

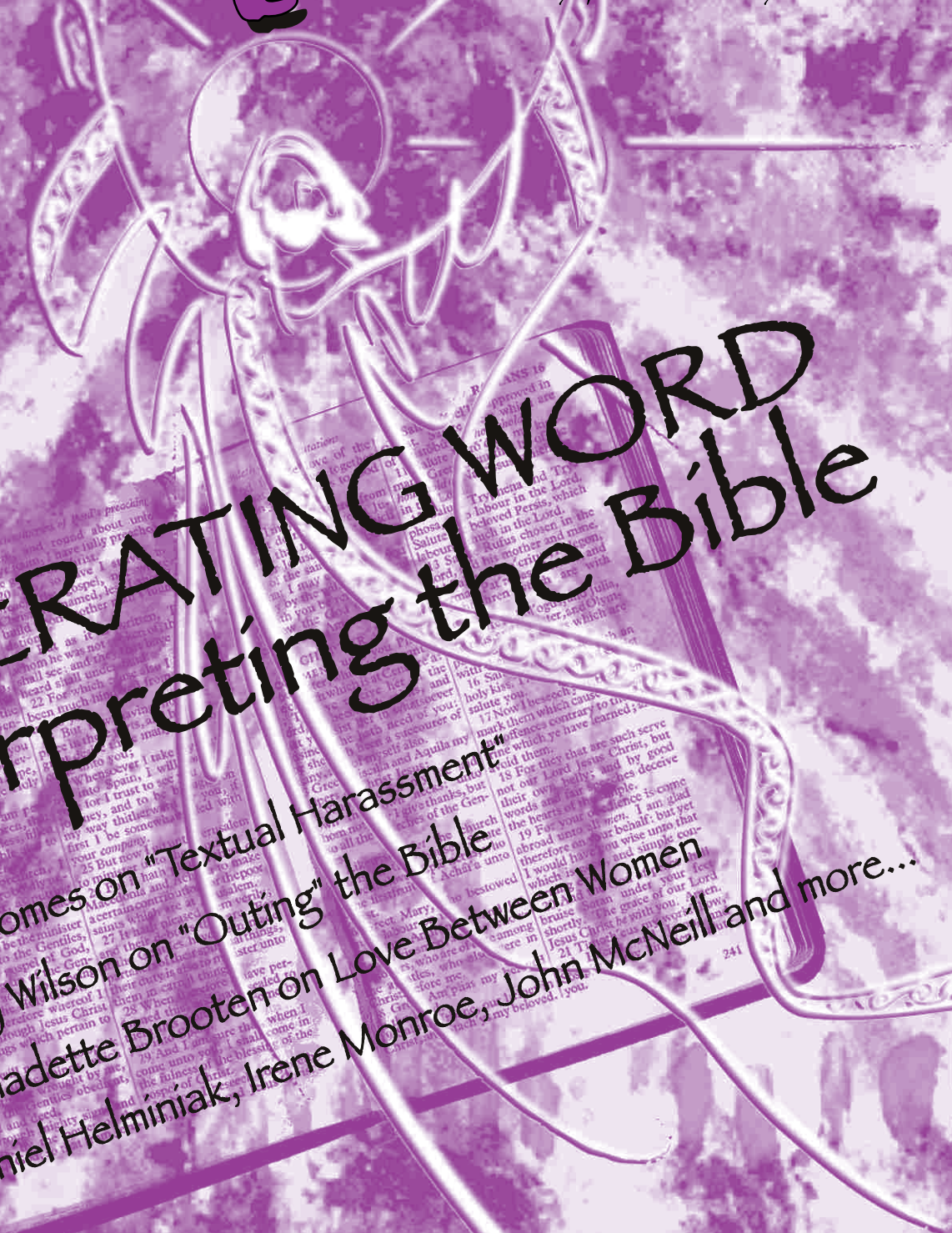
Open Hands

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Winter 2000

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Open & Affirming Ministries
Open and Affirming Program
Reconciling Congregation Program
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Nancy Wilson on "Outing" the Bible
Bernadette Brooten on Love Between Women
Daniel Helminiak, Irene Monroe, John McNeill and more...

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Open Hands is a resource for congregations and individuals seeking to be in ministry with lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. Each issue focuses on a specific area of concern within the church.

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THE HEALING TOUCH Our Pastoral Concerns

Theme Section: How have we and how can we, as *church*, provide healing for those hurt by church policies *and* effect reconciliation among those with differing opinions? How does the church repent of its sin of exclusion? How will our faith heal the church, making us whole? How do LGBT people let go of victimhood, once a church welcomes them? How do they graciously “accept” being “accepted”? What about LGBT families and friends and advocates in this long struggle? And what about our opposition?

1000-2500 words per article. Liturgies and litanies welcome too.

Ministries Section: Columns may include: Welcoming Process, Connections (with other justice issues), Worship, Spirituality, Outreach, Leadership, Health, Youth, Campus, Children, and Parents. These brief articles may or may not have to do with the theme of the issue.

750-1000 words.

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FOR ALL THE SAINTS
Stories of the Welcoming Movement

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Take Back the Bible

Irene Monroe

The Bible has always been a troubling text in our culture. Though it should serve as a balm in Gilead to soothe the sick and protect the weak, the Bible has also functioned throughout centuries as a controlling device, and its authoritative status in our society makes us all wonder if there is truly a separation between church and state. For example, it took the end of American slavery for both the state and church to marry African Americans. Prior to the end of the Civil War, my ancestors had to “jump over a broom” in front of their slave masters to legalize their nuptials. As for us queers, there is no broom for us, but we are jumping over state and church loopholes in order to protect and consecrate our unions.

The authority of scripture does not lie in what God said. It lies in the hands of those in power who determine what God ought to say.

Used as a controlling device, the Bible continues to promulgate moral and political agendas. The right wing Christian groups—the Family Research Council, the Christian Coalition, and Americans for Truth About Homosexuality—have advised their members to cease using the King James Version of the Bible because historians have proven that King James I of England was gay. Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council and candidate for the Republican presidential nomination has said, “I feel uncomfortable that good Christians all over America, and indeed the world, are using a document commissioned by a homosexual. Anything that has been commissioned by a homo-

sexual has obviously been tainted in some way.”

Supposedly the Bible contains the will of god, and many Christians, both blacks as well as whites, believe only heterosexuals are elected to do God’s will. Gospel singers Angie and Debbie Winans released a single last year titled, “Not Natural,” in which they self-righteously denounced our queer lifestyle. When queried by newscaster Travis Smiley on BET Tonight what compelled them to do so, Debbie Winans stated, “We don’t come as Angie and Debbie. We come as messengers of God doing his will.”

“Doing God’s will” is a prodigious task and unmistakably a human enterprise. Thus doing God’s will is invariably subject to error because it is based in the human act of interpreting the Word of God. Interpreting scripture as the Word of God is always subjective and is always suspect in intent, whether it is being done in the ivory towers of seminaries or within the holy walls of sanctuaries. Interpreting scripture with menacing messages—and with litanies of dos and don’ts—is not about embracing and empowering all people, but about authority and power over certain groups. The authority of scripture does not lie in what God said. It lies in the hands of those in power who determine what God ought to say.

The Bible is replete with contradictory and damning messages to *all* people. Determining which messages are discarded and which are upheld is not a battle about biblical inerrancy or God’s will. It is an unmitigated battle of human will. For example, there are two creation myths in the Bible in the first two chapters of Genesis. The first says that God made woman and man simultaneously. The second is our “rib story,” in which Eve is born from a rib

of Adam. This story has ribbed and poked at Christian women throughout the centuries, since it is the authoritative text for substantiating gender inequity in society.

Determining which messages are discarded and which are upheld is not a battle about biblical inerrancy or God’s will. It is an unmitigated battle of human will.

The curse of Ham (Genesis 9:18-27) and the apostle Paul’s edict to slaves (Ephesians 6:5-8) served as the “scientific” and “Christian” legitimization for the enslavement of people of African ancestry. The Sodom and Gomorrah narrative (Genesis 19:1-29) is one of the most quoted scriptures to argue for compulsory heterosexuality. Yet is it the will of God to devalue the lives of women, people of African ancestry, and queers?

As LGBT people, many of us allow the power of God’s will to be interpreted and executed by heterosexuals by not knowing the Bible ourselves. Our ignorance about the Bible, whether we are practicing atheists or recovering Christians, perpetuates our oppression and makes us participants in this climate of queer hatred. Our strategy to stop queer-bashing has to be on both biblical and legal fronts. Much of our failure with right wing organizations results from our refusal or inability to argue for the biblical legitimization of our rights. The success of the Civil Rights Movement was because my people employed both strategies.

The intent of white slave owners giving us the Bible was to keep us docile,

to keep us fearful of God and them, and to keep us enslaved. However, our “hermeneutic of suspicion” told those of us who could and could not read that the words printed on the pages of the Bible meant more than what our slave owners told us, that black life was sacred and reflected positively in and throughout those pages, and the God we served was always on the side of the oppressed. The Bible became our talking book, our road map, our Declaration of Independence, our Bill of Rights. In other words, the Bible was used as a subversive tool to form and to frame a new world order. The Bible told us how to do what must be done. And in so doing, Nat Turner revolted against slavery, and Harriet Tubman conducted a railroad out of it.

Today even the Southern Baptists, who used the Bible to support its bigoted stance against my people, not only know that it is illegal to discriminate against African Americans, but that it is also morally wrong and against God’s will to do so. They, too, now interpret the Bible with a filter against racism.

As more and more lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people unabashedly take back the Bible, we must ask ourselves questions of each text like I ask myself: “Do I tolerate this text or do I accept it? What about this text is liberating and truth-telling, and what about it is oppressive, damning, and damaging? How is my existence as black, female, and queer, embraced, skewed, or made invisible by Christians using this text? And how has our use of this text created a welcoming world?”

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Beyond the Human Point of View

Peter J. Gomes

The Rev. Peter J. Gomes gave this presentation to the Covenant Network of Presbyterians during a luncheon at the 211th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, June 21, 1999. The Covenant Network was formed in 1997 to replace or remove what is considered the antigay provision (ratified that year) of the denomination’s constitution, The Book of Order, in an attempt to allow “sessions and presbyteries more discretion in discerning God’s call for ordained office on particular people, within clear Biblical and confessional standards.” Its larger purpose is “to articulate and act on the church’s historic, progressive vision and to work for a fully inclusive church.” This is excerpted from the full presentation reproduced on its website (www.covenantnetwork.org) with the permission of the Covenant Network and the Rev. Peter J. Gomes, with many thanks from Open Hands. The introduction and some specific references were deleted so that you, the reader, may hear the speech addressed personally to you. An audiotape of the Covenant Network Luncheon including this address is available for \$10 from the Covenant Network Administrative Office, c/o Calvary Presbyterian Church, 2515 Fillmore St., San Francisco, CA 94115.

It is my church, my faith, my book, it belongs to me
as I belong to it, and the notion just beggars credulity
that I should chuck the whole experience
or reconfigure my experience to conform to it
because there are parts of it which do not describe
the world as I now know it or as I have experienced it.

The Vitality of Scripture

A conundrum that I face frequently in my courses on the interpretation of scripture, and in my general commerce across the country, is being addressed by people in any one of my privileged minority statuses, including that of a gay man, a black man, an unmarried man, a Harvard man, a Baptist man—any one of them, choose your label—as people ask, “How can you keep loyal to a book which is used to do in every one of your distinctions? How can you maintain fidelity, when it would make so much more sense just to chuck the whole thing, or do what Thomas Jefferson did and rewrite it, editing out all the things you’d rather not have in it?” Why are we so committed to that which on a superficial basis would ap-

pear to be the instrument of our own destruction or our own inhibition?

I was in a debate once with a very distinguished member of the Nation of Islam, one of the black Muslims, who argued that Christianity is so unnatural for black people, that the religion of the slave master and the oppressor is one that does more harm than good, and that that is why the only natural religion for a black person in the modern world is the Nation of Islam. How does one respond to that, at so many other levels, at so many particular divisive levels?

It strikes me, as I think about how to answer that question each time it’s put to me, that I’ve never thought of myself as apart from the community of scriptural experience, scriptural inter-

pretation, and scriptural authority. It has never been mine to look at from the outside, for I was born into the faith of my fathers and my mothers, and I was nourished by it and continue to be nourished in it. I am not there on probation; I am not an on-looker. It is my church, my faith, my book; it belongs to me as I belong to it, and the notion just beggars credulity that I should chuck the whole experience or reconfigure my experience to conform to it because there are parts of it which do not describe the world as I now know it or as I have experienced it. It simply does not make sense, nor has it ever made sense for the people of God.

This makes me realize what our evangelical friends refer to as the “perspicacity of scripture,” and realize what a dynamic and vital book it is, that in every age and in every place and in every clime it has the capacity, without changing one jot or tittle, to include within its gracious orbit people who heretofore or in other circumstances would have no way of being included.

It is a book that invites, that opens, that compels, that consoles, that comforts, that redefines our relationship to ourselves, to each other, and to God. And the book that is capable of doing that is the book to which I am prepared to devote all the powers and skills and graces that God has given me. The Bible in its dynamic way is an inclusive book, and our ancestors understood that. Our earliest Christian ancestors understood that the Jewish book was a book that was capable of accommodating a different revelation; and as they moved through their human experience they discovered the capacity of this book to draw them in. It certainly was true of our ancestors at the time of the Reformation, and it has been the experience of Christian people throughout the world ever since. This is not a book that belongs to somebody else, or to some prior period, or to some particular school of interpretation or exegesis. And every attempt to put a fence around this book, to keep it from change, and to keep people from it, has gone down to defeat.

The history of the interpretation of scripture is a history of the capacity of God’s word to speak in many tongues



Photo by Danny Bolin, General Assembly News

With his usual flair and wit, the Rev. Peter Gomes addresses the Covenant Network of Presbyterians at the 1999 Presbyterian General Assembly.

and in many ways, and to draw all people into its gracious embrace. It strikes me that that is perhaps the most compelling and exciting case for what we would call the ‘authority’ of scripture. It does not mean bowing down to some inert text or to some absolute school of exegesis, but in this case means recognizing in the history of the people in the book and in the encounters of the peoples of the world with this book, the experience of people who have been called to new life and who have recognized in that experience and in that relationship the vitality of their own image created in the image of God. It is from that book that that operating principle comes. Therefore I affirm the authority of scripture, in the sense of its exemplary model, its authority for us in describing the relationship that God intends for us to have, and for all of us to share. And I recognize that the authority of scripture is based on one fundamental principle of modesty which acknowledges the fact that God knows more about human vocation and salvation than we do.

That is a very important principle for my fellow exegetes, my fellow historians of interpretation, my fellow biblical scholars and expositors: it is very important to remember that God knows

more about vocation and salvation than we do. This principle requires that the church take the unaccustomed position of a certain generosity and a certain modesty in imputing its values upon the values of scripture and God. That is the first thing that we must remember. We are committed to the vitality of scripture, we take the book seriously, we take the history of the book seriously, we take the interpretations of the book seriously. But we understand that the book is but a means and not an end. We do not worship this book. If you do worship it, you are in the wrong church and in the wrong tradition. There are other places in which to worship books, such as in the Morgan Library in New York City; or you might visit any fine collector of rare bindings. You can worship books there, but you can’t worship books in the house of God.

The Power of the Holy Spirit

The second thing that I want to affirm is the affirmation of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit which makes us believe, and makes us know that God speaks, not simply that God spoke. God speaks in the present tense, and the great question that we always have to be alert to is what the Spirit is saying to

the churches today. It is interesting to know what the Spirit was saying to the churches in Antioch, in Calcedon, and even what the Spirit was saying to the churches in Geneva; but it is equally important to ask what the Spirit is saying to the churches today. What does the Spirit require? In order to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, we have to listen, and that is a rather unfamiliar posture to so many of us in the Protestant and Reformed versions of Christ's catholic church. We are not good listeners. We tend to stop speaking, which is not the same thing as listening, for usually we stop speaking in order to prepare our next set of remarks rather than to listen to what is being said.

You may sometimes feel inhibited or strapped in by the notion that one of your tasks is not so much to convert or to triumph immediately, but simply to be heard, simply to be listened to. That is a long and tiresome vocation; but it is the vocation that has been thrust upon you, and it is the vocation that you have chosen. We know through the history of our experience as believers in this country, and in the world, that if we really do hear what the Spirit is compelling us to do, we will be forced to change our ways. We may hear things that we'd rather not hear. I suspect that's one reason why public worship in the great generality of Protestantism is such a noisy enterprise. On Sunday mornings at ten o'clock or eleven o'clock in most churches, I would be willing to bet, there is not three minutes of unstructured sound in the services. If somebody is not speaking, somebody is singing; and if somebody is not singing, somebody's about to sing or the organ is playing or somebody is strumming on a guitar: we desperately block out the silences for fear that we might hear something that might make a difference.

You are in the business of both listening and hearing what the Spirit has to say; and then by your example, by your witness, by your perseverance, you are persuading others to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Now, we realize that we're fighting tremendous odds in any effort to bring the church from where it has been to where

we think it ought to be, for the church exists in this wonderful conundrum. It is an agent for change created out of the most powerful elements for change that one can imagine. The Creation is certainly an element for change, the Incarnation is certainly an element for change, the Resurrection is certainly an element for change, the coming again of our Lord is certainly an element for change—we are built for change. And yet the church by itself is probably the most conservative institution short of private banks.

We are terrified of change. We have been dragged kicking and screaming into every positive and constructive movement that the world has faced, and our track record of change is not very

ment came, the moment to affirm the gifts which God has laid upon those people whom he has called into his ministry?"

My friend Will Willimon, a Methodist, and dean of the Duke Chapel, reminds me that it is clearly within his memory that forty years ago, as he was entering theological school and the ministry, the vast majority of Methodist preachers were still, in tall-steeple and no-steeple churches, holding onto the inherited racial orthodoxies of a 1958 South Carolina. Now, he says, many of those people are still in the ministry, and the great terrifying question always concerns where they were thirty years ago on this issue, or even twenty years ago. It is possible that God



Photo by Danny Bolin, General Assembly News.

"I yearn for the day when you will all be free of textual harassment," Peter Gomes told the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, established to recover the "center" of the church from those on the far right.

good. Show me where we have stood on the frontlines and I'll applaud it, but there won't be many such instances. If one were to be judged this moment on the church's position on women, or the church's position on race, few would be able to stand. "If Thou shouldst judge iniquity, O Lord, who could stand?" I believe that the question of the full inclusion of homosexual persons in the ministries of the church will have the same kind of indicting quality when the question is asked, "Where were we, where was the church, when the move-

does move in mysterious ways, but sometimes God takes a very long time to do it; and you and I and the church have to give an account of our stewardship on these matters.

It would be nice to think that on the issue of sexuality, the church finally might get it right; but my researchers tell me that you have been debating this subject since the 70's at more or less every one of your conferences. On the one hand one should congratulate you for your consistency and your steadfastness, and on the other hand one could

think that you're obsessed with sex, and that what you like about sex is never coming to any conclusion. My great hope is that for the sake of the rest of the church you will finally come to some conclusion, and our prayer is that it will be the right conclusion. Resistance to change is natural and persistent. And you are devoted to order, as is well known around the world, not because you are orderly but because you are chaotic; and that is why you do everything decently and in order—like the person who washes three times a day: either he is very dirty, or he is very clean.

There is something of that with you, and those of us on the outside just can't wait for some of you to hang up the wash. The work of the Spirit may at times seem chaotic, risky, and very dangerous. Although Trinitarians, many tend to place two-thirds of their emphasis on two-thirds of the Trinity, that is, on the first two members. The third member is a little loosey-goosey, a little hard to define and very hard to orchestrate or corral.

The important thing to remember about the Spirit's work at Pentecost, for example, is not the ecstasy which is usually invoked on Pentecost Sunday, the confusion and the excitement and the high energy level. That's an interesting point, but if that were preached in my sermon course I would say that it's a 'B' point, not an 'A' point. The 'A' point is the Spirit-induced understanding. That was the thing that the Spirit did, and that was how the people could say that they each heard in their own language the wonderful works of God. The work of the Spirit is designed to foster understanding and ultimate reconciliation. You are about that work.

The Future Vitality of the Church

The final thing I want to say to you is that you are in my opinion the future of the church, and that I think most people recognize that. I think that is why you encounter as much resistance as you do. Most people recognize that this is the way of the Spirit. You can play King Canute if you want to and vote not to allow the tide to come in; you can do it and you may even prevail

in that vote. You can play Dame Partington and command the waters to recede by a majority vote in a clean procedural action; but the water will not recede.

You are the future of the church because you represent the kind of hospitality, openness, and lively reading of the word of God that in the long run is going to be the evangelistic seed for the church of the next millennium; and it is to that that you should be lending your energies. You are witnesses to the sure conviction that we must transcend the world of which we are a part. You must not be driven by the agenda of the secular world, you must not be driven by fashion or custom or convenience. You are driven by conviction, and most Christians realize that there are times when conviction crosses in a very jagged way the cultural consensus. You cannot be the church of the cultural consensus, for we do not need another denomination to bless the status quo, or another group of people who pander to the fearful anxieties of our culture. We do not need that: America has enough churches of that order and you ought not to be among them.

That leads me to my concluding remarks, which bring me back to where I started. This talk had a title that somehow got mangled in transmission. The title you have been given is "The Human Point of View," and I read one of your notes saying that you weren't quite sure what that was all about. Well, the reason you weren't quite sure what it was all about is that it wasn't accurate. The title is "Beyond the Human Point of View," which makes a very big difference, especially if you're taking as your text 2 Corinthians 5:16, which says, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view." Remember, this is that dead white male Paul speaking to his community about the fact not only that did he not know Jesus after the flesh, but that the knowledge of Jesus after the flesh is now irrelevant.

"We regard no one"—including Jesus—"from a human point of view," says St. Paul, for we have been brought into "a new creation," a new relationship. New standards obtain. "Beyond the Human Point of View" is where

Christ has always wanted his church to be. And it seems to me that that is the point of view you are trying to affirm and represent.

When I looked at the last Baptist of whom I knew to speak to a group of Presbyterians, I realized that it had cost him something. My old friend Harry Emerson Fosdick was very wise to preach to you but not to join you, for your predecessors would have done him in. You can't do me in, because I'm not joining. But in his great sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" the tone towards its close becomes actually electric. Remember when he says that the times are too important for these petty little divisions within the church to obsess the church, to curtail the mission of the church in a needy and dying and dreadful world? We should not be obsessed with these "lesser matters of the law," as Dr. Fosdick says, quoting scripture.

I hope the day passes when your denomination is defined by its sexual politics. I yearn for the day when you will all be free of textual harassment, which is not a bad way, I think, of describing the enterprise. It is a good Presbyterian professor, Diogenes Allen, who said, "The only way forward is forward," for there is no other place to go. You cannot go backward and you cannot stay here. They know that, and that is why they are so concerned about how you carry on your business. The only way forward is forward.

Three Things to Remember in the Struggle

Well, three things for you to remember. The cause is just, you are on the Lord's side. The cause is just, the record is clear, the experience of the gospel is in your direction, you are sailing with the wind of the Holy Spirit. If you feel a little grim about that from time to time, remember, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake...for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." That's the first thing.

The second thing is that the struggle is real. This is not a metaphorical enterprise, this is a real battle. Fear and igno-

rance must never be underestimated, and there is always more money for fear and ignorance than for their opposite. Just look around and you will find that that is true.

So, the struggle is very real, which means that patience is the most important witness—which is the third thing. Patience is the most important witness. How does the old hymn go?

*Not to the strong goes the battle,
Nor to the swift goes the race;
But to the true and the faithful,
Victory is promised through grace.*

Does that mean that I'm optimistic? No. I am not optimistic. We live in a fallen world ruled by totally depraved people who do not understand the sovereignty of God.

I am not optimistic, but I am hopeful. What is the difference? Optimism cannot stand the bright heat of the noonday reality: mere optimism wilts and has no inner resources with which to combat the seeming hosts of evil all

around it. Optimism fades very quickly; but the hopeful are the ones who, in spite of the circumstances, in spite of apparent reality, in spite of the moment, understand that hope endures all things and ultimately carries all before it in God's time. When we had Nelson Mandela at Harvard last fall, somebody asked him whether in prison he had been optimistic that this day would ever come. He said, "I never was optimistic, but I never lost hope."

You must remember that God knows where you are. God knows what you are doing. God honors the witness and the ministry that you are making. And while God may not deliver victory into your hands on your timetable or when you think you deserve it or want it, you are on the Lord's side. You must never, ever give up. Never give up, never go away, never cease to work for the goal of a whole church, a whole ministry which reflects the image of God in all of its splendor, all of its diversity, and all of its glory.

That is the work that you have chosen for yourselves. But perhaps more insistently, that is the work that has been chosen for you.

"From now on, therefore," my brothers and sisters, "we regard no one from a human point of view." We have moved beyond that. And by God's grace we will reach that moment, that place and time, when all of this will be seen as a mere prelude to the great ministry and work to which all of God's people have been called. ▼

Peter J. Gomes is the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Pusey Minister in The Memorial Church of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is the author of Sermons—Biblical Wisdom for Daily Living (William & Morrow and Co. Inc., 1998; Avon paperback, 1999), and The Good Book—Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart (William & Morrow and Co., Inc., 1996).



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Maturity and the Church of the Holy Spirit

John J. McNeill

Excerpted from a presentation entitled, "Achieving Spiritual Maturity: A Necessary Step in the Pursuit of Global Justice," dedicated to the memory of his sister, Sister Mary Sheila, OSF, at the Roman Catholic Call to Action National Conference meeting in Chicago, Nov. 5-7, 1999.

A prophetic Cistercian Abbot in Italy named Joachim of Flores in the early thirteenth century foresaw the total transformation of the church as it existed in his time and the dawn of an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He prophesied that there would be a new form of spiritual life in which the Holy Spirit would speak directly to the human heart without ecclesiastical mediation. He believed that there is a sequence of historic stages in the Trinitarian God's self-revelation over time. The first stage of that self-revelation was the stage of the Father, the law of Moses, and the people of Israel. The second was the stage of the Son, the New Testament, and the church. He said the third will be the age of the Holy Spirit, when the church "becoming superfluous would in time dissolve."

I think that this third stage is what is going on in the church today. I don't see the church dissolving, but I do see it being transformed into a church of the Holy Spirit, a purely democratic church. The task of anyone who has a leadership position in the church of the Holy Spirit is to listen, just listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying through the people of God.

During the years of my psychotherapy practice with gays and lesbians, I made the discovery that the Holy Spirit was most powerfully present with the twelve-step groups working miracles of healing and curing in the basement of the church, and very seldom did I find the Holy Spirit as effectively present upstairs in the sanctuary. Why is the Holy Spirit there? Because these people meet together as equals, men and women, gay and straight. There is no hierarchy. They share from the heart and they listen to each other with respect and act as total equals.

What I see as the most important movement of the Holy Spirit in today's church has to do with the development in the church of mature spirituality based on [such equality, which leads to] freedom of conscience and discernment of spirits. This insight is the primary fruit of over thirty years of ministry to lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered men and women.

How can we develop a mature spiritual life? I want to put the emphasis on mature because as I see the new millennium, the church is twenty going on twenty one, which is the age of maturity. There is not just our individual growth to maturity; there is the development of humanity and the church into a mature stage, and I believe that is happening. The possibility is opening up of a real spiritual maturity for every human being on the face of the earth.

Jesus said, "It is necessary that I should go away in order for the Spirit to come." Jesus was pointing out that his followers must detach themselves from their dependence on his external presence and prepare themselves to receive the Spirit of Christ who will dwell in their hearts. Again he said to them, "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:6-13).

Paul sees the gift of the Holy Spirit as a fulfillment of this prophesy of Jeremiah: "This is the new covenant I will make after those days. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, Know the Lord. For they shall all know me from the least to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquities and remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

Notice that Jeremiah foresees the new covenant where every human being from the least to the greatest will have direct access to a God who dwells in each heart. This access to God will not be the privilege of a few who are gifted with extraordinary intelligence, or ritual rank, or even special holiness. The Holy Spirit is a thoroughgoing respecter of democratic process.

We must grow out of a passive dependent role in the church to an active and creative one. We have a special need to become mature, self-motivated, autonomous people, no longer dependent on outside sources for a sense of our identity and well-being. We must not let our enemies outside ourselves define us; we must let the Spirit of love that dwells within our hearts define us. If we approach church authorities, it should not be to get an approval which they cannot and frequently will not give us. Rather, it should be to bear witness to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through our experience. ▼

John J. McNeill began his ministry within the GLBT community as a Jesuit priest and psychotherapist, helping to found *Dignity/NYC*. He has published four books: *The Church and the Homosexual* (1976), *Taking a Chance on God: Liberating Theology for Gays, Lesbians, and their Lovers, Families and Friends* (1988) and *Freedom, Glorious Freedom: The Spiritual Journey to the Fullness of Life for Gays, Lesbians and Everybody Else* (1995). In 1998, *Westminster John Knox Press* published his autobiography, *Both Feet Firmly Planted in Midair: My Spiritual Journey*.



Outing the Bible

A Queer Biblical Agenda

Nancy Wilson

Stirrings of the Spirit in Biblical Research

We need a pilgrimage.

In 2005, gays and lesbians and our allies should make our pilgrimage to the birthplace of the late Derrick Sherwin Bailey in the United Kingdom. Dr. Bailey was the author of *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, published in 1955. It will be the 50th anniversary of that book—the first book written on the subject of homosexuality and the Bible in the history of the church.

I was five years old in 1955, and could have had no way of knowing how important its publication would be to me and millions of others. In fact, when I came out of the closet and in to UFMCC in 1972, his was still the only book in print on the subject. There were essays like Robert Treese's "Contemporary Biblical Perspectives on Homosexuality" in an anthology on gay liberation and the church, and there was the Rev. Troy Perry's early treatment of the subject in his book, *The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay*. But Bailey's was the only book focused on biblical interpretation and homosexuality for two decades.

Now, of course, there are shelves of books, by Roman Catholics and Protestants, fundamentalists and liberals, and new, emerging queer interpretations of the Bible that Bailey could have never imagined. There are articles in respected biblical journals and commentaries, as well as an explosion of writings by gays and lesbians. The subject of homosexuality and the Bible has become mainstreamed in less than 50 years.

The first writers, besides Bailey, who wrote books on the subject were not biblical scholars. They were literary scholars (e.g., Virginia Mollenkott and Tom Horner), or pastoral counselors (like Jesuit John McNeill), or historians

(like John Boswell). The first biblical scholars "in the guild" on the scene of this subject were heterosexual, or, assumed to be, like Byron Shafer, Robin Scroggs, Victor Paul Furnish and others. One of the best summaries of this scholarly work is former Catholic priest and present-day therapist Daniel Helminiak's *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, a book that, years after publication, still keeps flying off the shelves of GLBT bookstores, revealing our community's profound interest in the subject.

UFMCC, much too busy in the trenches to be doing extensive biblical scholarship, instead produced pamphlets on the subject. Our most popular, "Not a Sin, Not a Sickness: What the Bible Does and Does not Say about Homosexuality," has been reprinted dozens of times. More than half a million copies have been distributed over the past 20 years. Other groups did the same. The Quakers produced "Toward a Quaker View of Sex," and Evangelicals Concerned cleverly created a pamphlet whose cover read, "What Jesus Said About Homosexuality," and the inside of the pamphlet was blank! On the back it said, "That's right, Jesus said absolutely nothing about homosexuality." The implication was that if Jesus didn't say anything bad about it, how bad could it really be for Christians to be gay? Of course, some of us would now dispute the idea that Jesus said nothing—more about that later.

We've done such a good job in our biblical apologetics, whether in book or pamphlet form, that many fundamentalists and so-called "ex-gays" seldom want to engage us on the topic. Their conferences instead focus on bogus psychology and group therapy. They have grown weary in realizing that we often know the Bible better than they do, and

have answers to satisfy anyone, from a fundamentalist to a liberal feminist scholar. Essentially, I believe, the intellectual battle over the "texts of terror," our "clobber passages" as we call them, has been won. (Those passages, of course, are the Sodom and Gomorrah story in Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13; Romans 1:26 and 27; 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10).

We have thoroughly disconnected Sodom and Gomorrah from the present day reality of gay and lesbian relationships, and addressed Leviticus, Romans, 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy *ad nauseam*. We have studied the Hebrew and Greek texts, and, with the help of D.S. Bailey and others who have followed, traced the sad story of the homophobic layers of interpretation that burden the texts.

The problem is, of course, that almost no one knows this except gays and lesbians who care about the Bible, and our self-appointed opposition. Most mainstream or nominal Christians, or people who aren't religiously identified at all, know little or nothing about biblical scholarship on the subject of homosexuality. That is because the church is afraid to teach what its own scholars know. *And* because the religious right continues to intimidate politicians and the public with their homophobic rhetoric based on their misreading of the Bible. Much of that misreading is now without excuse. It is not credible for them to keep claiming ignorance.

New Translations Down the Road?

Over a decade ago, the U.S. National Council of Churches held the first nationwide consultation on the subject of homosexuality and the Bible in a joint effort with MCC churches. I served as co-chair of the "Dialogue Committee."

We attempted at first to structure a debate among scriptural scholars “in the guild,” who would debate whether or not the Bible condemns homosexuality. Interestingly enough, the NCC members of the committee reported back that they could not find a biblical scholar to say that the Bible unilaterally condemns homosexuality. We in MCC provided them the names of scholars we knew who had gone on record that the Bible condemned homosexuality. We knew who they were because we had had to confront and debate them. The NCC folks told us that none of those scholars were respected by the leadership of the NCC. I remember the moment of shock when I first heard this. “The battle is over,” I thought to myself.

That was in 1987. We ended up simply holding a consultation with scholars from mainstream NCC churches and seminaries that essentially upheld MCC’s point of view, which, of course, people (many of whom would not attend the consultation) then said was “biased.” During that consultation, it was Byron Shafer of Fordham University who said, “No serious scholar of scripture today would claim that the Bible condemns loving, mutual, respectful homosexual relationships.” I would have thought that would have been front page news. But, for the NCC, it spelled division and disaster, and they buried the report during a time of difficult leadership transitions.

The leadership and hierarchy of the church knows the truth about homosexuality and the Bible. Unfortunately, they believe it is a truth that they cannot politically or economically afford to know or teach or embrace.

But, the truth *will* will out, eventually. Dr. Gwynne Guibord, Ecumenical Officer for the UFMCC, recently reported on the 1999 annual General Board meeting of the National Council of Churches, which holds the copyright on both the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). She stated that during its 50th anniversary General Assembly meeting in Cleveland, the NCC “affirmed that the ‘five-seven’ biblical passages often cited in discussions of homosexuality need to be considered for

“No serious scholar of scripture today would claim that the Bible condemns loving, mutual, respectful homosexual relationships.”

-Byron Shafer of Fordham University

reevaluation, for clarification and possible retranslation. The process of making changes in translations is a lengthy one, often taking a ten year ‘start to finish’ journey. There is a definite movement afloat and gaining ground that is aware that the current translations and annotations are often inaccurate, soul-murdering and damaging to the entire faith community as they separate us from one another.”

The day in 1983 that the NCC refused to declare MCC eligible for membership in the NCC, though we met all their stated criteria, was the same day *The New York Times* announced that the Pope had taken the first steps to acknowledge the church’s error in dealing with Galileo. I figured that was God’s little encouraging message to us that day. At the least, it put things in perspective. It can make 10 years not seem so long.

Will we really have a Bible within 10 years that actually does not use annotations with the word “sodomy,” or that actually takes the last 50 years of scholarship, from D.S. Bailey to Peter Gomes, and use it to retranslate and reinterpret those troublesome texts of

The institutions that support biblical scholarship are often homophobic, though some are changing. We cannot afford to run from them, we need to be running them.

terror we are so weary of explaining? I think we may. And that is a miracle.

The Politics of Biblical Interpretation

I have often tried to help lesbian and gay people understand the politics of biblical interpretation. Why do some passages get studied and not others? When women and people of color are not educated and empowered to read the Bible for ourselves, we cannot undertake to reexamine the passages that have been misused to oppress us. The same is true with gays and lesbians.

Biblical scholarship is an extremely conservative field. It will be years before there are many openly gay biblical scholars in the “guild.” There are closeted ones who dare not write or speak up. But there are gay and lesbian scholars who cross over and do biblical work from a cross-disciplinary perspective, as well as amateurs like me, who struggle to study and understand and interpret for the thousands of people we come in contact with who need a friendlier Bible.

Peter Gomes said something which gave me great hope in *The Good Book*. A section discusses race and slavery under the rubric “Fixed Text and Changed Minds.” Gomes claims that the scholarship around passages about slavery in the Bible did very little to change prevailing opinion. Ultimately, the “texts of terror” about slavery still stand, relatively unchallenged. But scholars and preachers and freedom fighters began to measure those few, difficult texts against broad Biblical principles of love, freedom, hope, the Exodus, and the new Body of Christ that was neither “Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” but all one in Christ Jesus. As hearts and minds began to change, the interpretation of the Bible changed, not the other way around. The big picture won, and the embarrassing texts once trotted out to support slavery are no longer honored or lifted up except by the most crazed of racists.

There is a lot more scholarship available to debunk the texts historically believed to condemn homosexuality. Biblical passages about sexuality were not studied much at all, and we have a

lot of catching up to do. But the process seems to be picking up speed now, and that is hopeful and exciting. Walls supported by Biblical ignorance are about to come crumbling down once and for all. Can I hear an "Amen"?

Biblical scholarship takes money, libraries and classrooms, and political and religious support. Biblical scholarship has not been the favorite charity of most gay people! But maybe it should be. The institutions that support biblical scholarship are often homophobic, though some are changing. We cannot afford to run *from* them, we need to be *running* them.

Our Own Biblical Canon

Another agenda that needs our attention is the expansion of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered "canon within the canon." In my book, *Our Tribe*, I repeated Virginia Ramey Mollenkott's thesis that every "interpretive community" has its own "canon with the canon" of the Bible. These are the biblical stories and passages that speak to us—that, in essence, re-tell our own tribal story, stories to which we can relate. It is very new for us to see *ourselves* as an interpretive community of the Bible, but we are and must be. We cannot simply stick to the passages that are comfortable or familiar. We have to branch out and boldly go where no LGBT biblical scholars have gone before. It is time.

Virginia Mollenkott's point has been that we should not stay stuck in our canons (!), but build interpretive bridges. That is why it is important for gay and lesbian scholars to understand the biblical interpretive histories of people of color, African Americans, and women. They paved the way for this work, and we benefit from their methods and successes.

Gay and lesbian people now have layers of this interpretive history ourselves. The first interpretive layer has been simply to de-toxify the Bible from those "texts of terror." But then we moved on to the obvious—to the stories of Jonathan and David (or, perhaps more accurately, Saul and Jonathan and David) and Ruth and Naomi, obvious candidates for stories of same-sex rela-

tionships in the Bible. And there has begun a quiet uncovering of many possible gay or lesbian references: the story of the centurion's slave (the Matthew 8:5-13 version), Paul's troublesome relationships with men, and less obvious same-sex biblical couples (Tryphena and Tryphosa, for example, mentioned in Romans 16:12).

But we have gone deeper than that. In *Our Tribe*, I posited (and I was not the first to do so, only the first to do so in great detail, I think), that the term "eunuch" is really a generic term for men and women who do not reproduce, and not simply men who were castrated. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* no longer interprets eunuch in that narrow way, but understands the term more inclusively. When I started to study eunuchs in the Bible, I only could name one or two. I now have identified nearly 50. Gradually I came to see that at least the God-given role of male eunuchs was apparently to save the lives of the prophets, kings, and queens favored by God. A eunuch saves Joseph, Esther's


uncle Mordecai is a eunuch, a eunuch saves Daniel and his friends, (Daniel may have been a eunuch in training), Nehemiah is a eunuch, an Ethiopian eunuch saves the life of Jeremiah, and three eunuchs save Jesus' life (the Magi). These are only a few examples.

An Ethiopian eunuch becomes the first African Christian, and, according to John McNeill, the first gay Christian. I believe that the passage in Isaiah 56:3-5 that pairs gentiles and eunuchs of both genders is our liberation passage. It prophesies our inclusion by the welcome of "eunuchs who keep the Sabbath," also affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:12, and in the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39. Note that the eunuch in Acts 8 was reading from Isaiah 53, about a Suffering Servant who would be "cut off" from his people (in the verse from Isaiah immediately following the quoted text in Acts), just like all eunuchs would have been, without heirs, no longer connected to the people of God (See Isaiah 56:5). Jesus was a defacto eunuch. Philip used this passage to preach the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, and "nothing" could prevent him from being baptized: not being a eunuch, or a gentile, or a homosexual (which most eunuchs were by nature or by default).

Lydia the Seller of Purple

And there is Lydia of Acts 16, that seller of purple, our color, for many good reasons documented by Judy Grahn in her amazing book *Another Mother Tongue*. When I juxtaposed Grahn's literary and historical/mythological research with the Bible, I learned amazing things.

Lydia, the seller of purple in Philippi, who became the first European Christian (and the first lesbian Christian?), who led a women's prayer group, had her own business and was the head of her own household in a patriarchal culture. Six hundred years before, during the time of Sappho the lesbian poet, the poet Homer wrote that the art of making purple dye was invented by two women from Thyatira, Lydia's hometown. Lydia was the heir of an ancient, possibly lesbian, art, the making of purple dye. And she was totally enchanted with Paul's preaching of this



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Jesus whose love included and empowered everyone. She is one of my favorite candidates for a lesbian in the Bible.

My experience over the last 10 years is that the Bible is full of amazing, surprising details like this one that I believe, at some level, have been left in the Bible for us to find. If we are everywhere, we gay and lesbian people, then we lived in biblical times, too, and we are in the Bible. Our only task is to discover ourselves, as well as those who are bisexual and transgendered. I believe that queer scholars have to start boldly lifting up the many possibilities of our presence in scripture.

Our work has barely begun. It is not enough to simply detoxify the Bible and make it safe from overt homophobia. I believe we have to go way beyond that and aggressively seek and find ourselves in the Bible, outing biblical characters, speculating about others. It will make the Bible more interesting to gay and lesbian people, which, mostly, today, it is not.

The truth is, we are in the Bible and have always been. Biblical closets have to be opened—sometimes gently, sometimes not. Some people will accuse us of going too far, and I say, “So what?” I haven’t come this far in my life as a lesbian Christian preacher to be afraid of “going too far.” I fear we will not go far enough, and that we will not fully claim ourselves as included among the people of God. We’ve got a millennium of work ahead of us. ♡

Nancy Wilson is the pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles, a bilingual, multicultural MCC congregation in West Hollywood, California, in the heart of the gay and lesbian community. She also serves as Vice Moderator of the Universal Fellowship of MCC Churches worldwide. Nancy is an author, a civil rights activist, and ecumenist.



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# The Bible and Love Between Women

Bernadette J. Brooten

The voices of any early Christian women who may have romantically loved other women have not come down to us. Instead, we have the early Christian voices who treated such love with contempt. The apostle Paul declared that same-sex unions shared between women disturbed the natural order (Romans 1:26-27). Paul's understanding of sexual love between women overlaps closely with the general conceptions of sexual relations found throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. Greek and Latin writers in his culture agreed with Paul that a woman was to be "under a man" (Romans 7:2, where the Greek word for "married" is literally "under a man"), thereby the passive object of sexual activity, and not a sexual subject who actively pursues her desires with other women. Paul's teaching on this subject proved foundational for the condemnation of same-sex sexual expression by later Christian writers who argued variously that it was unnatural, impure, dishonorable, shameful, sinful, and rendered the participants deserving of punishment in hell. Further, Paul's negative portrayal of female homoeroticism not only influenced the early church fathers' treatment of the issue, but has also remained influential into our own century.

In what follows, I am focusing on erotic relations between women, but I want to note that Mary Rose D'Angelo has applied Adrienne Rich's concept of a "lesbian continuum" to early Christianity to denote bonding between female partners, regardless of erotic involvement (e.g., Romans 16:12; Philippians 4:11). Early Christianity did provide both women and men with opportunities for close bonding with members of their own sex.

The Jewish Bible explicitly prohibited sexual relations between males

Greek and Latin writers in his culture agreed with Paul that a woman was to be "under a man" (Romans 7:2, where the Greek word for "married" is literally "under a man"), thereby the passive object of sexual activity, and not a sexual subject who actively pursues her desires with other women.

(Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), but not between females. Some have argued that Ruth had a lesbian relationship with her mother-in-law, Naomi (see e.g., Ruth 1:14, "Ruth clung to her [i.e., Naomi]"), but this is speculation, and ultimately, Ruth married a man, Boaz (Ruth 4:13).

Within the New Testament, the gospels do not present Jesus as addressing the question of same-sex sexual expression, but the apostle Paul does condemn relations between both females and males. In his Letter to the Romans, chapter 1, Paul states that idol worshipers could have known God through observing God's created works. He argues that God punished idol worshipers by giving "them up to the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves" (Romans 1:24), and that "God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another" (Romans 1:26-27). Such persons "deserve to die" (Romans 1:32).

Some scholars have argued that Romans 1:26 refers to intercourse between a woman and an animal (prohibited in Leviticus 18:23; 20:16), to intercourse during a woman's menstrual period (prohibited in Leviticus 18:19), or to anal intercourse between a woman and

a man (not prohibited in the Jewish Bible and allowed by the majority of ancient Jewish rabbis). Romans 1:27, however, introduces sexual relations between males with the term "in the same way," thereby specifying that the females' unnatural intercourse was of the same type as that of the males. Further, other ancient sources also depicted sexual relations between women as unnatural (Plato [5th-4th C. BCE], Seneca the Elder [1st C. BCE-1st C. CE], Martial [1st C. CE-2d C. CE], Ovid [1st C. BCE-1st C. CE], Ptolemy [2d C. CE], Artemidoros [2d C. CE], probably Dorotheos of Sidon [1st C. CE]).

## Paul's Sexual Attitudes Culturally Determined

We can best understand Paul's response to sexual relations between women in the context of the culture of the Roman Empire and its assumptions about proper sexual relations. While Roman-period non-Christian writers disagree on whether to condone sexual relations between males, nearly all of these writers condemn sexual relations between women. Against the background of the common cultural assumption that sexual relations should naturally occur between two unequal parties (e.g., a man and his wife, a male slave owner and his male or female slave, a man and his mistress, a man and a prostitute), such writers as Seneca the Elder, Mar-

tial, Soranos (1st-2d C. CE), and Lucian (2d C. CE) depicted women who had sexual relations with other women as having become like men. They applied the term *tribades* (cf. the later term “tribadism”) to such women and represented them as trying to transcend the passive, subordinate role accorded to them by nature and attempting to take on a dominating, penetrating role. Ancient medical writers went as far as to prescribe a selective clitoridectomy, apparently for women whose clitorises were ostensibly capable of penetration (Soranos, as excerpted in Caelius Aurelianus [5th C. CE], Mustio [perhaps 5th or 6th C. CE], and Paulus of Aegina [7th C. CE]). Paul’s condemnation fits in well with the greater awareness of sexual love between women documented in the Roman world.

Paul’s earliest readers, the early church fathers, read Paul as a man of his time; they saw him as condemning homoeroticism for the same reasons that others of their culture did. Paul used the terms “impurity,” “to degrade,” “to exchange,” “natural,” and “unnatural” in the ways that others in the ancient world employed these terms. In ancient Mediterranean culture generally, “impurity” meant a blurring of boundaries, in this case, of the boundaries between femaleness and maleness. Just as, according to the Book of Leviticus, impure animals were those that did not conform to delineated categories, the people about whom Paul was speaking were not maintaining the clear gender polarity and complementarity necessary for a specific social order. Thus, taking seriously Paul’s description of homoeroticism as “impurity” helps us to see it as a societal, rather than a private concern.

The term Paul uses for “degrade” can also be rendered “dishonor.” Paul’s use of this term demonstrates his conviction that the treatment of female and male bodies should differ, especially with respect to honor. Men were accorded honor because their sex occupied a superior and dominant station that afforded them that right. Paul asks in his First Letter to the Corinthians 11:14, “Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him?” This required gender

differentiation in hair length points to bodily appearance as a primary basis for distinguishing between women and men. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul asserts that the man is head of woman. According to 1 Corinthians 11:7, short hair and the lack of a veil signify the male body, as God’s image and glory; the opposite conditions, long hair and veil, apply to the female body, marking the woman’s subordinate status as the glory of man. In this hierarchical framework, a non-compliant woman brings shame upon her husband. Against the background of the gendered cultures of the Roman world, Paul’s earliest readers saw him as condemning men who had relinquished the honor due to the male sex and had become effeminate and women who did not conform to Paul’s model of the man as head of woman.

Paul used the word “exchanged” to indicate that people knew the natural sexual order of the universe and left it behind. Some scholars contend that Paul was referring to heterosexual persons committing homosexual acts, rather than to lesbian and gay persons (e.g., Boswell) or that he did not have a concept of sexual orientation at all (e.g., Goss). While ancient constructions of the erotic differed from our own, both ancient astrological and medical texts attest to the concept of life-long erotic orientations, caused, e.g., by the constellation under which one was born, by the male and female seed not mingling well at conception, or by inheritance. Thus, Paul could well have been familiar with the concept of erotic orientation, without accepting that as a valid reason for homoerotic expression. Similarly, astrologers saw female homoerotic orientation as astrally determined, but nevertheless “unnatural” (e.g., Ptolemy).

### “When in Rome...”

If we read Romans 1:26-27 against the backdrop of a broad range of ancient sources, “natural” intercourse means penetration of a subordinate person by a dominant one. Other Pauline texts further demonstrate that Paul shared common cultural assumptions of the Roman world, for example: Romans 7:2, in which Paul speaks of a married woman as “under a man,” and 1 Corin-

thians 11:2-3, in which Paul calls man “head of woman.” The shapers of Graeco-Roman culture saw any type of vaginal intercourse, whether consensual or coerced, as natural (including, e.g., between a man and his slave). Thus the “natural intercourse” that the females of Romans 1:26 gave up include such forms of vaginal intercourse as marital relations, adultery, rape, incest, prostitution, and sexual relations between an adult male and a minor girl.

These understandings of “natural intercourse” derive from ancient understandings of nature generally. Two principal ways of conceptualizing nature were available to Paul: (1) nature as the order of creation, which would refer to the naturalness of marriage between women and men, based on Genesis 2, according to which God created woman from man (see Paul’s use of Genesis 2 in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16); or (2) the ancient concept that women have a different nature from men. Either concept entails a gender hierarchy. According to either concept, sexual relations between women are “unnatural,” because a sexual encounter necessarily includes an active and a passive partner, and women cannot naturally assume the active role, thus rendering natural sexual relations between women impossible.

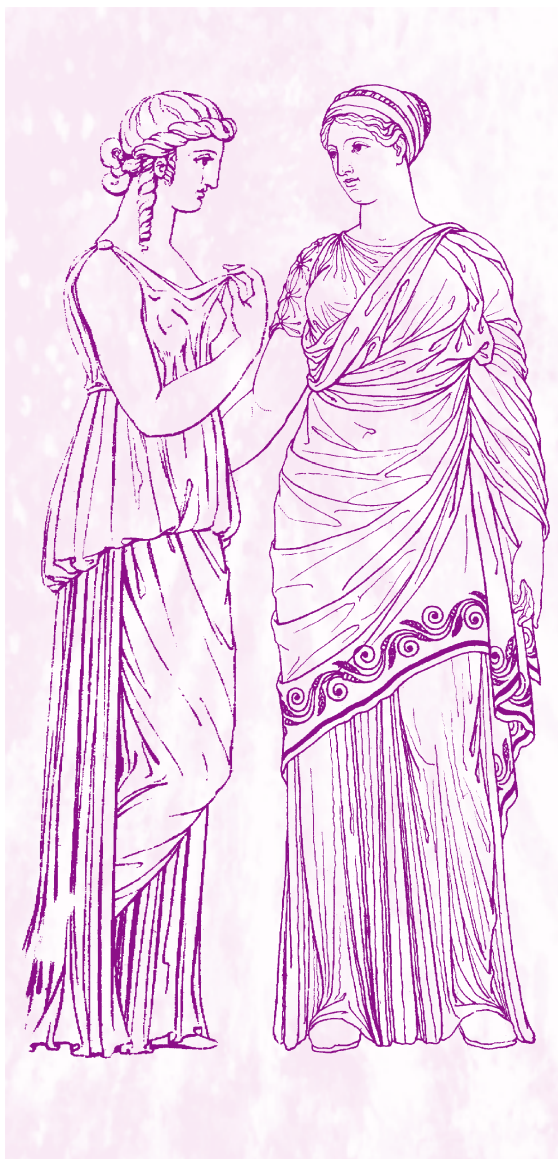
Like Paul, the early Christian writers of the second through the fifth centuries that have been passed down to us vigorously condemn sexual relations between women. Thus, Christian apocalyptic visions of hell echo Paul’s teaching that these women “deserve to die” (Romans 1:32). These visions include images of homoerotic women suffering torture in hell for their sin: being forced to cast themselves off a cliff (*Apocalypse of Peter* [2d C.]), burning in hell (*Acts of Thomas* [3d C.]), and running in a river of fire (*Apocalypse of Paul* [3d C.]). Tertullian of Carthage (2d-3d C.) derides homoerotic women as outsiders to polite society, associating them with prostitutes, and states that one would not want even to take a sip from such a woman’s cup (*On the Pallium; On the Resurrection of the Flesh*). John Chrysostom (4th-5th C.) argues that female homoeroticism is “far more disgraceful” than male homoeroticism, “since they ought

to feel more shame than men.” Chrysostom, arguing that women have a different nature from men and that by nature woman was commanded to be man’s helper, sees homoeroticism as overturning the social order, which is protected by nature: “nature knows her own boundaries.” Chrysostom attacks homoeroticism with such invectives as: “whatever transgression you speak of, you will name none equal to this lawlessness”; “there is nothing more irrational and grievous than this outrage”; and “how many hells will suffice for such people?” (*Homilies on Romans*).

### Marriage Between Women

In spite of tremendous opposition by Christians and others, sources demonstrate that women in this period engaged in what they saw as woman-woman marriage. Clement of Alexandria (2d-3d C.) responds to women who had long-term relationships with other women that they defined as marriage (*Instructor*). (Ptolemy, Lucian, the rabbinical commentary known as the Sifra [before ca. 220 CE], Hephastion of Thebes [4th-5th C. CE], and possibly Iamblichos [2d C. CE] also refer to woman-woman marriage. Further, in a papyrus letter from Egypt [probably 3d C. CE], a mother refers to her daughter’s wife [Papyrus Oxyrhynchos 4340].) Clement argues that such marriages were unnatural because they defied God, who created woman from man in order for her to receive men’s seed and to help him; that they prevented the male seed from finding a proper field; that the uteri of the two women were calling out to be filled with the male seed; that humans should not imitate such lascivious animals as the hare; and that Paul called female homoeroticism unnatural in Romans 1:26-27.

Hippolytos of Rome (2d-3d C.) reports on a group of Gnostic Christians called the Naassenes (defined by Hippolytos as heretical), who rejected “natural intercourse” between women and men on the belief that androgyny characterized the world above. We do



not know whether they promoted same-sex love, but they did interpret Paul in Romans 1:20-27 as speaking about an “unspeakable mystery of blessed pleasure” (*The Refutation of All Heresies*).

Ironically, even though early Christians generally opposed homoeroticism, they themselves created homosocial environments in which it could occur, a fact that did not escape Christian monastic leaders. Egyptian monk Shenute of Atripe (4th-5th C.) explicitly warns nuns against same-sex sexual contact (*On the Monastic Life*) and describes the beating of two nuns as punishment for having had such contact (*Letters*). In a similar vein, Augustine of Hippo (4th-5th C) instructs that nuns go out in groups of three (*Epistles*).

### Are All Biblical Traditions Created Equal?

How can Christians of today respond to this early Christian tradition of condemning sexual love between women? While some Christians might want to downplay it or to see it as just a reflection of ancient culture, I suggest that this horrific vilification of such women requires careful theological reflection. Do we want to perpetuate all biblical traditions that have persisted through the centuries? Do we agree with Paul that such love is unnatural, with the *Acts of Thomas* that such women should burn in hell, or with John Chrysostom that women ought to feel more shame than men? These are Christian traditions, but are they traditions of which we can be proud? Christian citizens have a special responsibility to rethink Christian teachings that have historically led to physical torture and even death. For example, an American colonial statute in New Haven placed sexual love between women under the death penalty, explicitly quoting Romans 1:26 as support (*New Haven’s Settling in New England: And Some Lawes for Government*). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons can greatly contribute to a moral reform of Christianity by soberly facing our past and creating theologies for the future. ▼

A version of this article will appear in the *Encyclopedia of Lesbianism*, Bonnie Zimmerman, editor (Garland Publishers).

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# Breaking Open Tradition

Ann M. Amideo

Each step closer to the front door of my parents' home intensified the pounding of my heart. The long impending spiritual battle had at last arrived. The stage was set to unveil my sexual orientation to my traditional Roman Catholic parents. Two pensive faces greeted me at the kitchen table. St. Jude's tattered novena card was propped up against the napkin holder. A deafening moment of silence lingered. Mom impulsively rose to her feet. "You can't expect us to accept your lifestyle! This is against every tradition of church and family we hold dear," she asserted with rare authority. At 21, I received the dreaded ultimatum: conform with our traditions or you are no longer a member of our family.

Within 24 hours, all my essential belongings were crammed into my rickety old Ford Escort. Turning the key signaled the birth of my exile. This injurious fracture in family life stirred a frenzy of unsettling questions. Technically, Mom was correct. Being a lesbian was not aligned with my family's normative traditions. But does change in tradition always constitute a sacrilegious act? Do time-honored family and religious traditions ever mutate with age...even cease? I earnestly hungered for answers. This cataclysmic event ignited a life long spiritual sojourn and study of sacred scripture.

Ten lonesome years elapsed before my parents and I arrived at a compromise resolution. Still, the word tradition remains an Achilles heel for myself and many other gay and lesbian Christians. Right wing religious and political groups continue their disingenuous application of the phrase "traditional values" with propaganda that demonizes gay and lesbian people. Like a weapon, the word "tradition" is surreptitiously aimed at gay and lesbian people to defend the status quo of exclusion. Rhetoric is manipulated to cast gays and lesbians as the enemy of tra-

ditional marriage, child rearing, family values, moral rectitude, and of course, traditional Christian values.

The erroneous assumption of this propaganda insinuates that traditions are immutable and sealed with the holy stamp of God. On the contrary, sacred scripture has astonished me with numerous occasions where God alters, confronts or terminates time honored traditions. What follows are some examples.

## Deuteronomy and Exclusion

Deuteronomy states, "No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 23:1). The eunuchs were cast as a spiritual aberration to God because he lacked power to transmit life. However, further on in the Book of Isaiah we encounter a dramatic shift in this tradition of exclusion. The prophet Isaiah declares, "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbath and choose what pleases me, and hold fast to my covenant, to them I will give in my house and within my walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off" (Isaiah 56:4-5).

God not only welcomes eunuchs into the assembly, but rewards their vibrant faithfulness with a memorial. Israel is directed by God to cease a tradition excluding those who are innately different, yet abundant in faithfulness. How much more should the church today honor the faithfulness of gay and lesbian people? In this unprecedented era, whereby the charitable spiritual gifts of gay and lesbian are visible, why do sanctions remain?

## Amos and Oppression

The prophet Amos delivers a sobering message to the decaying religious traditions of the Israelites. They are charged with oppressing the poor,

crushing the needy, and distressing the righteous. Amos unmask a total disregard for human rights and social justice. God denounces the manipulation of religious traditions to extort material wealth and status: "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to me burnt offerings and grain, I will not accept them" (Amos 5:21-22). The power of this text is jarring. Outwardly pious religious traditions will not compensate for inner hypocrisy. What does God desire from God's community of chosen people? The answer is revealed in a subsequent verse, "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). According to Amos, traditions must honor God's people or they do not honor God.

## Matthew and Hypocrisy

The New Testament reveals a disquieting confrontation between Jesus and religious tradition. The Pharisees and Scribes question Jesus regarding his disciples "transgressing the tradition of the elders" (Matthew 15:2). They did not wash their hands before a meal—a tradition which marked ceremonial purity as noted in Leviticus 22:46. Jesus responds, "And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3). Jesus hurls a revolutionary accusation at religious authorities. He exposes a tradition which deliberately opposes the commandment to "Honor thy father and mother" (Exodus 20:12).

Jesus knows religious authority can manipulate tradition for selfish gain. He reveals that inner purity supersedes ritual piety: "The people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Matthew 15:8). I am reminded that gay and lesbian people are the contemporary scapegoats for religious finger-pointing brigades. Yet, a comforting paradox emerges. We are also the beneficiaries of solace knowing that Jesus protects the innocent by holding a mirror to the pointing finger.

## Matthew and Family Values

The next time you are assaulted by well-intentioned Christians with the phrase "traditional family values," direct them

to Matthew 12:49-50. Again, Jesus upsets the status quo of tradition by raising the perplexing question, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" (Matthew 2:48). In the context of Jewish tradition, blood lineage is an essential requirement for property inheritance, marital arrangements, religious community, and societal status. Depending on bloodline, you were either in or out. Jesus answers his own rhetorical question pointing to the multitudes of people (not bloodline) stating, "Behold my mothers and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, they are my brother, sister and mother" (Matthew 12:49-50).

Jesus has the audacity to announce faith and love, not biology, as the primary defining characteristics of family. His words shatter the ironclad tradition of family defined by correct gender, ethnicity, and DNA. This text offers profound liberation, not only for same-sex families, but all creations of domestic life built upon Gospel values. Christ-centered family values will embrace foster children, adopted children, single people and their friends, single parent families, interracial and interfaith marriages. Our potential to plumb the depths of family intimacy will be actualized only when we recognize our common spiritual bloodline.

### A Living Tradition

The illumination of these four biblical texts welcome *all* people of faith to breathe a healing sigh of relief. Our God does not stagnate in tradition. An adjustment in tradition may be imminent when the love of God, coupled with the love of neighbor, are foremost. The insights gleaned from these texts challenge the alleged immutable nature of tradition.

- Religious traditions are abolished, replaced, maintained, or renovated upon God's command. We must avoid idolizing tradition.
- God honors tradition relative to its ability to reflect the divine nature of mercy, compassion, love, justice, and inclusivity.

- God is not honored by tradition that:
  - ~ serves to exclude those who are faithful, yet different, poor, or marginalized;
  - ~ extorts material wealth for selfish gain;
  - ~ judges or condemns the innocent;
  - ~ manifests disingenuous religiosity in an attempt to camouflage hypocrisy.

It is not my intention to cajole anyone, least of all my family, into abandoning the traditions they esteem valuable. Analogous to the prophet Isaiah, I am hoping my family of origin and faith can create room in the assembly. I would prefer to herald in the breaking *open* of tradition as opposed to *breaking* tradition. All four texts cry out for expansion and growth. We must be willing to hold our traditions with open hands rather than tight fists.

I am not holding my breath waiting for conservative religious authorities to acquiesce to my conclusions. Surprisingly, Mom has since conceded to her fear: fear of losing her security, fear of being humiliated, fear of failing as a traditional parent, fear of tainting the family reputation with deviant outsiders, fear of the unknown. Love has begun to replace fear with welcome. Joyfully, Mom and Dad are still celebrating their traditions. I am discovering the delight of creating new ones. We are both learning to surrender our ideas about tradition to God. But most of all, we are both rejoicing that we are no longer slaves to tradition. ▼

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## SELECTED RESOURCES ON THE BIBLE

### VIDEO

*Panelists: Homosexuality and the Bible*, featuring Dr. Robert Goss, author of *Jesus ACTED UP*, New Testament scholars Dr. Dale Martin and Dr. Deirdre Good, and Hebrew scholars Dr. Sam Olyan and Dr. Ken Stone. \$12 from Other Sheep, c/o Gordon Herzog, Suite 910, 319 N. 4th St., St. Louis, MO 63102.

### BOOKS

*Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*, edited by Robert L. Brawley.

*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, John Boswell.

*The Church and the Homosexual*, John J. McNeill.

*Coming Out as Sacrament*, Chris Glaser.

*Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today*, L. William Countryman.

*The Good Book: Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart*, Peter J. Gomes.

*Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, Derrick Sherwin Bailey.

*Jesus ACTED UP: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto*, Robert Goss.

*Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times*, Tom Horner.

*Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*, Bernadette J. Brooten.

*Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible*, Nancy Wilson.

*Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture*, John Shelby Spong.

*Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, John Boswell.

*Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity*, Bruce Bawer.

*What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, Daniel A. Helminiak.

*The Word Is Out—Daily Reflections on the Bible for Lesbians and Gay Men*, Chris Glaser.

### FROM THE OPPOSITION

*Scripture & Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today*, Marion L. Soards.

# Scripture, Homosexuality, and the Nature of Christianity

Daniel A. Helminiak

Originally presented at First United Methodist Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for a regional meeting of Reconciling Communities and published in unabridged form in *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 47, 1999, pp. 261-271, with full documentation.

What does the Bible teach? In practice, it depends on what people happen to hear in it. Different listeners hear different things. "Interpretation" is central to talk of biblical teaching. Add questions about sexual ethics and the discussion becomes more complicated, for sex is emotionally charged, and emotions cloud thinking.

At stake in the Christian debate over homosexuality is the nature of Christianity itself. Fundamentalists and mainline Christians would likely agree with this statement. However, and most revealing, they are also likely to differ on sexual ethics. But more important than anyone's opinion are the broad implications of this debate.

On the conservative pole stand Evangelical Christianity and Biblical Fundamentalism. Though sometimes very different religious emphases, when homosexuality is the topic, these two groups rely on what is basically a literal reading of the Bible. Thus, in Romans 1, F. LaGard Smith sees Paul condemning lesbian and gay sex as unnatural, degrading, and shameless, and R. B. Hays and Thomas Schmidt see gay sex as an affront to the very order of God's creation.

In what appears to be one of the most common mistakes in interpreting this passage, that reading runs together the verses on sex (26-27) and the verses that follow (28-32). As a result, same-sex behaviors are associated with a long list of egregious offenses: evil, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, and so on, which even have a death penalty attached. The conclusion is that the Bible condemned gay sex in ancient times and that the condemnation remains as strong today as ever.

Across mainline denominations, contemporary biblical scholarship uses a more critical method of interpretation. It insists on reading Paul's words in the context of his own time and place. As a result, the "historical-critical method" comes to a more permissive ethical conclusion. Yet even then, there is a variety of opinions.

Some, like Victor Furnish and Bernadette Brooten, believe that Paul was indeed condemning same-sex acts. But, they point out, his reasons for condemning them do not hold today and his understanding of same-sex acts was simply not what we speak of today—homosexuality as a component of the personality, probably biologically determined, beyond personal choice, fixed in early childhood, and linked not just to sex acts, but to a person's very capacity for bonding and affection. Taking into consideration the findings of today's medicine, psychology, and sociology, these scholars conclude that the Bible's teaching never addressed today's questions and current ethical answers must be based on something other than scripture.

Still relying on a critical reading of the historical evidence, but coming to an even more liberal conclusion, L. William Countryman and I have argued that Romans 1 did not condemn the same-sex behaviors of Paul's day. Rather, Paul saw sexual practices as a matter of purity in the sense that the Jewish Law understood the matter.

In Romans 1:24, Paul announced the topic of his discussion of sexual behavior: *akatharsia*, impurity. This topic stands in contrast to the topic of that long list of sins in verses 28-32: *ta me kathékonta*. This latter phrase, translated "things not to be done," is a technical

Stoic term for clearly unethical acts. Paul intended to contrast impurity with sin. Moreover, Paul used another technical Stoic term, *para physin*. It is usually translated "unnatural," but this translation makes no sense in 11:24 where the same term refers to acts of God. So according to Paul's usage, in contrast to the Stoic, this term should be translated "atypical." As Brooten has shown, Paul was using the popular, not the technical, meaning for this term, and like the other two descriptors in the passage on same-sex acts, *degrading* and *shameless*, it implies no ethical condemnation. Rather, Paul painted a picture of social disapproval and disdain. He was talking about ritual impurity, not immorality or wickedness.

## Religious Purity and Cultural Categories Irrelevant in Christ

Paul deliberately opened his letter to the Romans with a contrast between ritual impurity and wickedness. His purpose was to make one of the main points of his letter: the purity requirements of the Old Law have become irrelevant in Christ, and Jewish and Gentile converts should not splinter the Christian community by bickering over matters of custom and culture. Unless they are otherwise wrong, sexual practices in themselves are ethically neutral.

B. Barbara Hall provides further support for this interpretation. Coming from a completely different direction and apparently unaware of Countryman's interpretation of Romans 1, she concluded that Paul would not be concerned about differences in sexual orientation today.

According to Hall, Paul's vision of Christianity was revolutionary. Gala-

tians 6:11-16 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 present a picture of a new order in Christ. In it, all standard polarities and cultural categories are superseded and become irrelevant. Galatians 3:28 gives a specific list and shows how radical Paul's thought actually was: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ." 1 Corinthians 7 illustrates that in Paul's mind there is no one right way for Christians to live out their sexuality. Paul is open to all the options of his day. What matters for Paul is not one's specific lifestyle, but the Christian virtue one expresses through it.

There is solid argument that Paul did not even condemn the same-sex behaviors of his day. Granted this interpretation, the scriptures themselves would certainly allow loving gay and lesbian relationships today.

## Same-Gender Couples in Scripture

Finally, pushing that conclusion a step further, there is an even more liberal reading of the Bible's teaching on homosexuality. One could argue that, not only does the Bible not condemn same-sex behaviors per se, but it actually supports them in some instances. Two cases are apropos.

First, in *Jonathan Loved David*, Tom Horner argued persuasively that these two Old Testament heroes were sexual partners. Described in 1 Samuel, their relationship fits the model of noble military lovers. Such relationships were common and well-known throughout the ancient middle East.

Second, James Miller and others suggest that Jesus' healing of the centurion's servant, recounted in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10, reestablished the relationship of two male lovers. The provocative alternation between two Greek terms for servant, *pais* and *doulos*, in those passages; the consistent quotation of the centurion referring to the sick servant as *pais*; and Luke's comment that the servant boy was *entimos* (dear, valuable) to the presumably wealthy centurion, easily allow that there was an important emotional bond between the two. In addition, as John Boswell

pointed out, *pais* was sometimes used to mean male lover. It would be wrong to conclude that, by not condemning this relationship, Jesus approved of it. Still, in light of the often heard claim that homosexuality is the paradigmatic rejection of God's plan for creation, it is peculiar that Jesus never spoke out against same-sex behaviors, especially when he was face-to-face with the Roman centurion.

In any case, in order to dramatize the overall point, it can be argued that the Bible actually endorses homosexual love.

There is an array of opinions about the Bible's ethical teaching on gay sex. Either the Bible condemns it outright and totally, or the Bible condemns same-sex acts but not in terms of homosexuality as we know it today, or else the Bible does not condemn same-sex acts in themselves but is neutral on the matter, or finally, the Bible, in part, actually endorses same-sex love.

A similar state of affairs applies to other ethical questions like divorce, the status of women in marriage and society, or the acceptable way to raise and discipline children. And on numerous current questions—like genetic engineering, cloning, nuclear energy, computer technology, environmental responsibility—it is hardly to be expected that the ancient texts of the Bible express any opinion at all. Thus, when the Bible is to be the source of answers about ethical questions, no clear and simple answer is forthcoming.

The only honest response in this case seems to disqualify appeals to the Bible regarding ethical questions. If the biblical teaching is so ambiguous that consensus on the teaching is nearly impossible to achieve, the teaching cannot be helpful. It must be disregarded. Ethical questions must be resolved in some other way.

This is a disturbing conclusion for Christians. Where does Christianity stand if the scriptures are irrelevant to Christian living?

## The Question of Interpretation

The teaching of the Bible is not to blame for that disturbing conclusion. Actually,

the principles of interpretation that were brought to bear on the Bible explain the differing opinions. So, attention needs to turn to interpretation.

The line of demarcation in the previous array of opinions fell between the literal and the historical-critical approaches. Only the literal approach resulted in the absolute condemnation of homosexual relationships. In one way or another, the critical approaches all allowed room for acceptance. Therefore, not the scriptures, but the mind that one brings to them, is what determines ethical conclusions. This point needs to be emphasized.

Our human minds are both a blessing and a burden. Self-aware and capable of reflection, we have become historically, psychologically, and hermeneutically sophisticated. This is to say, we now take for granted the need to get behind mere words. We routinely ask, "What is their context?" "How are they used in this case?" "What is the concern of the speaker?" "What is his or her real intent?" And thus, we cannot but ask, "What do the words really mean?"

We are aware that the meaning is the key and that, like a smile or a nod, the same words can carry very different meanings in different situations. In all things human, the human subject is the bottom line. We create our own worlds. We make our own interpretations. And more and more, we all know this. (See P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* [New York: Doubleday, 1967].)

Today, no one can hide from the awareness that the base of life has shifted. No longer do authority, convention, cultural inheritance, or tradition restrict individuals and societies. Rather, we routinely appropriate and adjust these, applying them to our own situation according to our own best judgment. And we realize that such a process of inheritance and adaptation was also behind the very traditions that we are now adapting. We are more aware of this process than any previous generation.

A religion that relies on texts must admit that the ground has shifted. As

Bernard Lonergan suggests, the thinking mind, not the text or the inherited religious teaching, is now rock bottom. Some take this realization to mean that anything goes. To this striking position they apply the name *post-modernism*. The implication is that we have entered a new era, and indeed we have, but what remains to be seen is how this new era will go down in history. One rendition is that the certainties of the past, and even the hope for certainty, have given way to thorough-going relativism. Nothing is absolute. Nothing is sacred. There is no right and wrong. All depends on what one wants to make of it.

People concerned about ethics rightly shudder at that position. It is grossly mistaken and dangerous. The difference between truth and falsehood is real. Even the relativists must tacitly accept this fact, for they indulge in truth claims. Their claim that there are and can be no firm truths is a statement about what is supposedly the case. They do not walk their talk.

Besides, if our own creative minds are a critical factor in our construction of a meaningful world, our construction also depends on factors that are independent of ourselves. For example, the density of matter remains. Gravity continues to make things fall. Emotions eventually show themselves. Hatred is inevitably self-destructive. Falsehood forebodes an unstable future. In fact, we cannot make things into whatever we would like. There are unavoidable regularities in the universe.

With regard to the Bible, its verses do say something; its words and sentences do impose limits on what one could claim the Bible teaches. Though determination of the biblical teaching depends on the human mind, the Bible also has a mind of its own.

Overall, the Bible fosters a spirit of wonder, praise, humility, thanksgiving, faithfulness, personal integrity, honesty, justice, welcome, concern, compassion, forgiveness, change of heart, reconciliation. These notions express the mind of the Bible, and their validity is everlasting. Only the devil could question their ongoing relevance to ethical decision-making.

When the focus is on attitudes, the biblical teaching remains completely

relevant to human living. Scripture still have an important role to play when we make ethical decisions. The biblical mind informs our own minds and thus influences whatever we do.

The same point can be made in more technical terms. Alasdair MacIntyre discussed this matter in detail. If we return to the classical concern for *aretaic* ethics—that is, ethics build on virtue, excellence, and character formation—the scriptures remain fully relevant. But if our intent is the modern preoccupation with *deontic* ethics—that is, ethics that would spell out in legal fashion every act that is to be performed—the scriptural teaching becomes moot, for it is controverted. The array of opinions about biblical teaching on homosexuality provided an example.

### Four Intimations of a New Christianity

1. The biblical mind actually corresponds to the mind of the critical thinker. Biblical wonder, questioning, dedication, honesty, personal integrity, and commitment to truth are the very qualities that come to fruition in current critical thinking. Indeed, the biblical attitude, along with the contribution of the Greeks, is behind Western civilization's achievement of modern science. And in the humanities, this scientific mentality shows itself in the emergence of the historical-critical method.

Thus, when one attends to the attitude of the Bible and not to its specific pronouncements, the historical-critical method turns out to enjoy biblical endorsement, and the literalism of Biblical Fundamentalism appears to be unbiblical. By the same token, in one way or another, the liberal ethical conclusion regarding homosexuality turns out to be the biblical teaching.

2. The biblical mind also corresponds with the mind of naturalistic ethics. The Bible fosters an unreserved commitment to good and the ongoing pursuit of justice and love in every situation. These are the same attitudes that motivate any person of good will who seeks to know what is the right thing to do.

Ethical people attend to all the evidence, look to personal experience, con-

sult the experts of the day, apply their best reasoning, and collaborate with other honest seekers. Thus, they arrive at ethical decisions. In doing these things, they are also implementing the mind of the Bible. They are embodying the holy attitude that the Bible enshrines. Whether they conceive the matter in these terms or not, they are acting "as God would want," they are doing "what Jesus would do," they are being "led by the Holy Spirit" in their present situation. Heard with both a secular and religious ear, the biblical teaching on ethics can be summarized in the words of St. Augustine, "Love, and do what you will."

3. Attention to the mind of the Bible brings insight into the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. The Bible is not to be read as a cookbook for Christian living. The Bible was not intended to provide ready-made answers to our ethical questions. Rather, the Bible is a record of paradigmatic examples of how godly people live. Our task is to learn a lesson from the examples and apply it in our own lives.

That way of approaching the scriptures presupposes that the Bible emerged from within the Christian community. The Bible did not descend pristine and pure directly from heaven. It was not transcribed by an entranced scribe responding to divine dictation. Rather, the Bible is the historical record of people's experience of God. To be sure, the Bible is the record of a privileged era. However, in that era the early Christians were facing *their* ethical questions just as Christians do today. The same process of ethical decision-making operates throughout.

Recognition of that consistent process blurs the distinction between Scripture and Tradition. If tradition means the ongoing teaching of the churches, then the scriptures are a part of this tradition. But because of the Scriptures' privileged position, they inform whatever else comes later. They inform future decisions precisely by enshrining the attitude that keeps the ongoing tradition on track.

Thus, the old Protestant-Catholic debate over Scripture and Tradition dissolves, and the opposing sides fall to-

gether. The historical-critical method and the mind of the Bible bring Christianity back into unity. By the same token, the nature of Christianity, at least where ethics are concerned, is clarified, and in the process, the literalism of biblical fundamentalism disqualifies it as a Christian religion. Mountains crumble. Valleys are filled. Monumental shifts are occurring.

The Christian approach to ethics is complex and nuanced. The scriptures play a role, but they are only one part of a bigger picture. The Methodist "quadrilateral" usefully depicts that whole picture: Christian decision-making appeals to scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Those four are the very elements that, in varying configurations, the other Christian churches also invoke. There is appreciable consensus on these matters across denominations. More and more, this consensus defines the Christian way.

As for lesbian and gay relationships, the broad picture seems to include them. Evidence continues to mount. Most recently, we hear that the physiological functioning of the lesbian's inner ear differs from the non-lesbian's and that this difference is a biological given. As the findings of medical and social science and the experience of gay Christians accumulate, the critical reading of the scriptures gains more and more credibility, and the on-going teaching of the churches, Tradition, gravitates toward a new equilibrium. All the pieces—scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—converge to interlock and confirm one another. Christianity takes another transformative step forward on its life-giving mission through history.

4. The final implication is that the biblical mind is open to all religions and peoples. Insofar as the biblical mind corresponds with the mind of critical thinking and the mind of naturalistic ethics, the biblical mind also corresponds with that of authentic humanism. The openness, questioning, honesty, and good will that the Bible requires are the very same qualities that, according to Bernard Lonergan, define genuine humanity in any of its cultural expressions.

The emphasis is on "genuine" because an alternative is possible. We can

deform and misshape ourselves. In religious terms, we can sin. Still, the presupposition is that the human spirit in all of us, fortified by the Holy Spirit, is geared toward what is right, true, and good. In religious terms, it is geared toward God. So again with St. Augustine, we could pray, "Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you." And this statement holds true whether a person believes in God or not, for this statement is about the human heart.

A Christianity that attends to the mind of the Bible rather than to its specific ethical prescriptions is a Christianity that is open to a global and religiously diverse society. Thus, Christianity steps into and remains relevant in the third millennium. Such Christianity affirms and embraces any person of good will. And all this is said without any prejudice to the distinctive Christian beliefs about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Christian church. Although these Christian specifics do color the expression of the authentic humanism represented in the biblical mind, they do not reshape it in any way that would exclude non-Christians from human communion. True Christianity is ecumenical Christianity because it includes authentic humanism, and the inclusion of authentic humanism entails the reconciliation of religion and the human sciences. Gays and lesbians are not the only class of people that a new Christianity would embrace.

### At Stake: The Nature of Christianity

The very nature of Christianity is at stake in the current discussion of gay and lesbian love. Claims about biblical teaching on homosexuality are linked with people's positions on how to interpret the Bible, and the positions on biblical interpretation are linked with differing conceptions of Christianity. The present discussion envisions a Christianity that is ecumenical in the broadest sense—open through our common humanity to all peoples in their good-willed and wholesome living even while retaining the specifics of Christian belief for those who are Christian. The present discussion envi-

sions the integration of Christianity and psychology.

On the basis of that logic, as suggested here and argued elsewhere, biblical fundamentalism has abandoned authentic Christianity. Yet by turning condemnation of homosexuality into a litmus test of Christianity, fundamentalism reveals a correct intuition. It fears the loss of Christianity, and its apprehension is justified. But it is mistaken and superficial to identify homosexuality as the threat.

On the contrary, this analysis suggests that the loss of Christianity will occur only if everyone adopts the literalism of biblical fundamentalism. Apart from that, not the loss of Christianity, but its transformation is at stake. The pain of this transformation is the apprehension that Fundamentalists and Christians alike are feeling. Changing attitudes toward homosexuality are merely an expression of this deeper process.

Still, the fundamentalist alarm is a useful reminder that mammoth shifts are underway and that churches need to be careful about how far they allow things to shift. Surely, it is myopic to tie these shifts simplistically to homosexuality and other culturally-conditioned biblical prescriptions. But if one insists on doing so, nonetheless, a disconcerting but unavoidable question arises: Does Christianity itself stand or fall with lesbians and gays? In light of the present analysis, the answer appears to be, Yes. ▼



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# QUESTION (Biblical) AUTHORITY!

## Free in the Spirit, Not Shackled by a Text

T. Lynn Stott

It was with eagerness that I first contacted *Open Hands* about writing an article for this issue. As a lesbian and a New Testament scholar who has felt alienated by the religious traditions that helped shape my commitments and as someone who has (until lately) had to remain closeted in my family and my workplace, I thought this would be an excellent forum for me to make a contribution by suggesting models of interpreting the biblical texts in ways which, as stated in the call for papers, “focus on liberating the Bible from pre-conceptions and prejudices and reading it as restorative and empowering.”

As I began to prepare an article, however, I found my resolution crumbling. Sure, I can offer new readings of the biblical texts that have been used to legitimize the oppression and exclusion of LGBT people from church life and church blessing. However, I’m forced to acknowledge the existence of great segments of the Bible that are repressive and exclusionary. In addition, most biblical texts can be interpreted in a variety of ways. One can overlay them with different concepts of history, understandings of authority, perceptions of Jesus and Judaism in the first century, linguistic perspectives, and theoretical approaches and produce a host of viable interpretations. Some interpretations will support the beauty and sanctity of the lives and relationships of LGBT folks, some will condemn those lives (as many have).

In considering how I might offer a liberating interpretation of a tiny section of a Bible of which many parts can legitimately be used to support non-liberating stances, I began to see my questions and concerns cluster around a different issue. Why do we persist in supporting the Bible as an *authority* for our lives? Why does this set of myths, legends, and community foundation documents from the Ancient Mediterranean world exercise such a strong in-

fluence in our consciousness and sense of self-worth as children of God? How does adherence to any concept of biblical authority (however defined) further the justice needs of LGBT folks in 21<sup>st</sup> century American churches and society?

I should pause here to assure you that I am not opposed to the Bible, *per se*. I grew up in denominations deeply rooted in the Bible (Free Will Baptist and, later, Southern Baptist); I grew up loving its stories, memorizing its passages, finding in its pages comfort, spiritual inspiration, and calls to pursue justice. I have dedicated more than a decade of my adult life to studying and teaching the Bible. I have struggled time and time again to help students see its elegance, its artistry, its windows into ancient cultures and mindsets, its views of God and of humanity’s place in God’s creation, its understandings of justice, its potential for liberation, its potential for oppression, and its relevance to our lives as participants in Western cultural traditions. I speak from close in, not from some “safe” distance.

### The Bible’s Limitations

The truth of the matter is that while I can see parts of the Bible as spiritually inspiring, comforting, and insightful with regard to models of justice and human nature, I *always* also see other parts of it as oppressive and exclusionary. After my years of graduate study and college teaching, I find it difficult to champion the Bible as a source of authority in any generalized fashion. Even in my desire to use my experience and knowledge to the benefit of Queer communities, I come up short regarding what I believe I can, in good conscience, suggest people do about interpreting the Bible as a source of authority for modern ethics or social policy.

The Bible, you see, is a collection of ancient texts from far away cultures to which very few of us can claim ancestral heritage. It was written in languages

most of us have never heard and few can read. There was no direct, uninterrupted transmission of divinely guided, sacred, and perfect ancient texts. Our translations are made from hand-written copies of still more ancient hand-written copies.

The texts of the Hebrew Scriptures reflect grand mythic visions of a creator god and mythologized histories of that god’s interactions with certain (usually select and exclusive) groups of human beings. God is a god who chooses, abandons, judges, protects, vindicates, and destroys. The stories are written in the cultural languages of ancient, patriarchal, and often militaristic cultural groups. They include frequent imagery of “us versus them” and generally assume the inferiority of women and accept slavery as a given institution.

The texts of the Christian New Testament are the foundation documents of a first century Jewish sect which became a major Gentile religious movement. The gospels represent four distinct interpretations of Jesus’ life, his work, and his purpose in the grand scheme of things. They also represent differing views of who the true followers of Jesus are and what they can expect in the future. Paul’s writings (as well as those of later writers whose work depends on Paul’s) struggle to identify Christians as the new “chosen ones” of God. By the time of the later epistles, Christian writers have claimed a fairly rigid rule of appropriate behavior, social structure, and exclusion of “undesirables” that parallels, in some ways, the “us versus them” language of the Hebrew Scriptures and calls, not for a radical new social order (which some would consider Jesus to have called for), but for an order in which the status quo of the Roman world is dutifully replicated. This view also assumes slavery and the “natural” inferiority of women.

Certainly, there are passages in the Bible that portray the inclusive nature

of God, the grace of the spirit, and a radically egalitarian vision of God's reign. These passages, which I imagine formed the religious views and social commitments of many of us, are, however, always in the company of the sections of the Bible that portray God as judgmental, exclusionary, vindictive, and jealous—passages which are interpreted by many as justifying “Christian” domination of the earth and of any group which can be deemed “outside of God's will,” LGBT folks included.

### No Biblical Unity or Purity

The texts of the Bible are not unified in one homogeneous message and everyone (and I mean *everyone*, literalist/fundamentalist and liberationist alike) who wishes to grant an authoritative place for the Bible in Christianity must pick and choose which parts of the Bible to emphasize and which ones to ignore. The passages or stories one holds dear demonstrate one's own theological vision and Christian self-understanding. However, someone else can select a different set of passages and stories (or a different interpretation of the same passages) and end up with a completely different (and sometimes oppositional) vision of the same God.

This clash of interpretations of the same sets of material is particularly interesting when one considers that one of the motivations driving the desire for a canon of Christian scripture in the second to fourth centuries (and one of the reasons for Paul's writing some of his letters in the mid-first century) was the desire for unity and relative uniformity of Christian belief. This ancient selection of a collection of texts to be deemed Christian, however, has not led to a uniformity of beliefs as the centuries have passed, but to a diversity even more wide-ranging than that of the earliest Christians. Many of us Queer folk encounter aspects of the range of Christian interpretations in a painful way when our experiences of ourselves as children called by God conflicts with the possibilities allowed by our families, our church communities, or our denominational hierarchy. After all, if Jesus loves “all the children of the world,” why isn't there room for us in his church?

And so I ask, why do we feel it necessary to find biblical authority for the persons we are and the lives we lead? Generations have come to rely on the texts of the Bible as somehow revelatory of God's will for humanity—a will that for some reason God revealed to the ancients in a more direct way than God reveals it to modern people. Many Christians read the Bible as conservative Muslims are taught to read the Qur'an, as God's revealed will and word, divine, immutable, clear and precise. Not only does this approach ignore the historical development, transmission, and canonization of the texts which comprise the Bible, it has forced the issue of interpretation to become an effort at unlocking the secrets in this mysterious “Word” that God intends for us and our society. This attitude is not limited to literalists (a.k.a. “fundamentalists”), it shows up among Queer folk as well. After all, these ancient, foreign texts are often obscure and confusing. We believe, however, that if we only look hard enough, with the light slanted just so, and use the right interpretive trick, then we will be able to prove irrefutably that the Bible speaks God's word of liberation to us and shame to those who would exclude us.

The gyrations of mind and hermeneutics required for this task are immense. The results of our efforts at liberating interpretation, while they can be tremendously inspiring, are often fragile and tenuous, easily shot down by more conservative, traditional approaches to the text. After all, the tradition and cultural presumptions of much of the Bible are not particularly liberating at all. What is the problem then? The problem is our approach to the Bible itself. We have bought into the myth of the Bible as mysteriously divine and as foundational to the practice of modern Christianity. We have forgotten the role of experience of spirit in our own sense of belonging and in our practice of our faith and commitments to justice.

### Keeping a Perspective

I would argue that though many of us experience the liberating, life-giving spirit of Christ in our lives, our work, and our call to be our truest selves, our

desire to find legitimation for our lives in the texts of the Bible places us in collusion with the efforts of those who would deny us that same legitimation. Adherence to any theory of biblical authority supports the efforts of those who would designate the Bible as the sole source of authority (fully negative) in determining the legitimacy of our lives as Christian LGBT folks. That is very wrong. If we limit “legitimate” witness of the grace and mercy of God to the interpretation of biblical texts, even if those interpretations are our own, we help weave the rope with which others wish to strangle us.

The Bible as a whole will never be completely on the side of what most of us understand as liberation. It is a text which covers too many cultures, time periods, and political ideologies to provide any consistent guidance for modern questions of social ethics.

I suggest we hold the Bible near, but in perspective. It is a rich and important text to Christianity, but it is not the voice of God. It is the voice of many human attempts to envision God. Sometimes those ancient visions provide inspiration and guidance for our struggles in this day and age; sometimes they don't. I suggest that we loosen our grip on this grand old tome, recognizing its cultural, historical, and ideological limitations, and turn to it not for authority, but for comfort, inspiration, positive and negative models of action, metaphor, and for just some good old stories. Let us, like some of the earliest Christians, value in ourselves the living spirit that called us and follow that spirit's guidance as we seek life, justice, and a model of a new way. ▼

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# WELCOMING MOVEMENT TOPS 1000!

Since 1978, 1,046 churches, 45 campus ministries, 34 judicatories, and seven national and international ministries have publicly declared themselves welcoming of lesbian and gay people. These 1,069\* welcoming communities are found in ten denominations in 46 states and the District of Columbia of the United States and in five provinces of Canada. The complete list (as of January 26, 2000) follows. The affiliation of each is designated by the following codes:

|     |                                                                 |     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| AC  | Affirming Congregation Programme (United Church of Canada) .... | 15  |
| ML  | More Light Presbyterians .....                                  | 95  |
| OAS | Oasis (Episcopal) .....                                         | 58  |
| ONA | Open and Affirming (United Church of Christ) .....              | 310 |
| O&A | Open & Affirming (Disciples) .....                              | 44  |
| RIC | Reconciling in Christ (Lutheran) .....                          | 186 |
| RC  | Reconciling Congregation Program (United Methodist) .....       | 188 |
| SCN | Supportive (Brethren/Mennonite) .....                           | 26  |
| W&A | Welcoming & Affirming (American Baptist) .....                  | 39  |
| WEL | Welcoming (Unitarian Universalist) .....                        | 107 |

TOTAL

\*This total is lower than the sum of the numbers listed above and on the right because some welcoming communities are multiply designated and affiliated with more than one denomination.

## CONGREGATIONS

### UNITED STATES

#### ALABAMA

##### Huntsville

UU Church (WEL)

#### ALASKA

##### Anchorage

Immanuel Presbyterian (ML)

UU Fellowship (WEL)

##### Palmer

Church of the Covenant (W&A)

##### Sitka

UMC of Sitka (RC)

#### ARIZONA

##### Mesa

Celebration of Life Presbyterian (ML)

##### Phoenix

Asbury UMC (RC)

Augustana Lutheran (RIC)

Faith Lutheran (RIC)

Shadow Rock Cong. UCC (ONA)

##### Scottsdale

Scottsdale Cong. UCC (ONA)

##### Tempe

Desert Palm UCC (ONA)

University Lutheran (RIC)

##### Tucson

Church of the Painted Hills (ONA)

First Christian (O&A)

Rincon Congregational UCC (ONA)

Santa Cruz Lutheran (RIC)

St. Francis in the Foothills UMC (RC)

#### ARKANSAS

##### Little Rock

Pulaski Heights Christian (O&A)

#### CALIFORNIA

##### Alameda

First Christian (O&A)

First Congregational (ONA)

##### Albany

Albany UMC (RC)

##### Altadena

Altadena Congregational (ONA)

Christ the Shepherd Lutheran (RIC)

##### Baldwin Park

First Presbyterian (ML)

##### Belmont

Congregational Church UCC (ONA)

##### Benicia

Community Congregational (ONA)

##### Berkeley

Berkeley/Richmond Intercity Min. (O&A)

Epworth UMC (RC)

First Baptist (W&A)

First Congregational (ONA)

St. John's Presbyterian (ML)

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran (RIC)

Trinity UMC (RC)

University Lutheran Chapel (RIC)

University Church (O&A)

##### Campbell

First UMC (RC)

##### Carlsbad

Pilgrim Congregational UCC (ONA)

##### Carmel

UU of Monterey Peninsula (WEL)

##### Chatsworth

West Valley UMC (RC)

##### Chico

Congregational Church (ONA)

##### Claremont

Claremont UMC (RC)

Claremont UCC, Congregational (ONA)

##### Cloverdale

United Ch. of Cloverdale (ONA)

##### Concord

First Christian (O&A)

##### Danville

Danville Cong. UCC (ONA)

Peace Lutheran (RIC)

##### Davis

Davis UMC (RC)

##### El Cerrito

Christ Lutheran (RIC)

El Cerrito UMC (RC)

Mira Vista UCC (ONA)

Northminster Presbyterian (ML)

##### Eureka

First Congregational (ONA)

##### Fair Oaks

Fair Oaks UMC (RC)

##### Fairfax

Fairfax Community (ONA)

##### Fremont

Fremont Congregational (ONA)

Niles Congregational UCC (ONA)

##### Fresno

College Comm. Cong. (ONA)

First Congregational (ONA)

Wesley UMC (RC)

##### Fullerton

Fullerton Congregational (ONA)

##### Gardena

First UMC (RC)

##### Geyserville

Geyserville Christian (O&A)

##### Guerneville

Community Church, UCC (ONA)

##### Hayward

Eden UCC (ONA)

New Fellowship UCC (ONA)

United Church (ONA)

Westminster Hills Presbyterian (ML)

##### Hollywood

Hollywood Lutheran (RIC)

Hollywood UMC (RC)

Hope Lutheran (RIC)

##### Irvine

Irvine UCC (ONA)

##### Kensington

Arlington Community UCC (ONA)

##### Lafayette

Lafayette Christian (O&A)

##### Laguna Niguel

Shepherd of the Hills (ONA)

##### Larkspur

Redwoods Presbyterian (ML)

##### La Verne

Church of the Brethren (SCN)

##### Long Beach

First Congregational UCC (ONA)

First UMC (RC)

Resurrection Lutheran (RIC)

Trinity Lutheran (RIC)

##### Los Alamitos

Community Congregational UCC (ONA)

##### Los Angeles

Bethel Lutheran (RIC)

Mt. Hollywood Congregational UCC (ONA)

United University (ML, RC)

Westwood Hills Congregational (ONA)

Wilshire UMC (RC)

##### Los Gatos

First UMC (RC)

Skyland Community (ONA)

##### Malibu

Malibu UMC (RC)

##### Marin City

St. Andrews Presbyterian (ML)

##### Martinez

Martinez UMC (RC)

##### Milpitas

Sunnyhills UMC (RC)

##### Modesto

College Avenue Congregational (ONA)

##### Napa

Emmanuel Lutheran (RIC)

##### Newark

Holy Redeemer Lutheran (RIC)

##### North Hollywood

St. Matthew's Lutheran (RIC)

Toluca Lake UMC (RC)

##### Oakland

Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship (ML)

Faith American Lutheran (RIC)

First Congregational (ONA)

First Lutheran (RIC)

Lake Merritt UMC (RC)

Lakeshore Avenue Baptist (W&A)

Lutheran Peace Fellowship (RIC)

Montclair Presbyterian (ML)

Plymouth UCC (ONA)

St. Paul Lutheran (RIC)

##### Orinda

Orinda Comm. Ch. UCC (ONA)

##### Palo Alto

Covenant Presbyterian (ML)

First Evangelical Lutheran (RIC)

First Presbyterian (ML)

St. Andrew's UMC (RC)

University Lutheran (RIC)

##### Pasadena

First Congregational UCC (ONA)

##### Portola Valley

Ladera Community Church (ONA)

##### Richmond

Grace Lutheran (RIC)

##### Riverside

First Congregational (ONA)

##### Sacramento

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer (RIC)

Parkside Community (ONA)

Unitarian Universalist Society (WEL)

##### San Bernardino

First Congregational Church, UCC (ONA)

##### San Bruno

Peace Lutheran (RIC)

##### San Diego

First Lutheran (RIC)

First Unitarian (WEL)

Pacific Beach UMC (RC)

University Christian (O&A)

##### San Francisco

Bethany UMC (RC)

Calvary UMC (RC)

Christ Church Lutheran (RIC)

Church of the Advent (OAS)

Ch. of the Incarnation (OAS)

|                                         |                         |                                      |                                          |                                         |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Church of St. John the Evangelist (OAS) | <i>Sunol</i>            | Little Brown Church (ONA)            | First Church of Christ Cong. (ONA)       | <i>Miami Beach</i>                      |
| City of Refuge (ONA)                    | <i>Tiburon</i>          | Community Congregational (ONA)       | <i>Guilford</i>                          | Miami Beach Community (ONA)             |
| Dolores Street Baptist (W&A)            |                         | Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran (RIC) | First Congregational UCC (ONA)           | Riviera Presbyterian (ML)               |
| First Congregational UCC (ONA)          |                         | Westminster Presbyterian (ML)        | <i>Hamden</i>                            | St. John's UMC (RC)                     |
| First Mennonite Church (SCN)            | <i>Vacaville</i>        |                                      | Spring Glen Church, UCC (ONA)            | <i>North Palm Beach</i>                 |
| First St. John's UMC (RC)               |                         |                                      | U Society of New Haven (WEL)             | First Unitarian (WEL)                   |
| First Unitarian Society (WEL)           | <i>Vallejo</i>          |                                      | <i>Hartford</i>                          | <i>Orlando</i>                          |
| First United Lutheran (RIC)             |                         |                                      | Central Baptist (W&A)                    | First Unitarian (WEL)                   |
| Glide Memorial UMC (RC)                 |                         |                                      | First Church of Christ, UCC (ONA)        | <i>Pinellas Park</i>                    |
| Grace Cathedral (OAS)                   | <i>Walnut Creek</i>     |                                      | <i>Madison</i>                           | Good Samaritan Presbyterian (ML, ONA)   |
| Hamilton UMC (RC)                       |                         |                                      | Shoreline UU Society (WEL)               | <i>St. Petersburg</i>                   |
| Noe Valley Ministry (ML)                | <i>West Covina</i>      |                                      | <i>Mansfield Center</i>                  | Lakewood UCC (ONA)                      |
| Pine UMC (RC)                           |                         |                                      | First Church of Christ Cong. (ONA)       | <i>Sunrise</i>                          |
| Seventh Avenue Presbyterian (ML)        | <i>West Hollywood</i>   |                                      | <i>Middletown</i>                        | Christ the King Lutheran (RIC)          |
| St. Aidan's Church (OAS)                |                         |                                      | First Church of Christ Cong. (ONA)       | <i>Tallahassee</i>                      |
| St. Francis Lutheran (RIC)              | <i>Yucaipa</i>          |                                      | <i>New Haven</i>                         | St. Stephen Lutheran (RIC)              |
| St. John the Evangelist Episcopal (OAS) |                         |                                      | Church of Christ in Yale Univ. (ONA)     | United Church (ONA)                     |
| St. John's UCC (ONA)                    |                         |                                      | First Church of Christ (ONA)             | <i>Tampa</i>                            |
| St. Mark's Lutheran (RIC)               |                         |                                      | First & Summerfield UMC (RC)             | First United Church (ONA)               |
| St. Paulus Lutheran (RIC)               |                         |                                      | United Church on the Green (ONA)         | John Calvin Presbyterian (ML)           |
| Temple UMC (RC)                         |                         |                                      | <i>Noank</i>                             | Unitarian Universalist (WEL)            |
| Trinity Church (OAS)                    |                         |                                      | Noank Baptist (W&A)                      | <b>GEORGIA</b>                          |
| <i>San Jose</i>                         | <b>COLORADO</b>         |                                      | <i>South Glastonbury</i>                 | <i>Athens</i>                           |
| Almaden Hills UMC (RC)                  | <i>Arvada</i>           |                                      | Congregational Church (ONA)              | Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (WEL) |
| Alum Rock UMC (RC)                      |                         |                                      | <i>Stamford</i>                          | <i>Atlanta</i>                          |
| Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran (RIC) | <i>Aurora</i>           |                                      | St. John Lutheran (RIC)                  | Clifton Presbyterian (ML)               |
| 1st Cong. Ch. of San Jose UCC (ONA)     |                         |                                      | <i>Storrs</i>                            | Grant Park-Aldersgate UMC (RC)          |
| First Christian Church (O&A)            | <i>Boulder</i>          |                                      | Storrs Congregational (ONA)              | Ormeewood Park Presbyterian (ML)        |
| New Community of Faith (ONA, W&A)       |                         |                                      | <i>Uncasville</i>                        | Trinity UMC (RC)                        |
| St. Paul's UMC (RC)                     |                         |                                      | Uncasville UMC (RC)                      | <i>Marietta</i>                         |
| <i>San Leandro</i>                      |                         |                                      | <i>Waterbury</i>                         | Pilgrimage UCC (ONA)                    |
| San Leandro Comm. Church (ONA)          | <i>Colorado Springs</i> |                                      | South Congregational (ONA)               | <b>HAWAII</b>                           |
| San Leandro Community (W&A)             |                         |                                      | <i>Westport</i>                          | <i>Honolulu</i>                         |
| <i>San Mateo</i>                        |                         |                                      | Unitarian Church (WEL)                   | Calvary By the Sea Lutheran (RIC)       |
| Chalice Christian Church (O&A)          | <i>Denver</i>           |                                      | <i>Windsor</i>                           | Church of the Crossroads (ONA)          |
| College Heights UCC (ONA)               |                         |                                      | First Church UCC (ONA)                   | Honolulu Lutheran (RIC)                 |
| First Christian (O&A)                   |                         |                                      | <b>DELAWARE</b>                          | <i>Kalaupapa</i>                        |
| <i>San Rafael</i>                       |                         |                                      | <i>Newark</i>                            | Kanaana Hou-Siloama, UCC (ONA)          |
| Christ in Terra Linda Presb. (ML)       |                         |                                      | New Ark UCC (ONA)                        | <b>IDAHO</b>                            |
| Faith Lutheran (RIC)                    |                         |                                      | <i>Wilmington</i>                        | <i>Boise</i>                            |
| First Congregational UCC (ONA)          |                         |                                      | West Presbyterian (ML)                   | First Cong. UCC (ONA)                   |
| First UMC (RC)                          |                         |                                      | <b>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</b>              | <b>ILLINOIS</b>                         |
| <i>Santa Barbara</i>                    |                         |                                      | <i>Washington, D.C.</i>                  | <i>Aurora</i>                           |
| First Congregational UCC (ONA)          |                         |                                      | All Souls Unitarian (WEL)                | Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (RIC)   |
| La Mesa Community (ONA)                 |                         |                                      | Augustana Lutheran (RIC)                 | The N.E. Cong. UCC (ONA)                |
| <i>Santa Cruz</i>                       |                         |                                      | Christ Lutheran (RIC)                    | <i>Carbondale</i>                       |
| First Congregational UCC (ONA)          |                         |                                      | Christ UMC (RC)                          | Church of the Good Shepherd (ONA)       |
| First UMC (RC)                          |                         |                                      | Community of Christ Lutheran (RIC)       | <i>Champaign</i>                        |
| Grace UMC (RC)                          |                         |                                      | Dumbarton UMC (RC)                       | Community UCC (ONA)                     |
| <i>Santa Monica</i>                     |                         |                                      | First Congregational (ONA)               | McKinley Memorial Presbyterian (ML)     |
| The Church in Ocean Park (RC)           |                         |                                      | First Trinity Lutheran (RIC)             | St. Andrew's Lutheran (RIC)             |
| <i>Santa Rosa</i>                       |                         |                                      | Foundry UMC (RC)                         | <i>Chicago</i>                          |
| Christ UMC (RC)                         |                         |                                      | Georgetown Lutheran (RIC)                | Albany Park UMC (RC)                    |
| First Congregational UCC (ONA)          |                         |                                      | Grace Lutheran (RIC)                     | Augustana Lutheran (RIC)                |
| UU Fellowship of Sonoma Co. (WEL)       |                         |                                      | Lutheran Church of the Reformation (RIC) | Berry Memorial UMC (RC)                 |
| <i>Saratoga</i>                         |                         |                                      | New York Ave. Presbyterian (ML)          | Broadway UMC (RC)                       |
| Grace UMC (RC)                          |                         |                                      | Riverside Baptist (W&A)                  | Christ the King Lutheran (RIC)          |
| <i>Sausalito</i>                        |                         |                                      | Sojourner Truth Cong. UU (WEL)           | Christ the Mediator Lutheran (RIC)      |
| First Presbyterian (ML)                 |                         |                                      | St. Paul's Lutheran (RIC)                | Ebenezer Lutheran (RIC)                 |
| <i>Sebastopol</i>                       |                         |                                      | Westminster Presbyterian (ML)            | Epworth UMC (RC)                        |
| Community Church (ONA)                  |                         |                                      | <b>FLORIDA</b>                           | First UMC (RC)                          |
| <i>Simi Valley</i>                      |                         |                                      | <i>Clearwater</i>                        | Gladstone Park Lutheran (RIC)           |
| United Church of Christ (ONA)           |                         |                                      | UU Church of Clearwater (WEL)            | Grace Baptist (W&A)                     |
| <i>Stockton</i>                         |                         |                                      | <i>Gainesville</i>                       | Grace UMC (RC)                          |
| Central UMC (RC)                        |                         |                                      | United Church (ONA)                      | Holy Covenant UMC (RC)                  |
| First Christian (O&A)                   |                         |                                      | Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (WEL)  | Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran (RIC) |
| St. Mark's UMC (RC)                     |                         |                                      | <i>Key West</i>                          | Immanuel Lutheran (RIC)                 |
| <i>Sunnyvale</i>                        |                         |                                      | Holy Trinity Lutheran (RIC)              | Irving Park Christian (O&A)             |
| Congregational Community (ONA)          |                         |                                      | <i>Lake Mary</i>                         | Irving Park UMC (RC)                    |
| Raynor Park Christian (O&A)             |                         |                                      | Grace UMC (RC)                           | Lake View Lutheran (RIC)                |
| St. John's Lutheran (RIC)               |                         |                                      |                                          | Lincoln Park Presbyterian (ML)          |

Lord of Light (RIC)  
 Mayfair UMC (RC)  
 Nazareth UCC (ONA)  
 Norwood Park UMC (RC)  
 Park View Lutheran (RIC)  
 Peoples Church (ONA)  
 Resurrection Lutheran (RIC)  
 St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran (RIC)  
 St. Paul's UCC (ONA)  
 Trinity Lutheran (RIC)  
 United Church of Rogers Park (RC)  
 University Church (ONA, O&A)  
 Wellington Avenue UCC (ONA)

*Elmhurst*  
 Maywood House Church (RIC)

*Evanston*  
 Lake Street Church of Evanston (W&A)  
 Hemenway UMC (RC)  
 Wheadon UMC (RC)

*Hazel Crest*  
 Hazel Crest Community UMC (RC)

*Jacksonville*  
 Congregational Church, UCC (ONA)

*La Grange*  
 First Congregational (ONA)

*Naperville*  
 First Congregational Church (ONA)

*Normal*  
 New Covenant Community (ML, ONA, O&A)

*Oak Park*  
 Euclid Avenue UMC (RC)  
 First United Church (ML, ONA)  
 Good Shepherd Lutheran (RIC)  
 Oak Park Mennonite (SCN)  
 Pilgrim Church (ONA)

*Park Forest*  
 UU Community (WEL)

*Rockford*  
 Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

*Streamwood*  
 Immanuel UCC (ONA)

*Waukegan*  
 First Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Wheaton*  
 St. Paul Lutheran (RIC)

*Wilmette*  
 First Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Winfield*  
 Winfield Community UMC (RC)

**INDIANA**

*Bloomington*  
 St. Thomas Lutheran (RIC)  
 Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

*Goshen*  
 Circle of Hope Mennonite Fellowship (SCN)

*Indianapolis*  
 First Congregational UCC (ONA)  
 Northeast UCC (ONA)

*North Manchester*  
 Manchester Church of the Brethren (SCN)

*South Bend*  
 Central UMC (RC)  
 First Unitarian (WEL)  
 Southside Christian (O&A)

*West Lafayette*  
 Shalom UCC (ONA)

**IOWA**

*Ames*  
 Ames Mennonite (SCN)  
 Lord of Life Lutheran (RIC)

University Lutheran (RIC)

*Cedar Rapids*  
 Faith UMC (RC)  
 Peoples Church UU (WEL)

*Clinton*  
 Clinton-Camanche, Iowa MFSA (RC)

*Davenport*  
 Davenport Unitarian (WEL)

*Des Moines*  
 Cottage Grove Avenue Presbyterian (ML)  
 First Unitarian (WEL)  
 Plymouth Congregational UCC (ONA)  
 Trinity UMC (RC)  
 Urbandale UCC (ONA)

*Iowa City*  
 Faith UCC (ONA)

**KANSAS**

*Kansas City*  
 FaithWorks Community (O&A)  
 Rainbow Mennonite (SCN)

*Olathe*  
 St. Andrews Christian (O&A)

*Topeka*  
 Central Congregational UCC (ONA)

**KENTUCKY**

*Henderson*  
 Zion UCC (ONA)

*Louisville*  
 Calvary Lutheran (RIC)  
 Central Presbyterian (ML)  
 First Unitarian (WEL)  
 Third Lutheran (RIC)

*Mount Prospect*  
 Grace and Glory Lutheran (RIC)

**LOUISIANA**

*New Orleans*  
 St. Mark's UMC (RC)

**MAINE**

*Bath*  
 UCC, Congregational (ONA)

*Camden*  
 John Street UMC (RC)

*Ellsworth*  
 Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

*Mt. Desert*  
 Somesville Union Meeting House (ONA)

*Portland*  
 Woodfords Cong. UCC (ONA)

*Rockland*  
 The First Universalist (WEL)

*Saco*  
 First Parish Cong. Ch. of Saco (ONA)

*Waterville*  
 Universalist Unitarian (WEL)

**MARYLAND**

*Adelphi*  
 Paint Branch UU (WEL)

*Baltimore*  
 Brown Memorial Park Ave. Pres. (ML)  
 Dundalk Church of the Brethren (SCN)  
 First & Franklin Presbyterian (ML)  
 Govans Presbyterian (ML)  
 St. John's UMC (RC)  
 St. Mark's Lutheran (RIC)

*Bethesda*  
 Cedar Lane Unitarian (WEL)  
 River Road Unitarian (WEL)  
 Westmoreland Cong. UCC (ONA)

*Columbia*  
 Christ UMC (RC)  
 Columbia United Christian (O&A)

Columbia United Christian (ONA)  
 St. John UM-Presbyterian (ML, RC)  
 UU Congregation (WEL)

*Gaithersburg*  
 Christ the Servant Lutheran (RIC)

*Lanham*  
 Good Samaritan Lutheran (RIC)

*Rockville*  
 Rockville Presbyterian (ML)

*Silver Spring*  
 Christ Congregational UCC (ONA)  
 Silver Spring Presbyterian (ML)

*Takoma Park*  
 Takoma Park Presbyterian (ML)

**MASSACHUSETTS**

*Acton*  
 St. Matthew's UMC (RC)

*Amherst*  
 First Congregational UCC (ONA)  
 South Congregational (ONA)

*Andover*  
 Ballardvale United (ONA, RC)  
 Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

*Athol*  
 South Athol UMC (RC)

*Auburn*  
 Pakachoag (ONA)

*Boston*  
 Arlington Street (WEL)  
 Church of the Covenant (ML, ONA)  
 Old South Church (ONA)

*Braintree*  
 All Souls Church (WEL)

*Brewster*  
 First Parish (WEL)

*Cambridge*  
 First Church, Congregational (ONA)  
 Harvard-Epworth UMC (RC)  
 Old Cambridge Baptist (W&A)  
 University Lutheran (RIC)

*Concord*  
 West Concord Union (ONA)

*Danvers*  
 Holy Trinity UMC (RC)

*Framingham*  
 Grace UCC (ONA)

*Greenfield*  
 First Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Hingham*  
 First Parish Old Ship (WEL)  
 Hingham Congregational (ONA)

*Holliston*  
 First Congregational (ONA)

*Jamaica Plain*  
 Central Congregational (ONA)

*Lincoln*  
 The First Parish in Lincoln (ONA)

*Malden*  
 The First Ch. in Malden (ONA)

*Marblehead*  
 St. Stephen's UMC (RC)

*Marshfield*  
 Marshfield UMC (RC)

*Middleboro*  
 First Unitarian Society (WEL)

*Needham*  
 First Parish UU (WEL)

*Newburyport*  
 Belleville Congregational UCC (ONA)  
 First Parish Society (WEL)  
 People's UMC (RC)

*Newton Highlands*  
 Congregational (ONA)

*Northampton*  
 First Baptist Church (W&A)  
 First Church of Christ (ONA)  
 Unitarian Society (WEL)

*Osterville*  
 United Methodist (RC)

*Penbrooke*  
 First Church in Penbrooke (ONA)

*Provincetown*  
 Universalist Meeting House (WEL)

*Reading*  
 Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

*Roxbury*  
 Ch. Of United Community (O&A, ONA)

*Salem*  
 Crombie Street UCC (ONA)

*Shrewsbury*  
 Mt. Olivet Lutheran (RIC)

*Somerville*  
 Clarendon Hill Presbyterian (ML)  
 First Cong. of Somerville (ONA)

*South Hadley*  
 UMC of Holyoke, S. Hadley, & Granby

*Springfield*  
 First Ch. of Christ Congregational (ONA)

*Stowe*  
 First Parish Ch. of Stowe & Acton (WEL)

*Sudbury*  
 The First Parish (WEL)  
 Memorial Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Waltham*  
 First Presbyterian (ML)

*Wayland*  
 First Parish of Wayland (WEL)

*Wellesley*  
 Wellesley Congregational (ONA)

*Wendell*  
 Wendell Congregational (ONA)

*West Newton*  
 First Unitarian Society (WEL)  
 Second Church in Newton UCC (ONA)

*West Somerville*  
 College Avenue UMC (RC)

*Williamstown*  
 First Congregational UCC (ONA)  
 First UMC (RC)

*Worcester*  
 Bethany Christian United Parish (W&A, ONA, O&A)  
 United Congregational (ONA)

**MICHIGAN**

*Ann Arbor*  
 Amistad Community Church, UCC (ONA)  
 Church of the Good Shepherd (ONA)  
 First UU (WEL)  
 Lord of Light Lutheran (RIC)  
 Memorial Christian (O&A)  
 Northside Presbyterian (ML)

*Bloomfield Hills*  
 Birmingham Unitarian (WEL)

*Detroit*  
 Truth Evangelical Lutheran (RIC)

*Douglas*  
 Douglas Congregational UCC (ONA)

*East Lansing*  
 Edgewood United Church (ONA)  
 UU of Greater Lansing (WEL)

*Ferndale*  
 Zion Lutheran (RIC)

*Grand Rapids*  
Plymouth Congregational, UCC (ONA)

*Kalamazoo*  
Phoenix Community UCC (ONA)  
Skyridge Church of the Brethren (SCN)

*Lansing*  
Ecclesia (O&A)  
Lansing Church of the Brethren (SCN)  
Pilgrim Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Port Huron*  
St. Martin Lutheran (RIC)

*Southfield*  
Calvary Lutheran (RIC)

*Williamston*  
Williamston UMC (RC)

*Ypsilanti*  
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

**MINNESOTA**

*Becker*  
Becker UMC (RC)

*Burnsville*  
Presbyterian Church of the Apostles (ML)

*Duluth*  
Gloria Dei (RIC)

*Edina*  
Edina Community Lutheran (RIC)  
Good Samaritan UMC (RC)

*Falcon Heights*  
Falcon Heights UCC (ONA)

*Mahtomedi*  
White Bear UU (WEL)

*Mankato*  
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Maple Grove*  
Pilgrims United (ONA)

*Minneapolis*  
Christ the Redeemer Lutheran (RIC)  
First Congregational (ONA)  
First Unitarian Society (WEL)  
First Universalist (WEL)  
Grace University Lutheran (RIC)  
Hennepin Avenue UMC (RC)  
Hobart UMC (RC)  
Holy Trinity Lutheran (RIC)  
Judson Memorial Baptist (W&A)  
Lyndale UCC (ONA)  
Lynnhurst Congregational (ONA)  
Mayflower Community Cong. UCC (ONA)  
Minnehaha UCC (ONA)  
Our Savior's Lutheran (RIC)  
Parkway UCC (ONA)  
Praxis (RC)  
Prospect Park UMC (RC)  
Spirit of the Lakes (ONA)  
St. Andrew's Lutheran (RIC)  
St. Peter Lutheran (RIC)  
University Baptist (W&A)  
Walker Community (RC)  
Wesley UMC (RC)  
Zion Lutheran (RIC)

*New Brighton*  
United Church of Christ (ONA)

*Northfield*  
First UCC (ONA)

*Robbinsdale*  
Robbinsdale UCC (ONA)

*Shoreview*  
Peace UMC (RC)

*St. Cloud*  
St. Cloud UU Fellowship (WEL)  
Univ. Lutheran of the Epiphany (RIC)

*St. Paul*  
Cherokee Park United (ML, ONA)  
Dayton Avenue Presbyterian (ML)  
Macalester-Plymouth United (ML, ONA)  
St. Anthony Park UCC  
St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship (SCN)  
St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran (RIC)

*Wayzata*  
St. Luke Presbyterian (ML)

**MISSOURI**

*Kansas City*  
Abiding Peace Lutheran (RIC)  
All Souls Unitarian (WEL)  
Country Club Congregational (ONA)  
Fountain of Hope Lutheran (RIC)  
Kairos UMC (RC)  
St. James Lutheran (RIC)  
St. Mark's Lutheran (RIC)  
Trinity UMC (RC)  
Van Brunt Blvd. Presbyterian (ML)

*St. Louis*  
Centenary UMC (RC)  
Epiphany (ONA)  
Gibson Heights United (ML)  
Lafayette Park UMC (RC)  
St. Marcus Evangelical UCC (ONA)  
Tyler Place Presbyterian (ML)

*University City*  
Bethel Lutheran (RIC)

**MONTANA**

*Billings*  
First Congregational UCC (ONA)  
Mayflower Cong. UCC (ONA)

*Butte*  
United Congregational Church (ONA)

*Missoula*  
University Congregational UCC (ONA)

**NEBRASKA**

*Lincoln*  
Unitarian Church (WEL)

*Omaha*  
First Lutheran (RIC)  
Reconciling Worship Community (RC)

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

*Concord*  
South Congregational, UCC (ONA)

*Exeter*  
Congregational (ONA)

*Hanover*  
Our Savior Lutheran (RIC)

*Jaffrey*  
United Church (ONA)

*Milford*  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation (WEL)

*Pelham*  
First Congregational (ONA)

*Plymouth*  
Plymouth Congregational (ONA)

*Sanbornton*  
Sanbornton Congregational UCC (ONA)

**NEW JERSEY**

*Belleville*  
Christ Church Episcopal (OAS)

*Belvedere*  
St. Mary's Episcopal (OAS)

*Bloomfield*  
Christ Episcopal (OAS)

*Boonton*  
St. John's Episcopal (OAS)

*Chatham*  
St. Paul's Episcopal (OAS)

*Cherry Hill*  
UU Church (WEL)

*Chester*  
Church of the Messiah Episcopal (OAS)

*Clifton*  
St. Peter's Episcopal (OAS)

*Closter*  
First Cong. Ch. UCC (ONA)

*Denville*  
Church of Our Saviour Episcopal (OAS)

*East Brunswick*  
East Brunswick Cong. UCC (ONA)

*Englewood*  
St. Paul's Episcopal (OAS)

*Exeter*  
Congregational Church (ONA)

*Fort Lee*  
Church of the Good Shepherd (OAS)

*Hackensack*  
Christ Episcopal (OAS)

*Hackettstown*  
St. James' Episcopal (OAS)

*Harrington Park*  
St. Andrew's Episcopal (OAS)

*Hasbrouck Heights*  
Church of St. John the Divine (OAS)

*Haworth*  
St. Luke's Episcopal (OAS)

*Hawthorne*  
St. Clement's Episcopal (OAS)

*Hoboken*  
All Saints Parish (OAS)

*Jersey City*  
Grace Lutheran (RIC)  
Grace Van Vorst Episcopal (OAS)  
St. Paul's Episcopal (OAS)

*Kearny*  
Trinity Episcopal (OAS)

*Leonia*  
All Saints Episcopal (OAS)

*Lincoln Park*  
St. Andrews Episcopal (OAS)

*Madison*  
Grace Episcopal (OAS)

*Maplewood*  
St. George's Episcopal (OAS)

*Mendham*  
St. Mark's Episcopal (OAS)

*Millburn*  
St. Stephen's Episcopal (OAS)

*Montclair*  
St. John's Episcopal (OAS)  
St. Luke's Episcopal (OAS)  
Unitarian (WEL)

*Montvale*  
St. Paul's Episcopal (OAS)

*Morristown*  
Church of the Redeemer (OAS)  
St. Peter's Episcopal (OAS)  
Unitarian Fellowship (WEL)

*Mt. Arlington*  
St. Peter's Episcopal (OAS)

*New Brunswick*  
Emanuel Lutheran (RIC)

*Newark*  
Cathedral of Trinity and St. Philip (OAS)  
Grace Episcopal (OAS)

*Norwood*  
Church of the Holy Communion (OAS)

*Oakland*  
St. Alban's Episcopal (OAS)

*Parsippany*  
St. Gregory's Episcopal (OAS)

*Passaic*  
St. John's Episcopal (OAS)

*Paterson*  
St. Paul's Episcopal (OAS)

*Plainfield*  
First Unitarian Society (WEL)

*Pompton Lakes*  
Christ Church (OAS)

*Princeton*  
Christ Congregation (ONA, W&A)

*Ramsey*  
St. John's Episcopal (OAS)

*Ridgewood*  
Christ Episcopal (OAS)

*South Orange*  
First Presbyterian & Trinity (ML)

*Sparta*  
St. Mary's Episcopal (OAS)

*Summit*  
Calvary Episcopal (OAS)  
Christ Church (ONA)

*Teaneck*  
St. Mark's Episcopal (OAS)

*Tenafly*  
Church of the Atonement (OAS)

*Towaco*  
Church of the Transfiguration (OAS)

*Titusville*  
UU of Washington Crossing (WEL)

*Union City*  
St. John's Episcopal (OAS)

*Upper Montclair*  
St. James' Episcopal (OAS)

*Verona*  
Holy Spirit Episcopal (OAS)

*Wantage*  
Good Shepherd Episcopal (OAS)

**NEW MEXICO**

*Albuquerque*  
First Unitarian (WEL)

*Santa Fe*  
Christ Lutheran (RIC)  
First Christian Church (O&A)  
Unitarian Church (WEL)  
United Church (ONA)

**NEW YORK**

*Albany*  
Emmanuel Baptist (W&A)  
First Presbyterian (ML)

*Binghamton*  
Centenary-Chenango Street UMC (RC)  
UU Congregation (WEL)

*Blooming Grove*  
Blooming Grove UCC (ONA)

*Brookhaven*  
Old South Haven Presbyterian (ML)

*Brooklyn*  
All Souls Bethlehem (O&A, ONA)  
Church of Gethsemane (ML)  
First Unitarian Cong. Society (WEL)  
King's Highway UMC (RC)  
Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian (ML)  
Park Slope UMC (RC)  
St. John-St. Matthew-Emmanuel Lutheran (RIC)

*Buffalo*  
Westminster Presbyterian (ML)

*Churchville*  
Union Congregational (ONA)

*Copake*  
Craryville UMC (RC)

*Cortland*  
United Community Church (W&A, ONA)

*Dobbs Ferry*  
South Presbyterian (ML)

*Fairport*  
Mountain Rise UCC (ONA)

*Gloversville*  
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Grand Island*  
Riverside Salem (ONA)

*Henrietta*  
John Calvin Presbyterian (ML)

*Huntington*  
UU Fellowship (WEL)

*Ithaca*  
First Baptist (W&A)  
First Baptist Church (W&A)  
St. Paul's UMC (RC)

*Marcellus*  
First Presbyterian (ML)

*Merrick*  
Community Presbyterian (ML)

*Mt. Kisco*  
Mt. Kisco Presbyterian (ML)

*Mt. Sinai*  
Mt. Sinai Congregational UCC (ONA)

*New York City*  
Broadway UCC (ONA)  
Central Presbyterian (ML)  
Good Shepherd-Faith Presbyterian (ML)  
Grace & St. Paul's Lutheran (RIC)  
Holy Trinity Lutheran (RIC)  
Jan Hus Presbyterian (ML)  
Judson Memorial (ONA, W&A)  
Madison Avenue Baptist (W&A)  
Metropolitan-Duane UMC (RC)  
Our Savior's Atonement Lutheran (RIC)  
Park Avenue Christian (O&A)  
Riverside (ONA, W&A)  
Rutgers Presbyterian (ML)  
St. Paul & St. Andrew UMC (RC)  
St. Peter's Lutheran (RIC)  
Trinity Lutheran (RIC)  
Trinity Presbyterian (ML)  
Unitarian Ch. of All Souls (WEL)  
Washington Square UMC (RC)  
West-Park Presbyterian (ML)

*Oneonta*  
First UMC (RC)  
UU Society (WEL)

*Palisades*  
Palisades Presbyterian (ML)

*Plattsburgh*  
Plattsburgh UMC (RC)

*Poughkeepsie*  
Unitarian Fellowship (WEL)

*Riverhead*  
First Congregational (ONA)

*Rochester*  
Calvary-St. Andrews (ML)  
Downtown United Presbyterian (ML)  
First Unitarian (WEL)  
Lake Avenue Baptist (W&A)  
Third Presbyterian (ML)  
Westminster Presbyterian (ML)

*Saratoga Springs*  
Presb.-New Eng. Cong. (ML, ONA)  
Saratoga Springs UMC (RC)

*Sayville*  
Sayville Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Schenectady*  
Emmanuel Bapt.-Friedens UCC (ONA)  
First UMC (RC)  
First Unitarian (WEL)

*Sea Cliff*  
UMC of Sea Cliff (RC)

*Slatehill*  
Grace UMC of Ridgebury (RC)

*Slingerlands*  
Community UMC (RC)

*Snyder*  
Amherst Community (ONA, O&A)

*Syosset*  
The Community Church (ONA)

*Syracuse*  
Plymouth Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Troy*  
First United Presbyterian (ML)

*Utica*  
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

*Williamsville*  
UU of Amherst (WEL)

*Yorktown Heights*  
First Presbyterian (ML)

**NORTH CAROLINA**

*Chapel Hill*  
Church of the Reconciliation (ML)  
Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist (W&A)  
United Church (ONA)

*Charlotte*  
Holy Trinity Lutheran (RIC)

*Durham*  
Eno River UU Fellowship (WEL)  
Pilgrim UCC (ONA)

*Raleigh*  
Community UCC (ONA)  
Pullen Memorial Baptist (W&A)

*Wilmington*  
UU Fellowship (WEL)

*Winston-Salem*  
Parkway UCC (ONA)  
UU Fellowship (WEL)

**NORTH DAKOTA**

*Fargo*  
St. Mark's Lutheran (RIC)

**OHIO**

*Brecksville*  
United Church of Christ (ONA)

*Chesterland*  
Community Church (ONA)

*Cincinnati*  
Clifton UMC (RC)  
Mt. Auburn Presbyterian (ML)

*Cleveland*  
Archwood UCC (ONA)  
Euclid Ave. Congregational UCC (ONA)  
Pilgrim Congregational UCC (ONA)  
Simpson UMC (RC)  
Trinity UCC (ONA)  
West Shore UU (WEL)  
Zion UCC (ONA)

*Cleveland Heights*  
Church of the Redeemer (RC)  
Noble Road Presbyterian (ML)

*Columbus*  
Calvary Lutheran (RIC)  
First English Lutheran (RIC)  
First Unitarian Universalist (WEL)  
North Congregational UCC (ONA)

Redeemer Lutheran (RIC)  
St. Mark Lutheran (RIC)

*Dayton*  
Congregation for Reconciliation (ONA)  
Cross Creek Community (ONA)  
Faith UCC (ONA)  
Miami Valley Unitarian Fellowship (WEL)

*Granville*  
First Baptist (W&A)

*Lakewood*  
Cove UMC (RC)  
Liberation UCC (ONA)

*Norton*  
Grace UCC (ONA)

*Oberlin*  
First Church in Oberlin (ONA)

*Shaker Heights*  
First Unitarian of Cleveland (WEL)

*Toledo*  
Central UMC (RC)  
St. Lucas Lutheran (RIC)

**OKLAHOMA**

*Oklahoma City*  
Church of the Open Arms, UCC (ONA)  
Epworth UMC (RC)

*Tulsa*  
Fellowship Congregational, UCC (ONA)  
UM Community of Hope (RC)

**OREGON**

*Ashland*  
United Church of Christ, Cong. (ONA)

*Beavercreek*  
Beavercreek UCC (ONA)

*Beaverton*  
Southminster Presbyterian (ML)

*Bend*  
First Presbyterian (ML)

*Corvallis*  
First Congregational Church (ONA)  
First UMC (RC)

*Estacada*  
Estacada UMC (RC)

*Eugene*  
First Congregational, UCC (ONA)  
Unitarian of Eugene & Lane Co. (WEL)

*Forest Grove*  
Forest Grove UCC (ONA)

*Gresham*  
Zion UCC (ONA)

*Klamath Falls*  
Klamath Falls Cong. UCC (ONA)

*Lake Oswego*  
Lake Oswego UCC (ONA)

*Milwaukie*  
Clackamas UCC (ONA)  
Milwaukie UCC (ONA)

*Portland*  
Ainsworth UCC (ONA)  
First Congregational (ONA)  
First UMC (RC)  
Metanoia Peace Community (RC)  
Peace Church of the Brethren (SCN)  
Southwest United (ONA)  
St. James Lutheran (RIC)  
St. Mark Presbyterian (ML)  
University Park UMC (RC)

*Salem*  
First Congregational UCC (ONA)  
First Unitarian Society (WEL)  
Morningside UMC (RC)

*Springfield*  
Church of the Brethren (SCN)

**PENNSYLVANIA**

*Allentown*  
Muhlenberg College Chapel (RIC)  
St. John Lutheran (RIC)

*Devon*  
Main Line Unitarian (WEL)

*Harrisburg*  
Unitarian Church (WEL)

*Lansdale*  
Trinity Lutheran (RIC)

*Levittown*  
United Christian Church (O&A, ONA)

*Lewisburg*  
Beaver Memorial UMC (RC)

*Norristown*  
Olivet-Schwenkfelder UCC (ONA)

*Philadelphia*  
Calvary UMC (RC)  
First UMC of Germantown (RC)  
Germantown Mennonite Church (SCN)  
Holy Communion Lutheran (RIC)  
Old First Reformed (ONA)  
St. Michael's Lutheran (RIC)  
Tabernacle United (ML, ONA)  
Univ. Lutheran of the Incarnation (RIC)

*Pittsburgh*  
First Unitarian (WEL)  
Sixth Presbyterian (ML)  
St. Andrew Lutheran (RIC)

*State College*  
Univ. Baptist & Brethren (SCN, W&A)

*Upper Darby*  
Christ Lutheran (RIC)

*Wayne*  
Central Baptist (W&A)

**RHODE ISLAND**

*East Greenwich*  
Westminster Unitarian (WEL)

*Newport*  
Newport Congregational (ONA)

*Pawtucket*  
Park Place Cong. UCC (ONA)

*Providence*  
Mathewson Street UMC (RC)

**SOUTH CAROLINA**

*Charleston*  
Circular Congregational (ONA)

*Columbia*  
Gethsemane Lutheran (RIC)

**SOUTH DAKOTA**

*Erwin*  
Erwin UCC (ONA)

**TENNESSEE**

*Chattanooga*  
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

*Knoxville*  
Tennessee Valley UU (WEL)

*Memphis*  
First Congregational UCC (ONA)

*Nashville*  
Brookmeade Congregational UCC (ONA)  
Edgehill UMC (RC)  
First UU Church (WEL)  
Hobson UMC (RC)

**TEXAS**

*Austin*  
First English Lutheran (RIC)  
First UU Church (WEL)

St. Andrews Presbyterian (ML)  
Trinity UMC (RC)  
*College Station*  
Friends Congregational (ONA)  
*Corpus Christi*  
St. Paul UCC (ONA)  
*Dallas*  
Bethany Presbyterian (ML)  
First Unitarian (WEL)  
Midway Hills Christian (O&A)  
Northaven UMC (RC)  
*El Paso*  
St. Timothy Lutheran (RIC)  
*Fort Worth*  
St. Matthew's Lutheran (RIC)  
*Houston*  
Bering Memorial UMC (RC)  
Comm. of the Reconciling Servant (ML)  
Covenant Baptist (W&A)  
Faith Covenant (ML, ONA)  
First Congregational (ONA)  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran (RIC)  
*Lubbock*  
St. John's UMC (RC)  
*Mesquite*  
St. Stephen UMC (RC)  
*Plano*  
Dallas North Unitarian (WEL)  
*San Antonio*  
Spirit of Life (RIC)

## UTAH

*Salt Lake City*  
Holladay UCC (ONA)  
Mount Tabor Lutheran (RIC)  
South Valley UU Society (WEL)

## VERMONT

*Bennington*  
Second Congregational (ONA)  
*Burlington*  
Christ Presbyterian (ML)  
College Street Congregational (ONA)  
*Middlebury*  
Congregational UCC (ONA)  
*Putney*  
United Church (ONA)  
*Rutland*  
Rutland UMC (RC)  
*Thetford*  
First Congregational Church (ONA)

## VIRGINIA

*Alexandria*  
Hope UCC (ONA)  
Mount Vernon Unitarian (WEL)  
Peace Lutheran (RIC)  
*Arlington*  
Clarendon Presbyterian (ML)  
Unitarian Church (WEL)  
*Charlottesville*  
Sojourners UCC (ONA)  
*Harrisonburg*  
Sanctuary UCC (ONA)  
*Oakton*  
Fairfax Unitarian (WEL)  
*Roanoke*  
Unitarian Universalist (WEL)

## WASHINGTON

*Bellevue*  
Eastgate Congregational UCC (ONA)  
First Congregational, UCC (ONA)  
First UMC (RC)

*Bellingham*  
First Cong. of Bellingham (ONA)  
*Carnation*  
Tolt Congregational, UCC (ONA)  
*Chelan*  
Fullness of God Lutheran (RIC)  
*Edmonds*  
Edmonds UU (WEL)  
*Ellensburg*  
First UMC (RC)  
*Everett*  
First Congregational (ONA)  
*Federal Way*  
Wayside UCC (ONA)  
*Kirkland*  
Holy Spirit Lutheran (RIC)  
*Leavenworth*  
Faith Lutheran (RIC)  
*Marysville*  
Evergreen UU Fellowship (WEL)  
*Medical Lake*  
Shalom UCC (ONA)  
*Mountlake Terrace*  
Terrace View Presbyterian (ML)  
*Olympia*  
Comm. for Interfaith Celebration (ONA)  
*Pullman*  
Community Congregational UCC (ONA)  
*Reston*  
Washington Plaza Baptist (W&A)

## RICHLAND

Shalom UCC (ONA)  
*Seattle*  
Alki Cong. UCC (ONA)  
Broadview Community UCC (ONA)  
Central Lutheran (RIC)  
Fauntleroy UCC (ONA)  
Findlay Street Christian (O&A)  
First Baptist (W&A)  
Gethsemane Lutheran (RIC)  
Immanuel Lutheran (RIC)  
Keystone Cong. UCC (ONA)  
Magnolia UCC (ONA)  
Normandy Park Cong. UCC (ONA)  
Pilgrim Congregational (ONA)  
Plymouth Congregational (ONA)  
Prospect UCC Cong. (ONA)  
Ravenna UMC (RC)  
Richmond Beach Cong. UCC (ONA)  
Trinity UMC (RC)  
St. Paul's UCC (ONA)  
University Baptist (W&A)  
University Christian (O&A)  
University Congregational (ONA)  
University Temple UMC (RC)  
Wallingford UMC (RC)

## SPokane

Unitarian Church (WEL)  
*Suquamish*  
Community Congregational (ONA)  
*Vancouver*  
East Vancouver UMC (RC)  
First Congregational UCC (ONA)  
*White Salmon*  
Bethel Cong., UCC (ONA)

## WEST VIRGINIA

*Wheeling*  
UU Congregation (WEL)  
**WISCONSIN**  
*Brown Deer*  
Brown Deer UCC (ONA)

## Delavan

Delavan UMC (RC)  
*Eau Claire*  
University Lutheran (RIC)  
*Green Bay*  
Union Cong. UCC (ONA)  
*Madison*  
Advent Lutheran (RIC)  
Community of Hope UCC (ONA)  
First Baptist (W&A)  
First Congregational UCC (ONA)  
James Reeb UU Congregation (WEL)  
Lake Edge Lutheran (RIC)  
Orchard Ridge UCC (ONA)  
Plymouth Congregational UCC (ONA)  
University UMC (RC)  
*Milwaukee*  
Broken Walls Christian Comm. (W&A)  
Cross Lutheran (RIC)  
Pentecost Lutheran (RIC)  
Plymouth UCC (ONA)  
Reformation Lutheran (RIC)  
Village Church, Lutheran (RIC)  
*Racine*  
Our Savior's Lutheran (RIC)  
*Sheboygan*  
Wesley UMC (RC)  
*Waukesha*  
Maple Avenue Mennonite (SCN)

## CANADA

### ALBERTA

*Calgary*  
Calgary Inter-Mennonite (SCN)  
*Edmonton*  
Southminster-Steinhauer United (AC)  
Unitarian Church (WEL)

### BRITISH COLUMBIA

*Burnaby*  
St. Paul's United (AC)  
*Vancouver*  
First United Church (AC)  
Trinity United (AC)  
Unitarian Church (WEL)

### MANITOBA

*Winnipeg*  
Augustine United (AC)  
First Unitarian Universalist (WEL)  
Young United (AC)

### ONTARIO

*Kingston*  
Sydenham Street United (AC)  
*Thunder Bay*  
Lakehead U. Fellowship (WEL)  
*Toronto*  
Bathurst United (AC)  
Bloor Street United (AC)  
Glen Rhodes United (AC)  
Metropolitan United (AC)  
Trinity-St. Paul's United (AC)

### Waterloo

Olive Branch Mennonite (SCN)  
Westminster United (AC)

### SASKATCHEWAN

*Regina*  
St. James United (AC)  
*Saskatoon*  
King of Glory Lutheran (RIC)  
St. Thomas-Wesley United (AC)

## CAMPUS MINISTRIES

### Key:

LCM=Lutheran Campus Ministry  
LSC=Lutheran Student Center  
LSM=Lutheran Student Movement  
UCM=United Campus Ministry  
UMSF=United Methodist Student Fellowship

## UNITED STATES

### CALIFORNIA

Cal-Aggie Christian House, UC-Davis (RC)  
UCM, UC, Riverside (RC)  
UCM, USC, Los Angeles (RC)  
Wesley Fdn., UC-Berkeley (RC)  
Wesley Fdn., UC-Santa Barbara (RC)  
Wesley Fdn., UCLA, Los Angeles (RC)

### COLORADO

LCM, CU-Boulder (RIC)  
Wesley Foundation, U. of Denver (RC)

### DELAWARE

Wesley Fdn., UD, Newark (RC)

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

UMSF, American U. (RC)

### ILLINOIS

Agape House, U. of Illinois, Chicago (RC)  
Ill. Disciples Fdn., UI, Champaign (O&A)  
UMSF, Ill. Wesleyan, Bloomington (RC)  
UCM, No. Illinois, DeKalb (RC)  
University Christian Ministry, Northwestern, Evanston (RC)

### INDIANA

LCM, IU, Bloomington (RIC)

### IOWA

LCM, UI, Iowa City (RIC)  
Stud. Cong., Luther Coll., Decorah (RIC)

### KANSAS

LCM, KSU, Manhattan (RIC)  
United Methodist CM, UK, Lawrence (RC)

### KENTUCKY

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (ML Chapter)

### MICHIGAN

Guild House, UM, Ann Arbor (O&A)  
Wesley Fdn., Central Mich. Univ., Mt. Pleasant (RC)  
Wesley Fdn., U. of Michigan, Ann Arbor (RC)

### MINNESOTA

LCM in Minneapolis (RIC)  
Stud. Cong., St. Olaf, Northfield (RIC)

### NORTH DAKOTA

Univ. Lutheran Center, NDSU, Fargo (RIC)

### OHIO

UCM, OU, Athens (O&A, RC, W&A)

### OREGON

LCM in Portland (RIC)  
Wesley Fdn., UO, Eugene (RC)

### PENNSYLVANIA

Christ Chapel, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg (RIC)  
LSC-LCM, Kutztown U, Kutztown (RIC)

### TENNESSEE

Wesley Fdn., Vanderbilt, Nashville (RC)

### TEXAS

LCM, UT, Austin (RIC)

### VIRGINIA

Campus Christian Community, MWC, Fredericksburg (RC, RIC)

### WASHINGTON

The Common Ministry, Washington State U., Pullman (RC)  
LCM, WWU, Bellingham (RIC)

Wesley Club, UW, Seattle (RC)  
UM Fellowship, UPS, Puget Sound (RC)

**WISCONSIN**

LCM, UW, LaCrosse (RIC)  
LCM, Metro Milwaukee (RIC)  
LCM, UW-Stout, Menomonie (RIC)  
Wesley Fdn., U. of Wisconsin, Madison (RC)

**CANADA**

**SASKATCHEWAN**

LSC, LSM, Saskatoon (RIC)

**JUDICATORIES**

*which have passed welcoming resolutions  
Conferences (ONA)*

California/Nevada N.  
Central Atlantic  
Central Pacific  
Connecticut  
Massachusetts  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
New Hampshire  
New York  
Ohio  
Rocky Mountain  
Southern California

*Conferences (RC)*

California-Nevada  
New York  
Northern Illinois  
Oregon-Idaho  
Troy  
Wisconsin

*Regions (O&A)*

Northern California/Nevada  
*Synods (ML)*  
Synod of the Northeast  
*Synods, ELCA (RIC)*  
Eastern North Dakota  
Eastern Washington-Idaho  
Greater Milwaukee  
Metro Chicago  
Metro New York  
Metro Washington, D.C.  
Minneapolis Area  
Pacifica  
Rocky Mountain  
Sierra-Pacific  
Southeast Michigan  
Southeast Pennsylvania  
Southern California-West  
St. Paul (MN) Area

**NATIONAL MINISTRIES**

*which have passed welcoming resolutions*  
Disciples Justice Action Network (O&A)  
Disciples Peace Fellowship (O&A)  
Gen'l Commission on Christian Unity &  
Interreligious Concerns (RC)  
Lutheran Student Movement—USA (RIC)  
Methodist Fed. for Social Action (RC)  
Urban Servants Corps (RIC)

**INTERNATIONAL  
MINISTRIES**

Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America  
(W&A)



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