Official Statements by Religious Organizations

Following are official statements against discrimination and/or for the rights of homosexual persons made by religious bodies. This list is not intended to be comprehensive; other religious organizations may have positions which reflect similar concerns. Nor is it intended to reflect the full positions of these religious bodies on issues of sexual orientation. Many (though not all) have restrictive statements regarding marriage, positions of religious leadership, and other matters. We encourage people who feel so moved to work with their religious organizations for full inclusion of people whose sexual orientation or gender identity differ from the majority.

National Religious Bodies

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

1977 WHEREAS, homosexual persons are victims of discrimination, daily losing jobs or being denied employment, losing homes, being denied custody and visitation rights of their children, being denied financial credit, insurance, accreditation, licensing and other rights simply on the basis of their sexual orientation or preference, and... THEREFORE, Be it resolved that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada... urge the passage of legislation on local, state and national levels which will end the denial of civil rights and the violation of civil liberties for the reason of sexual orientation or preference, and calls upon its members to advocate and support the passage and maintenance of such legislation.

1993 WHEREAS, various campaigns across the country conducted in the name of "no special rights for gay lesbian and bisexual persons" misrepresent legitimate claims for persons who seek equal application of the law to all people and fail to acknowledge historical and current discrimination in employment, housing, child custody, insurance, probate, education and other civil and human rights; additionally, these campaigns ignore ongoing violence and hatred against individuals based exclusively upon their perceived sexual orientation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Assembly encourage and support the enactment of laws at all levels of government which will ensure the civil rights and civil liberties of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, and call upon members, congregations and other manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to advocate, support and maintain the passage of such laws, and work to change discriminatory laws, policies and procedures where they exist.

General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1978 There is no legal, social or moral justification for denying homosexual persons access to the basic requirements of human social existence. Sexual conduct in private between consenting adults is a matter of private morality to be instructed by religious precept or ethical example and persuasion, rather than by legal coercion. Vigilance must be exercised to oppose federal, state, and local legislation that discriminates against persons on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

1993 Resolved, That the 205th General Assembly (1993) unequivocally condemns all discriminatory legislation, such as is exemplified by Article 2, Section 30 (Amendment 2) of the Colorado Constitution. The 205th General Assembly (1993) further instructs the Stated Clerk to communicate with presbytery and synod councils, requesting them to notify the office of the Stated Clerk of proposed or pending legislation in their states or communities regarding similar discriminatory measures, so that the Stated Clerk may communicate with state or local officials informing them of the official Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy.

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

1977 ...homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection under the law. We oppose discrimination against homosexuals in the areas of opportunity, including employment and housing... we affirm our belief that private sexual acts between consenting adults are not the proper province of government and law enforcement agencies.

1993 ...The Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolves:
To actively oppose state and local referenda and statutes restricting the civil rights of gays, lesbians, or bisexuals.

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church

1994 "No one shall be denied access to the selection process for ordination in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age..."

Other resolutions included calling on the church to create educational materials for lesbian and gay youth and families (CO26a), calling on the government to provide benefits for domestic partners (D006a), and calling for the addition of sexual orientation to the federal Civil Rights Act (C019s).

1997 "[W]hile acknowledging the diversity of opinion among the Bishops and Deputies...on the morality of gay and lesbian sexual relationships, the 72nd General Convention apologizes on behalf of the Episcopal Church to its members who are gay and lesbian, and to lesbians and gay men outside the Church, for years of rejection and maltreatment by the Church."

Central Conference of American Rabbis

1977 WHEREAS the Central Conference of American Rabbis has consistently supported civil rights and liberties for all people... WHEREAS homosexuals have in our society long endured discrimination, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that we encourage legislation which decriminalizes homosexual acts between consenting adults, and prohibits discrimination against them as persons...

United Church of Christ

1969 The Council for Christian Social Action (CCSA) hereby declares its opposition to all laws which make private homosexual relations between consenting adults a crime and thus urges their repeal.

1975 Discrimination related to affectional or sexual preference in employment, housing, public accommodations, and other civil liberties, has inflicted an incalculable burden of fear into the lives of persons in society and in the church whose affectional or sexual preference is toward persons of the same gender. THEREFORE...recognizing that a person's affectional or sexual preference is not legitimate grounds on which to deny her or his civil liberties, the Tenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ proclaims the Christian conviction that all persons are entitled to full civil liberties and equal protection under the law. Further, the Tenth General Synod declares its support for the enactment of legislation at the federal, state and local levels of government that would guarantee the liberties of all persons without discrimination related to affectional or sexual preference.

The Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

1995 "...RESOLVED, that words of prayer and pastoral concern and encouragement come quickly from the Conference of Bishops and the bishop of this church, so that this church can express a caring welcome for gay and lesbian persons and repudiate all words and acts of hatred toward such persons in our church and in our communities," [CA95.750]
1996 "To gay and lesbian members...we walk beside you and we value your gifts and commitment to the Church. We also call attention to the action of the 1991 Churchwide Assembly that declared 'gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate fully in the life of the congregation of the [ELCA].' At the 1993 assembly, that declaration was extended to express 'strong oppositioin to all forms of verbal or physical harassment or assault of persons because of their sexual orientation,' and support for the civil rights of all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation."

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

1970 Recognizing that a significant minority of this country are either homosexual or bisexual in their feelings and/or behaviors; homosexuality has been the target of severe discrimination by society and in particular by the police and other arms of government; therefore be it resolved that the 1970 General assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges all people immediately to bring an end to all discrimination against homosexuals, homosexuality, bisexuals, and bisexuality, with specific immediate attention to the following issues: private consensual behavior between persons over the age of consent shall be the business only of those persons and not subject to legal regulations; a person's sexual orientation or practice shall not be a factor in the granting or renewing of federal security clearances, visas, and the granting of citizenship.

National Federation of Priests' Councils (Roman Catholic)

1974 BE IT RESOLVED that the NFPC hereby declares its opposition to all civil laws which make consensual homosexual acts between adults a crime and thus urges their repeal; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NFPC also express its opposition to homosexuality as such being the basis of discrimination against homosexuals in employment, governmental services, housing and child rearing involving natural or adoptive parents.

National Assembly of Religious Brothers (Roman Catholic)

1983 We the members of the National Assembly of Religious Brothers wish to stand with all groups in their struggles for justice and, ...we believe that those whose sexual orientation is homosexual have been discriminated against by society at large as well as in the Church and, we believe that all men and women, including those of homosexual orientation, have a right to a full life in society as well as in the Church. Be it resolved that we are opposed to any unjust discrimination against those of homosexual orientation in society at large and in the Church, including its ministry, and... we the members of the NARB take an active role, together with our President and Board, in promoting legislation and other projects that favor human rights and justice for all, including those of homosexual orientation.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops (Roman Catholic)

1997 The teachings of the Church make it clear that the fundamental human rights of homosexual persons must be defended and that all of us must strive to eliminate any form of injustice, oppression, or violence against them... (cf. The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, 1986, no. 10). Homosexual persons 'must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity'... (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2358). [A]ll homosexual persons have a right to be welcomed into the community, to hear the word of God, and to receive pastoral care."*

Progressive National Baptist Convention, U.S.A.

1994 ...The greatest theology and definition of God expressed from the inspired writers of the Bible is simply this: God is love.

...Therefore, as Progressive Baptists, we declare the following to be basic moral rights, and we will develop, support, study, and monitor programs to assure these rights:

...The God-given and moral right to equality and social justice: to have access to shelter, education and health care, and to secure those things for others; the right to own and develop land within our neighborhoods and communities.

...The God-given and moral right to human dignity and pride, to be respected and treated as a person, and to be protected against discrimination due to race, gender, marital status, age, sexual orientation, income, national origin, legal status, culture or condition in society.

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United Methodist Book of Discipline

1990 Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for homosexual persons. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting their rightful claims where they have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney, and other such lawful claims typically attendant to contractual relationships that involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protections before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against gays and lesbians.

Michigan Area

Executive Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan

1993 Resolved, that the Executive Council of the Diocese of Michigan seek to strategically prevent a measure which would jeopardize present and future equal civil rights for all of Michigan's citizens, specifically the lesbian, gay, and bisexual citizens of this State, from appearing on the November 1994 state election ballot, by opposing the petition of the Michigan Family Values Committee...

And be it further resolved, that the Executive Council of the Diocese of Michigan urge the individual members and parishes of the Diocese of Michigan to join in efforts to prevent this and any similar ballot measure.

And be it further resolved, that should the petition drive be successful and the measure appear on the 1994 state election ballot, that the Executive Council of the Diocese of Michigan urge the individual members and parishes of the Diocese of Michigan to defeat this and any similar ballot measure.

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

1993 As Quakers we recognize that of God in everyone. We believe that cultivating a deeper awareness of our relatedness to all persons, everywhere, enables us to live more Spirit-filled and thus more joyous lives.

So, in keeping with the Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, we seek to recognize and include, as our brothers and sisters, gays, lesbians and bisexuals, who suffer from exclusion and rejection by many in our society and who are subject to derision and violence. We seek always to heal the separations caused by intolerance; to recognize the diversity of humanity; and to live in an ever more loving and peaceful association with our fellow human beings.

Detroit Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

1994 Be it resolved that the Detroit Annual Conference:

- affirms that basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons, including homosexual persons;
- rejects attempts to limit human rights and civil liberties based upon sexual orientation;
- abhors all forms of violence directed at persons on the basis of sexual orientation;
- urges churches and individuals to actively oppose all efforts that would eliminate or restrict local statutes designed to protect the human rights and civil liberties of any persons including homosexual persons.

We are indebted to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute (1734 14th Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20009-4309) for their work in collecting most of the national statements cited here.