

FOIA MARKER

This is not a textual record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

Collection/Record Group: Clinton Presidential Records

Subgroup/Office of Origin: Public Liaison

Series/Staff Member: Suzanna Valdez

Subseries:

OA/ID Number: 4268

FolderID:

Folder Title:

Church Groups in favor of lifting ban on Gays in the Military [1993]

Stack:

S

Row:

29

Section:

5

Shelf:

5

Position:

3

General Board of Church and Society
of The United Methodist Church



Recycled Paper

JANE HULL HARVEY
Assistant General Secretary

Ministry of
God's Human Community
100 Maryland Avenue, Northeast
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-488-5654
Fax: 202-488-5619



THE REVEREND
ELENORA GIDDINGS IVORY
DIRECTOR

WASHINGTON OFFICE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(U.S.A.)

110 MARYLAND AVE., N.E.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002
(202) 543-1126



FATHER ROBERT J. BROOKS
THE PRESIDING BISHOP'S STAFF OFFICER
WASHINGTON

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WASHINGTON OFFICE

110 MARYLAND AVENUE, N.E., SUITE 309
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002
(202) 547-7300
1 (800) 228-0515

InterfaithIMPACT
for Justice and Peace

110 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
202/543-2800
FAX 202/547-8107

James M. Bell
Executive Director

TELECOPIER COVER LETTER
FAX

OFFICE FOR CHURCH IN SOCIETY
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
110 Maryland Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20002

Telephone (202) 543-1517

Fax #(24hours) (202) 543-5994

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING TO:

NAME ALEXIS HERMAN
COMPANY PUBLIC LIAISON, WHITE HOUSE
Fax Number 456-6218

FROM: JAY LINTNER Account UCC

Total # of pages 8 including this cover page.

Date 6/25 Time: 5 am or pm

IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE ALL THE PAGES AS SHOWN ABOVE, PLEASE CONTACT OUR
OFFICE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

Message:

Person handling transmission: _____

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OFFICE FOR CHURCH IN SOCIETY**

110 MARYLAND AVENUE N.E., SUITE 504 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002 (202) 543-1517

June 28, 1993

To: Alexis Herman

From: Jay Lintner, Director, Washington Office, United Church of Christ



Is it possible for a delegation of heads of Washington offices from the religious community to meet with you on Monday or Tuesday? Depending on schedules, this might include the following:

- Jim Hamilton, National Council of Churches
- ✓ Lynne Landsberg, Union of American Hebrew Congregations
- ✓ Robert Brooks, Episcopal Church
- ✓ Jane Hull Harvey, United Methodist Church
- ✓ Eleanor Giddings Ivory, Presbyterian Church
- Kay Dowhower, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Bob Alpern, Unitarian Universalist
- ✓ Jim Bell, Interfaith IMPACT
- Jay Lintner, United Church of Christ

A delegation from the above will want to convey the strong support of the religious community for lifting the military ban on gays and lesbians.

Specifically, we urge:

1. The government should not force people to lie. There should be no restrictions on private speech.
2. Treat all sexual orientations equally. Do not discharge based on status.
3. Treat all sexual misconduct equally.

If a meeting is possible, we would very much appreciate it. We had hoped that a compromise could be worked out between President Clinton, Secretary Aspin and General Powell which we could support, based on these principles. However, now that leaks have forced this into a public contest for support, we wish to share with the White House our strong feelings on this matter.

I would also like to suggest a second political option. IF the President decides to go with the more principled option, which we hope he will, and if he does not make his public announcement until July 15, you might wish to know that the General Synod of the United Church of Christ convenes in St. Louis on July 15. If the President would like to make his announcement with the background of our General Synod and with the support of our General Synod, we would be happy to set that up.

Enclosed, if you have not seen it, is the testimony given by our President, Dr. Paul Sherry, before the House Armed Services Committee.

TESTIMONY
OF
THE REV. DR. PAUL H. SHERRY
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
MAY 4, 1993

Thank you very much for inviting me to testify today. My name is Paul Sherry. I'm speaking today as President of the United Church of Christ, a denomination of 1.6 million members and 6400 local churches. My testimony is based on the policy statements of our General Synod, the most widely representative body in our denomination. Our General Synod and other national bodies have spoken out many times and in many ways affirming civil rights for gay and lesbian persons. While in our system of church governance no one person speaks for or attempts to represent the beliefs of all the members or all the churches, the General Synod does offer moral guidance to our churches and for the nation.

While my testimony today is based on my personal convictions and the position of the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, I have also been asked by many of my colleagues among religious leaders to convey to you their own support for ending discrimination against gay and lesbian persons in the military. While each of us would want to speak out of a distinctive theological tradition, and is accountable to policy bases formulated by differing structures of authority, we share a common conviction that the civil rights guaranteed for all citizens should be guaranteed for gay and lesbian persons as well. Gay and lesbian persons should have the same right to military service as heterosexual persons, and should be held to the same standard of conduct. The religious leaders who have asked me to convey this conviction to you include:

The Rt. Rev. Edmond L. Browning, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church

The Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

The Rev. Dr. Herbert W. Chilstrom, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bishop Frederick C. James, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Dr. C. William Nichols, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Rev. Troy Perry, Elder of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan
Community Churches
Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew
Congregations
Dr. William Schulz, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association
Dr. Gordon L. Sommers, President of the Provincial Elders Conference,
Moravian Church in America
Bishop Melvin G. Talbert, Council of Bishops of the United Methodist
Church
Dr. Daniel E. Weiss, General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches

A letter to then President-elect Bill Clinton in November urging him to carry out his
commitment to rescind the ban also carried the signature of Dr. James Andrews, Stated
Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

* * * * *

There are four fundamental points I wish to make today:

1. There is significant support in the religious community for lifting the ban
against gay and lesbian persons in the military.
2. The sexual misconduct of military personnel, not their sexual orientation,
should be the issue.
3. Prejudice should not determine policy.
4. The moral fiber of our nation is very much at stake in this issue.

* * * * *

I. Religious Support for Lifting the Ban

The support of my colleagues among U. S. religious leaders, to which I have already
referred, is evidence that a very significant part of the religious community, in most cases
authorized by the official positions of national policy-making assemblies, has for years urged
an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation. Our denomination first passed a
resolution in 1969 on "Homosexuals and the Law" urging an end to discrimination in
employment, among other things. In 1975 the General Synod issued a major
pronouncement entitled "Civil Liberties Without Discrimination Related to Affectional or
Sexual Preference." (See Appendix). In 1972 the first openly gay minister in our church
was ordained by the Golden Gate Association of the United Church of Christ. This action
of a regional body was affirmed by the General Synod the following year, and soon

sexual orientation was added to our national equal opportunity policy. As recently as 1991 the General Synod again overwhelmingly reaffirmed the gifts for ministry of gay, lesbian and bisexual people, urging that they be welcomed and recognized in local churches and regional bodies.

There has been an assumption that throughout church history the church has opposed homosexuality and considered it a sin. Many scholarly studies of church history, however, reveal that this hostility has not been consistent. There have been periods of fierce opposition, as well as periods of tolerance.

The Bible has been used by some as a basis for the condemnation of homosexuality. However, there is much debate about this question and about how to interpret the six brief references to homosexuality contained in the Bible. One thing is clear. Scripture does point us, over and over again, to the core of the Christian Gospel -- the need for love to be at the center of our lives and an overriding concern for justice and mercy for the oppressed.

For these reasons, it is distressing to note how this issue is often portrayed as a battle between the religious community on the one hand, resisting any change, and the gay community on the other hand, seeking change. This is simply not accurate. This perception is frequently promoted by the media as was the case, for example, during the recent March on Washington on April 25. The thousands of members of the religious delegation participating in the march were, for the most part, ignored by the media, including the Washington Post, which chose instead to cover the small gathering of religious persons opposing the march with shouted slogans. As you consider this issue of such fundamental public and personal importance, I hope you will take into account the broad support from the religious community I represent today.

II. People of all sexual orientations should be judged by their behavior, in this case specifically by their sexual misconduct. People should not be judged by their sexual orientation.

While the religious community and the nation are still in the midst of a profound and difficult debate about the moral character of various forms of sexual behavior, there is a growing conviction that sexual orientation is not an adequate or appropriate basis for judging others. We are what we are and who we are. Before God, all people should be treated with profound dignity, for Jews and Christians alike believe all of us are created in the image of God. From this fundamental principle our forbears developed a constitutional system that has slowly expanded its circle of those afforded equal protection before the law. A person's race or gender no longer can be cause to deny equal opportunity or full participation in our society, including the military. I believe the time has come, indeed is long overdue, to extend this basic American principle to gay and lesbian citizens as well.

Given the fears, misunderstanding and prejudice surrounding homosexuality in our society, it is not surprising that the change in policy being proposed to the military is being met with uncertainty, resistance and in some cases hostility. This same reaction has

characterized many other sectors of our society, including the church. I would like to share, briefly, the experience of our own church as it has struggled with this issue in its own life.

When the Golden Gate Association of the United Church of Christ ordained the Rev. Bill Johnson in 1972, he was the first openly gay or lesbian person ordained by a mainline Protestant denomination. What made this significant event possible? It was the fact that Christians in the San Francisco Bay area had come to know Bill Johnson. He was not a cause but a person. Because they knew him they were able to see and appreciate his ability. They had grown to trust him, his integrity and his gift for ministry. Rather than judge him for his orientation, they were able to judge him on the basis of his conduct. Preconceptions and prejudices fade before the knowledge of a person's character, conduct and ability. The process of transformation is slow. It is still difficult for many church people to get to know gay and lesbian Christians because the church is not generally perceived to be a safe place for homosexual persons to reveal their orientation. In spite of the challenge, however, we are working at the task of creating safe and accepting environments.

I believe this experience can be repeated in military service. Gays and lesbians are already serving in the military. They need to be judged, not on their sexual orientation, but on their whole being, on their conduct and their integrity and their skill and their principles and the way they perform their duties. The current policy forces gay and lesbian persons to lie. They are forced to commit an immoral act: to lie about who they are. I believe when they are allowed to tell the truth and to be known, trust will build, just as it is slowly beginning to build in the church.

As we have watched thousands and thousands of church people grow in their understanding of human sexuality, there is one consistent factor in this profound cultural change: heterosexual people in our churches have begun to know openly gay and lesbian Christians, and as that has happened, old assumptions and stereotypes have disappeared. We believe that will happen in the military.

So what we are asking for is simply an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation. As the focus shifts from orientation to behavior, we recognize that many issues of sexual conduct or misconduct will need to be examined and addressed. We expect that the military, which already has quite different rules for sexual behavior than the general society, will need to extend those same rules to gays and lesbians. Given the problem of sexual harassment revealed in such recent events as the Tailhook scandal, questions of adaptations to the code of conduct for openly gay or lesbian persons may in fact be only a small portion of the much larger question of sexual conduct by all military personnel.

III. Prejudice should not determine policy.

Few would maintain today that the current policy can be defended by arguing that gay people are not good soldiers. The honorable and courageous service of countless gay and lesbian persons clearly contradicts this. Instead, the rationale for keeping the ban now

largely centers on what it will do to morale, unit cohesion, mutual trust, recruitment and retention. In other words, the current ban is based on how the military believes straight soldiers will react to openly gay and lesbian soldiers. The military fears the prejudice of its own troops. The ban assumes that homophobia is in control and that commanders are either unwilling or unable to change that.

Many have noted that these same fears and objections were raised when the military faced racial integration and when the military faced admitting women. The echoes of previous prejudice are audible today. Therefore, I assume that many of the same techniques that have helped the military make adjustments to race and gender differences will be helpful in the current context. One key is certainly leadership. Strong military leadership is necessary to maintain a work environment which is comfortable for all personnel. The command needs to set the tone for the troops to follow. Commanding officers can be responsible for insuring that sexism, racism and homophobia are not supported or condoned in their units.

In this regard, we greatly admire the leadership that President Clinton has exhibited on this issue. If we are to rid our society of homophobia, strong leadership is needed. We appreciate that leadership from President Clinton, and we ask for that same leadership from the Congress and from the military.

This is a time of societal change, change that is long overdue. We have watched heterosexuals members of our churches change as they have come to know gay and lesbian Christians on a personal basis. Prejudice is based, in part, on fear of the unknown. It is time to end a discriminatory policy based on prejudice, a policy that itself promotes prejudice.

IV. The moral fiber of our nation is very much at stake in this debate.

Some would argue that our society's very structure is being undermined by gay and lesbian persons declaring their orientation openly and demanding the civil rights guaranteed to all other American citizens. We see it quite the opposite. For the ban against gays and lesbians in the military runs counter to all the basic principles of our nation: liberty and justice for all. To allow the military to discriminate is morally intolerable and contradictory to the values that undergird our society.

To quote from our 1975 General Synod pronouncement, "Denial and violation of the civil liberties of the individual and her or his right to equal protection under the law defames that worth and dignity and is, therefore, morally wrong. Our Christian faith requires that we respond to the injustice in our society manifested in the denial and violation of the civil liberties of persons whose affectional or sexual preference is toward persons of the same gender."

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I urge you to do that which is morally right, that which leads us toward a society free from fear, a society that encourages honesty and accountability, a society where prejudice is overcome. Please end discrimination in the military. Thank you.

Dr. Paul H. Sherry, President
United Church of Christ
700 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216)736-2101

June 28, 1993

Christian
Church
(Disciples
of Christ)

Interfaith
IMPACT
for Justice
and Peace

National
Council of
Churches
Washington
Office

Presbyterian
Church (USA)
Washington
Office

Union of
American
Hebrew
Congregations
Religious
Action
Center

United
Church
of Christ
Office
for Church
in Society

United
Methodist
Church
General Board
of Church
& Society

President Bill Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

*Please
give
copy
to Ruby*

As the directors of Washington offices for our denominations and faith groups, we know how divisive the debate has been on lifting the military ban on gays and lesbians. That divisiveness exists in our churches and synagogues.

We urge you to stand by your principles.

It is immoral for the nation's largest employer to discriminate. It is immoral for the government to force people to lie. It is immoral to rob people of their human dignity in the way that the military has been doing.

We hope that as much as possible you will hold to these basic principles:

- All sexual orientations should be treated equally.
- All sexual misconduct and sexual harassment should be treated equally.

We are disappointed that compromise seems necessary. As you attempt to compromise basic principle, we urge that you include these three specific principles as you draft your executive order:

1. Individuals should not be discharged based on sexual orientation or status.
2. There should be equal enforcement of sexual misconduct violations.
3. There should be no restrictions placed on private speech.

We know from personal experience that there is a price for leadership on this issue. We also know there is a greater price to the nation for failure to meet very basic human rights. For the sake of our national community, we urge you to offer this principled leadership.

Sincerely yours,

James M. Bell
Executive Director
Interfaith IMPACT
for Justice and Peace

A. Garnett Day
Director, Church and Community
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

James A. Hamilton
Director, Washington Office
National Council of Churches of Christ
United Church of Christ

Jane Hull Harvey
Head of Washington Office
General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church

Elenora Giddings Ivory
Director, Washington Office
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Jay Lintner
Director, Washington Office
Office for Church in Society
United Church of Christ

David Saperstein
Executive Director, Religious Action Center
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Contact:

110 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 543-1517

*no statement
attached*



General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church

100 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002 • (202) 488-5600

Social Principles of The United Methodist Church, Paragraph 71 G

Rights of Homosexual Persons

Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to support 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 which involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protection before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against gays and lesbians.

November 30, 1993

The Honorable Bill Clinton
President-elect
Governor's Mansion
1 State Capitol, Suite 250
Little Rock, AK 72201

Dear Mr. President-elect:

Your commitment to end discrimination against openly gay and lesbian members of the armed services was greeted by many in the country, as well as by many in the religious community, as a welcome sign of your desire to extend full civil rights and equal protection of the law to all in our society. Refusal to induct a person into the military, or the discharge of a person, solely on the basis of sexual orientation, is intolerable. Such government sanctioned action by military leaders has only served to legitimate and encourage other acts of discrimination against gay and lesbian persons in our society which, at times, have led to harassment, violence, even death. Protection of the rights of gay and lesbian persons in the military becomes, therefore, an important act of justice in its own right, as well as a symbolic statement of our nation's commitment to liberty and justice for all.

People of faith and conscience are not of one mind about the nature of homosexuality or the morale character of gay and lesbian lifestyles. These questions divide the religious community just as they divide the larger society. However, regardless of one's position on these questions, there is a growing consensus that homosexuality should not be cause for discrimination, and that attitudes or behavior that encourage violence are to be condemned.

We commend you for your courageous commitment to end injustice in the military with regard to gay and lesbian persons. While we recognize that the implementation of this executive order will require careful planning and consultation, we encourage you to fulfill your pledge as quickly and as clearly as possible following your inauguration.

As you encounter fear, misunderstanding, or resistance to this action, please be assured of our continued support and constant prayers. Thank you.

Yours respectfully,

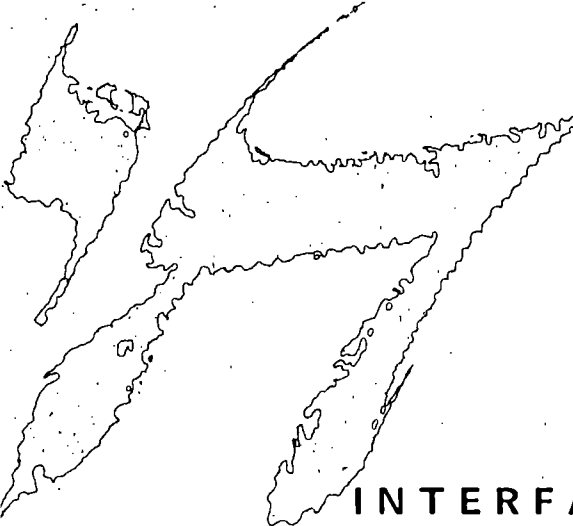
Dr. Paul H. Sherry
President, United Church of Christ
Cleveland, Ohio

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
President, Union of American
Hebrew Congregations
New York, New York

Dr. C. William Nichols
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Indianapolis, Indiana

Bishop Melvin G. Talbert
Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church
San Francisco, California

Dr. James Andrews
Stated Clerk
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Louisville, Kentucky



RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER OF REFORM JUDAISM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 17, 1993
CONTACT: LAURA SHEINKOPF
(202) 387-2800

INTERFAITH CALL TO LIFT BAN ON GAYS AND LESBIANS IN THE MILITARY

Statement of Rabbi Lynne F. Landsberg Associate Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism Union of American Hebrew Congregations

*The Religious Action Center
pursues social justice and
religious liberty by
mobilizing the American
Jewish Community and
serving as its advocate
in the nation's capital*

2027 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 387-2800

Rabbi David Saperstein
Director and Counsel

Rabbi Lynne Landsberg
Associate Director

Evelyn Laser Shlensky,
Chairperson
Commission on Social Action
of Reform Judaism

Rabbi Eric Yoffie
Director
Commission on Social Action
of Reform Judaism

*The Religious Action Center
is under the auspices of
the Commission on Social
Action of Reform Judaism,
a joint instrumentality of
the Central Conference of
American Rabbis and
the Union of American
Hebrew Congregations
with its affiliates:
American Conference
of Cantors,
Association of Reform
Zionists of America,
National Federation of
Temple Brotherhoods,
National Federation of
Temple Sisterhoods,
North American Federation
of Temple Youth.*

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, representing over 1.5 million Reform Jews and 865 congregations nationwide, commends the various religious and civil rights groups working toward full acceptance of gays and lesbians in the military.

As Jews, we believe that the Divine image reflected in every human being must be cherished and affirmed. Denial of that image by systematic discrimination and exclusion not only dissolves the bonds that unite us as citizens; it also rends the precious ties we share as children of one Creator.

We recognize that religious antagonism towards homosexuals has contributed to the acceptance of anti-gay bias, but just as such acts of hate have no place in communities of faith, neither may we tolerate them in the central institutions of our national life.

Military service provides a source of great pride and an important avenue of opportunity for thousands of our citizens. Yet our country, founded upon the ideals of equality and democracy, obstinately adheres to the tactics of a totalitarian regime. Witness the facts:

FACT: The overwhelming majority of NATO armies (14 out of 16) include gay and lesbian personnel. Still the recruitment message of our U.S. Armed Forces reads, "Gays and lesbians need not apply."

FACT: Gays and lesbians now serve and will always serve the U.S. Armed Forces with distinction that even their foes admire. Even Navy Vice Admiral Donnell has admitted that, "they are among the command's top professionals." And, still our military's "welcome mat" reads "Gays and lesbians need not apply."

FACT: Some of the most powerful and efficient armies in the world -- including the Israeli Defense Force -- have found, in the words of Prime Minister and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, "no reason to discriminate." Yet our defense forces maintain that gays and lesbians are "security risks" and that they "need not apply."



FACT: If we maintain that gays and lesbians are a security risk, we impugn their patriotism and imply that gay and lesbian Americans are tantamount to the enemy.

If these are the facts, what are we to conclude?

That the only perversion here is our perversion of justice, that the only lapse in morale here is the one caused by our own lapse in moral leadership, that the only behavior we must be ashamed of is our own -- our active exclusion, our active discrimination, our active rejection of patriotic American citizens eager to serve their country.

We Jews know only too well what "need not apply" means. Those three little words reflect an entire philosophy of hate and exclusion under the cruel misnomer of "values": "American values," "traditional values" or that of its most recent pernicious incarnation, "family values."

These codewords have been used throughout our history to define and legitimize racism, anti-Semitism, misogyny, xenophobia, and now -- a not so new twist -- homophobia.

Yes, gay people have come to the fore as the new demon, the new alien, the new scapegoat. We cannot condone any of this -- not as Americans, and especially not as Jews. For we have seen it all before:

We have seen membership barred with a wink and a nod.

We have felt the pain of subtle and not so subtle exclusion.

And, we have witnessed the violence that results when such bigotry becomes national policy.

As religious people we recognize and embrace the gay and lesbian community for what they are. They are not the enemy. They are us and we are them.

As Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, has often said, "I use the plural pronoun "we" based on a simple fact, a fact that any Jewish child with a crayon can tell you: that the star of David contains within it the triangle. Based on that essential geometry, all of us are indeed one community, one people, bound to one another by indissoluble bonds of kinship."

The UAHC is here today to join other faith groups to call upon all religious Americans to pray that America will renew its covenant with the best and not the worst of its heritage, to remember and to remind the nation that people of God -- the truly religious -- advocate equality, unity, love and respect.

We are here today to say, loudly and clearly, that the real traditional values of American life -- if not always of American history -- are those of freedom, liberty and equality.

We are here today to join our voice with other religious voices in one chorus demanding "End the ban now."

RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER OF REFORM JUDAISM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 23, 1993
CONTACT: LAURA SHEINKOPF
(202) 387-2800

RELIGIOUS LEADER DECRIES INJUSTICE OF MILITARY BAN

Press Conference Marking Conclusion of the "Tour of Duty"
To End the Ban Against Gays and Lesbians in the Military

Statement of Rabbi Lynne F. Landsberg
Associate Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

*The Religious Action Center
pursues social justice and
religious liberty by
mobilizing the American
Jewish Community and
serving as its advocate
in the nation's capital*

2027 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 387-2800

Rabbi David Saperstein
Director and Counsel

Rabbi Lynne Landsberg
Associate Director

Evelyn Laser Shlensky,
Chairperson
Commission on Social Action
of Reform Judaism

Rabbi Eric Yoffie
Director
Commission on Social Action
of Reform Judaism

*The Religious Action Center
is under the auspices of
the Commission on Social
Action of Reform Judaism,
a joint instrumentality of
the Central Conference of
American Rabbis and
the Union of American
Hebrew Congregations
with its affiliates:
American Conference
of Cantors,
Association of Reform
Zionists of America,
National Federation of
Temple Brotherhoods,
National Federation of
Temple Sisterhoods,
North American Federation
of Temple Youth.*

I stand here today as the representative of the nation's largest Jewish organization -- the national Reform Jewish movement. I stand here today because burned into our Jewish souls are the scars of two thousand years of Western bigotry, discrimination, and persecution.

How fitting that we gather here, in Washington, DC, in the shadow of the new Holocaust Museum -- to remind us that we, Jews and Gays, died side by side in the death camps of Nazi Germany -- to warn us of the devastating results of bigotry and hatred becoming national policy.

If "never again" is to mean anything, we must begin here, today, now.

Never again will we cease our efforts to shatter intolerance and bigotry -- the very foundation of homophobia;

Never again will we stand idly by the persecution of our sisters and brothers;

Never again will we allow the victims of bigotry to be blamed for their own persecution -- accused of perversion and immorality.

I stand here on behalf of the vast majority of the religious community to say to all Americans: Beware those who would justify hatred and injustice in the name of God. For the true perversion and real immorality is the invocation of the name of God to destroy, degrade, and demean God's children.

The ban on gays in the military is unjust, immoral, vicious and cruel. In the name of decency, in the name of freedom, and, yes, in the name of God, it must not stand.



TESTIMONY
OF
THE REV. DR. PAUL H. SHERRY
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
MAY 4, 1993

Thank you very much for inviting me to testify today. My name is Paul Sherry. I'm speaking today as President of the United Church of Christ, a denomination of 1.6 million members and 6400 local churches. My testimony is based on the policy statements of our General Synod, the most widely representative body in our denomination. Our General Synod and other national bodies have spoken out many times and in many ways affirming civil rights for gay and lesbian persons. While in our system of church governance no one person speaks for or attempts to represent the beliefs of all the members or all the churches, the General Synod does offer moral guidance to our churches and for the nation.

While my testimony today is based on my personal convictions and the position of the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, I have also been asked by many of my colleagues among religious leaders to convey to you their own support for ending discrimination against gay and lesbian persons in the military. While each of us would want to speak out of a distinctive theological tradition, and is accountable to policy bases formulated by differing structures of authority, we share a common conviction that the civil rights guaranteed for all citizens should be guaranteed for gay and lesbian persons as well. Gay and lesbian persons should have the same right to military service as heterosexual persons, and should be held to the same standard of conduct. The religious leaders who have asked me to convey this conviction to you include:

The Rt. Rev. Edmond L. Browning, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church

The Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

The Rev. Dr. Herbert W. Chilstrom, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bishop Frederick C. James, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Dr. C. William Nichols, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Rev. Troy Perry, Elder of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan
Community Churches
Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew
Congregations
Dr. William Schulz, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association
Dr. Gordon L. Sommers, President of the Provincial Elders Conference,
Moravian Church in America
Bishop Melvin G. Talbert, Council of Bishops of the United Methodist
Church
Dr. Daniel E. Weiss, General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches

A letter to then President-elect Bill Clinton in November urging him to carry out his commitment to rescind the ban also carried the signature of Dr. James Andrews, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

* * * * *

There are four fundamental points I wish to make today:

1. There is significant support in the religious community for lifting the ban against gay and lesbian persons in the military.
2. The sexual misconduct of military personnel, not their sexual orientation, should be the issue.
3. Prejudice should not determine policy.
4. The moral fiber of our nation is very much at stake in this issue.

* * * * *

I. Religious Support for Lifting the Ban

The support of my colleagues among U. S. religious leaders, to which I have already referred, is evidence that a very significant part of the religious community, in most cases authorized by the official positions of national policy-making assemblies, has for years urged an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation. Our denomination first passed a resolution in 1969 on "Homosexuals and the Law" urging an end to discrimination in employment, among other things. In 1975 the General Synod issued a major pronouncement entitled "Civil Liberties Without Discrimination Related to Affectional or Sexual Preference." (See Appendix). In 1972 the first openly gay minister in our church was ordained by the Golden Gate Association of the United Church of Christ. This action of a regional body was affirmed by the General Synod the following year, and soon

sexual orientation was added to our national equal opportunity policy. As recently as 1991 the General Synod again overwhelmingly reaffirmed the gifts for ministry of gay, lesbian and bisexual people, urging that they be welcomed and recognized in local churches and regional bodies.

There has been an assumption that throughout church history the church has opposed homosexuality and considered it a sin. Many scholarly studies of church history, however, reveal that this hostility has not been consistent. There have been periods of fierce opposition, as well as periods of tolerance.

The Bible has been used by some as a basis for the condemnation of homosexuality. However, there is much debate about this question and about how to interpret the six brief references to homosexuality contained in the Bible. One thing is clear. Scripture does point us, over and over again, to the core of the Christian Gospel -- the need for love to be at the center of our lives and an overriding concern for justice and mercy for the oppressed.

For these reasons, it is distressing to note how this issue is often portrayed as a battle between the religious community on the one hand, resisting any change, and the gay community on the other hand, seeking change. This is simply not accurate. This perception is frequently promoted by the media as was the case, for example, during the recent March on Washington on April 25. The thousands of members of the religious delegation participating in the march were, for the most part, ignored by the media, including the Washington Post, which chose instead to cover the small gathering of religious persons opposing the march with shouted slogans. As you consider this issue of such fundamental public and personal importance, I hope you will take into account the broad support from the religious community I represent today.

II. People of all sexual orientations should be judged by their behavior, in this case specifically by their sexual misconduct. People should not be judged by their sexual orientation.

While the religious community and the nation are still in the midst of a profound and difficult debate about the moral character of various forms of sexual behavior, there is a growing conviction that sexual orientation is not an adequate or appropriate basis for judging others. We are what we are and who we are. Before God, all people should be treated with profound dignity, for Jews and Christians alike believe all of us are created in the image of God. From this fundamental principle our forbears developed a constitutional system that has slowly expanded its circle of those afforded equal protection before the law. A person's race or gender no longer can be cause to deny equal opportunity or full participation in our society, including the military. I believe the time has come, indeed is long overdue, to extend this basic American principle to gay and lesbian citizens as well.

Given the fears, misunderstanding and prejudice surrounding homosexuality in our society, it is not surprising that the change in policy being proposed to the military is being met with uncertainty, resistance and in some cases hostility. This same reaction has

characterized many other sectors of our society, including the church. I would like to share, briefly, the experience of our own church as it has struggled with this issue in its own life.

When the Golden Gate Association of the United Church of Christ ordained the Rev. Bill Johnson in 1972, he was the first openly gay or lesbian person ordained by a mainline Protestant denomination. What made this significant event possible? It was the fact that Christians in the San Francisco Bay area had come to know Bill Johnson. He was not a cause but a person. Because they knew him they were able to see and appreciate his ability. They had grown to trust him, his integrity and his gift for ministry. Rather than judge him for his orientation, they were able to judge him on the basis of his conduct. Preconceptions and prejudices fade before the knowledge of a person's character, conduct and ability. The process of transformation is slow. It is still difficult for many church people to get to know gay and lesbian Christians because the church is not generally perceived to be a safe place for homosexual persons to reveal their orientation. In spite of the challenge, however, we are working at the task of creating safe and accepting environments.

I believe this experience can be repeated in military service. Gays and lesbians are already serving in the military. They need to be judged, not on their sexual orientation, but on their whole being, on their conduct and their integrity and their skill and their principles and the way they perform their duties. The current policy forces gay and lesbian persons to lie. They are forced to commit an immoral act: to lie about who they are. I believe when they are allowed to tell the truth and to be known, trust will build, just as it is slowly beginning to build in the church.

As we have watched thousands and thousands of church people grow in their understanding of human sexuality, there is one consistent factor in this profound cultural change: heterosexual people in our churches have begun to know openly gay and lesbian Christians, and as that has happened, old assumptions and stereotypes have disappeared. We believe that will happen in the military.

So what we are asking for is simply an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation. As the focus shifts from orientation to behavior, we recognize that many issues of sexual conduct or misconduct will need to be examined and addressed. We expect that the military, which already has quite different rules for sexual behavior than the general society, will need to extend those same rules to gays and lesbians. Given the problem of sexual harassment revealed in such recent events as the Tailhook scandal, questions of adaptations to the code of conduct for openly gay or lesbian persons may in fact be only a small portion of the much larger question of sexual conduct by all military personnel.

III. Prejudice should not determine policy.

Few would maintain today that the current policy can be defended by arguing that gay people are not good soldiers. The honorable and courageous service of countless gay and lesbian persons clearly contradicts this. Instead, the rationale for keeping the ban now

largely centers on what it will do to morale, unit cohesion, mutual trust, recruitment and retention. In other words, the current ban is based on how the military believes straight soldiers will react to openly gay and lesbian soldiers. The military fears the prejudice of its own troops. The ban assumes that homophobia is in control and that commanders are either unwilling or unable to change that.

Many have noted that these same fears and objections were raised when the military faced racial integration and when the military faced admitting women. The echoes of previous prejudice are audible today. Therefore, I assume that many of the same techniques that have helped the military make adjustments to race and gender differences will be helpful in the current context. One key is certainly leadership. Strong military leadership is necessary to maintain a work environment which is comfortable for all personnel. The command needs to set the tone for the troops to follow. Commanding officers can be responsible for insuring that sexism, racism and homophobia are not supported or condoned in their units.

In this regard, we greatly admire the leadership that President Clinton has exhibited on this issue. If we are to rid our society of homophobia, strong leadership is needed. We appreciated that leadership from President Clinton, and we ask for that same leadership from the Congress and from the military.

This is a time of societal change, change that is long overdue. We have watched heterosexuals members of our churches change as they have come to know gay and lesbian Christians on a personal basis. Prejudice is based, in part, on fear of the unknown. It is time to end a discriminatory policy based on prejudice, a policy that itself promotes prejudice.

IV. The moral fiber of our nation is very much at stake in this debate.

Some would argue that our society's very structure is being undermined by gay and lesbian persons declaring their orientation openly and demanding the civil rights guaranteed to all other American citizens. We see it quite the opposite. For the ban against gays and lesbians in the military runs counter to all the basic principles of our nation: liberty and justice for all. To allow the military to discriminate is morally intolerable and contradictory to the values that undergird our society.

To quote from our 1975 General Synod pronouncement, "Denial and violation of the civil liberties of the individual and her or his right to equal protection under the law defames that worth and dignity and is, therefore, morally wrong. Our Christian faith requires that we respond to the injustice in our society manifested in the denial and violation of the civil liberties of persons whose affectional or sexual preference is toward persons of the same gender."

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I urge you to do that which is morally right, that which leads us toward a society free from fear, a society that encourages honesty and accountability, a society where prejudice is overcome. Please end discrimination in the military. Thank you.

Dr. Paul H. Sherry, President
United Church of Christ
700 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216)736-2101

APPENDIX 1
TO

TESTIMONY OF THE REV. DR. PAUL H. SHERRY
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
before the
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

May 4, 1993

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

by

The Rev. Jay Lintner

Director, Washington Office, UCC Office for Church in Society

The gulf which divides the religious community on the issue of homosexuality is very much related to a basic division in the religious community on how one reads the Bible.

Fundamentalists and more conservative Christians see the Bible as literally true, as word for word the Word of God. Mainline church people in general see the Bible as the story and history of God's saving acts. Isolated passages of scripture need to be interpreted in terms of the fundamental themes of scripture and in terms of the witness they make to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. When scripture seems unclear or ambiguous or contradictory, the context for the scripture becomes very important. Rather than pull the questionable text out of context and make it a general rule for living, the context is explored, to see what that text meant to the people who wrote it and to the people who first read it. Words and meanings change, and if one wants to understand what is the Word of God that speaks through the Bible, one has to seek to understand the text in its historical context and its literary setting to understand the meaning and see the witness to God being made.

There is an assumption that the Bible condemns homosexuality. Actually, this is highly debatable. On many issues the Bible is extremely clear, with hundreds of references to poverty and war, to the need to pursue justice for all who are oppressed and the need for love to be at the center of our lives. "Judge not, that you be not judged," for example, is a theme that runs through the Bible---the danger of using religion against people, to hurt people.

There is no reference to homosexuality in the four Gospels, and only six brief references to homosexuality in the rest of the Bible. All six have significant ambiguity as to how they are to be applied to the current debate. None talk about sexual orientation, very much at the center of modern thinking but an unknown concept in Biblical times.

While this paper is by no means an exhaustive treatment of these six passages, it does attempt to point to the basic directions taken by modern scholarship.

Genesis 19:1-11. "...the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.'" (Genesis 19:4-5. All quotations from the New Revised Standard Version)

What is the sin of sodom, that led to its destruction? Because the word "sodomy" came from this passage, some have attempted to put all the blame on the "sin of homosexuality." This is simply wrong.

Scripture itself has a more complex and different understanding of the sin of city of sodom. Ezekiel 16:48-49, for example, says, "This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it." And Jesus instructs his disciples, "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly, I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town." (Matthew 10:14-15)

The interpretation of the sin of Sodom given by Jesus in the Matthew passage is much closer to current scholarship. The sin of Sodom is inhospitality. In Biblical times those who read the Sodom story would contrast the hospitality Lot offers the two strangers with the inhospitality and hostile treatment offered by the crowd. That is the central sin in the story.

Was homosexuality a part of the story? Is that what Ezekiel means by "abominable things?" Some scholars would argue that the words "to know" do not necessarily have a sexual meaning in the text. A more natural reading of the text does understand that all the men of Sodom intended to rape the strangers.

It follows, then, that the Bible condemns gang rape of men by men, presumably heterosexual men. In Biblical cultures a victorious army would sometimes rape those they defeated, as a way of humiliating them.

To condemn all homosexuality on the basis of this story is impossible.

Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination."

Leviticus 20:13: "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them."

Those seeking a divine commandment against male homosexuality have it in these passages. There is no question but what homosexual relations are condemned in Leviticus.

But are the commandments of Leviticus binding Jews and Christians today? These are passages from the Holiness Code, the liturgical handbook of the Levitical priesthood. Jews interpret these Levitical commandments in terms of the Talmud. Christians interpret these Levitical commandments in terms of the New Testament. And the New Testament moves most Christians beyond the commandments of the Holiness Code.

Also in the Holiness Code, for example, are the rules for slaughtering domestic animals, the prohibition of eating meat with blood (i.e., rare meat), and penalties for pagan practices, along with a prohibition of a number of sexual relations, including restrictions on relations with a woman who is menstruating (an abomination). Which of these are still binding and which are not?

When Leviticus 19:18 says, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord," there is solid resonance with the fundamental message of the New Testament. Jesus quotes this as one of the two great commandments.

When Leviticus 19:19 says, "You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials," what are we to make of this? This sounds like the kind of law that Christians have set aside, following Jesus and St. Paul.

Is Leviticus 18:22 more like Leviticus 19:18 or 19:19? There is room for debate. Different Christians are bound to come to different conclusions.

And for those who decide it is still binding, what do they do with Leviticus 20:13? Does sodomy merit the death penalty? Some Christians do, indeed, urge death for homosexuals, to the embarrassment of a great many other Christians. Is it possible to keep Leviticus 18:22 without keeping Leviticus 20:13? For those Christians who decide to ignore the warnings of Jesus and Paul about overly legalistic interpretations of scripture, one wonders where the line will be drawn. The Bible simply doesn't say enough about homosexuality to draw a line with any certainty.

I Corinthians 6:9-10: "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators,

idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers---none of these will inherit the kingdom of God."

The two Greek words, translated in the New Revised Standard Version as "male prostitutes" and "sodomites" have presented problems for all translators. In Greek they are "malakoi" and "arsenokoitai." Robin Scroggs, Professor of New Testament at Union Theological Seminary in New York, devoted a book to analyzing these terms, since he was distressed with the way the New Testament had been used in debates on homosexuality.

"Malakos" literally means "soft" and by extension "effeminate." The word occurs in several Greek texts of the time referring "to the 'call-boy,' the youth who consciously imitated feminine styles and ways and who walked the thin line between passive homosexual activity for pleasure and that for pay." (P. 106 in Robin Scroggs, The New Testament and Homosexuality. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

"Arsenokoitai" is a less ambiguous term, and almost certainly refers to male homosexuality. "If the malakos points to the effeminate call-boy, then the arsenokoites in this context must be the active partner who keeps the malakos as a 'mistress' or who hires him on occasion to satisfy his sexual desires...A very specific dimension of pederasty is being denounced with these two terms." (Scroggs, p. 108).

I Timothy 1:8-10: Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching."

The three Greek words translated as "fornicators, sodomites, and slave traders" above are "pornoi, arsenokoitai, and andrapodistai." Robin Scroggs, in the book quoted above, feels that "pornoi" may be mistranslated as "fornicators:" "Pornos. This word in normal Greek usage means 'male prostitute'...pointing to either the male who sells himself, or the slave in the brothel house. Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian usage, however, skews the apparently straightforward definition." (Scroggs, p. 119) Thus, while in the New Testament generally it does usually mean "fornicators," it also could function in this passage much like "malakos" functioned in the last passage.

"The three words would thus fit together and could be translated: 'male prostitutes, males who lie (with them), and slave dealers (who procure them)...I thus draw the conclusion that the vice list in I Timothy is not condemnatory of

homosexuality in general, not even pederasty in general, but that specific form of pederasty which consisted of the enslaving of boys or youth for sexual purposes, and the use of these boys by adult males." (Scroggs, p. 120).

Romans 1:26-7: "For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error."

The Romans passage is generally the most quoted of the New Testament passages used to condemn homosexuality. It is also the only passage in the Bible condemning lesbians, since all other passages relate only to male homosexuality.

One of the ironies of this passage being used to condemn homosexuals as sinners is that the point of Romans 1:18 to 3:20 is to show that the whole world, Gentile and Jew, consists of sinners. Romans 1:19-32 shows the failure of the Gentiles, largely because of their idolatry, and Romans 2:1-24 shows the failure of the Jews. All of this is to lead up to Paul's major point that, because we all are sinners, we all need the saving grace of faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, using Romans 1:26-27 to set some people apart as special sinners is contrary to the principal point at the start of Romans. The two New Testament verses most often used to condemn homosexuality are in a text trying to make a theological point, not one offering ethical concerns or admonitions.

In these verses, however, it is clear that Paul shares with most Hellenistic Jews of his time a very negative view of homosexual acts. This negative view has two underlying beliefs. One is the Jewish Old Testament attitude that spilling or wasting the seed of men was a sin, and sexual acts were only for procreation. The second is that many surrounding cultures practiced temple prostitution, including male temple prostitution (condemned several times in the Old Testament), so that male homosexuality was linked to idolatry.

Note that Paul puts Romans 1:26-27 in the context of condemning the Gentiles for their idolatry.

Note also that Paul lists homosexual practices as a Gentile "passion," not Jewish. In this Paul shares the general view of his time that homosexual acts were not common to the Jewish community, but were frequent in the Gentile world, and particularly Greek culture.

Robin Scroggs, who analyzes Paul's understanding of homosexuality at length, concludes that "the likelihood is that Paul is thinking only about Pederasty, just as was Philo. There

was no other form of male homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world which could have come to mind." (Scroggs, p. 116).

To quote from Scroggs more general conclusions,

"Only in Romans 1 is there a negative judgment made on both female as well as male homosexuality which could be considered a general indictment. Even here, the entire cumulative evidence we have looked at throughout this book suggests that despite the general language Paul, with regard to the statement about male homosexuality, must have had, could only have had, pederasty in mind. That Paul uses here the argument from nature might mean, of course, that he would have made the same judgment about any form of homosexuality. No one can legitimately conclude, however, that he would have done so. We just do not know. What he would have said about the contemporary model of adult/adult mutuality in same-sex relationships, we shall also never know. I am not sure it is even useful to speculate." (p. 122)

"What the New Testament was against was the image of homosexuality as pederasty and primarily here its more sordid and dehumanizing dimensions. One would regret it if somebody in the New Testament had not opposed such dehumanization." (p. 126)

"The conclusion I have to draw seems inevitable: Biblical judgments against homosexuality are not relevant to today's debate. They should no longer be used in denominational discussions about homosexuality, should in no way be a weapon to justify refusal of ordination, not because the Bible is not authoritative, but simply because it does not address the issues involved." (p. 127)

For those who want to condemn homosexuality, these six texts have provided considerable historical ammunition. However, as can be seen, all six have ambiguities. Yes, the Holiness Code in Leviticus does prohibit a man lying with a man. But few of the laws set forth in the Holiness Code are still perceived as relevant for today. Yes, Paul does share the general attitude of his time and culture toward that form of homosexuality familiar to him: pederasty. But does Paul's condemnation of pederasty extend to a general condemnation of homosexuality as we know it today?

Are these Biblical texts enough to generate the kind of moral certainty now being exhibited by some parts of the Christian and Jewish communities?

Or is it time for a fresh look at what it means that God has created all people, all sexual orientations? How has large parts of the church gotten into the position of condemning what God has created?

The core Biblical truth is that God loves all people, and God calls all people to relate in love. What does this mean for

responsible and moral behavior by those whose sexual orientation is gay or lesbian?

The Bible witnesses to Jesus Christ as the one who brings God's invitation to human wholeness and community. In Jesus we do not see a condemnation of homosexuality or sexual orientation, but a call to reach out and form human community, to move beyond stereotypes to achieve new and deeper understanding of who is our neighbor and how we are to relate in love.

The Bible witness to Paul is not one that ever mentions sexual orientation. Paul's central message is that we are not saved by what we do or don't do, nor are we saved by who we are. We are justified only by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and that grace is freely available to all people.

Given how little the Bible has to say about homosexuality and how much the Bible has to say about reaching out to the oppressed and to those alienated and separated from the community, perhaps it is long past time to quit using the Bible to sanction hatred and violence and alienation, and begin in seriousness a new conversation.

Sources:

In addition to a number of papers, the four principal books used in this paper are:

John J. McNeill, The Church and the Homosexual. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976, 1988.

James B. Nelson, Embodiment. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978.

Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. Is The Homosexual My Neighbor? San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980

Robin Scroggs. The New Testament and Homosexuality. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.