



BGLT History & Facts: what UUs need to know

1. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has been on record in support of bisexual, gay, and lesbian people since a 1970 resolution passed at a General Assembly in favor of non-discrimination.
2. The first resolution specific to transgender people was passed at General Assembly in 2007.
3. The *Welcoming Congregation* Program passed as a General Resolution in 1989. First Parish of Brewster, MA, became the first Welcoming Congregation in 1991. (The Unitarian Church of Edmonton was the first Canadian Welcoming Congregation.) In 1996 there were 57 Welcoming Congregations. As of November 2007, there were over 570 Welcoming Congregations in the United States, over 56%. 31 of the 50 Canadian congregations are Welcoming.
4. The UUA General Assembly supported ceremonies of union in 1984 through a General Assembly resolution. Another resolution in support of full marriage equality passed in 1996.
5. Massachusetts is the only US state that allows same-sex marriage. (All of Canada does). Of the seven plaintiff couples that brought suit against the state of Massachusetts, seven of the fourteen individuals identify as UU. The first same-sex couple to get a marriage license in Massachusetts was a UU couple and it was issued by the UU city clerk. The UUA has received more publicity on its work for equal marriage than any other issue. The first ceremony of union done by a UU minister for a same-sex couple was reportedly done in the late 1950s. It became more commonplace by UU ministers in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
6. The UUA's Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns was created by a General Assembly resolution in 1973. It was known as the Office of Gay Affairs. In 1974, General Assembly passed funding for the Office and a year later the first staff person, Arlie Scott, was hired for a half-time position. She was not a UU and not invited to speak in a UU congregation for more than a year and a half. In 1977, the name of the Office was changed to the Office of Gay Concerns.
7. In 1986 "lesbian" was added to the title of the Office (Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns.) In 1993, "bisexual" was added to the title (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 its present-day title. The various identities were alphabetized.
8. In 1969, Rev. James Stoll came out as gay at a youth conference in Colorado. He never served a congregation again. Prior to that, ministers discovered to be gay were fired from their congregations (though in one congregation the minister was rehired as the custodian). In 1979, Rev. Douglas Morgan Strong and Rev. Mark Belletini became the first openly gay ministers to serve congregations.



9. Today, about 5% of our ministers identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender. Best estimates put our general membership as 5-6% bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender.
10. We have had three ministers who identify as transgender serve as ministers of congregations
11. We still have closeted bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender ministers serving congregations and members in our congregations. Bisexual and transgender people are more closeted in our congregations than gays and lesbians.
12. Unitarian Universalism began teaching about bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender issues to youth in 1971 in the UU curriculum About Your Sexuality.

Did You Know?

1. Sexual orientation and gender identity are not the same. Sexual orientation (bisexual, gay, lesbian, heterosexual, questioning, asexual) is about to whom you are attracted. Gender identity and expression (man, woman, transgender) are about how you identify and express your gender (see our new resources, *Between and Beyond* and *Basic Definitions*, for more information).
2. There are no known numbers of the percentage of the population that is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Homophobia and biphobia in our culture play a part in how people report their sexual orientation. In the United States, after the last two presidential elections, news reports indicated that 4-5% of those responding to exit polls identified as gay or lesbian. Rarely are people asked about being bisexual when asked about sexual orientation. There was a study done of cultures around the world that found that in non-sexually repressed cultures more people identified as bisexual than gay, lesbian, or heterosexual.
3. The most common putdown in schools today is to call someone, “gay,” fag, “queer.” “That’s so gay,” is often used as a putdown, though some youth don’t associate the phrase with homosexuality.
4. There is a growing field of excellent children’s literature with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender characters. These include such titles as *Luna*, by Julie Anne Peters, about a sister and her transsexual sibling who needs to live as a girl; *And Tango Makes Three*, by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, about two male penguins who nest together and raise a chick; and *Am I Blue?* A collection of stories edited by Marion Dane Bauer.
5. The Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Spain, South Africa, and the state of Massachusetts all allow same sex couples to marry. Denmark was the first country to allow for a form of civil union (1989). Other places that allow for civil unions/domestic partnerships include Argentina, France, Great Britain, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Luxembourg, and the states of Vermont, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Oregon, California, and Washington.