

**COVENANT OF OPENNESS AND AFFIRMATION OF PERSONS OF
LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL ORIENTATION
WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

A Resolution

WHEREAS Christ teaches us that, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” ...and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:36-39)

BE IT RESOLVED by the delegates to the 1993 Annual Assembly of the Central Pacific Conference United Church of Christ that

WE CELEBRATE all our conference churches, that in a great variety of ways have taken steps to bring about reconciliation with gay, lesbian, and bisexual people including:

- Welcoming gay, lesbian and bisexual people into their congregations
- Electing gay, lesbian and bisexual people to their boards and committees
- Call gay, lesbian and bisexual people to pastoral responsibilities
- Sponsoring adult education forums on homosexuality (including the Conference’s six-week educational program, “Moving Toward Openness”)
- Holding formal and informal discussions on issues of sexuality
- Providing study materials for their congregations
- Preaching on the pastoral and justice issues involved
- Offering meeting and worship facilities to gay, lesbian, and bisexual support and advocacy groups (e.g. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; Metropolitan Community Church)
- Supporting, ministering and counseling gay, lesbian and bisexual people and their families (e.g. those dealing with the pain of homophobia, those living with the HIV virus and AIDS)
- Opposing ballot measures and local ordinances that would deny gay, lesbian and bisexual people their civil rights
- Moving towards or having publicly declared themselves to be an Open and Affirming church

WE REAFFIRM the Conference’s historic position of support for gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, (see “A Brief History...” attached)

WE REAFFIRM the employment personnel policy as adopted by the Central Pacific Conference’s Board of Directors on April 20, 1991 and call upon local congregations to adopt a similar non-discrimination employment policy

WE ALSO AFFIRM those persons whose interpretation of scripture moves them lovingly to oppose this resolution or parts of it. We call upon all persons associated with this conference to pray, to speak and to act in accordance with God’s will to the best of their ability on this matter, as in all other matters.

WE CALL UPON the 51 churches who comprise the Central Pacific Conference to develop and design their own individual processes for determining what it means to be Open and Affirming of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons based upon the guidelines of the United Church of Christ*, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that we commit the 1995 Assembly as a time to share and celebrate how our individual congregations have responded to and discerned God's presence through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in affirming the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons.

* "An Open and Affirming church is a faith community where homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual people are ALL recognized as children of God as cherished members of Christ's body, who, as the synod resolution declared, '...join together as a covenantal community, to celebrate and share our common communion and the reassurance that we are indeed created by God, reconciled by Christ and empowered by the grace of the Holy Spirit.' [It is a church] which WELCOMES gay, lesbian and bisexual people into the life, leadership, and ministry of the congregation AND declares such a welcome through a public statement."

Submitted by: Rev. Gary Davis, Lake Oswego United Church of Christ; Ann Hawkins, First Congregational Church, Corvallis; John Hawkins, First Congregational Church, Corvallis; Rev. Chuck Knapp, First Congregational Church, Portland; Rita Knapp, First Congregational Church, Portland; Jane Lovelady, Lake Oswego United Church of Christ; Rev. Matthew Nelson, Clackamas United Church of Christ; Jan Standlea, Lake Oswego United Church of Christ; Dottie Waltz, Forest Grove United Church of Christ; Loren Waltz, Forest Grove United Church of Christ; Bruce White, First Congregational Church, Portland.

Adopted by the Central Pacific Conference United Church of Christ Annual Assembly, May 1993.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST REGARDING AFFIRMATION OF GAY, LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL PERSONS

- As member churches of the United Church of Christ, we look "...to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world." We further claim as our own "the faith of the Historic church..." and "affirm the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God" (preamble, UCC Constitution).
- The United Church of Christ has a long history of social policy, beginning in 1969, regarding lesbian, gay and bisexual concerns ranging from homosexuals and the law, ordination, human sexuality, equal employment opportunity policies, homophobia within the United Church of Christ, to resolutions calling on the congregations within the United Church of Christ to declare themselves Open and Affirming of persons of gay, lesbian and bisexual orientation within the community of faith.
- The actions of General Synod 10, 11, 14, 15, 16 and 17 have supported human rights of all persons in the church and society, regardless of sexual orientation.
- The "18th General Synod boldly affirms, celebrates and embraces the gifts for ministry of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons and faithfully continues to work for justice in our church and society."
- In seeking to be faithful to the history and heritage of the United Church of Christ, the Central Pacific Conference Board of Directors formed the Gay and Lesbian Concerns Task Force in 1989 to implement an education program to be offered to all its local congregations.
- The Central Pacific Conference Board of Directors on April 20, 1991 voted to adopt a personnel policy stating that "The Central Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ believes that no person should be excluded from employment because of race... sexual orientation, or age... [and that] positions of employment... will be openly advertised and made available to the candidate who most nearly fist the job description without discrimination on the basis of race... sexual orientation, or age."
- At the Spring Assembly of 1991, the Central Pacific Conference delegates passed a resolution encouraging local churches to study issues relating to homosexuality, and to develop faithful responses to gay and lesbian people, and determine what it would mean to be "open and affirming individuals and churches" and further resolving that "...the 1993 Annual Assembly... consider adopting the provision of the General Synod XV resolution 'Calling on United Church of Christ Congregations to Covenant as Open and Affirming'."