



LGBT History & Facts for Unitarian Universalists

Major resolutions in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people

- The first General Assembly resolution on this topic passed in 1970, urging the UUA to work to end discrimination against homosexuals and bisexuals.
- In 1980, a General Assembly resolution urged the UUA to end discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in regards to employment, and assist in the settlement of lesbian, gay, and bisexual religious leaders.
- In 1984, a General Assembly resolution affirmed the practice of conducting services of union for gay and lesbian couples. Another resolution in support of full marriage equality passed in 1996.
- The first resolution to affirm transgender individuals and identity passed at General Assembly in 2007 and urged the expression of this affirmation through employment practices, educational efforts, congregational life, and public witness, as well as encouraging congregations to explore the differences between sexual orientation and transgender identity.
- Over the last 4 decades, resolutions and actions on immediate witness have been passed at General Assembly regarding discrimination, AIDS, the military, sexual education in public schools, marriage equality, the employment non-discrimination act, and more.

Welcoming Congregations

- Unitarian Universalism began teaching about gay issues to youth in 1971 in the UU curriculum About Your Sexuality (now called Our Whole Lives).
- In 1989, a General Assembly resolution urged the UUA to implement the Welcoming Congregation program (proposed by the Common Vision Planning Committee and approved by the UUA Board of Trustees), and the first edition of the curriculum was published in 1990.
- First Parish of Brewster, MA, became the first recognized Welcoming Congregation in 1991. By 1996 there were 57 recognized Welcoming Congregations; in 2000 25% of all UU congregations are recognized as Welcoming Congregations.
- As of May 2011, there were 670 UU Welcoming Congregations in the United States (62% of U.S. congregations), and all but 3 Canadian congregations are recognized as Welcoming.
- Because the majority of congregations that have not gone through the program have smaller memberships, over 85% of Unitarian Universalists attend a Welcoming Congregation.

Ordination

- In 1969 the first UU minister came out as homosexual on the national scene: Rev. James L. Stoll. He never served a congregation again. Prior to that, ministers discovered to be gay were fired from their congregations (though once one was rehired as a custodian).
- In 1979 the first out gay men in the UU ministry were called to serve congregations: Rev. Douglas Morgan Strong, called to All Souls Church, Augusta, ME, and Rev. Mark Belletini, called to First UU Society of San Francisco, CA.
- In 1980, a General Assembly resolution urged the UUA to assist in the settlement of lesbian, gay, and bisexual religious leaders.



- The UUA has been ordaining people regardless of sexual orientation since the 1970s, and the first openly transgender person was ordained in 1988.
- In 2002, the first out transgender person in the UU ministry was called to serve a congregation: Rev. Sean Dennison, called to South Valley UU Society, Salt Lake City, UT.
- Only 4 openly transgender ministers have served UU congregations. Currently, only 2 are serving congregations, as interim ministers.
- Today, about 5% of our ministers identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. The UUA expects all ministers to show ministerial competency in the area of human sexuality before being approved for ordination.
- The UUA still has closeted lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender ministers serving congregations and members in our congregations. People who are bisexual and/or transgender are more closeted in our congregations than those who are gay or lesbian.

Marriage Equality

- The first ceremony of union performed by a UU minister for a same gender couple was reportedly done in the late 1950s. It became more commonplace in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
- In 1984, a General Assembly resolution affirmed the practice of conducting services of union for gay and lesbian couples. Another resolution in support of full marriage equality passed in 1996.
- In 2003 Massachusetts was the first U.S. state to legalize same gender marriage without the decision being overturned. (It is legal in all of Canada.) Seven of the 14 plaintiff couples that brought suit against the state of MA identified as UU. The first same gender couple to get a marriage license in MA, in May 2004, was a UU couple and it was issued by the UU city clerk.
- In 2004 the UUA President's *Freedom to Marry Fund* was launched.
- In 2009 Standing on the Side of Love was launched, a public advocacy campaign that seeks to harness love's power to stop oppression. The campaign provides a platform for marriage equality efforts, among other causes.
- The UUA has received more publicity on its work for equal marriage than any other issue.

History of the UUA's LGBT Office

- In 1971 Rev. Richard Nash and Elgin Blair co-founded the UU Gay Caucus, to lobby for the creation of an Office of Gay Affairs.
- In 1973 a General Assembly resolution called for the creation of the Office of Gay Affairs to be a resource to the denomination on matters pertaining to gay people and the gay community. A 1974 General Assembly resolution created funding for the office.
- In 1975 Arlie Scott was hired as the first Director of the office. She was not UU and was not invited to speak in a UU congregation for more than a year and a half. In 1977 the name was changed to the Office of Gay Concerns.
- In 1986 the name was changed to the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, and in 1993 the name was changed to the Office of Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay Concerns. Meg Riley, the office's fifth Director, became the first one to be employed full time.
- In 1996, "transgender" was added to the office's title and the various identities were alphabetized: Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns, or OBGLTC.
- In 2010 the name was changed to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Ministries, or LGBT Ministries.