sexual activity of others in public. Teens clearly need education about sexual harassment. They also need to understand that it will not be tolerated in youth group activities. However, it is a mistake to think that only teens harass each other; a clear statement about avoiding such behaviors and a commitment to a sexually safe congregation is also helpful for adult members. Religious educators, both staff and volunteers, also need this education. Again, the congregation should have a clearly stated grievance procedure for handling complaints of sexual harassment.

In addition, congregations should consider having a clearly stated policy for teen sexual behaviors. Most youth groups do little more than discourage what young people call “PDA,” public demonstrations of affection. Yet, such inexplicit pronouncements do not really educate young people. Is handholding allowed? Kissing? Arms around each other? What will happen to young people who go to a retreat and are found engaging in sexual activity? Will some activities be forgiven but others punished? A frank, honest discussion each year with the youth group to help them develop standards of behavior to post and share is another sign of the community’s commitment to sexual health.

Two excellent resources for congregations are *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, produced by the United Methodist Church, and *Creating Safe Congregations: Toward An Ethic of Right Relations*, produced by the Unitarian Universalist Association.



The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence is the premier organization working with religious communities to address issues of sexual and domestic violence. Founded in 1977, its goal is to “engage religious leaders in the task of ending abuse.” They offer award-winning videos, books, curricula, a web site, and training programs and seminars. Their clearinghouse on religion and abuse can refer victims to sources of counseling in a local area or to specific denominational resources. For more information, contact them at 2400 N. 45th Street, Suite 10, Seattle, WA 98103, 206-634-1903, www.cpsdv.org

SOCIAL ACTION

Almost all faith communities have strong traditions of community service and involvement in social action. The **Religious Declaration** calls on faith communities to offer prophetic witness for sexual justice in the society as a whole; this could include advocating for sexuality education in schools and community agencies; working for access to sexual and reproductive health services; and helping to end discrimination and violence against persons who are sexual minorities.

According to the Park Ridge Center for Health, Faith, and Ethics, “religious participation in public forums on sexuality and gender roles will continue and will likely increase in coming years.” They point to the involvement of organized religious groups at international conferences such as the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, and the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994. They note, “Recent public debates in the United States over abortion, the state of the modern family, and sexual lifestyles have featured pointed comment from religious quarters.” They acknowledge “some observers now predict schisms over homosexuality in certain moderate and liberal American Protestant denominations, the significance of which would recall debates during the Civil Rights era and splits over slavery around the time of the Civil War.” (Green, 2001)

Faith communities must also advocate for sexual and spiritual wholeness in society.

We call for:

- *Lifelong, age appropriate sexuality education in schools, seminaries, and community settings.*
- *A faith-based commitment to sexual and reproductive rights, including access to voluntary contraception, abortion, and HIV/STD prevention and treatment.*
- *Religious leadership in movements to end sexual and social injustice.*



Involvement in social action on sexual justice issues can help the congregation:

- Demonstrate support for all people in the community, not just the people in the congregation.
- Make visible the congregation’s commitment to sexual justice.
- Increase the congregation’s visibility and influence in the community.
- Provide an opportunity to work with other like-minded faith communities.
- Engage individual member involvement in the community.
- Provide a forum for community wide partnerships.

Perhaps most importantly, involvement in social action on behalf of sexual justice provides a visible demonstration that there are many religious points of view on sexuality issues.

Too often, only the viewpoints of the Religious Right are present in community controversies on sexuality issues. The media often only includes this point of view in discussions of such issues as the morality of abortion, gay rights, and sexuality education, pitting a religious voice from the Religious Right against a secular voice from the mainstream.

Active involvement by clergy who support sexual justice is essential to assuring that all religious voices are heard and considered. So is the involvement of the laity in these issues. Many conservative faith communities have active and visible public roles when such issues as sexuality education, sexual rights for sexual minorities, and reproductive choice are debated. But mainstream and progressive congregation members are often not present in equal numbers.

Begin by researching the denomination's policies on sexuality issues. Many denominations have developed policies on reproductive choice, sexuality education, HIV/AIDS, and sexual orientation. Depending on the denomination's position on polity, these positions may be binding on the congregation or there may be an opportunity to ratify or modify them for your denomination. Consider using the bulletin or newsletter to reprint these positions for your members. Consider bringing these issues to a congregational vote, if appropriate.

Some congregations have chosen to vote to endorse the **Religious Declaration** as a sign of their commitment to sexual justice and health. It then becomes the congregation's value statement on sexuality issues. Copies can be posted on bulletin boards, inserted into congregational handbooks, periodically run in the bulletin or newsletter, or given to new members. Posters of the **Religious Declaration**, suitable for framing, can be ordered from the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing.

The social action committee can conduct a variety of activities in support of sexual justice.

They can:

- Conduct letter writing campaigns on behalf of legislation that is pending at the local, state, or national level on these issues.
- Hold community forums on emerging issues.
- Participate in school board meetings, state legislative hearings, community rallies, and the like.
- Develop a bulletin board on sexual justice issues in the foyer or meeting room.
- Encourage the clergy to appear on the electronic media, speaking on behalf of a progressive religious view on sexuality.
- Write op ed pieces for the local newspaper or cable station.

Staying up to date on emerging sexual justice issues is time-consuming, but there are national organizations, web sites, and list serves that can help you.

- Planned Parenthood Federation of America has a network called "Clergy Voices" that sends its members a regular newsletter and periodic updates and action alerts.
- The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice has a biweekly online newsletter.
- People for the American Way has a clergy network and periodically sends out e-mail alerts.
- The Interfaith Working Group Online has an excellent bimonthly online newsletter on sexual orientation issues.
- For a daily news summary of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS issues, subscribe to the *Kaiser Family Foundation Daily Reports*, www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm

See the Resource List on pages 37 to 38 for more information.



DENOMINATIONS SUPPORT SEXUAL JUSTICE

Sexuality Education

The following denominational bodies have policies supporting sexuality education in the schools:

- Central Conference of American Rabbis
- Church of the Brethren
- Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Unitarian Universalist Association
- United Church of Christ
- United Methodist Church.

Other religious organizations that support sexuality education include:

- National Council of Churches of Christ, Office of Family Ministries
- Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing
- American Jewish Congress, Commission on Women's Equality
- B'nai Brith
- Central Conference of American Rabbis
- Jewish Women International
- Women's Christian Association of the United States

Reproductive Choice

The following denominational bodies are members of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice:

- United Methodist Church
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- United Church of Christ
- The Episcopal Church
- Moravian Church in America
- United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
- Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot
- Union of American Hebrew Congregations
- Unitarian Universalist Association
- American Humanist Association
- American Ethical Union

Other religious organizations that support reproductive choice include:

- American Baptist Witness for Choice
- Catholics for a Free Choice
- Disciples for Choice
- Lutheran Women's Caucus
- Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options
- American Jewish Committee
- American Jewish Congress

Rights of Sexual Minorities

The following denominations have policies that support full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) persons, including ordination and same-sex unions.

- Unitarian Universalist Association
- United Church of Christ
- Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

The following religious groups, while they may not be sponsored by their denomination, are working for sexual justice for GLBT persons.

- Brethren/Mennonite Council for Lesbian and Gay Concerns
- Dignity U.S.A (Catholic)
- Evangelicals Concerned
- GALA (Community of Christ – formerly Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)
- Gay Lesbian + Affirming Disciples (GLAD) Alliance (Disciples)
- Integrity, Inc. (Episcopal)
- Kinship International (Seventh Day Adventists)
- Lutherans Concerned
- More Light Presbyterians
- Reconciling Ministries Network (Methodist)
- Soulforce, Inc.
- The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches
- Welcoming and Affirming Baptists

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

SEXUALITY AND RELIGION

CARPENTER PROGRAM IN RELIGION,
GENDER, AND SEXUALITY
235 Divinity School
Nashville, TN 37240
615-343-3981 or 615-343-3974
<<http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu>>

THE CENTER FOR
SEXUALITY AND RELIGION
987 Old Eagle School Road,
Suite 719
Wayne, PA 19087-1708
610-995-0341
<www.CTRSR.org>

THE RELIGIOUS CONSULTATION
ON POPULATION, REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH AND ETHICS
2717 E. Hampshire Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211
414-962-3166
<www.religiousconsultation.org>

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE FOR SEXUAL
MORALITY, JUSTICE, AND HEALING
304 Main Avenue, #335
Norwalk, CT 06851
203-840-1148; 773-324-8580
<www.religiousinstitute.org>

WOMEN'S ALLIANCE FOR
THEOLOGY, ETHICS AND RITUAL
8035 13th Street
Silver Spring MD 20910-4803
301-589-2509

HIV/AIDS

THE BALM IN GILEAD
130 West 42nd Street, Suite 450
New York, NY 10036
212-730-7381
<www.balmingilead.org>

GLOBAL AIDS INTERFAITH ALLIANCE
P. O. Box 29110
San Francisco, CA, USA
415-561-2307
<www.thegaia.org>

NATIONAL EPISCOPAL AIDS
COALITION
520 Clinton Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11238-2211
302-764-9455
<www.NEAC.org>

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

CATHOLICS FOR A FREE CHOICE
1436 U Street, N.W., Suite 301
Washington, DC 20009-3997
202-986-6993
<www.cath4choice.org>

PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION
OF AMERICA, INC.
810 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10019
212-541-7800
<www.plannedparenthood.org>

RELIGIOUS COALITION FOR REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

1025 Vermont Avenue, N.W.,
Suite 1130
Washington, DC 20005
202-628-7700
<www.rcrc.org>

SEXUAL ABUSE

CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF
SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
2400 N. 45th Street
Seattle, WA 98103
206-634-1903
<www.cpsdv.org>

INTERFAITH SEXUAL TRAUMA INSTITUTE
Saint John's Abbey and University
Collegeville, MN 56321
320-363-3994
<www.csbsju.edu/isti>

SOCIAL ACTION

AMERICANS UNITED FOR SEPARATIONS
OF CHURCH AND STATE
1816 Jefferson Place, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-466-3234
<www.au.org>

THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE
1012 14th Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
202-639-6370
<www.tialliance.org>

**INTERFAITH WORKING
GROUP ONLINE**

P. O. Box 11706
Philadelphia, PA 19101
215-235-3050
<www.iwgonline.org>

**NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC
EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

165 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022
212-750-6461

**PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY
CLERGY NETWORK**

2000 M Street, N.W., Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
<www.pfaw.org>

**THE REGAS INSTITUTE/PROGRESSIVE
RELIGIOUS PARTNERSHIP**

215 N. Margeno Avenue, 2nd Floor
Pasadena, CA 91101-1569
626-683-9440

**WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING
ORGANIZATIONS**

AFFIRMATION

P. O. Box 46022
Los Angeles, CA 90046
323-255-7251
<www.affirmation.org>

**BRETHREN/MENNONITE COUNCIL
FOR LESBIAN AND GAY CONCERNS**

P. O. Box 6300
Minneapolis, MN 55406
612-722-6906
<www.webcom/bmc/welcome>

DIGNITY USA

1500 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.,
Suite 11
Washington DC 20005
202-861-0017
<www.dignityusa.org>

GALA (RLDS)

9468 Broadway
Temple City, CA 91780
<www.galaweb.org>

**GAY LESBIAN + AFFIRMING DISCIPLES
(GLAD) ALLIANCE**

P. O. Box 44400
Indianapolis, IN 46244-0400
202-624-5435
<www.gladalliance.org>

INTEGRITY, Inc.

1718 M Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
<www.integrityusa.org>

KINSHIP INTERNATIONAL

P. O. Box 7320
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607
949-248-1299
<www.sdakinship.org>

LUTHERANS CONCERNED

P. O. Box 1676
Milwaukee, WI 53201-1676
612-330-1202
<www.lcna.org>

MORE LIGHT PRESBYTERIANS

4737 County Road 101, PMB #246
Minnetonka, MN 55345-2634
505-820-7082
<www.mlp.org>

**OFFICE OF BISEXUAL, GAY, LESBIAN,
AND TRANSGENDER CONCERNS**

Unitarian Universalist Association
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
617-742-2100, extension 301
<www.uua.org>

RECONCILING MINISTRIES NETWORK

3801 N. Keeler Avenue
Chicago, IL 60641
773-736-5526
<rmnnetwork.org>

SOULFORCE, INC.

P. O. Box 4467
Laguna Beach, CA 92652
949-455-0999
<www.soulforce.org>

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
COALITION FOR LGBT CONCERNS**

800 Village Walk
Guilford, CT 06437
800-653-0799
<www.uccoalition.org>

**THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY
CHURCHES**

8704 Santa Monica Boulevard,
2nd Floor
West Hollywood, CA 90069
310-360-8640
<www.UFMCC.com>

**WELCOMING AND
AFFIRMING BAPTISTS**

P.O. Box 2596
Attleboro Falls, MA
508-226-1945
<www.wabaptists.org>

**YOUTH ISSUES/SEXUALITY
EDUCATION**

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

6404 South Calhoun Street
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46807
219-774-6510
<www.churchstuff.com>

**NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY**

1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.,
No. 200
Washington, DC 20036
202-478-8518
<www.teenpregnancy.org>

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION/OUR WHOLE LIVES**

25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
617-742-2100, extension 301
<www.uua.org>

SIECUS

130 West 42nd Street, Suite 350
New York, NY 10036-7802
212-819-9770
<www.siecus.org>

*NOTE: If you know of other organiza-
tions that should be included in this list,
please e-mail the Religious Institute at
<info@religiousinstitute.org>

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- <www.episcopalchurch.org/province-two/gv-soob.html>

ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE ON SEXUAL MORALITY, JUSTICE, AND HEALING

The Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing was formed in April 2001 to promote the vision and goals of the **Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing**. Its goals are:

- To identify, develop, and support a network of clergy, religious educators, theologians, and other religious leaders committed to advancing this vision of faith and sexuality.
- To build the capacity of religious institutions and clergy to offer comprehensive sexuality education within the context of their own faith traditions and to advocate for sexual rights.
- To help congregations become sexually healthy faith communities.
- To educate the public and policy makers about this vision of sexual morality, justice, and healing by training religious leaders to be articulate and forceful media spokespersons.
- To develop a clearinghouse of resources on religion and sexuality.

The Christian Community hosts the Religious Institute. The web site of the Religious Institute is www.religiousinstitute.org Clergy, theologians, religious leaders, and staff from religious institutions can endorse the **Religious Declaration** at the web site. The Religious Institute is co-directed by Reverend Larry Greenfield, Ph.D., and Debra W. Haffner, M.P.H., M.Div.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debra W. Haffner is the director of the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing. A sexuality educator for more than 25 years, she graduated from Union Theological Seminary in May 2002 with a Masters in Divinity. She is the co-creator of the **Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing**. She is currently a candidate for ordination in the Unitarian Universalist Association.