

Toward a Sexually Healthy and Responsible Unitarian Universalist Association

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Introduction

The Religious Institute has sought to translate a term in the public health community -- “sexual health” -- into a framework that can be understood and embraced by religious communities. In its 2003 guidebook, *A Time to Build*, the Religious Institute developed the criteria for sexually healthy religious professionals and sexually healthy congregations. More recently, in conjunction with 36 seminaries and in partnership with Union Theological Seminary, the Religious Institute defined the criteria of a sexually healthy and responsible seminary. The Religious Institute is now working to develop and promote the criteria of a sexually healthy and responsible denomination.

The Unitarian Universalist Association can be rightfully proud of its leadership on sexuality issues. The UUA has a longstanding commitment to comprehensive sexuality education, reproductive rights, and BGLT inclusion. Many congregations offer at least part of the *Our Whole Lives* (OWL) curriculum. Many have undergone the welcoming process. The UUA has been one of the leading denominations advocating for sexual justice for lesbian and gay people, especially in its commitment to marriage equality. In December 2009, the UUA became the first denomination to require its ministerial candidates to demonstrate competency in sexual health, education, and justice.

In July 2009, the Religious Institute, with support from the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock and the leadership staff of the UUA, began a systematic review of the Unitarian Universalist Association’s sexuality-related policies, programs, advocacy, and commitments. The following areas, which constitute the foundation of a sexually healthy and responsible religious denomination, were reviewed and assessed:

- Policies, bylaws, and procedures
- Full inclusion of women in denomination leadership
- Full inclusion of BGLT persons
- Sexually healthy religious professionals, including:
 - Required competencies for ministerial candidates
 - Sexually healthy and responsible seminaries
 - Continuing education and support
- Sexually healthy congregation programs and policies
- Sexuality education, including curricula, training, implementation, and supervision
- Sexual abuse and harassment prevention policies and procedures
- Prophetic witness for sexual justice in the public square

The Religious Institute reviewed more than 40 documents and reports, conducted one-on-one interviews with 17 UUA staff members, and conducted an electronic survey of all UU fellowshipped ministers with email addresses.* The survey had a response rate of 41% after three follow-ups. (A complete list of documents reviewed and persons interviewed is found in the Appendices.)

The needs assessment demonstrated that the UUA has both significant strengths *and* areas that require attention and improvement. The UUA can be proud of the OWL curricula; our longstanding commitment to full inclusion of lesbian and gay persons in our congregations, clergy, and society; gender equity in leadership and clergy; and our strong prophetic voice on sexual justice in the public sphere. The study also revealed significant areas of needed improvement, including the need to renew our commitment to the OWL program, BGLT programs and materials, and ongoing public leadership on the broad range of sexual justice issues. In addition, the UUA needs to significantly strengthen its procedures on sexual abuse and misconduct prevention and response. **A full list of recommendations found in each section of the report is on pages 36-39. The most important recommendations and the Religious Institute next steps follow this Introduction.**

What was most notable about this needs assessment, though, was the commitment and willingness of the staff responsible for programs and initiatives to engage these issues. During the course of the first year of this needs assessment, as a result of work between the Religious Institute and UUA staff, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee added a new competency for its candidates on sexuality issues; the director of human resources modified the UUA's personnel policies to reflect best practices on such sexuality-related issues as full inclusion (including people of transgender experience), Internet safety, personal relationships, and a revised process for allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct; and a draft template for institutional apologies to victims of professional misconduct was created.

The Religious Institute is grateful to the staff and leadership of the UUA, the ministers who completed the survey, as well as the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, for their gracious support, honesty, and openness to examining sexuality issues throughout the denomination. We hope that this needs assessment and its recommendations are carefully considered, so that the UUA can be a model of a sexually healthy and responsible denomination.

Our faith calls us to be sexually healthy, just, and prophetic – for our members and for the world.

Rev. Debra Haffner

* The Religious Institute developed 100 questions, partially based on its survey of more than 2,000 progressive religious leaders in 2008. Additional questions were developed to assess particular program efforts unique to the UUA, and certain questions were dropped as not relevant. Ministerial and Professional Leadership provided the Religious Institute with the email addresses of 1,335 ministers, who were sent a preliminary email. It was determined that 1,273 email addresses were current and usable. On November 2, 2009, the Religious Institute sent an invitation to all ministers with current emails to participate in our survey. Follow-up survey invitations were sent on December 1, 2009, and January 6, 2010, to yield 523 total responses to the survey --a 41% response rate. Percentages in this report are based on the number of ministers responding to a specific question, not to the questionnaire as a whole.

Key Recommendations and Next Steps for the Religious Institute Assessment Project

A full list of recommendations found in each section of the report is on pages 37-40. We have summarized the most important recommendations here, but encourage the reader to see each section for the strengths and weaknesses of each area studied as the background for these recommendations.

We strongly encourage the UUA Board of Trustees to reconsider the recommendation to replace Section C-2.3 of the bylaws, with a generalized “Full Inclusion” policy. The existing bylaw should be expanded to explicitly name sex (indicating biological sex), gender identity, and gender expression, and relabeled non-discrimination and full inclusion. A separate memo will be sent to the Board on this in summer 2010.

We also strongly encourage the staff leadership of the UUA to re-invest and re-commit to the *Our Whole Lives* (OWL) program, the Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns (OBGLTC), and public advocacy on sexuality education, reproductive justice, and BGLT issues. As the sections of this report pertaining to sexuality education, BGLT issues, and public witness demonstrate, these areas have not received adequate staffing, resources, updating, or innovation in recent years. When funding becomes available, we encourage the leadership to consider creating a new “Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice” staff position, similar to the position the United Church of Christ has in its headquarters. This person could be responsible for OWL, provide additional staffing on BGLT concerns, and perhaps become the key point of contact for harassment and misconduct prevention. **We also hope we can count on the President to continue a high level of public involvement on sexuality issues,** and we urge that the UUA communications program include greater coverage of a wide range of sexuality issues. We also suggest that reproductive justice and comprehensive sexuality education become part of the Standing on the Side of Love campaign to assure continued commitment to these areas.

We strongly encourage the leadership to make a visible commitment to improving how the UUA understands, defines, and responds to sexual harassment and misconduct. This is clearly the weakest area of sexual health for our denomination, our congregations, and our religious professionals. The UUA needs to consider a separate, more in-depth assessment of this area, including a key stakeholders’ meeting, with the goals of creating a single definition/expectation of conduct and a process for investigating and responding to complaints. The Religious Institute would be pleased to be considered to help with this process. We encourage the UUA to look to the work that The United Methodist Church has begun in this area, and consider creating a separate website, as The UMC has, to signal the importance and gravity of this issue.

The Religious Institute has just been notified that it has received \$34,000 for second-year funding for this work with the Unitarian Universalist Association. This funding will allow the Religious Institute to:

- Meet with the Board of Trustees in June 2010 and present the findings from year one at General Assembly;
- Develop an article for the *UU World* magazine or other venue on the Ministers’ Survey results;
- Conduct presentations on the needs assessment and its recommendations to key UU constituency groups, including the UUMA, LREDA, and Youth Programs;

- Provide assistance to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) on materials and evaluation of the new competencies for candidates;
- Survey the District Executives and Program Consultants on their knowledge, skills, background and need for training on sexuality issues;
- Develop an assessment tool for UU congregations on sexual health that can be published on the website; and
- Assist UUA staff in considering the recommendations of this report.

In addition, the Religious Institute proposes to co-convene a meeting of key UUA stakeholders to discuss this report, refine the criteria for a sexually healthy and responsible UUA, and prioritize the full set of recommendations for implementation. We suggest working with the Executive Vice President to develop a list of participants for this meeting and to obtain a mini-grant from Veatch to cover travel and other costs for this one-day meeting.

Policies, bylaws, procedures support sexual health/full inclusion

Materials Reviewed:

UUA bylaws

Human Resources Employee Manual, 2010 Update

A Personnel Policy Manual for Religious Organizations/Office of Church Staff Finances

Board of Trustees list

District Executives list

Staff lists

Ministers' Survey

Strengths:

Section C-2.3 of the UUA bylaws is a comprehensive non-discrimination clause, although it would be stronger if it names sex, gender identity, and gender expression.

The UUA Human Resources Employee Manual (the Manual) is strong on anti-discrimination, family leave, birth parent and adoption benefits, affirmative action policy, mandatory background checks for employees, and a requirement for an annual gender and people of color employment analysis.

The following changes to the Manual have been made after the Religious Institute review identified several areas that needed strengthening. Changes were finalized in July 2010.

- a) In the section on background checks, a full disclosure requirement for all new employees was added, as well as an explicit requirement that employees must report any allegations of physical and sexual abuse and assault after employment to their supervisor and Human Resources.
- b) "Sex" and "gender" were added to the list of possible foundations for offensive remarks.
- c) The statement on offensive messages was modified as suggested. Materials not to be accessed on work time now include not only pornography but any erotic material. (Except for legitimate UUA business purposes, such as OWL.)
- d) A statement of disclosure of romantic, sexual, or intimate relationship between a supervisor and employee, and between an employee and a member of the Board of Trustees, was added, as well as actions to be taken if a conflict of interest arises. The manual explicitly states that the UUA prohibits relationships between supervisors and staff who have direct or indirect reporting relationships.
- e) The sexual harassment policies (pages 41 – 42) needed considerable strengthening. The following changes have been made:

- a. "Gender" was added to the list of harassment that will not be tolerated.
- b. The definition of harassment was expanded to include "persistent, pervasive, or severe pattern of offensive conduct."
- c. Prior to reporting "violations of policy" to the Executive Vice President or Human Resources Director, employees who believe they are being harassed are now asked to tell the person whose conduct is in question to stop. If the conduct continues, employees should then report it to their supervisor, who will caution the accused harasser to desist from this behavior and, if necessary, file a written report.
- f) The definitions, policies, and procedures for responding to a complaint have been made and include the key components of a "gold standard" policy. See pages 25-32 in the section on abuse and harassment prevention policies for the complete text.

A large majority of UU congregations have inclusive policies. Eighty-six percent of the ministers in the survey report that their bylaws prohibit discrimination based on gender identity, and 93% have policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:

The proposed bylaw amendment Section C-2.4 should be seen as an addition **not a replacement for** section C-2.3. Without explicitly naming categories, people will not find themselves included in the by-laws, nor does a welcome statement commit the association to actual action on increasing inclusion of people of diverse sexualities and genders.* We recommend Section C-2.3 be relabeled as non-discrimination/full inclusion, including the language as follows:

Section C-2.4 Inclusion and Non-Discrimination

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to do all we can to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

The Association declares and affirms its special responsibility, and that of its member congregations and organizations, to promote the full participation of persons in all of its and their activities and in the full range of human endeavor without regard to race, ethnicity, **sex**,[†] disability, affectional or sexual orientation, **gender identity/expression**,

* Other protected and excluded people may have similar concerns as well.

[†] Note: Words are in bold to indicate the Association's commitment to persons of transgender identity/experience.

age, language, citizenship status, economic status, or national origin and without requiring adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed.

The 2004 “Personnel Policy Manual for Religious Organizations,” if still in use, should address sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. The section on sexual harassment needs to be consistent with UUA HR policy, and should specify policies about staff and ministerial sexual relationships with congregants.

Local congregations should receive templates for full inclusion policies that are trans-inclusive. According to the Ministers’ Survey, fewer than one third (31%) have policies explicitly affirming family diversity, and only about two thirds (62%) have inclusion policies on gender equity. Only 43% have inclusive language policies. Such a template should be developed and circulated.

Recommendations for congregations on safe congregation policies are on page 21.

Full inclusion of women in denomination leadership

Materials Reviewed:

Board of Trustees list
District Executives list
Staff lists
UUA website
Organization chart

Strengths:

Board of Trustees is gender-balanced.
Ministerial representation on Board of Trustees is gender-balanced.
The Executive Vice President is a woman, and she has been in this position for 25 years.
The first woman moderator was elected in 1977.
Fourteen of 20 District Executives are women.
There is a requirement for an annual report on equal employment opportunities, by gender and race.
Fifty-six percent of the ministers completing the survey are women.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:

Currently the youth positions (one elected, one appointed) on the Board of Trustees are held by white men. In the future, efforts should be made to have diversity in these positions.

The recent reorganization has made top leadership at staff headquarters less gender-balanced than it has been in recent years. Three of the top four staff positions are now held by males. Ministries and Congregational Support directors are all women who report to a man. Financial, operations, stewardship, IT, and human resources are all headed by men. Eighty-five percent of all office and clerical positions, which represent one third of the total staff, are women. It is notable that an organization committed to gender equality has an “informal curricula” of women as the office and program staff and men as the primary financial and operations staff and managers. A new gender analysis should be done following the recent staff changes, and new hires should be considered with a gender lens.

Full inclusion of BGLTQI persons

Materials Reviewed:

Welcoming Congregations Handbook

Living the Welcoming Congregation

Fact sheets

Website materials

Strengths:

The Welcoming Congregation Program has now been in place for more than two decades.

Seventy-eight percent of ministers say their congregations have gone through a welcoming process. As of December 2009, 606 congregations have gone through the process of becoming a welcoming congregation. Only nine congregations with memberships of more than 200 are not official welcoming congregations. The congregations that are not recognized as welcoming congregations by and large have fewer than 75 members.

Lesbian and gay people are well integrated in ministerial and congregational life. In the Ministers' Survey, 15.3% of respondents said they publicly identify as gay or lesbian; 6.4% self-identify publicly as bisexual; and 1.5% self-identify as queer. Asked to describe their gender identity, 0.3% identify as intersex; 0.5% identify as transgender/gender queer. Together, nearly one quarter of the ministers in the survey identify as BGLTQI.

Ministerial awareness of lesbian and gay adult congregants is almost universal. Ninety-eight percent of the ministers say there are lesbian and gay adults in their congregation, compared to 64% in Public Religion Research's national survey of mainline Protestant clergy. Forty-two percent believe there are people of transgender experience in their congregation, although 29% are unsure and 28% say there are not. Only 8% of mainline Protestant clergy said there are transgender people in their congregations.

UU ministers have a high degree of public commitment to BGLT issues, especially marriage equality. Eighty-three percent of the ministers have spoken publicly about marriage equality in the past two years. Fifty-eight percent of ministers have preached on sexual orientation and a third on transgender issues in the past two years.

There has been a high degree of public witness from UUA denominational leaders on lesbian and gay issues. Twenty-four percent of the press releases from 2001-2009 were on marriage equality and an additional 11% covered other lesbian and gay issues. Twenty-four percent of the press mentions about the UUA from 2006 to 2009 were on marriage equality or lesbian/gay issues.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:

There has recently been only one staff person with key responsibility for the OBGLTC, down from staffing several years ago. Renewed staffing for this office is vital, especially in light of the Director's move to Ministerial and Professional Leadership.

The *Welcoming Congregations Handbook* is now 11 years old, out of date, and in need of significant updating and revision. The 1999 edition is the "revised edition" of the original 1990 guide.

There are no fact sheets or resources on intersexuals.

There are no fact sheets or resources on gender-variant children.

All of the existing BGLT fact sheets need some updating.

Transgender inclusion was only passed as a UUA priority in 2007. UUA congregations need significant education and resources on transgender issues. Only one minister of transgender experience has served a congregation as a parish minister.

Congregations need support, resources, ideas, and encouragement on how to more fully include bisexuality and transgender issues in their BGLT efforts. UU congregations have often ignored the "B" and "T" in BGLT outreach, programs, and policy initiatives. Interweave has published a bisexuality curricula and is working on a transgender curricula. More should be done to promote congregational use of these resources.

There needs to be greater awareness and programming on behalf of BGLT teens and young adults. Only 44% of the ministers say there are teens in their congregation who struggle with these issues (although if one removes those congregations which have *no* teens, one could expect such teens in *every* congregation). Forty-five percent say they are unsure, and 11% said no. Only 12% of the congregational ministers report a program or support group for BGLTQ teens.

Despite high numbers of congregations (78%) having gone through the welcoming process, a majority (59%) do not have a current welcoming/rainbow task force. Sixty-eight percent went through the welcoming process more than five years ago; only 25% have renewed their welcoming commitment. In fact, only four in 10 congregations have an existing welcoming committee/rainbow task force.

Outreach for BGLT members is low. Fifty-four percent of ministers report that they do not advertise in gay community publications or organizations for new members.

Sexually healthy religious professionals

Materials Reviewed:

The UUMA Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministry

LREDA guidelines

Musician guidelines

Administrator guidelines

MFC policies

MFC rules

MFC reading list

Starr King School for the Ministry's completed *Sex and the Seminary* survey

Meadville Lombard Theological School's completed *Sex and the Seminary* survey

Background:

Sexually healthy religious professionals:

- Have examined their own personal sexual histories.
- Have explored their own attitudes and confronted their limitations and biases about sexuality.
- Have listened to the attitudes of others about sexuality, which are different from their own.
- Are knowledgeable about sexuality, including sexual behaviors, sexual response, sexual orientation and gender identity, and relationships.
- Undertake theological reflection regarding the integration of sexuality and spirituality.
- Model ease and comfort in discussing sexuality issues.
- Interact with people of all genders and ages in respectful and appropriate ways.
- Affirm their own sexual orientation and gender identity and respect the sexual orientation and gender identity of others.
- Recognize and affirm family diversity.
- Have personal relationships that express love and intimacy in ways congruent with their own values about sexuality.
- Seek ongoing opportunities for education and information regarding sexuality.*

* Haffner, Debra W. (2001). *A Time to Build: Creating Sexually Healthy Faith Communities*. Westport, CT: Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing.

There are three key components for assuring that religious professionals will be sexually healthy and responsible:

- Required competencies for candidates to demonstrate they are sexually healthy religious professionals
- Sexually healthy and responsible seminaries
- Continuing education and support for religious professionals on sexuality issues

Required competencies for sexually healthy religious professionals

Strengths:

In December 2009, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) voted unanimously for a new competency for all ministerial candidates beginning in December 2010. The new competency reads:

Sexual Health, Sexual Boundaries, Sexual Justice: Candidates are expected to be knowledgeable about sexuality issues in ministry, including sexuality education, BGLTQI issues, sexuality concerns of adults and adolescents for pastoral care and public witness. Candidates are expected to demonstrate a commitment to sexual justice in our Association and in society. One sexual harassment prevention learning experience is required.

In addition, the committee voted to strengthen the required reading list for candidates on sexuality issues, including making *The Safe Congregation Handbook* a required reading, requiring two OWL curricula, including the junior high program, requiring “Balancing Acts” (an online guide, published on www.uua.org, on keeping children safe, and addressing offenders) and *A Time to Build: Creating Sexually Healthy Faith Communities* (downloadable online from www.religiousthought.org).

The UUA is now the first denomination to require ministerial candidates to demonstrate competencies in sexual health, education, and justice. Others are sure to follow.

This change occurred as a result of this needs assessment and training workshops with the MFC. At the beginning of this project, the UUA did not have a competency requirement for sexuality issues or a requirement for any learning experience in sexual abuse/harassment prevention. The Human Development/Family Life Education/Ministry to Youth and Young Adults explicitly mentioned human development on “aging, adolescence, parenting and death” and “issues, programs, and resources for ministry with youth and young adults.” Sexuality issues were not mentioned explicitly, but were added by a vote initiated by Rev. Debra Haffner at the September 2009 meeting. The Religious Education competency required familiarity with at least one UU religious curriculum at each level, but did not specifically mention the requirement to read at least two levels of OWL (as indicated on the book list).

There has been no requirement for a sexuality or sexual harassment learning experience. Meadville requires a sexually harassment learning opportunity for ministers, but they do not offer it themselves. Starr King does not require such a program (to be fair, they do not have many requirements), nor do they offer one. The MFC voted in December 2009 that all candidates starting in December 2010 must have taken a learning opportunity on boundaries, attraction, and prevention of misconduct.

The required reading list (73 books) requires candidates to read two of the OWL curricula and the *Welcoming Congregation Manual*. *The Safe Congregation Handbook* had been an optional reading, but after this assessment, is now required reading. The gender analysis of the post 1970’s readings is fairly balanced; the historical readings are primarily by men. New books on sexuality issues have been added to the required reading list and suggested resources to the online recommendation.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:

Meadville and Starr King need to be encouraged to develop sexuality learning opportunities for their students so that they can easily meet the new requirements.

The Religious Institute and MPL successfully submitted a proposal to the UU Funding Program for the development of an online course that would fulfill the academic preparation for this new competency. This is high priority, both because the UU seminaries are not offering such courses, and because most UU candidates are not enrolled in UU seminaries. The course will be piloted in summer 2011, and available by January 2012.

MFC members need a one- to two-hour training to learn how to assess candidates on this competency.

MPL needs to create materials for candidates on fulfilling the requirements of this competency, including a list of sexual harassment prevention learning opportunities, sexuality classes, and resources to read.

MPL needs to consider developing a similar set of sexual health competencies for credentialed religious educators. Credentialed religious educators are currently required to read *The Safe Congregation Handbook*, but no other sexuality-related books are required (though some are on suggested reading lists.) The Human and Faith Development requirement includes nothing on sexual development. There is no requirement to read even a single level of the OWL curricula or attend an OWL training. Both should be required for credentialing.

Sexually healthy seminaries

Background:

Meadville Lombard Theological School and Starr King School for the Ministry participated in the Religious Institute's 2008 survey of the sexual health of mainline and progressive seminaries. Seminaries were evaluated on more than 20 criteria, which assessed their formal curricula, informal learning opportunities, institutional policies, advocacy on sexual justice issues, and leadership composition.

Ten seminaries in the United States met at least two-thirds of the criteria for a sexually healthy and responsible seminary. At the time of the study's completion, Meadville Lombard met one third and Starr King just over half of the criteria.

A year later, Religious Institute staff contacted the presidents of the UU seminaries to re-evaluate each institution, record any progress toward meeting the criteria, and offer assistance.

Strengths:

Meadville Lombard

Meadville Lombard Theological now meets 57% of the criteria for a sexually healthy and responsible seminary.

- Sexual harassment policies cover faculty, staff, and student relationships.
- Non-discrimination policies cover sex, gender identity, and orientation.
- A sexual harassment prevention learning opportunity is required for all students.
- Sexuality-related issues are reported to be addressed in all core courses.
- Full-semester courses in queer theology/BGLT issues, sexual ethics, and feminist/women's studies are available either on campus or through the Association of Chicago Theological Schools.
- Senior leadership staff is now gender-balanced.
- Students and faculty have hosted worship and on-campus events on sexuality-related issues.
- Faculty, including Sharon Welch, Mark Hicks, and John Tolley, have engaged the media and/or published on sexuality-related issues. Mark Hicks also serves on the Human Rights Campaign LGBTQ Seminary Project.

Starr King

Starr King School for the Ministry now meets more than 80% of the criteria, an improvement of more than 25 percentage points since the seminary study was published.

- Inclusion statement names gender, gender expression, and sexual/affectional orientation.
- Policies on sexual harassment prevention cover faculty, staff, and student relationships.
- Non-discrimination policies cover sex, gender identity, and orientation.
- The required core course covers some sexuality-related issues.

- Full-semester courses in queer theology/BGLT issues in religion, sexual ethics, feminist/women’s studies, and sexual abuse/violence issues are available either directly through Starr King or through the Graduate Theological Union.
- The faculty, staff, and board of trustees are gender-balanced.
- Students and faculty have hosted worship and on-campus events on sexuality-related issues.
- Faculty, including President Rebecca Parker, have engaged media and published on sexuality-related issues.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:

Meadville Lombard

- Adoption of an explicit inclusion policy or statement related to sexuality issues would strengthen policies (e.g. Open and Affirming statement for a seminary that includes sex, gender identity, and orientation).
- Students do not have an opportunity to take a “sexuality issues in ministry” skills course, nor do other schools in the Association of Chicago Theological Schools provide such a learning opportunity.
- New faculty hires should address gender balance among the faculty.

Starr King

- There is no requirement for a sexual harassment prevention training opportunity.
- Students do not have an opportunity to take a “sexuality issues in ministry” skills course, nor do other schools in the Graduate Theological Union provide such a learning opportunity.

Continuing education and support for religious professionals on sexuality issues

Strengths:

Center has included Debra Haffner as a trainer for UUMA chapters since 2006. Only Metro New York and Northern New England have held such a workshop.

Convo included workshops on sexual health and sexual misconduct prevention. There is coaching available for ministers going into “after pastor” churches.

Boundary issues are minimally covered in the first-year ministers’ workshop.

Areas for Improvement:

Significant numbers of UU ministers report that they did not receive training on sexuality issues, either in seminary or in continuing education. Thirty-nine percent of ministers reported that they do not think their seminaries adequately prepared them to deal with sexuality issues; 31% said they were not adequately prepared to deal with BGLT issues. Recently trained ministers are more likely than those who were trained more than 10 years ago to say their preparation on sexuality issues in seminary was adequate (52% vs. 28%). Still, nearly one third of recent graduates report that they were not adequately prepared.

One-third have not had training on sexual abuse prevention.

Seventy-five percent have not had training in pregnancy options counseling.

Forty percent have not attended programs on safe congregations.

Seventy-nine percent have no training background on counseling about sexuality concerns.

Eighty-one percent do not have certified sex counselors or therapists in their referral networks.

Forty-four percent say that they would like training on these issues; 38% say they would like outside assistance and speakers.

Recommendations

The MFC could consider developing a requirement in preliminary fellowship for a UUA-sponsored “sexuality issues for ministers” one- or two-day workshop.

Center Days, Ministry Days, LREDA, UUMA chapter events, General Assemblies, and districts could offer periodic training workshops on being a sexually healthy religious professional.

Continuing education requirements, if instituted, should include sexual health offerings.

Sexually healthy congregations

Background:

A sexually healthy faith community is committed to fostering spiritual, sexual, and emotional health among the congregation, and to providing a safe environment where sexuality issues are addressed with respect, mutuality, and openness. The building blocks of a sexually healthy congregation are sexually healthy religious professionals,* worship and preaching on sexuality issues, pastoral care, education for youth,* adult education,* welcoming and affirming congregations,* safe congregations,* and social action* that includes sexual justice as a priority.* *

Due to financial constraints, this report did not conduct individual assessments of congregations or interview lay leaders. However, the Ministers' Survey provides information about the types of services, activities, and policies on sexuality that are being offered at the local level, as well as topics covered from the pulpit.

Ministers who serve congregations in any capacity were asked which sexuality-related services were provided. The following table demonstrates the percentage of ministers who say their congregations offer a specific service:

Table A

Relationships w/ community BGLT organizations	79%
BGLT ministries	78%
OWL at some level	68%
Middle school	66%
High school	42%
4 – 6th grade	30%
K – 2nd grade	16%
Adult	11%
Parent	6%
Young adult	5%

* Considered in separate sections of this report.

* Haffner, Debra W. (2001). *A Time to Build: Creating Sexually Healthy Faith Communities*. Westport, CT: Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing.

Allow BGLT groups to use building	64%
AR/AO programs	47%
BGLT family support groups	15%
Marriage/couples enrichment	14%
Groups for BGLT teens	12%
AIDS ministries	9%
Groups on divorce	8%
Support groups for survivors of abuse	4%

In a further analysis of services offered, urban and suburban congregations were more likely to offer AR/AO programs, AIDS ministries, and marriage/couples enrichment programs, and to allow other BGLT community agencies to use their buildings. Rural congregations were more likely to offer ministry to BGLT people and support groups for families with BGLT members. Larger congregations (those with memberships over 251, and especially those with memberships over 500) were more likely to offer AIDS ministries, AR/AO programs, marriage enrichment, support groups for families with BGLT members and teens, and divorce and survivor groups. Equal numbers of all sizes of congregations offered BGLT ministries.

Strengths:

More than three quarters of UU congregations offer BGLT ministries of some kind.

Almost six in 10 ministers have preached about sexual orientation in the past two years, and one third has preached on transgender issues.

More than two thirds offer some level of OWL programming: two of three at the junior high school level, and four in 10 at the high school level.

Almost half offer AR/AO programming and commitments, and many acknowledged that it includes BGLT issues.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:

Many areas of sexuality-related services are lacking in most congregations. With the exception of ministries for lesbian and gay persons, congregations by and large are not actively engaging many of the sexuality issues faced by congregants. And even in the area of lesbian and gay ministries, there is still more that could be done.

Few ministers have preached on sexuality topics other than orientation/identity. Only one in five has preached on domestic violence, one in six on reproductive justice and sexuality education, and fewer than one in 10 on sexual abuse. Nearly one in three (27%) has not preached on any sexuality issue. An annual prize for a sermon on a sexuality issue might encourage more ministers to speak about these issues from the pulpit.

The OWL program is not being taught in significant numbers beyond junior high or high school levels. Support groups and adult education offerings are not generally available for marriage/couples enrichment or self-help groups, nor do most have groups for lesbian and gay teens. In a study completed last year by the Religious Institute, a smaller percentage of UU congregations offer AIDS ministries than any mainline religious denomination.

There is a need to help congregations assess whether they are sexually healthy and responsible. The Religious Institute proposes to develop an online assessment tool for congregations, matching supportive attitudes to programs, policies, and social action. A further step would be to develop a guidebook for UU congregations on being a sexually healthy and responsible congregation.

District offices need to be more engaged in these efforts. There is a need to survey the District Executives and Program Consultants on their knowledge, skills, background, and need for training on sexuality issues, as they are often the “first responders” when congregations face issues related to OWL, sexual misconduct, conflict over welcoming policies, a sex offender at church, etc. There has been no recent training of District Executives or Program Consultants on these issues. Fewer than half of the congregations have a safe congregations team. The development of regional teams with expertise in these areas could also be considered. Experienced and outstanding OWL trainers might provide the core of such a network.

Other sections will address higher accountability and visibility for safe congregation policies (pp. 25-32), promoting the welcoming renewal process (pp. 10-11) and implementation of the full range of OWL curricula (pp. 22-24).

Lifespan sexuality education

Materials Reviewed:

OWL curricula K - Adulthood

Safety packet

Code of Ethics for UU Youth Events

Data submitted by Lifespan Education Office

Strengths:

OWL Curricula! The UUA can be rightfully proud of its leadership of the OWL program, and its multiple curricula. Every age is covered, except for pre-school and senior adults.

According to the OWL consultant, more than 6,500 people have attended OWL trainings in order to be able to teach some level of the curricula. More than 2,000 have participated in the junior high training, and 2,700 have taken a combined junior/high school training. There are more than 80 OWL trainers. Bookstore sales for OWL curricula since 2004 are impressive (refer to Table B below):

Table B

Level	# Sold
K-1	1064
4-6	1452
Junior High	2822
10-12	1775
Young Adult	382 (only available since 2008)
Adult	676

According to the Ministers' Survey, 66% of congregations teach OWL junior high school and 42% teach OWL high school. Sixty-eight percent of the congregations teach OWL on some level.

There is an active listserv for OWL trainers and teachers that allows for peer education and review.

The OWL slides became available as a narrated DVD in fall 2009.

Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:

The OWL program has not been significantly updated since its publication. The facts in the junior high program were updated five years ago, but no activities were modified, changed, or added. Current topics that have been identified by Lifespan Education and OWL volunteers that have not been addressed include Internet safety and drug and alcohol use. No other curricula have been updated.

There needs to be a comprehensive review of all of the OWL curricula. Supplements need to be created at least every other year and distributed to every congregation. There needs to be an email database of trained volunteers, so that Lifespan Education can send out regular updates as needed for information and activities.

There needs to be a major update of OWL junior and high school curricula. In addition, the development of a parents' curriculum could be considered to accompany the teen programs.

The OWL program is not as widely adopted by congregations at the elementary school or adult level. According to the Ministers' Survey, 16% of congregations teach K-1, 30% teach 4 -6, 5% teach young adult, and 11% teach adult OWL. Only 6% report using the parent curricula. According to the Director of Lifespan Education, there is still resistance in many congregations to the K-1 program.

Training is only offered to volunteers *before* they teach the program. There are no opportunities for continuing education (beyond the peer-run listserv) or ongoing training. Once trained, there are no additional requirements of leaders.

There has been no new training of trainers – or continuing education for trainers – “in more years than” the director of lifespan education “could remember.”

Ministers have limited involvement with the OWL program. Forty-two percent said they have no involvement with the OWL program in their congregation; only 27% speak to parents during the course of the program. Only 3% have observed the OWL classes being taught in their congregations.

OWL volunteer leaders are not monitored and supervised. Although there have been few complaints about OWL to Lifespan Education staff, it is clear from the listserv postings that there is great variability of skill and expertise among the volunteer teachers.

Continuing education should be available to OWL teachers and to the LREDA members who supervise them. Certified religious educators should be required to attend at least one OWL training. There should be an expectation that the DRE or OWL volunteers create a relationship with a local sexuality education program or certified sexuality educator for at least annual observation and consultation.

The UUA should create an expectation for continuing training experiences at least every three years for educators and trainers. There needs to be an email database for regular updating and support of OWL educators and trainers. As a first step, staff should create an unduplicated database of OWL educators and trainers. No such list currently exists.

The OWL program is now staffed by a 10-hour per week consultant who reports to the director of lifespan education. This was recently expanded to a half-time staff person, who should be directly responsible for monitoring and promoting OWL, including the OWL listserv.

LREDA is an untapped resource for OWL education in our congregations. At least every other year, an OWL update training should be included in regularly scheduled LREDA training programs. LREDA members who are professionally employed by congregations should be engaged in OWL programming, training of local volunteers, and supervision.

Although 72% of the ministers report that their congregations have a youth group, 45% reported that those groups have no guidelines for teens about sexual or romantic relationships at church or during youth group activities. This needs to be a high priority for the youth office to develop a model template and process. Current efforts of the denomination go little beyond “no PDA,” and many young adults have told the report’s author that their first sexual experiences happened at UU events.

The Code of Ethics for Adults and Youth in Leadership Positions needs to be refined, to include clearer guidelines about physical behaviors with youth, participation in games or activities with physical contact, etc. “Inappropriate sexual behavior” (defined now only as sexual intercourse or sexual harassment) must be defined as NO sexual behavior with youth.

The OWL volunteer network could provide a powerful foundation for advocates of community-based sexuality education, although they are currently not being resourced by the Washington, DC office or advocacy programs. OWL educators/trainers should be linked with the UUA’s efforts in national and community advocacy for sexuality education in public schools.

A national evaluation of OWL is being developed by Christian Community, with involvement from Mathematica and Indiana University. UUA staff should be involved in helping create the goals and objectives of this evaluation, the instruments that will be used, and the reports that come from it.

Commitment to sexual abuse and harassment prevention policies and procedures

Materials Reviewed:

2000 report

2000 apology letter

2002 report

Report of the Ad Hoc Task Force on Ethics and Congregational Life, April 2007

Making Our Congregations Safe for Children/Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Screening Forms

Ethics in Congregational Life Program (online)

Process for Handling Complaints of Misconduct: online, UUMA, MFC guidelines

Restorative Justice Manual (January 27, 2010 latest update, copyright 2002)

Speaking Truth to Power: Victims/Survivors of Clergy Sexual Misconduct

The UUMA Guidelines on the Conduct of Ministry, current, July 2010

LREDA Code of Conduct

Musicians Code of Conduct

Administrators Code of Conduct

Human Resources Employee Manual

The Safe Congregation Handbook

Balancing Acts

UUA website materials

Background:

The key components of a sexual harassment/misconduct prevention policy are:

- Clear, shared definitions, including:
 - “Nature of the conduct, whether such conduct is unwelcome, whether such conduct is persistent, pervasive or severe, and context...a pattern of offensive conduct” (Jewish Theological Seminary)
- Clear, shared understanding of ethical sexual and other intimate relationships
- Clear, shared understanding of relationships/behaviors that are inappropriate

- Clear, shared expectations of transparency and knowledge
- Clear levels of grievance procedures
 - Informal/personal: “No thank you. Please stop.”
 - Supervisor: “You must stop.”
 - Official person/body
 - Supervisor/HR
 - Professional Body
 - Investigation
- Possible Outcomes
 - Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment did *not* occur.
 - Formal written reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior
 - Recommended or required assessment, counseling, and treatment
 - In case of ministers or staff, referral to other appropriate body
 - Probationary standing
 - Dismissal from board, volunteer role, or job
 - Written summary record

All may apply for false, malicious accusation as well
- Rights of the Victim/Survivor – Clear Restitution

“Just resolution focuses on repairing any harm to people and communities, achieving real accountability by making things right in so far as possible, and bringing healing to all parties.”
(The United Methodist Church)

 - To be heard and taken seriously
 - To be dealt with in a timely manner
 - To be informed about procedure and outcome
 - To be offered an advocate for procedures
 - Reimbursement for associated, time-limited counseling
 - Apology by perpetrator and institution
- Prevention
 - Periodic required training and updates for staff ministers, religious educators and leadership
 - Statement of importance of self care
 - Competencies for ordination for candidates
 - Background check for all new staff/volunteers
 - Disclosure form
 - Requirement to report change

Strengths:

The Safe Congregation Handbook, 2005

Balancing Acts – The UUA is the only denomination that has a manual for congregations on ministering to sex offenders. An online course for religious professionals is available at the UUA website, and has been completed by 336 professionals.

As a result of this study and work during year one of this project, all ministerial candidates beginning in December 2010 will be required to take a sexual harassment prevention/boundaries workshop before seeing the MFC.

As a result of this study and work during year one of the needs assessment project, there is now for the first time a template for an institutional apology to a survivor, and a clear agreement that such an apology will come from the UUA President (without concurrence or direction of the Board of Trustees).

As a result of this study and work during year one of this project, the UUA Human Resource Manual has been completely updated, and there are both updated definitions of harassment and a much clearer policy that contains all of the core elements of a sexual harassment policy. This section could now be the basis for policies throughout the Association.

As of July 2010, the policies now read:

“Harassment in the workplace is unlawful. Any harassment regarding race, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, or disability will not be tolerated. Such harassment includes unsolicited remarks, gestures or physical contact, display or circulation of written materials or derogatory pictures directed at any of these categories. In addition, sexual advances, jokes, explicit or offensive pictures, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- 1. Submission to such conduct or communication is made a term or condition either explicitly or implicitly to obtain or maintain employment; or,*
- 2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting such individual’s employment; or,*
- 3. Such conduct or communication is pervasive, severe, and persistent, and has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual’s employment or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment environment.*

Resolving Issues

- 1. The best resolution often results when you take personal responsibility and communicate directly and clearly with the person without delay. If possible, immediately tell the person whose conduct is in question to stop the problematic behavior.*
- 2. If the unwanted behavior does not stop, ask your supervisor to be involved to set clear expectations for how the behavior is to change by the person in question. You and your supervisor should then file written reports with Human Resources.*
- 3. Further violations should be brought to the attention of the Executive Vice President or the Director of Human Resources as soon as possible, so that a thorough investigation may be conducted and appropriate action taken. An investigation may include discussions with all involved parties, identification and requesting of witnesses, examination of written or electronic records and documents, requests for written statements, and other appropriate actions.*

In any situation when you are not clear about the appropriate actions to take, contact the Director of Human Resources or the Executive Vice President for guidance.

If the Association determines that harassment occurred, it will take action to end the harassment. Steps and other recommendations may include, but are not limited to, assessments, counseling, or treatment as a condition of employment; other steps may also include, and again are not limited to, warnings, probation, transfers, suspension, and/or termination of employment. Ministers and other religious professionals will also be referred to the appropriate body (i.e., the Office for Ethics in Congregational Life, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, and LREDA Good Offices). The Association will also offer to the victim of harassment, upon request, limited counseling, a report about what steps have been taken, and a version of the apology if available.

It is unlawful to retaliate against an employee for filing a complaint of sexual harassment or for cooperating in an investigation of a complaint of sexual harassment.

Staff who are found to have made a false claim of harassment will face appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.”

Areas for Improvement:

Many of the recommendations of previous task forces were never implemented. Less than half of the Districts have safe congregation teams, although all were to do so. District Executives have not received specific training in this area. District teams of investigators/liaisons were never constituted, nor was a Crisis Response Team created to help congregations with healing. No pamphlet was ever written for congregations on sexual harassment/misconduct prevention. An Office of Restorative Justice was never established.

The codes of conduct (and therefore definitions of harassment/misconduct) for ministers, religious educators, and musicians differ. See page 31, Table C to compare the different codes. The administrators' code does not mention sexual boundaries or harassment at all.

The newly revised UUMA guidelines in our opinion do not reflect best practice for single ministers, which would include removing the ministerial relationship before a romantic or sexual relationship is pursued. They also create a double standard based on marital status, and do not require the minister to consider the consequences for the proposed congregant partner. These issues will be discussed with the UUMA Executive Committee in fall 2010.

The Code of Ethics for Adults and Youth in Leadership Positions needs to be refined, to include clearer guidelines about physical behaviors with youth, participation in games or activities with physical contact, etc. “Inappropriate sexual behavior” (defined now only as sexual intercourse or sexual harassment) must be defined as NO sexual behavior with youth.

The processes for investigating and resolving complaints differ for the UUA staff, ministers through the MFC, and ministers through the UUMA. There is no process identified for handling complaints and investigations by LREDA (beyond “confront colleague” and/or report to an LREDA Good Officer or the LREDA Board of Trustees). There is no process for complaints against members of the musicians’ or administrators’ associations. The parallel processes (as determined from the guidelines and procedures reviewed) are presented on page 32, Table D.

The lack of clarity around these issues also exists at the congregation level. According to the Ministers’ Survey:

Seven in 10 congregations do not have safe congregations committees in place. One-third do not have a written safety policy. And among the two thirds that do, 55% don’t publish it in newsletters, membership materials and/or their website, and a third of the ministers don’t know if it’s been published. Eighty percent say that they do not offer education for parents on sex abuse prevention.

One third of the ministers say that they do not have written policies against sexual harassment in their congregation. And of those who do, only 30% have it on their website, and only 37% printed periodically in the bulletin.

The lack of thorough polices results in a lack of good practice on these issues. One third of congregations, according to the ministers, do not screen volunteers for histories of misconduct/abusive behavior and 29% do not screen all employees for their histories. Seventy-eight percent don’t have policies in place for how to respond to a sex offender in the congregation, despite Balancing Acts being published five years ago. Eight in 10 say that they don’t educate parents on sex abuse prevention; 51% do not have sex offender treatment or experts on their referral lists. Only 16% report they have babysitters who are screened, with 36% saying their babysitters are not screened, and the remaining 48% reporting that they don’t know or that they have no babysitters.

Recommendations:

This is clearly the weakest area of sexual health for the denomination, our congregations, and our religious professionals. Although the Religious Institute spent extensive time reviewing materials during this first year of the assessment, there was not the time to interview enough people to completely understand the history of the many complicated reports and the many recommendations that have been made over the past 10 years that have not been adopted. There needs to be a separate analysis/study (perhaps by the Religious Institute or another outside expert) that includes developing a list of all past report recommendations with status and reasons for action not taken. There could also be a separate convening with key stakeholders from the Board, UUA Staff, MPL, MFC, UUMA, LREDA, and selected survivors with the goal of developing a single definition, code of conduct/behavioral expectation, and process for investigating and responding to complaints. (The Religious Institute would be pleased to facilitate such a meeting using our consensus colloquium methodology.)

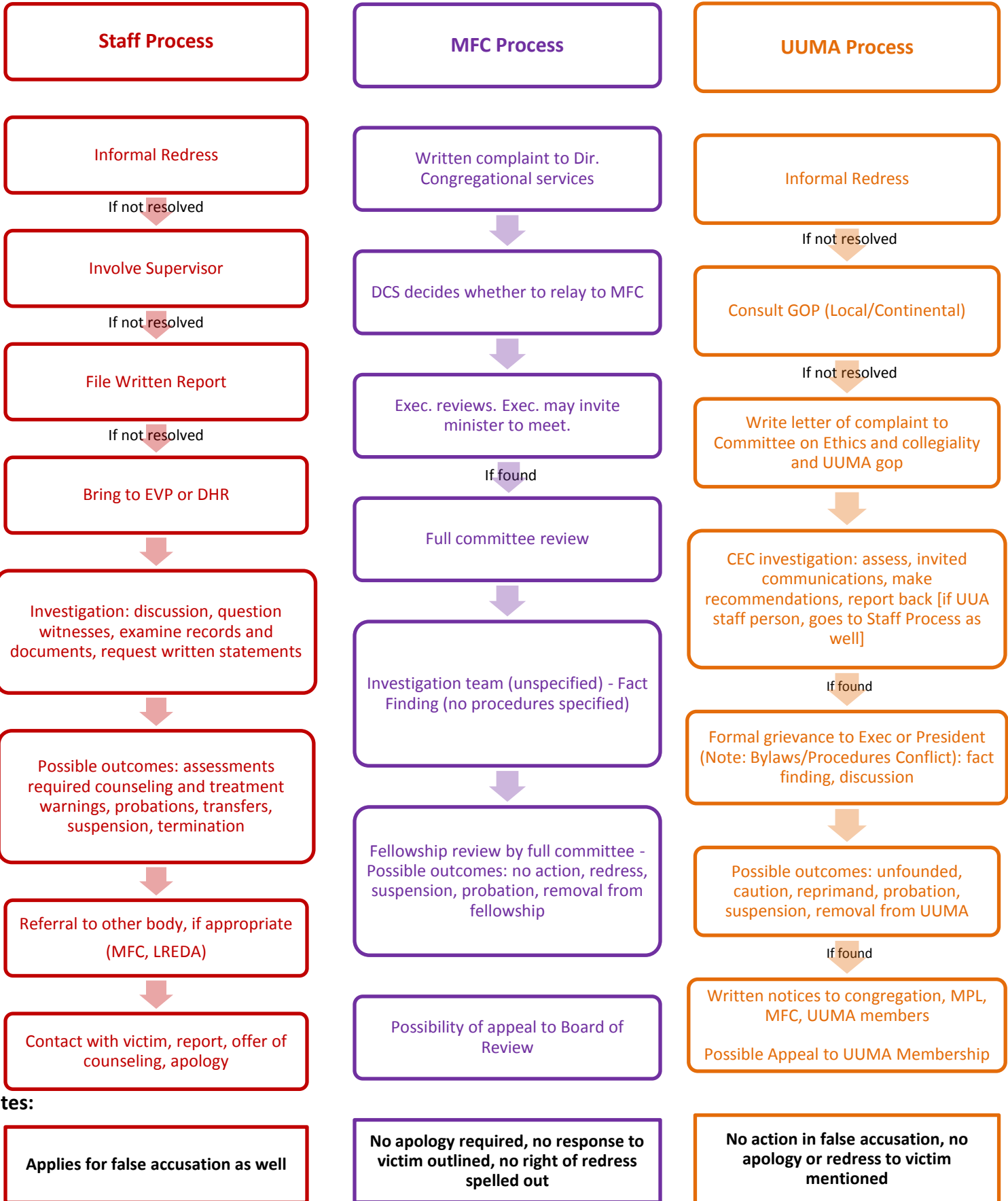
In addition, the following recommendations are suggested:

- A single staff person be identified and publicized to receive complaints about misconduct and harassment related to any UU professional or volunteer acting in their UUA capacity, who reports directly to President or Vice President. A safe congregations committee should be reconstituted in Boston in light of recent staff changes. This committee could decide how next steps in this process are to proceed.
- Develop single statement for code of conduct/behavioral expectations for professionals – staff, ministers, religious educators, musicians, Board of Trustees, and UUA volunteers.
- Develop streamlined, clearly articulated, standard process that would apply to staff, board of trustees, ministers, religious educators, musicians, and administrators. At this time, a minister who works for the UUA who is accused of harassment/misconduct by an employee could be subject to three distinct processes with three distinct outcomes.
- Have the President issue broad-based statement and apology to victims/survivors of misconduct; announce new actions taken in 2009-10 (MFC requirement, new staff policies, institutional apology template and procedure) and the next steps the UUA will take to make this area a higher priority.
- Develop annual training for staff, MFC Executive Committee members, UUMA and LREDA officers on how to evaluate complaints of possible misconduct/harassment.
- Prominently place new procedures and commitments on a separate section of website. Have it linked from home page.
- Consider a separate website on these issues (see The United Methodist Church dedicated website, www.umsexualethics.org. This website includes instructions for filing a complaint, definitions, denominational policies, sample congregation policies, opportunities for sexual ethics training workshops, guidance for self reporting, responses, and a pamphlet for distribution by congregations. It does not yet include steps for the investigation, which would be helpful if the UUA were to have its own resource of this kind.)
- Revise Religious Education materials on sexual boundaries.
- Revise the Code of Ethics and Adults and Youth in Leadership Positions.
- Develop stronger outreach promotion and expectations on safe congregations policies to all congregations—models, trainings, higher visibility, importance expressed by President and congregational leadership.
- Consider recommendations on past violations project.

Table C

Definitions of Appropriate Conduct
<p>Staff/Human Resources Employee Manual</p>
<p><i>“Such harassment includes unsolicited remarks, gestures or physical contact, display or circulation of written materials or derogatory pictures directed at any of these categories. In addition, sexual advances, jokes, explicit or offensive pictures, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Submission to such conduct or communication is made a term or condition either explicitly or implicitly to obtain or maintain employment; or,</i> 2. <i>Submission to or rejection of such conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting such individual’s employment; or,</i> 3. <i>Such conduct or communication is pervasive, severe, and persistent, and has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual’s employment or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment environment.”</i>
<p>Ministers/UUMA Code of Conduct</p>
<p><i>“I will not engage in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with any minor child or unwilling adult. I will not engage in sexual contact or sexualized behavior in potentially exploitive relationships, including with any person I am counseling, with interns, and with any staff person I supervise directly or indirectly except my spouse or partner. I will respect the relationships of those to whom I minister, and not engage in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with any married or partnered client or member of the congregation, agency or enterprise I serve, or with the spouse or partner of a client or member of the institution. If I am married or in a committed partnership I will not engage in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with any person whom I serve professionally except my spouse or partner. In pursuing any special personal relationship of friendship or romance with a client or member of the congregation, agency or enterprise I serve, I will recognize the potential negative consequences for my ministry and/or the institutional system and I will consider the advice of colleagues.”</i></p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MFC bylaws have no definitions in this area; the above is from UUMA Code of Conduct, Current Version. • The above guideline was approved by the UUMA in June 2010. The need to examine the “consequence” for the “other person and the congregation” was eliminated.
<p>Religious Educators/LREDA Code of Conduct</p>
<p><i>“Examples of such abuse would be sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; sexualized behavior with any adult who is in another committed relationship; sexualized behavior with interns or youth advisors.”</i></p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No statement on involvement with single adults in congregation or marital status of religious educator. • No process beyond confront colleague and report to GOP or LREDA BOT
<p>Musicians/Musicians Code of Conduct</p>
<p><i>No sexual behavior with any child, adolescent, vulnerable adult seeking advice, any adult in another committed relationship, colleagues serving my congregation.</i></p> <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No statement on involvement with a single adult congregant.
<p>Administrators/Administrators Code of Conduct</p>
<p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing on sexuality, sexual boundaries, or harassment.

Table D: Process for Complaints of Misconduct/Harassment



Commitment to sexual justice in the public square

Materials Reviewed:

UU World magazine: Last three years

UU World Online 2009

Beacon Press and Skinner House catalogs

All statements of witness/other statements/resolutions on sexuality issues since 1970

Last year of *UU World Online* for numbers of stories with sexuality content

Last three years of President's columns in *UU World* magazine

All press releases

GA program books, 2007, 2008, 2009

Strengths:

During the past 40 years, the Unitarian Universalist Association has passed 89 resolutions and statements of witness on sexual justice issues. These statements have largely been in response to public events and present a remarkable commitment in the public square to sexual justice.

Sexual justice issues have been a focus of public witness for the UUA for the past two Presidential administrations. Of 109 press releases on the website issued in the past five years, 44% were on a sexual justice issue. (Twenty-four percent were on marriage equality; 11% other BGLT issues; and 10% other sexual justice issues.)

Coverage of the UUA in the general press heavily featured UU involvement in sexuality issues during the past nine years. Thirty-nine percent of articles that mentioned the UUA were about a sexual justice issue, with 19% on marriage equality and 5% on other BGLT issues. See Table E below.

Table E

Topic	# of stories (Total press mentions on website=1,236)	% of stories
Marriage Equality	250	19%
Bisexual, Gay Lesbian, Transgender Issues	60	4.9%
Sexuality Education	28	2%

Health (Care)	22	2%
Global HIV/AIDS	14	1%
Hate Crimes	14	1%
Reproductive Health	9	0.7%
Abortion Rights	8	0.6%
Gender Justice	8	0.6%
Accessibility-Sex Offenders	4	0.3%
Adoption Rights	1	0%

Eighty-five percent of the ministers (and 82.7% of congregation ministers) report that their congregation has a social action committee. During the past two years, 114 churches held at least one community forum on a sexual justice issue, most often on marriage equality.

The ministers have a strong public commitment to BGLT issues, in particular marriage equality; these issues are covered two to three times more than other sexuality issues. Eighty-three percent of the ministers have spoken publicly about marriage equality in the past two years. Similarly, 58% of ministers have preached on sexual orientation and a third on transgender issues.

UU ministers are actively involved in a broad range of advocacy for sexuality issues. Almost half say they are engaged with the national Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), and 47% are members of the Human Rights Campaign. Far fewer are involved with their state and local affiliates on these issues; only one in 10 works with a local Planned Parenthood affiliate, and only one in five works with a state RCRC chapter.

Beacon Press is publishing books with sexuality themes: six (20%) of the 30 books in the 2009 Beacon Press Fall Catalog deal with a sexuality-related issue, broadly defined.

Areas for Improvement:

Press releases and coverage could be offered on a broader range of sexuality issues beyond marriage equality and bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender issues (see Table E above).

Fewer than half (44%) of ministers report that the social action programs make sexual justice a stated priority.

Less than one quarter of ministers have spoken out on abortion (22%) or sexuality education (23%) in the public square. Almost one third (27%) have not preached about any sexuality issue from the pulpit,

and fewer than one in five have publicly addressed domestic violence (19%), reproductive justice (15%), sex education (17%), or sexual abuse (10%).

Only 10% of ministers report that there is a congregational policy on abortion, 4% on sex education, and 6% on AIDS.

UU World magazine has by in large not addressed sexuality issues. The Religious Institute reviewed *UU World* magazines from 2006 through 2009. Of 34 feature stories, **none** addressed a sexuality topic. Of 61 sub-feature articles (forum, congregation life, and reflections), one was on transgender issues. (One was on global social entrepreneurship of women and one was on stem cells.) Using the most generous interpretation of three sexuality-related articles, sexuality issues were covered 3% of the time. (If one counts only the transgender article, it is 1 %.) Forty-three percent of the articles are authored by women. Presidential messages did not mention any sexual justice issues in 2006 or 2007; one 2008 issue did, and one 2009 issue did.

UU World Online also is not addressing sexuality issues. None of the 19 feature articles from summer 2008 through December 2009 addressed a sexuality issue. Only six (3.4%) of 176 departmental stories did, four out of those six on marriage equality.

Skinner House Books has not addressed sexuality issues. Only six (4.2%) of the 144 books in Skinner House’s 2009 catalog deal with a sexuality issue, broadly defined. Only one of the featured books does. On the back list, only five (3.8%) of 132 books do.

The bookstore is carrying only a few sexuality-related books. Excluding the 16 OWL-related curricula and books, only 20 (3.5%) of 558 books listed in the bookstore catalog are about sexuality issues.

General Assembly has not had a significant amount of programming around sexuality issues during the past three years. The below Table F of GA programs demonstrates that issues related to gender (women’s and men’s roles) and BGLT issues dominate discussion of sexuality issues. In 2010, there were 3 sessions based on the celebration of the 200th birthday of Margaret Fuller, which explains a third of the increase.

Table F: General Assembly Programs

Topic	2007	2008	2009	2010
Women, Men, Gender	7	3	2	9
BGLT issues	7	1	4	7
Sex Education/OWL	1	2	1	0
Sexuality more broadly	2	0	0	2
TOTAL	16	7	7	18

General Assembly books include a statement on inclusive language, but do not include a separate statement against sexually harassing behaviors. This should be developed and included as a separate section in the program book.

Recommendations:

- Continue past Presidents' high level of involvement in public witness on broad range of sexual justice issues, including sexuality education, reproductive choice, marriage equality and BGLT full inclusion. Maintain high level of visibility in press and coalitions.
- Integrate sexuality education in schools and reproductive justice into Standing on the Side of Love.
- Raise visibility of sexuality issues in *UU World* magazine, print and online, and set goals for article focus of at least 10% annually.
- Encourage Skinner House to publish in these areas and UU Bookstore to expand its offerings on sexuality issues.
- Increase programming on a broader range of sexuality issues at General Assembly.
- Develop materials for social justice committees on sexuality issues, expanding beyond the primary BGLT focus.
- Develop a statement for the General Assembly book on a safe, sexually non-harassing GA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All recommendations in bold are no or low cost.

Overall

- Stakeholders' Meeting to discuss this report, and criteria for a sexually healthy and responsible UUA, and to prioritize recommendations.
- If funding is available, consider creating a new staff position, Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice, modeled on the United Church of Christ's headquarters position. This person could be responsible for OWL, provide additional staffing on BGLT concerns, and perhaps become the key point of contact for harassment and misconduct prevention.
- Develop national directory of UUs with expertise in broad range of sexuality issues, for congregations, districts, Board of Trustees, response teams, and so on.
- Create national network of UU consultants/resource persons for congregations, districts, etc.
- Consider developing networks of best OWL trainers to be UU regional teams on sexuality issues.

Policies, bylaws, procedures support sexual health/full inclusion

- **Revise section C-2.3 of the bylaws, with the proposed C-2.4 as an addition not a replacement.**
- **Change non-discrimination to full inclusion in all materials; make changes so that all are trans-inclusive.**
- **Modify the 2004 "Personnel Policy Manual for Religious Organizations" to be consistent with Human Resources Employee Manual changes.**
- **Develop and distribute templates for full inclusion policies to congregations.**

Full inclusion of women in denomination leadership

- **Re-assess revised staffing with gender balance in mind.**
- **With new staff hires, prioritize adding men to administrative/clerical areas and women to financial management areas.**
- **Continue commitment to gender balance on Board of Trustees, committees, and district staffing.**

Full inclusion of BGLTQI persons

- Additional staffing needed. **New OBGLTC Director should be named.**
- Update and republish *Welcoming Congregation Handbook*, now 11 years old.
- Promote Interweave materials to congregations.
- Develop materials on intersex and gender-variant children.
- **Update all fact sheets on website.**
- Create more materials and programming on transgender and bisexual issues.

- Create more materials and expectation for congregations working with BGLTQ teens and young adults.
 - **Promote congregational renewal of welcoming process after five years.**
 - **Encourage congregations to undertake increased outreach for BGLT members.**
- Also, see Congregations below.

[Sexually healthy religious professionals](#)

- As a result of this project, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee voted unanimously to require a new sexuality competency for all ministers, effective December 2010, including a requirement for each candidate to have taken a sexual harassment prevention learning opportunity. **There needs to be a one to two hour training for the MFC on how to assess candidates on the new sexual health competency.**
- **Develop materials for candidates, including a list of sexual harassment prevention learning opportunities, sexuality classes, and resources to read.**
- Develop training for UUA staff, district executives and program consultants, interim ministers, Center Days, UUMA and LREDA, district meetings, General Assemblies, regional trainings.
- **LREDA should consider sexuality competency for credentialed religious educators.**

[Sexually healthy seminaries](#)

- Meadville Lombard
 - **Adopt explicit inclusion policy/statement on sexuality issues.**
 - Create an opportunity for students to take a sexuality issues in ministry skills course.
 - **Address gender balance among faculty with new hires.**
- Starr King
 - **Create requirement for a sexually healthy prevention training opportunity.**
 - Create an opportunity for students to take a sexuality issues in ministry skills course.

[Continuing education and support for religious professionals](#)

- Consider developing requirement in preliminary fellowship for “Sexuality Issues for Ministers” workshop.
- At UUA and UUMA events, workshops and assemblies, offer regular training workshops on being a sexually healthy religious professional.
- Include sexual health offerings in continuing education requirements, if instituted.
- Create a sexual health and education requirement in religious educators’ credentialing.

[Sexually healthy congregations](#)

- Create annual prize for a sermon on a sexuality issue.
- Create materials for congregations in adult education offerings, preaching, and support groups.

- **Develop assessment tool for congregations.** ◇
- **Survey District Executives and Program Consultants on their knowledge, skills, background, and need for training on sexuality issues and offer training.** ◇
- Develop safe congregation teams in every district or at a minimum, every region.
- **Encourage higher accountability and visibility for safe congregation policies, emphasis on welcoming renewal process, implementation of full range of OWL curricula.**

[Lifespan sexuality education and support](#)

- Create system for required training updates every three years for educators and trainers.
- Create database of OWL educators and trainers.
- Create email system for regular updating and support of OWL educators and trainers.
- Major update of OWL junior and high school curricula.
- Develop parents' curriculum to accompany junior high school OWL.
- Consider survey to discover why most congregations do not offer K-1, 4-6, young adult and adult OWL and what would encourage them to do so.
- **Encourage ministers to have greater involvement and awareness about OWL.**
- **Institute partnerships with local sexuality organizations for monitoring and supervision of OWL programs.**
- Develop continuing education opportunities for OWL teachers and LREDA supervisors.
- Require certified religious educators to attend at least one OWL training.
- Engage LREDA members in OWL programming, volunteer training and supervision.
- Additional staffing needed for OWL support.
- Conduct OWL update training in regular LREDA trainings.
- Develop networks of best OWL trainers to become UU regional teams on sexuality issues, train to lead Sexually Healthy Congregations and Safe Congregations workshops, including misconduct investigators and advocates.
- **Develop model template and process for establishing sexual behavior guidelines in youth groups.**
- **Link OWL educators/trainers with national and community advocacy for sexuality education in public schools.**
- **Participate in national evaluation of OWL.**
- Consider identifying funding for OWL midlife and senior curricula.

[Commitment to sexual abuse and harassment prevention policies and procedures](#)

- Needs separate study.
- **Develop listing of all past report recommendations with status and reasons where action not taken.**



These activities are in the year 2 Religious Institute grant from the UU Veatch Program.

- Needs key stakeholders convening of its own with key participants, include some survivors, have President address.
- **One individual identified to handle complaints about misconduct and harassment, who reports directly to President or Vice President.**
- **Reconstitute a safe congregations committee at 25 Beacon St.**
- Develop single definition of expected behaviors and misconduct, and single code of conduct for all professionals – staff, ministers, religious educators, musicians, Board of Trustees, volunteers.
- Develop streamlined, clearly articulated, standard process for responding to complaints and allegations— apply to staff, Board of Trustees, ministers, religious educators, and other professionals.
- **Have President issue broad-based statement and apology to victims of misconduct at GA 2010 and announce new procedures or task force.**
- Develop annual training for new staff, MFC Executive Committee, UUMA and LDREDA members on how to evaluate complaints of possible misconduct/harassment.
- **Prominently place new procedures and commitments on separate section of website.**
- Consider separate website on these issues (see The United Methodist Church dedicated web site, www.umsexualethics.org).
- Revise religious education materials on sexual boundaries.
- Revise UUMA guidelines for single ethic for married and single ministers.
- **Revise the Code of Ethics for Adults and Youth in Leadership Positions.**
- **Develop stronger outreach promotion and expectations on safe congregations policies to all congregations—models, trainings, higher visibility, importance expressed by President and congregational leadership.**
- Consider recommendations on past violations project.

[Commitment to sexual justice in the public square](#)

- **Continue past Presidents' high level of involvement in public witness on broad range of sexual justice issues, including sexuality education, reproductive choice, marriage equality and BGLT full inclusion. Maintain high level of visibility in press and coalitions, and seek coverage of a broader range of sexuality issues.**
- **Integrate sexuality education in schools and reproductive justice into Standing on the Side of Love.**
- **Raise visibility of sexuality issues in *UU World* magazine, print and online; set goals for article focus of at least 10% annually.**
- Encourage Skinner House to publish in these areas and UU Bookstore to expand its offerings on sexuality issues.
- **Increase programming on broader range of sexuality issues at General Assembly.**
- Develop materials for social justice committees on addressing sexuality issues, expanding from primary BGLT focus.
- Develop a statement for the General Assembly program book on a safe, sexually non-harassing General Assembly.

Appendices

Materials Reviewed:

Overall

UUA bylaws

Human Resources Employee Manual, 2010 Update

A Personnel Policy Manual for Religious Organizations/Office of Church Staff Finances

Staff, Board of Trustees, District Executive lists

UUA website

Organization chart

Ministers' Survey

Full inclusion of BGLTQI persons

Welcoming Congregations Handbook

Living the Welcoming Congregation

Fact sheets

Religious Professionals

The UUMA Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministry

LREDA Code of Conduct

Musicians Code of Conduct

Administrators Code of Conduct

MFC policies

MFC rules

MFC reading list

Starr King & Meadville completed *Sex and the Seminary* survey

Lifespan Sexuality Education

OWL curricula

Safety packet

Code of Ethics for UU Youth Events

Data submitted by Lifespan Education Office

Sexual Abuse, Harassment and Prevention

2000 report

2000 apology letter

2002 report

The Safe Congregation Handbook

Report of the Ad Hoc Task Force on Ethics and Congregational Life, April 2007

Making Our Congregations Safe for Children/Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Screening Forms

Ethics in Congregational Life Program (online)

Process for Handling Complaints of Misconduct: online, UUMA, MFC guidelines

Restorative Justice Manual (January 27, 2010 latest update, copyright 2002)

Speaking Truth to Power: Victims/Survivors of Clergy Sexual Misconduct

Balancing Acts

Publications/Public Witness

UU World magazine: Last three years

UU World Online 2009

Beacon Press and Skinner catalogs

All statements of witness/other statements/resolutions on sexuality issues since 1970

Last year of *UU World Online* for numbers of stories with sexuality content

Last three years of President's columns in *UU World* magazine

All press releases

GA program books, last four years

People Interviewed:

Jory Agate

Lee Barker

Gini Courter

Judith Friediani

John Hurley

Rob Keithan

Keith Kron

Janette Lallier

Harlan Limpert

Beth Miller

Rob Molla

Kay Montgomery

Peter Morales

Mary Katherine Morn

Fred Muir

Rebecca Parker

Meg Riley

Tracey Robinson-Harris

About the Author and Religious Institute

Founded in 2001, the Religious Institute is a national, multifaith organization dedicated to promoting sexual health, education and justice in faith communities and society. The Religious Institute partners with clergy and congregations, denominations, seminaries, national advocacy organizations, and sexual and reproductive health communities to promote:

- Sexually healthy faith communities
- Full equality of women and of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in congregations and communities
- Comprehensive sexuality education
- Reproductive justice
- Sexual abuse prevention
- HIV/AIDS education and prevention

The mission of the Religious Institute is to develop a new understanding of the relationship between sexuality and religion. This mission involves:

- Developing and supporting a network of clergy, religious educators, theologians, ethicists and other religious leaders committed to sexual justice.
- Building the capacity of religious institutions and clergy to provide sexuality education within the context of their faith traditions.
- Helping congregations, seminaries and denominations to become sexually healthy faith communities.
- Educating the public and policy makers about a progressive religious vision of sexual health, education and justice.

More than 5,000 clergy, professional religious educators and counselors, denominational and interfaith leaders, seminary presidents, deans and faculty members, representing more than 50 faith traditions, are members of the Religious Institute's national network.

Debra W. Haffner is the co-founder and executive director of the Religious Institute. A sexologist for more than thirty years, she was ordained as a Unitarian Universalist minister in 2003. She is the endorsed community minister at the Unitarian Church in Westport, and is a member of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

For more information about the Religious Institute, visit www.religiousinstitute.org.