

Report and Recommendations

Common Vision Planning Committee

*to the Board of Trustees
Unitarian Universalist Association*

January 1989



Sumerian statue from 2600 BCE depicts uniquely human capacity of vision as godlike, the "window of the soul."

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

We are pleased to acknowledge grants totalling \$28,000 for the project from the Denominational Grants Panel.

We are pleased, also, to acknowledge the efforts of so many Unitarian Universalists throughout the continent: congregations, districts, and individuals who participated in the Common Vision survey, organizers of local Envisioning events and those who attended—and all those who have risked and labored for many years to make Unitarian Universalism a place of welcome for gay, lesbian and bisexual persons. Our sincere hope is that our present effort will help make real some “third option,” some unconceived possibility in the midst of an illiberal and fearful time. We are honored to have been given the mandate to do this work.

INTRODUCTION.

DYNAMICS LEADING TO the Common Vision project were set in motion when the UUA Board-appointed Task Force on Social Responsibility (TFSR) recommended in 1985 that the Department of Social Responsibility (now Social Justice) be restructured, eliminating the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns (OLGC). OLGC's functions could be assumed by the UU gay and lesbian constituency, the Task Force said. TFSR wanted to see, in place of “specialists” like a Director of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, “generalists” who would work with numerous issues. The recommendation was not welcomed by Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (UULGC), which responded with a call for a *full-time* OLGC director (the job had been half-time). UULGC argued that gay and lesbian people had reached a historic and critical moment in both the denomination and society, and that the Unitarian Universalist Association has a unique role to play in this period of history. They insisted that adoption of the Task Force recommendation would result in a seriously inadequate response to gay and lesbian issues.

Among the Task Force's recommendations was the staffing of an office by UULGC, which would employ its own director. But UULGC had only about 25 local chapters (now more like 35) and is not capable of assuming the cost of doing so. Many gay and lesbian UUs remain secretive about their identity because they fear that, were they to “come out,” the homophobia and heterosexism that prevail in society—and still in many UU societies—would take too severe a toll in their personal and professional lives.

In response to the concerns expressed about this TFSR recommendation, the 1986 UULGC Convocation in San Diego called for a process of assessment and planning not unlike the “Common Ground” effort that led in the early 80s to the demise of Liberal Religious Youth (LRY) and the birth of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU). At its April 1986 meeting the UUA Board accepted the proposal. The Rev. Dr. Jay Deacon was subsequently hired as half-time OLGC director, charged primarily with oversight of the project.

Deacon asked the Administration for the appointment of a planning committee to work with him in this effort. Its twelve members, from across the continent, began their work in July 1987. Deacon proposed to the committee a model for a consensus process of envisioning. The committee chose the name, "Common Vision," organized its efforts, assigned responsibilities, and named Rev. Lesley Rebecca Phillips as chair.

In the Winter of 1987-88, the Common Vision project conducted a survey of Unitarian Universalists to collect basic information about how UUs feel about the inclusion of gay and lesbian (and bisexual) persons in our religious movement.

The questionnaires constituted the first phase of the project. Responses came both from the 4-page questionnaire section in the Nov./Dec. 1987 *World*, and from direct participation in the survey by 37 UU societies.

During the Summer and Fall of 1988, groups of UUs came together throughout the continent to participate in "Envisioning" events, the second phase of the project. These gatherings, critical to the quality of this project, invited UUs to give voice to their hopes and fears, their values and their visions, and their concrete ideas regarding gay, lesbian and bisexual inclusion and outreach in the UUA.

The Common Vision Planning Committee met October 9-10, 1988, taking as primary data the survey, the data from the Envisioning events, and the report of a Leadership Conference held the two previous days at Arlington Street Church and attended by 24 invitees from across the continent. From this body of data, reaching deep into the heart and soul of our religious movement, the committee forged its recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

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

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

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

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

1. Preserve, honor and celebrate the rich and unique experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual culture as a source of truth and knowledge.
2. Prophetically voice opposition to homophobia within the Unitarian Universalist community.
3. Bear witness to the world of larger possibilities for justice, inclusion, and the inherent worth and dignity of all.
4. Design inclusive programs to affirm and promote the worth and dignity of every gay, lesbian and bisexual person.
5. Minister to families of gay, lesbian and bisexual people.
6. Achieve equal opportunity in ministerial settlement, employment and congregational leadership.
7. With the Unitarian Universalist Association, bring our Unitarian Universalist institutions into harmony with the Principles and Purposes of the Association.

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

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

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

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

1. Create a climate of support, care and affirmation for gay, lesbian and bisexual people and their families.
2. Increase visibility of gay, lesbian and bisexual people within our community of faith.
3. Foster gay, lesbian and bisexual spirituality.
4. Organize, encourage and support district and local groups.
5. Provide communication with members and chapters.

6. Represent together with the Office of Lesbian and Gay concerns (OLGC) a liberal religious presence within the gay, lesbian and bisexual community.

V. Specific Recommendations.

To the UUA:

1. Adopt the Welcoming Congregation program, proposed in this report.
2. In view of a) the urgency of the proposed Welcoming Congregations Program in light of the severely disturbing level of homophobia clearly apparent in the Common Vision survey findings, b) the ongoing need for the customary services of the Office of Lesbian Concerns, c) the need for development of new educational, program and resource materials, and d) the need for more effective coordination of efforts beyond OLGC toward gay, lesbian and bisexual inclusion and outreach, we urge the funding of the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns, including a full-time Director and a full-time support staff position.
3. Because of the overarching nature of our mission and its implications for every department and instrumentality of the Association, and toward the goal of a consistent and coordinated Unitarian Universalist effort toward inclusion of and outreach to gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons, we recommend that the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns be structured so as to relate formally with the departments and other programs, staffs, committees, and operating units of the UUA. We recommend that it be accountable to the Executive Vice President for its responsibility as liaison, advocate and educator with these departments, programs, staffs, committees and operating units.
4. Fund adequately the Equal Opportunity Team program. This program is a model effort, working with apparent effectiveness on the front lines in congregations in the search process. With boards, search committees and congregations, it confronts the fears, misapprehensions and resistances of UUs regarding gay, lesbian and bisexual persons and specifically addresses

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

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

To UULGC, OLGC, and all departments:

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

To UULGC:

1. Through by-law revision, restructure the Continental Coordinating Committee so that, rather than the present at-large composition of members elected at the annual meeting at General Assembly, it consist of regional or district representatives who are elected at grass-roots, locally by the region or district UULGC membership, as well as some at-large members elected by the annual meeting.
2. In place of the current arrangement of two simultaneous co-chairs, one male and one female, consider adopting a structure similar to that in effect within the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association, in which the chair or president serves with a vice-chair or vice-president who, as chair- or president- elect, automatically succeeds as chair or president. These must alternative between male and female.
3. Hire a part-time executive funded by the membership.
4. Participate in gay, lesbian and bisexual inter-faith activities alongside Dignity, Integrity, MCC, Affirmation, the gay synagogues, and other membership organizations.
5. Because of the significant numbers of per-

sons identifying themselves in the Common Vision survey as bisexual and because this underacknowledged minority has called upon OLGC and UULGC for fuller inclusion and greater attention to its specific issues, we recommend that UULGC include in its name and in its publications and programs the word, "bisexual."

6. Apply for the status of Associate organization, a change from the present Affiliate status, which would serve symbolically to affirm the major significance, continent-wide, of the gay, lesbian and bisexual constituency to the entire Unitarian Universalist population, and to recognize the reality that lesbian, gay and bisexual issues are and will continue to be part of the life and ministry of every Unitarian Universalist society.

To OLGC:

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

The Welcoming Congregation Program

The Welcoming Congregation program, below, is proposed by the Common Vision Planning Committee for adoption:

Preamble.

Whereas, the fear of same-sex love deeply embedded in our culture and religious traditions persists also in our Association, and

Whereas, the present situation demands education and action, and the will to live our Principles and Purposes:

Be it therefore resolved that the Common Vision Planning Committee urges the implementation of an Association-wide effort, as described below, to be called the Welcoming Congregation Program.

Definition.

1. A Welcoming Congregation is inclusive and expressive of the concerns of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons at every level of congregational life in worship and program, welcoming not only their presence but the unique gifts and particularities of their lives as well.

- a. A Welcoming Congregation does not assume that everyone is heterosexual. Vocabulary of worship reflects this perception.
- b. Lesbian, gay and bisexual life issues are fairly represented in Religious Education (RE).

2. The By-laws and other official documents of a Welcoming Congregation include an affirmation and non-discrimination clause affecting all dimensions of congregational life, including membership, hiring practices and calling of ministry.

3. A Welcoming Congregation has programming that takes into account gay, lesbian and bisexual life issues in these areas:

- a. Worship that celebrates the diversity of its people by inclusivity, language and content.
 - b. Religious education, social and other programs of the congregation: Gay, lesbian and bisexual experience will be incorporated fully throughout all programs. No longer will heterosexuality be assumed.
4. The Welcoming Congregation does outreach into the gay, lesbian and bisexual communities both by advertising in gay, lesbian and bisexual press and by supporting actively other gay, lesbian and bisexual affirmative groups.
 5. A Welcoming Congregation offers Congregational and ministerial support for same-gender services of union, memorial services, and celebrations of an ever expanding and growing definition of family on an equal basis.
 6. A Welcoming Congregation celebrates the lives of all people and welcomes same-sex couples, recognizing their committed relationships; and equally affirms all displays of caring and affection.
 7. A Welcoming Congregation seeks to nurture ongoing dialogue between gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexuals, and to create deeper trust and sharing.
 8. A Welcoming Congregation encourages the presence of a Unitarian Universalist for Lesbian and Gay Concerns chapter (UULGC).
 9. A Welcoming Congregation observes and celebrates gay, lesbian and bisexual pride as part of its regular celebratory cycle (most gay, lesbian and bisexual communities celebrate this in June).
 10. A Welcoming Congregation, as an advocate for gay, lesbian and bisexual people, attends to legislative developments and works to promote justice, freedom and equality in the larger society. It speaks out when the rights and dignity of gay, lesbian and bisexual people are at stake.
 11. A Welcoming Congregation celebrates the lives of all people and their ways of expressing

their love for each other.

Behavioral Objectives.

What follows is a list of measurable criteria for recognition as a Welcoming Congregation. "

1. A society will establish a Welcoming Congregation committee and monitor the implementation of these goals.
2. A Welcoming Congregation's by-laws and other official documents will include an affirmative, non-discrimination clause to include membership, hiring practices and calling of ministry.
3. Inclusive language and content will be a regular part of worship services. All worship coordinators and speakers will receive guidelines on this practice. The Welcoming Congregation committee will be responsible for monitoring this process.
4. The Minister, Religious Education Minister or Director, or where appropriate, the President or Chair of a society, will participate in a training seminar concerning a Welcoming Congregation.
5. A homophobia workshop will occur in a congregation. A quorum of the membership as defined by the society by-laws and a simple majority of the governing board will constitute the minimum attendance requirement to qualify for a Welcoming Congregation status.
6. The Welcoming Congregation will work with the religious education department of a society to see that gay, lesbian and bisexual life issues are incorporated into all aspects of religious education.
7. During the teaching of *About Your Sexuality* (AYS), the full curriculum will be used. All possible orientations will be affirmed.
8. Advertising will be placed in the local gay, lesbian and bisexual press and/or other media with specific outreach to the gay, lesbian and bisexual community.
9. Contact will be made with local gay, lesbian and bisexual groups to increase outreach, offer

support and promote dialogue and interaction.

10. Use of sanctuary and service of minister (where applicable) will be made available for rites of passages (same-sex unions, celebrations, dedication of the lives of gay, lesbian and bisexual people).
11. Follow-up opportunities for discussion following the homophobia workshop at various forums will occur during the church year.
12. A congregation will provide free church space for local society members who request such to begin a Unitarian Universalist for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (UULGC) chapter.
13. A celebration of gay, lesbian and bisexual pride will occur during a church year and will be documented in a society's newsletter.
14. A society will take visible, documentable action to help create justice, freedom and equality for gay, lesbian and bisexual people in the larger society.
15. Society information and programming will reflect the requested status of any individual as the individual sees appropriate (lesbian and gay couples will be recognized in directories and other information as they desire).

From the report of Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz, UUA President, to the 1987 General Assembly:

We Unitarian Universalists have been the religious leaders in [the area of gay and lesbian rights]: in our establishment of a denominational office; in our support of minister who perform services of holy union. But at the moment our values and principles are being sorely tested: not just by prejudice from outside our doors but by homophobia from within. Let me put it as directly as I can: far too many of our congregations are choosing not to call or even to consider gay or lesbian ministers solely on the basis of their affectional orientation. When we hear questions like these posed about gay or lesbian candidates —“But will she talk about anything other than homosexuality? But will we become a ‘gay church’? But will he be able to counsel heterosexuals? But will the community accept her?”—when we hear questions like these, we know we are in the grip of a profound terror. Now I do not want to be self-righteous here. The fear of same-sex love runs deep in Western culture. But I beg us to understand that if such fear is permitted to control us, we will be in violation of everything which Unitarian Universalism stands for in the world. It is not enough to say passively and self-contentedly, “Why, of course gays and lesbians are welcome in our congregation if they choose to come.” What is required is the recognition that gay and lesbian people are already members of every single congregation on this continent. The issue is whether they feel supported enough to make their presence known. What we require is the courage and wisdom to acknowledge our own fears, both gay and straight, and to take active steps to make the welcome known to the gay and lesbian community.

ADDENDA TO THE REPORT.

I. Survey.

THE FIRST-PHASE survey generated a picture of where UUs are now relative to gay/lesbian/bisexual inclusion. CVPC member Helen Bishop took on the monumental task of tabulating, coding, and preparing the report.

Questionnaires continued to pour into the Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns long after the official deadline, and a final report on the survey will include many of these responses. But this report represents those among the first 2,362 responses who identified themselves as heterosexual.¹ First, though, here's the breakdown on those included in the preliminary report:

Heterosexual	2,012
Gay men	119
Lesbians	100
Bisexuals	111
Total	2,362

Thus, about 14 percent of the respondents were gay, lesbian, or bisexual; 86 percent identified themselves as heterosexual. The 14 percent of the responses coming from gay/lesbian/bisexual persons are *not* figured into the statistics you're about to read. Had they been included in this preliminary report, the results would have come out somewhat more favorably on the matter of full inclusion because those 14 percent of the questionnaires contained fairly uniformly favorable responses.

Questions 13-15 asked respondents to identify possible strengths or weaknesses in the UUA ministry with gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons. Some were unaware of any such ministry or saw no need for one. Nearly a third indicated that such a ministry indicates that the UUA is becoming increasingly splintered into too many subgroups.

¹ Approximately 3,000 questionnaires have now been returned.

Specifically, 46 percent of heterosexuals said UULGC is little known; unfortunately, the instrument did not ask about OLGC. 54% said this ministry helps fulfill our UUA principles; 11% said UUs fail to affirm g/l/b people; another 11% said we attract *too many* g/l/b people.

Strengths listed on *question 13* included: outreach 45%; visibility 34%; providing a place to meet 59%; leadership 27%; fulfillment of UUA principles 54%; supportiveness 70%. Weaknesses listed on *question 14* included: UULGC is little known 46%; goals are not clear 48%; UUs fail to affirm gay, lesbian and bisexual people 11%; limited acceptance 16%; attract too many gay, lesbian and bisexual people 11%; resolutions not implemented 11%; goals not shared by individual congregations 27%.

As gay, lesbian, and bisexual responses began to be tabulated, we found that 70% of these believe that the UU outreach to gay/lesbian/bisexual persons helps fulfill our UUA principles. 72% of gay men and lesbian thought UULGC is little known. 15% of gay men and 34% of lesbians said the UUA fails to affirm them. Another 28% each of gay men and lesbians said they experience limited acceptance within the UUA; 41% of bisexuals said they felt similarly. 52% of lesbians said that the UUA's goals relative to g/l/b persons are clear, but that they're not shared by individual congregations. 34% of gay men and 38% of bisexuals agreed.

Question 16 asked respondents to agree or disagree with the statement, "I would have a difficult time voting for an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual ministerial candidate for my congregation."²

² The question of "flaunting one's sexuality" was a recurring theme on many surveys, even though *heterosexual* expressions of affection and sexuality are seen everywhere and never referred to as "flaunting" but taken for granted. But many others said that sexual orientation is irrelevant or only one factor among many in selecting a minister.

UUs were split. There are large groups *strongly* agreeing and *strongly* disagreeing, but slightly more disagree. There are large groups agreeing and disagreeing, but slightly more agree

A later question poses the statement, "I would have a difficult time accepting an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual person as a ministerial candidate for my congregation."

More respondents felt they could *accept* an openly gay ministerial candidate (*question #20*) than could *vote for* one (*question #16*). But the pattern of responses to both questions is similar.

The question of "gay teachers" is controversial in contemporary society, but UUs seem more accepting on this issue. *Question #18* reads: "I don't like the idea of gays, lesbians and bisexuals being involved in children's religious education programs." By far the largest group of responses were "strongly disagree."

So when UUs responded to #28, "I think gays, lesbians and bisexuals can be effective role models for children," the encouraging response was strongly positive.

"I worry that we will become a 'gay church'," *question #22*, shows most respondents disagreeing. But there's a correlation between those agreeing with questions 16 and 20 and this question. Some of those who, in answer to 16 and 20, didn't want a g/l/b minister, expressed the fear of becoming a 'gay church' or of hindering church growth while professing no personal discomfort with a gay minister.

Question #32, "I think my church or minister should offer ceremonies of union to gay, lesbian or bisexual couples," brought evidence of broad acceptance. Those disagreeing tended toward the view that marriage was pretty much out of date and that sexual minorities shouldn't seek to adopt such a custom. Some objected out a traditional view of marriage, which institution they felt was being distorted by services of union.

On #17, "My church could do more to minister to gays, lesbians and bisexuals," the averages response was neutral or tending towards agreement. Some said that a given church was already doing enough or that nothing special

should be done.

On #19, "Given the opportunity, I would like to participate in more events which include gays, lesbians, bisexual and heterosexuals," the majority were neutral, with another cluster tending to agree. Some specifically mentioned that they didn't want to attend dances if same-sex couples were also attending.

On #21, "I wish I knew more gay, lesbian or bisexual UUs," most were neutral. Some said they wanted to know more UUs period.

On #23, "Gays, lesbians and bisexuals are fully integrated in my congregation," responses were fairly evenly spread with a slight tilt toward neutrality. Some thought there were no such members in their congregation.

Question #24 says, "I feel uncomfortable around gays, lesbians, and bisexuals," and a vast majority disagreed or were neutral. Those who agreed tended to agree strongly, sometimes by extending the line to the left or with more than one checkmark.

On #25, "Gays, lesbians and bisexuals are OK with me, but my congregation isn't ready to deal with this issue," most were neutral or disagreed. Some complained that it was two questions in one, and that they disagreed with one part and agreed with the other.

On #26, "I would like to know more about the lives of gays, lesbians and bisexuals in my congregation and in my community," responses took the shape of a bell curve with a slight tilt toward agreement.


On #27, "I don't mind having gays, lesbians and bisexuals in my congregation, if only they would stop discussing it all the time," responses for all categories were about equal. Some thought the question flawed. Some said no such discussion takes place; others extended the line to the left to indicate strong agreement.

On #28, "I don't want to discuss gay, lesbian or bisexual issues because people might think I *am* one," more than 90% disagreed or were neutral.

Has the AIDS crisis “confused the issues surrounding gays, lesbians, or bisexuals in my congregation” (*question #30*)? The majority said No, or were neutral. A few said that, rather than confusing issues, AIDS has clarified them, since homosexuality is unnatural or a moral evil.

Do “gays, lesbians and bisexuals represent just another special interest group in the UUA” (*question #31*)? Yes, said a majority, and many wrote that there are entirely too many special interest groups in the UUA at present.

On *question #33*, “I think gays, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexuals can benefit from knowing more about each others’ lives,” there was broad agreement. This question elicited the largest majority in the survey.

 **Bar graphs for Questions 16-33 follow: see pp. 12-14.**

Short response questions.

Questions 34 and 35 asked respondents to write how UUA principles and purposes or resolutions have affected their behavior relative to g/l/b persons. Most surveys are blank here. Those who did write responses had strong views.³ Here are samples:

Supportive.

“I try to be tolerant of it even though I’m not very comfortable about it. I try to be welcoming. I guess you could say my feelings and thoughts are inconsistent. Perhaps education could change my feelings.”

“Application of these principles means being accepting of people of whatever sexual orientation, respecting their relationships, making sure gays and lesbians don’t feel excluded - for instance, not speaking or preaching as if we assume “we” are all heterosexual, speaking up when the rights of gays and lesbians to lead their own lives are attacked.”

³ Responses to 34 and 35 were found both in questionnaires returned from the *World* and in those generated by the 37 participating congregations.

“I support the resolutions, and I’m also anti-discrimination. For balance, we should not give more than 10% of time and effort for an issue that affects less than 10% of people.”

“It seems to me to be an area that is rich in culture and humanity as well as spiritual search. It clearly is not diminished, but rather enlarged, by our very mixed community.”

“I am not opposed to the resolutions, but until several gay persons request some of the above services and programs, I probably will not be an active advocate.”

“... they make me proud of the UUA and more certain of staying in the Association.”

“... keeping the issues in front of us and publicity on injustice, (and on good things happening) are valid and important... Experience is still the best educator.”

“... it is *love* we’re talking about. In a world that tolerates the obscenity of nuclear arms, surely we can work out an accommodation for a way of love that differs from our own...”

“... my husband and I continue to learn and learn and appreciate and appreciate because of [our gay friends].”

“Again, it is only justice to my way of thinking.”

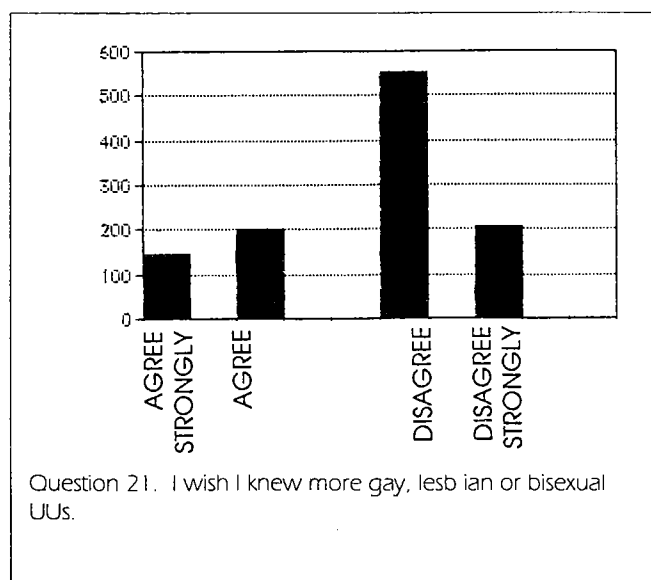
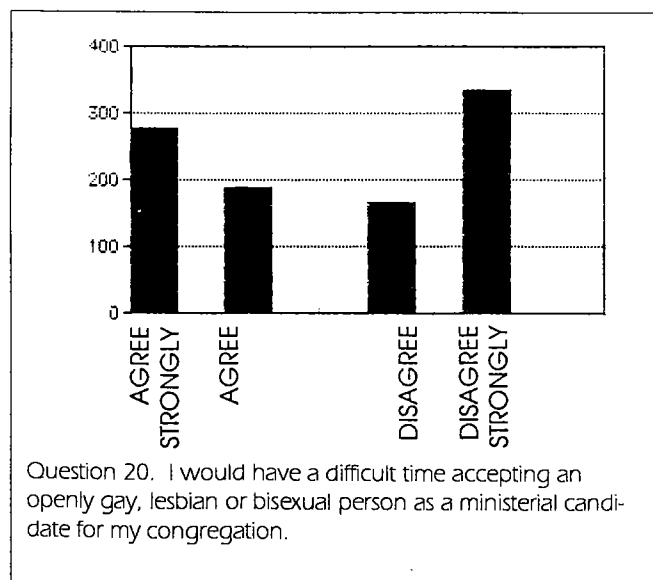
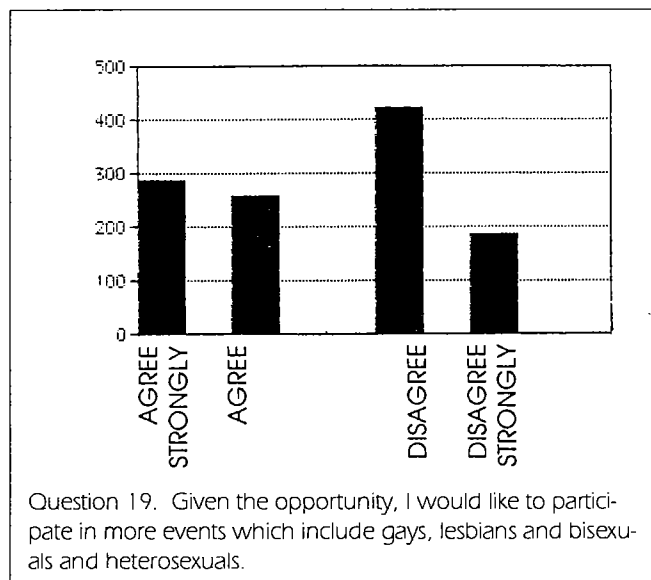
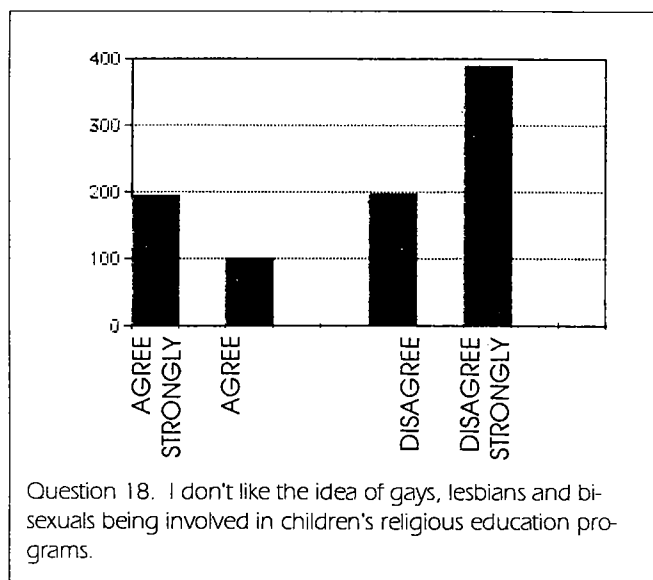
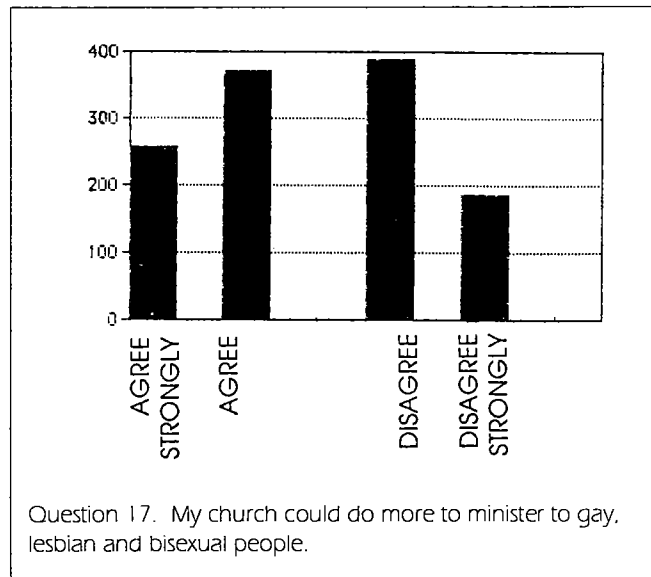
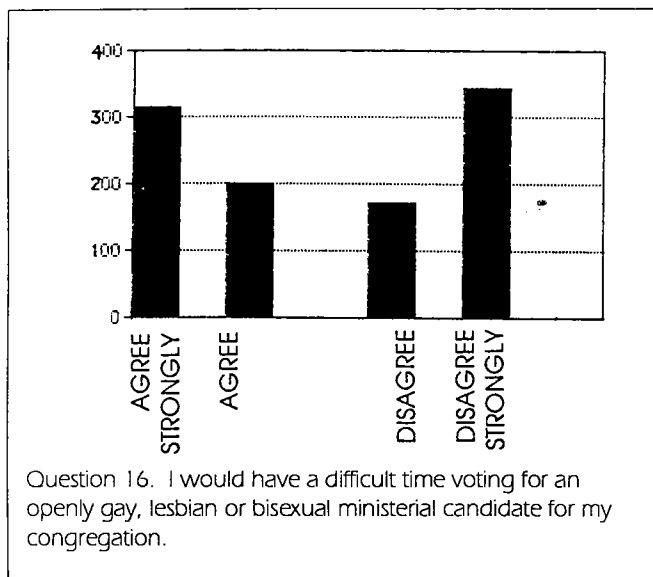
“I strive to relate to gays, lesbians and bisexuals as I would like to be related to - the good Old Golden Rule.”

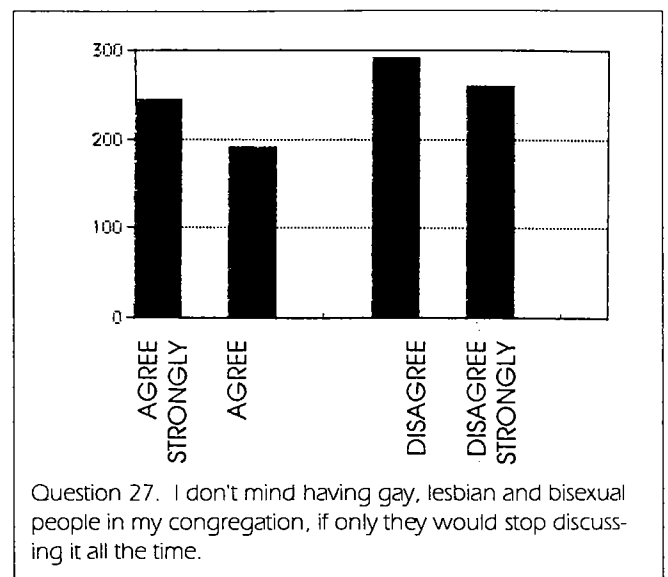
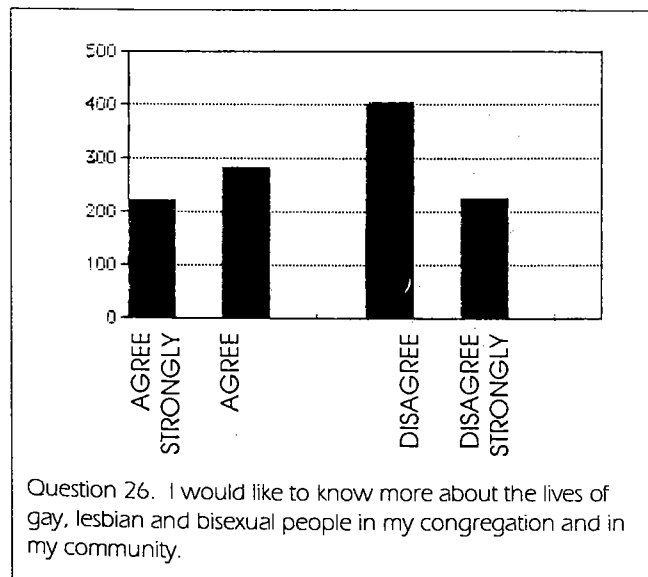
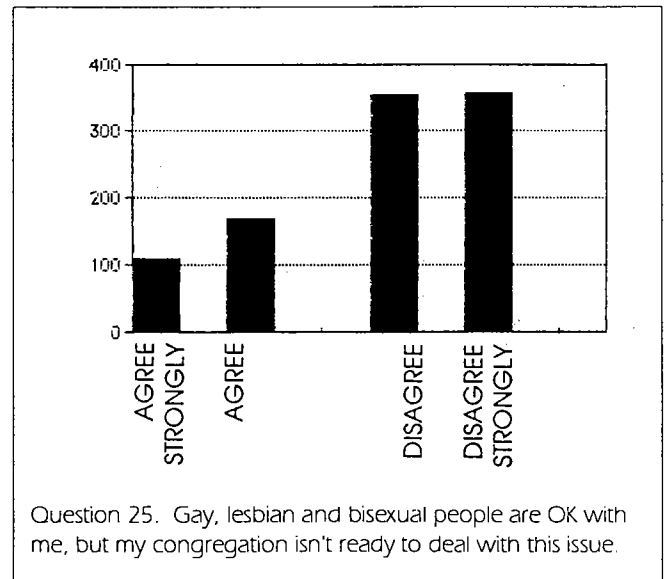
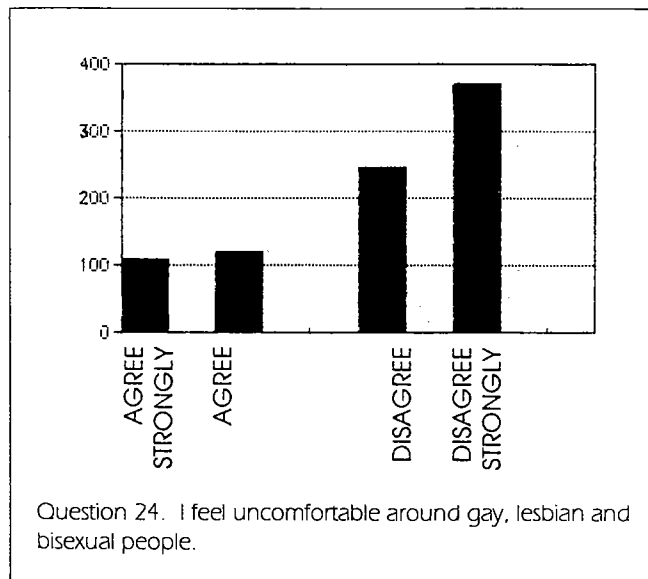
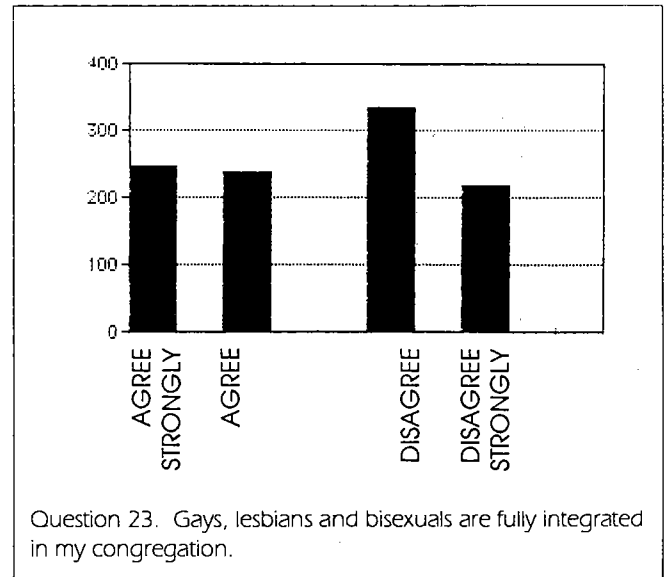
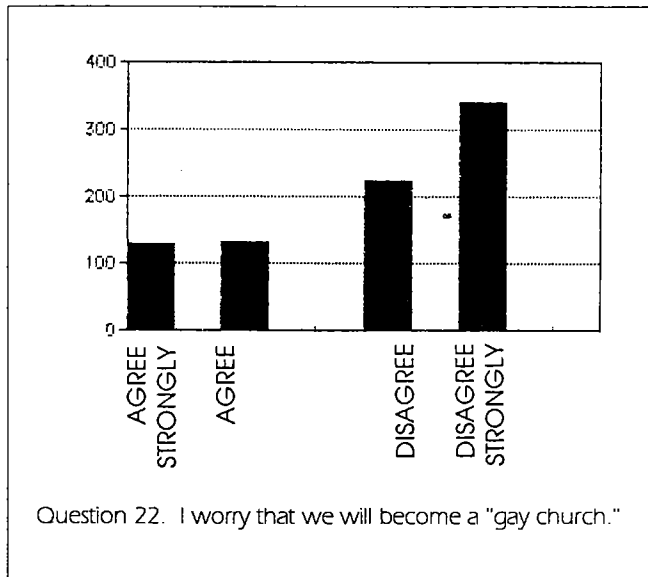
“Whatever we do to heal the lesions in the human community must be ‘God’s will,’ and if it isn’t, then it ought to be.”

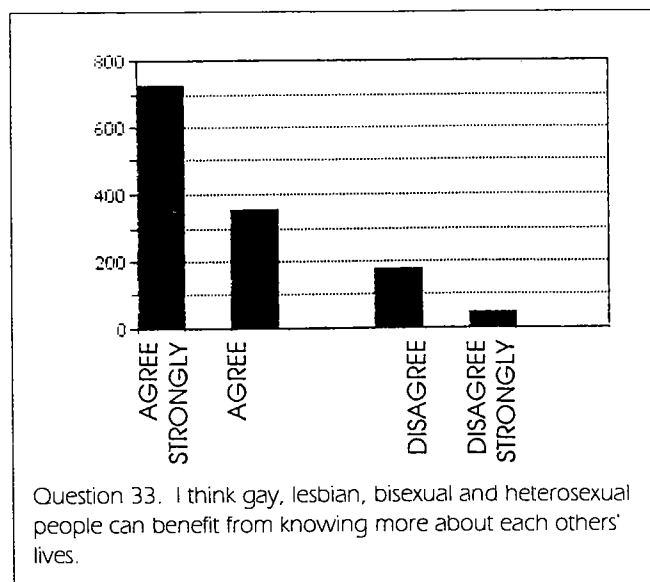
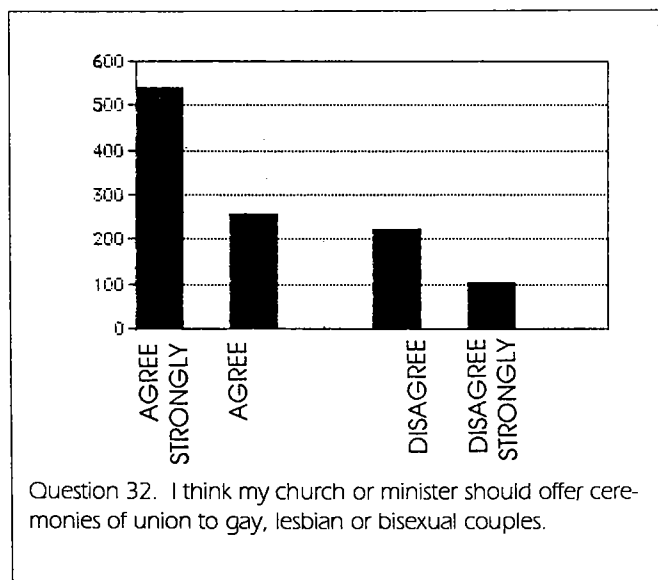
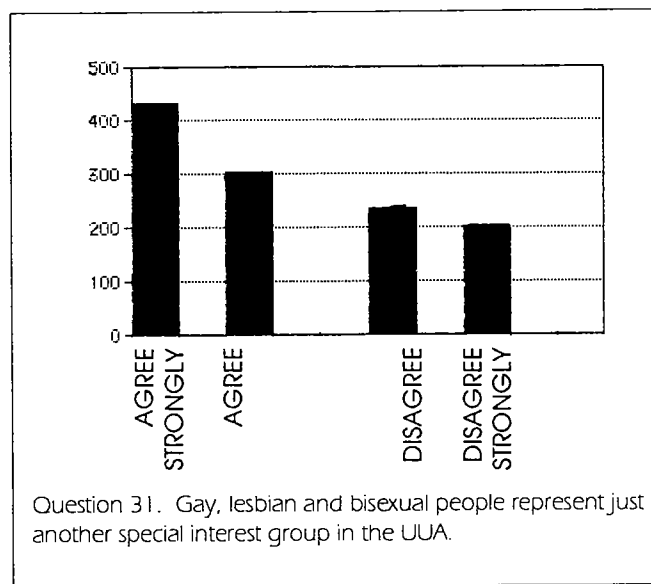
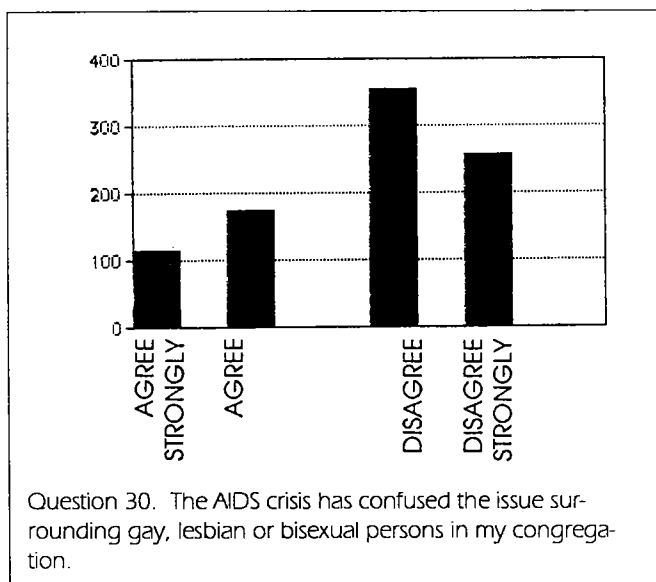
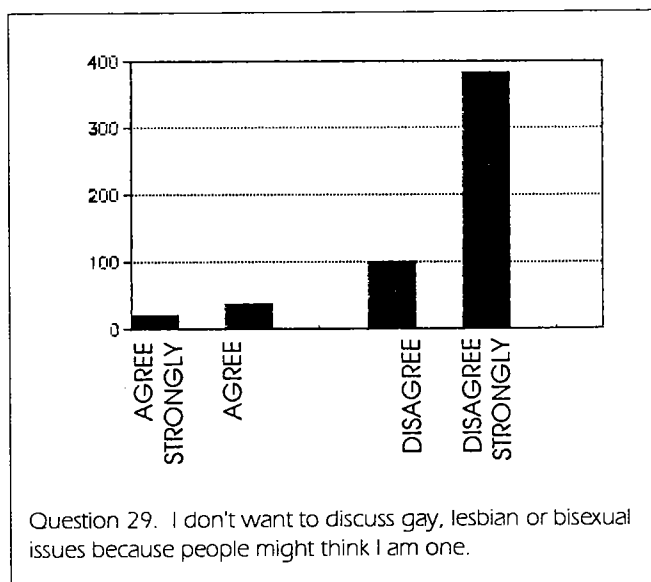
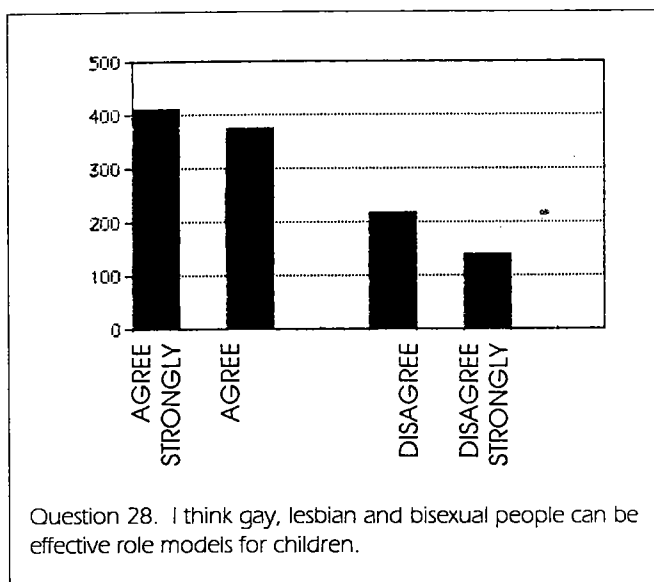
“These principles are the foundation of my spiritual/ethical life whether I relate to gays, lesbians, bisexuals, whites, blacks, green, red or orange.”

“... [gays, lesbians and bisexuals] need relief from discrimination, and support for acceptance as individuals of inherent worth.”

Continued on page 15







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"The resolutions communicate to me that the UUA would like to be supportive, and that is what I try to do as well."

"I'm proud the UUA in a variety of ways offers support to good people who happen to be gay, lesbian or bisexual."

"We are in an ideal position to offer acceptance and support of alternative family structures..."

"Dealing with 'relationships' and 'sexuality' as human issues will break down barriers between gays and non-gays... I want to make gays feel welcome as people, not 'gays'."

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

"My denomination has gone beyond a paper endorsement of gay rights to a living endorsement in each member's heart of a fellow person's right to an equal quality of life."

Non-supportive.

"I loathe them regardless. They actively prey upon young people, have multiple sex partners daily and do spread AIDS. Sex is the overriding concern in their tawdry lives; all else is meaningless. Many...are hate-filled anti-straight."

"The UULGC sounds like the most effective way for the UUA to self-destruct since [Black and White Together] almost did it."

"There is something of the pre-school child exposing himself for its shock effect in the flaunting of one's sexuality."

"I do not want a homosexual minister... Suppose [he] would fall in love with some man in our midst? Suppose he would make passes at

young boys? It's just too risky.. We are already considered peculiar and [this] would make us into pariahs and drive possible new members away."

"By insisting on civil rights and screaming for attention and demanding acceptance, they ask more than the mere compassion they deserve... The UUA should concern itself with worthier issues [such as] civil rights of blacks, racial justice, hunger here at home, shelter, poverty."

"... We can and should help society by trying to stamp out our recognition and publicity for these perverts...certainly they should not be role models."

"I am very compassionate toward the blind, deaf, physically handicapped, poor, black, abused adults and children, but hardly see the need for compassion for gays, lesbians or bisexuals... Of course, this is one way to reduce the population."

"I don't want the bedroom to enter the church. The sexual practices of a man and/or a woman should be left at home."

"...I believe the UUA is making a grave mistake which in years to come will be laughed at... I think the gays have taken over the UUA...they are arrested adolescents selling neurosis as a higher calling... To support gays would be like supporting mosquitoes in a malarial belt."

"...Our minister is more than our religious leader. She is a symbol, she is our representative in the community. Publicly we are thought odd enough, without our symbolic leader openly, publicly proclaiming gay or lesbian preferences."

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

"Accepting aberrant and abhorrent sexual activity should not be considered the obligation of a religious body any more than accepting a physical abnormality should be the role of medicine. We are always working toward correcting those with physical and mental problems; why not those with sexual problems, even if they have adapted to their deviation, as those with a club foot have, and consider themselves normal? The sooner we cut loose gays and lesbians as a sovereign group within our church, the better!"

"Totally disagree that [these principles] apply to the mentally ill, which I believe gays and lesbians to be. If it continues I am no longer a UUA member."

"Their sexual behavior is abnormal and disgusting, no matter *what* they say! Compassion and counseling is needed for such people. I think everyone would be happier if you'd all stayed 'in the closet.' I would leave a church headed by a gay or lesbian minister..."

"You shouldn't be a food server if you have active tuberculosis and you should not be a role model if you are an active queer... Perhaps 'faggot' is too prejudicial, but I deeply resent the misapplication of the word 'gay'."

"What is next? Movements to install ministers and perform ceremonies for the mentally retarded and sign language chimpanzees?... Please don't make the grievous error of submitting all gay lists to any individual congregation."

"Women are discriminated against because of gender, blacks because of color. Homosexuals are not discriminated against unless they *choose* to make a point of what should be *private*."

"I'm oblivious to the sexual orientation of Fellowship members, and I prefer to stay that way."

"...To be honest with you, within our church, the issue is becoming as boring as feminism."

"...I would (personally in my job) not hire an "out of the closet" gay or lesbian, but would have no problem with a gay or lesbian who was discrete."

"...I don't think even if our congregation hired a minister that I'd like a 'gay' minister. If we had a minister who happened to be gay, that would be OK, although I'm not sure he'd be able to understand fully any problems I had with heterosexual relationships..."

"I think the pendulum will swing back, pushed by AIDS and good old common sense, towards a more realistic UUA position on sexuality."

"As a black person, I strongly resent any comparison of my racial group with the movement. The AIDS problem further complicates all aspects of this issue."

"When we permit cowboys to bring their favorite ewe to church and I have to observe their roles of affection, I may leave!"

"I disagree with the General Assemblies, and they almost caused me to disaffiliate. Do you want me, and others who think as I do, to cease to be UUs? I would not surprise me if you threw out my questionnaire along with others that disagree with you."

"I cannot handle too many around me. I get uncomfortable. I feel they are unhealthy. Unclean...Let them stay in their space, and I'll stay in mine."

"Are we so hard up for members that we *seek out* gays, etc.?"

"I make them uncomfortable and they make me uncomfortable. Let's just be polite and stay away from each other as one does from other humans who make one uncomfortable."

"If you keep pressing the issue, you can count me out and I would suspect quite a number of others feel the same way. Do something worthwhile for a change instead of pissing into the wind."

"They're giving liberalism a 'crummy' reputation and our children a bleak future. Families matter most!"

"I do not believe that people whose lives

express wrong (rapists, thieves, exploiters, torturers, sex perverts, sex deviants) are people of equal dignity and worth..."

"2/3 of the problems non-heterosexuals face is brought on by people's reactions to their making a big thing out of it. The other 1/3 comes from diseases. Gay is a misnomer. I can't imagine anything gay about it."

"Divergent sexual behavior exhibited by gays, lesbians and bisexuals needs to be accepted as a fact of life, both ancient and modern, but need not be approved of or offered as a role model pattern for children or young adults."

"...I, for one, am sick of having the homosexual community shoved down my throat...When our church establishes an OLGC, my husband and I leave the church."

"I have great sympathy for homosexuals, gays, lesbians or whatever and am in favor of their receiving rehabilitation therapy, but *please* don't ask me to consider their sexual preferences normal."

"I won't flee just because I meet a queer, but I also won't seek someone's company based on their being of deviate preference."

"The only event I would like to participate in actively would be in the killing of this scum and garbage."

"Your groups, like all other aberrations, should be tolerated but not encouraged nor dwelt upon. The only good I can see in them is the reduction in population increases in this grossly overpopulated world."

Areas of Concern:

"Spending an inordinate amount of time and energy catering to sexual deviants who deserve neither ill treatment nor special treatment."

"You don't reach *deep into the soul* with a

questionnaire based on a silly shallow "Agree/Disagree" polarity... This issue is not a matter of 'feelings' anyway. Homosexuality is a moral evil. This is a matter of objective moral judgment, not mere subjective 'feelings'..."

"...[my town] is not ready for an [openly gay, lesbian or bisexual minister]. Our church would be burned."

"I don't agree [with ceremonies of union]. My reason is that I think this encourages others to be emotionally unbalanced. If anyone is to set a positive spiritual example, it should be the minister. Why should he then condone or encourage something that is unbalanced?"

II. Envisioning events.

TO DATE, 23 ENVISIONING events have been conducted, as follows:

Date, location	Attendance
2/14/88 Portland, Maine Convocation	50
6/19/88 GA, Palm Springs	56
7/21/88 Star Island, New Hampshire	10
8/3/88 Washington Crossing, New Jersey	18
8/8/88 Lincoln, Nebraska	9
8/10/88 Hindsdale, Illinois	9
8/14/88 Adelphia, Maryland	5
8/14/88 Lexington, Kentucky	n/r
8/17/88 Chicago	12
8/18/88 Oakton, Virginia	8
8/27/88 Portland, Oregon	23
8/28/88 Princeton, New Jersey	13
9/8/88 Madison/New Haven, Connecticut ⁴	24
9/12/88 Augusta, Maine (Central Cluster, NED)	10
9/15/88 Clearwater, Florida	21
9/17/88 Oakland, California	2
9/18/88 Edmonton, Alberta, Canada ⁵	30
9/22/88 Atlanta	12
9/24/88 Greenville, South Carolina	6
10/2/88 Hartland Four Corners, Vermont ⁶	11
10/1/88 New York City	12
10/4/88 Boston	n/r
10/15/88 Ballou Channing District, Massachusetts	5

⁴ Co-sponsored by Hampden, New Haven, and Madison societies.

⁵ Kit not used; no specific answers to six questions provided.

⁶ Official New Hampshire-Vermont District event, extensively publicized.

Envisioning events involved the use of a kit containing all necessary materials. Attendees first received a report on the questionnaire findings, then, in table groups of six, wrote individually and then shared responses to six questions (see below). A table-group recorder prepared a group response which was returned to us. All group responses were entered into our computer.

At the meeting of the Common Vision Planning Committee on October 9-10, 1988, the Committee studied the 1,220 separate "table recorder" comments and found the following major themes and issues in the data.

1. Question #1, "What does being Unitarian Universalist mean to you?"

Real inclusion and acceptance
Sense of family and belonging
Community with diversity
Personal growth
Freedom
Freedom from dogma

2. Question #2, "What UU values do you see as especially relevant to gay/lesbian/bisexual participants in our religious movement?"

All the Principles seemed relevant, but the three cited most commonly were:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person
Justice, equity and compassion human relations
Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

3. Question #3, "What are Unitarian Universalism's strengths in inclusion of and outreach to gay/lesbian/bisexual persons?"

We have come so far!
Diversity and inclusiveness
Acceptance and sometimes even affirmation
Long history of social advocacy
Official support through resolutions and

statements

Upfront advocacy that is vocal

4. Question #4, "What are Unitarian Universalism's weaknesses in inclusion of and outreach to gay/lesbian/bisexual persons?"

Homophobia and denied homophobia

Hypocrisy and a praxis-gap wherein actions don't match rhetoric

Lack of will and consensus

Conflict between community and individual
Organizational inadequacies (related especially but not exclusively to UULGC)

Fear

Invisibility of gay/lesbian/bisexual persons in Unitarian Universalism⁷, UU leadership, and society

5. Question #5, "Dream a little: It is the year 2000 (12 years from now). Describe how to gays/lesbians/bisexuals are included in the UUA."

A quality of full inclusion, acceptance prevails.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual people are "out" and visible in membership, ministry, and leadership.

Unitarian Universalists, and the UUA, are exerting bold and effective leadership on behalf gay, lesbian and bisexual people in a manner coherent with of our Principles.

⁷ One medium-sized congregation asked that their Common Vision survey results be tabulated and fed back to them. In written comments, several self-identified heterosexual members indicated that homophobia was not an issue in their congregation, and that the church had no gay members. Other members, identifying themselves as gay, indicated that homophobia was indeed a problem there! At an Envisioning event held in Greenville, S.C., participants were asked to put on their nametags the number of members in their society. Later they were asked to add the number of members they knew were gay. The figures, representing four societies: 2 out of 150; 0 out of 75; 0 out of 500; and 1 out of 120. Wrote the event leader: "This was particularly sharp as evidence that we are not meeting the needs of gay and lesbian members: more would be out, at least to their church leadership. Logically, we'd expect considerably more than 10%, being the 'safe port in a storm.'"

OLGC and UULGC are strong (though a very small minority viewed a time when there is no need for OLGC).

This inclusion, visibility, and value related to gay, lesbian and bisexual people carries through strongly to the local congregation level.

A broad array of programs are in place (the data contains numerous specific ideas which have been taken into account in the formulation of this report).

6. Question #6, "Back to the present: what specific programs, services, organizational structures or other things do you want to see implemented in 1988-89?"

The Welcoming Congregation program

An array of educational efforts

A more adequate Equal Opportunity in Ministry program

Full UUA funding for OLGC

Fuller political action and advocacy on part of local societies and UUA

Clearer, fuller communication between OLGC and UULGC

Print materials and program resources

III. Report of the Leadership Conference (Oct. 7-8, 1988) to the Common Vision Planning Committee.

The conference began with a series of approaches to evaluating the quality and effectiveness of our present efforts toward inclusion and outreach.

1. The first assignment was for each participant to draw an organizational chart of our entire Unitarian Universalist gay/lesbian/bisexual structure, including all the components the participant could think of. This project showed a signal lack of clarity about what those components are and how they relate. Particularly significant was the matter of how they relate: the need emerged for a more unified and integral approach, with clearer

structure.

2. **Need for a continental UU gay/lesbian/bisexual membership organization.** The survey instrument found a unanimous sense that the need is very great. On a scale of 1 to 7, 19 rated the need "1" (very great) and 5 rated it "2."
3. **Inclusion in such an organization of supportive non-gay people:** 23 were in favor; 1 was opposed. **Continental membership organization to have formal structures at which levels?** UUA, 24; District 22; Area/Cluster 13; Congregation 18. **Governing body:** 21 wanted a governing body representing regions or districts; 20 wanted these elected at region/district level while 1 wanted these elected by continental membership. 16 wanted at-large member; 6 wanted some appointed members; 12 wanted to see existing local groups represented.
4. **Need for a staffed OLGC at headquarters:** On a scale of 1 to 7, 21 rated the need "1" and 3 rated it "2."
5. **Summary of other measures.** Members were mixed about whether UULGC members know what their mission is, but the sense that members don't know predominated. They said UULGC doesn't have commonly-understood goals but that "our goals are worthwhile," reflecting the need to define goals publicly rather than rely on individuals' own private goals for the organization; and the sense that some significant commonality does exist sufficient to motivate participation. Participants did not think UULGC's programs were particularly coherent with its goals. Though about a quarter of participants said the programs are utterly ineffective, the sentiment was not universal. Many expressed satisfaction with the *effectiveness* of those programs. Reviews on the *efficiency* of UULGC programs were mixed, weighted slightly toward "inefficient." The two strongest messages in this section were that UULGC is not structured to fulfill its goals, and that UULGC is not effectively utilizing and nurturing its members' leadership and creative capacities.

IV. Other projects, Protestant denominations.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, programs similar to but less ambitious in scope than the Welcoming Congregation Program have existed within mainline Protestant denominations: denominations which, while endorsing the civil rights of gay and lesbian persons, have generally continued in their condemnations of homosexuality and barred gay and lesbian persons from professional ministry. The sole exception has been the United Church of Christ; but, if adopted, the Welcoming Congregation Program will be the first such official program of a major religious body.

All programs specify a process of study, reflection, and decision-making by which a congregation declares itself a participant. Here are three predecessors of the proposed Welcoming Congregation Program.

United Church of Christ. The *Open and Affirming Churches Program* resulted from a 1985 resolution of the General Synod. About a dozen congregations participate.

United Methodist Church. The most ambitious program is the *Reconciling Church Program*, begun in 1983 by the Methodist gay/lesbian organization Affirmation. The program has no official standing with the 11 million member denomination, which has passed a succession of strongly anti-gay resolutions. It counts 35 of the UMC's 38,000 congregations as participants. It publishes a slick magazine called *Open Hands*.

For more information, write PO Box 24213, Nashville TN 37202.

Presbyterian Church U.S. The oldest program, *More Light Churches* was inaugurated in 1978 by the gay/lesbian caucus of the old Northern Presbyterian denomination which, now merged with the southern Presbyterians, numbers 3.1 million members. The program has no official status and the caucus possesses only observer status in the denomination, which has repeatedly passed resolutions barring gay and lesbian persons from ministry.

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