

**The Task Force  
National Religious  
Leadership Roundtable**



*DAVID v. GOLIATH:*  
A report on faith groups working  
for lesbian, gay, bisexual and  
transgender equality  
(and what they're up against)

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National Gay and Lesbian  
**Task Force**



# FOREWORD

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## **Moving Forward with Inclusive Denominations and Denominational Affinity Networks**

The following religious groups have demonstrated a spiritual commitment to the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. In light of recent political events, secular progressive groups have an unprecedented opportunity to mobilize this existing expression of support into a broader political coalition, based on a constituency that is already networked nationwide but which has traditionally been neglected by secular progressive groups. In moving forward with this effort, however, secular organizations must first consider the following:

- **The goals of these organizations are spiritual, not political.** They see their work as nothing less than the transformation of the world into a place of greater compassion, love and awareness of spirit. Although their concerns about denominational polity, ordination and same-sex church blessings may seem unproductive or irrelevant to secular organizations, people of faith see these battles as essential to the spiritual transformation they seek. *The LGBT community is fighting a battle for hearts and minds, and these religious organizations are in the business of changing hearts and minds.* Secular progressive organizations must learn to relate their goals for societal transformation to the goals that people of faith have for spiritual transformation.
- **These organizations and congregations are not politically one-sided.** Because many of these congregations and organizations are truly liberal, they generally comprise a more diverse political constituency than conservative religious groups who require their adherents to toe the party line. Pastors may rightly be concerned that if they take too strong a political stance, they will alienate many of their members, losing the monetary tithes and offerings that support their churches' programs and the pastors' own salaries. The ability of these churches and organizations to operate is almost completely dependent on the good will of the people in the pews.
- **Many liberal and conservative people of faith see overt political expression as "unspiritual."** They find the posturing of the religious right and the interference of the Vatican to be distasteful, even sacrilegious. Secular progressive organizations must help progressive people of faith realize that a commitment to spiritual inclusion becomes truly meaningful when it improves social conditions, that it is not enough for religious organizations to say they welcome LGBT people into their congregations if they stand by while their LGBT members are treated as second-class citizens, and that, based on the formidable mobilization of the religious right, they no longer have the option of not being advocates for equality—silence is an act of complicity.
- **Secular progressive organizations can learn much about justice and transformation from the religious world, but they must be willing to surrender negative stereotypes about religious people.** When they do, they will be more likely to grow support among these crucial allies of LGBT equality.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Recent political events underscore the need for progressives to reclaim the dialogue on values in the United States. In the last few months, secular progressive organizations have undertaken an unprecedented effort to reach out to people of faith in order to reframe the way religion and values are discussed in the public square. This effort is of particular importance to those working toward LGBT equality because the strongest opposition to that equality comes from religious conservatives.

Progressives have many potential allies within the faith communities, and this report is the first attempt to create an inventory of major groups working within denominations and religious traditions to affect change for LGBT people. This inventory is based on research about and interviews with 29 leading religious bodies and organizations working in support of LGBT issues.

The hope is that this inventory will facilitate new streams of resources for the work of these supporters; help to avoid unnecessary duplication of labor; and encourage collaboration and mutual support for efforts underway to advance equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

## **Denominations<sup>1</sup>**

- These denominations, which have already dedicated themselves to LGBT issues at the national level, are some of the most underused resources in the progressive movement.
- These denominations and congregations include approximately 2 million people.
- Progressive movements have not fully cooperated with these strong networks of congregations, and on the whole, these denominations and congregations have not realized their full potential to promote social and political change on LGBT issues.

## **Denominational Networks<sup>2</sup>**

- The members of mainline Protestant denominations represent the vast “movable middle” of the American population.
- For many in the mainline churches, issues of LGBT ordination and same-sex blessings within their denominations are their primary point of engagement on issues of LGBT equality. If these denominations could be won over to support gay ordination and same-sex marriage, it would represent a historic shift in America’s religious landscape.
- The leadership of Catholic and evangelical churches is generally unresponsive to the needs of LGBT people and therefore the work of organizing the vast numbers of progressive Catholics and fair-minded evangelicals will have to be accomplished outside the official governments and hierarchies of these denominations.

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<sup>1</sup> The groups labeled “denominations” are denominations that started as LGBT-identified religious bodies or are denominations that are not LGBT-identified, but have made inclusivity such an important part of their mission they have national offices dedicated to LGBT issues.

<sup>2</sup> The groups labeled “affinity groups” include networks or chapters of LGBT-inclusive congregations or church members, mostly organized within traditional religious denominations.

## Bridge-Builders<sup>3</sup>

- Because of the multiple discriminations they face and because of the groundbreaking nature of their work, many of these organizations endure extreme opposition and struggle just to survive.
- These organizations represent sizable communities that, if organized, could represent a formidable political force.
- When building coalitions and looking for community leaders, progressives need to appreciate the significance and strength of national and local people of color religious bodies, organizations and networks.

## Conclusion

- **Changing Hearts and Minds/ Supporting the Community:** These organizations and congregations have shouldered most of the responsibility to educate religious people about the LGBT community.
- **Numbers:** These organizations represent thousands of congregations and millions of people who are already networked together for the cause of LGBT equality. If approached with caution and understanding about the specific beliefs of their spiritual communities, these organizations represent a vast, untapped network of political power for the LGBT community.
- **The opposition is immense, well-organized and largely unanswered by the progressive community:** The Institute on Religion and Democracy and other anti-LGBT organizations profiled in this report represent a massive shadow conservative movement pumping millions of dollars into the anti-LGBT movements in America's religious institutions. These activists, many of whom are connected at the highest levels of the conservative movement, are working behind the scenes to influence the opinions of tens of millions of otherwise moderate Americans, using fear, homophobia and calls for religious purity in organizations that hold great personal and spiritual importance for their members.

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<sup>3</sup> The category "bridge-builders" encompasses religious bodies and organizations that work at the intersection of faith, LGBT issues and at least one other identity-based issue, such as race or gender. It also includes religious bodies and organizations based in communities of color that have a deep commitment to social justice, of which fighting homophobia is one critical component.

# INTRODUCTION

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Recent political events have underscored the need for progressives to reclaim the dialogue on values in America. In the last several months, secular progressive organizations have undertaken an unprecedented effort to reach out to spiritual organizations and religious leaders in order to reframe the way religion, faith and values are discussed in the public square. For those working in the LGBT community, this effort has become of particular importance, as the strongest opposition to LGBT equality comes from the conservative religious community.

Facing virulent attacks from the religious right, secular LGBT organizations have frequently asked, “Where are our religious leaders?” Secular organizations are frequently unaware that there are scores of organizations working to transform the face of American religion for LGBT equality. Most of these organizations, many of which have been working toward that equality since, and before, the inception of the modern LGBT rights movement, are under funded, understaffed and often underappreciated. These organizations are developing unique conceptual frameworks in which their spirituality is integrally linked to their work for social justice.

This report is the first attempt to create an inventory of major groups working within denominations and religious traditions to affect change for LGBT people. This inventory is intended to help raise awareness of the important and strategic work these organizations are doing in order to foster collaboration and sharing of resources with secular progressive institutions. It is our hope that this inventory will help to open new streams of funding resources for the work of these groups; help to avoid unnecessary duplication of work; and encourage collaboration and mutual support for work currently being done to advance equality for LGBT people.

Because the work these groups are doing in religious communities springs from grassroots needs, it is not possible to catalogue every religious organization working in the area of LGBT issues. For instance, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America alone has six LGBT-related organizations. Therefore, this study has focused on denominations or large congregations that have made a commitment to full inclusion of LGBT people (such as the **United Church of Christ** and **Congregation Beth Simchat Torah**) LGBT affinity group networks in major denominations that have not made a commitment to full inclusion (such as **Lutherans Concerned** and **United Methodist Reconciling Ministries Network**) and a few of the many up-and-coming organizations that are working at the intersection of faith, LGBT issues and at least one other identity-based issue, such as race or gender (e.g. **Al-Fatiha** and **Queer Asian Spirit**). It is our hope that this study, although not exhaustive, is representative of the wide range of religious work being done on LGBT issues in America.

# METHODOLOGY

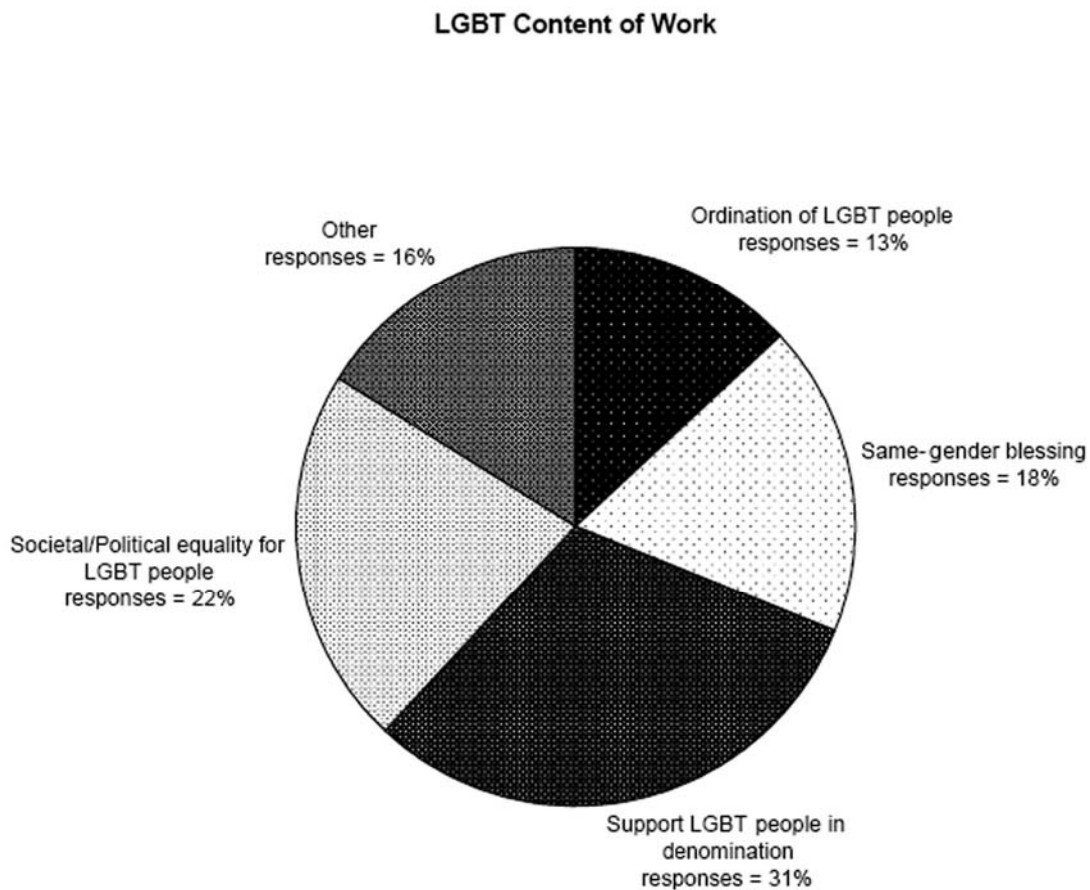
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The research and writing of this report were conducted over a three-month period. The researchers identified a broad sample of religious bodies and organizations by consulting with religious leaders, community members and LGBT organizations, and by studying the information available on religious organizations' web sites. From preliminary data on nearly 100 organizations, the researchers selected 29 organizations for in-depth profiles, which provide the foundation of this report. Information was gathered largely via phone interviews, although a few organizations responded via e-mail. The interviews were standardized using a 12-question survey of quantitative and qualitative questions (see Appendix B for questionnaire). To identify patterns once the research was gathered, the researchers classified the respondents' answers by category, and this report analyzes the general and interview-based research on those 29 organizations.

# LGBT CONTENT OF WORK

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Although this report is divided into denominations, denominational networks, and bridge builders, the work of all these types of organizations form some discernable patterns. The following chart, “LGBT Content of Work,” represents the organizations’ own approximation of the percentage of effort and resources they spend on key LGBT issues (support for LGBT people within the denomination; social and political equality for LGBT people; ordination of LGBT people; and same-gender blessings/marriage). The category “Other” represents a broad array of issues that intersect with how they approach LGBT concerns (for instance, how they understand their own power to challenge institutional hierarchies).





# DENOMINATIONS

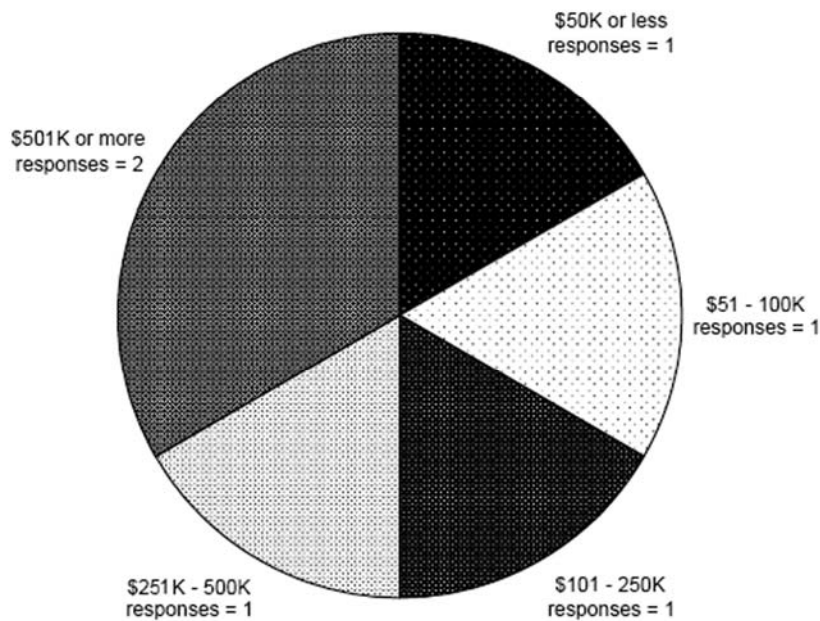
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“We can do a lot with just a few more resources, because we’re used to living on a shoestring. With ‘Call Me Malcolm,’ we produced a million dollar film for \$200,000.” — **Mike Schuenemeyer, UCC Wider Church Ministries**

The groups labeled “denominations” are denominations that started as LGBT-identified religious bodies or denominations that have made LGBT inclusivity such an important part of their mission that they have national offices dedicated to LGBT issues. **Congregation Beth Simchat Torah (CBST)** and **Congregation Bet Haverim (CBH)** are not denominations, but fit best in this category as large, successful congregations with national influence for whom the full inclusion of LGBT people is essential to their mission and purpose. It is also important to understand that although the **United Church of Christ (UCC)** and **Unitarian Universalist (UU)** denominations have a strong national commitment to inclusion, these denominations’ congregations and regional associations can still hold widely varying positions on LGBT issues because of their locally-based polity.

Organization	Founded	Affiliation	Home Office	Denominational Recognition	Membership or Mailing List	Congregations
Congregation Bet Haverim	1985	Jewish Reconstructionist	Atlanta, GA	Yes	750	1
Congregation Beth Simchat Torah	1973	Jewish ecumenical	New York, NY	No	800	1
Metropolitan Community Churches	1968	Christian ecumenical	West Hollywood, CA	Yes	40,000	254
Unitarian-Universalist — Office of BGLT Concerns	Unknown	Unitarian Universalist	Boston, MA	Yes	217,970	1,039
United Church of Christ — Wider Church Ministries	UCC denomination: 1957	United Church of Christ	Cleveland, OH	Yes	1,300,000	5,750
Unity Fellowship Church	1982	Unity Fellowship Church	Los Angeles, CA	Yes	4,000	12
Total					1,563,520	7,060

## Annual Budget: Denominations



## Strengths

- **Organizational Capacity, Inclusion, and Intersectionality:** These organizations benefit financially and logistically from having denominational approval and support. *In comparison with other progressive nonprofits, and especially in comparison to anti-gay religious organizations, however, these congregations and denominations are severely under funded.* Nonetheless, these denominations are able to create and distribute resources over a wide area. Not having to fight denominational battles over their existence means that they have freedom to develop and distribute resources, and to broaden their perspective to focus on the relationship of LGBT issues and other social justice issues. For instance, the **UCC Office of Wider Church Ministries** and **Metropolitan Community Church** focus on issues of public health, poverty and HIV/AIDS. As a denomination growing out of the black church tradition, **Unity Fellowship** is providing leadership on a variety of intersectional issues, including sexuality, race, ethnicity and urban poverty. Unity has churches in all of the cities with the largest African-American populations in the United States.

## Recent Achievements

- **Visibility:** Several of the denominations reported a marked increase in visibility over the last year, as with the **Unitarian Universalists**, who had a strong presence during the Massachusetts marriage debate. (Half of the plaintiffs in the Massachusetts case, *Goodridge v. the Department of Public Health* were Unitarians). The **UCC Office of Wider Church Ministries** was able to co-produce and distribute a full-length documentary on a transgender seminary student, *Call Me Malcolm*, and the denomination experienced widespread success with their “God Is Still Speaking”

campaign. The **Metropolitan Community Church** has experienced a marked increase in web site hits in the last year, moving from a few hundred thousand hits to more than one million, and has received positive coverage in the wake of founder Troy Perry's retirement and their new moderator's installation, which took place at the National Cathedral.

## Needs and Challenges

- **Challenges of Change:** The congregations and denominations that started as LGBT-identified, such as **Congregation Beth Simchat Torah**, **Congregation Bet Haverim** and **Metropolitan Community Church**, talked about the growth of their missions to include heterosexual allies and even individuals from other religious traditions. Congregation Bet Haverim is now 50 percent straight-identified. Twenty-five percent of the Metropolitan Community Church's membership is either straight-identified or from a different religious tradition than Christianity.
- **Breaking New Ground:** Most of the organizations expressed a desire to be able to address more social justice issues, such as racism and sexism, as they relate to issues of homophobia. Several of the organizations spoke about the need to integrate studies on sexuality into seminary training, so that the next generation of religious leaders has a better understanding of LGBT issues.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Most of the organizations said they needed more staff. They would like to be able to spread their resources more widely and have greater visibility as progressive religious people.

## Analysis

**These denominations are some of the most underused resources in the progressive movement.**

- **Numbers:** These denominations and congregations include approximately 1.6 million people.
- **Dedication to LGBT issues:** These are denominations and congregations that have dedicated themselves to justice on LGBT issues; they have essentially made a "full buy-in" to LGBT equality at the national level.
- **Need for progressive secular movements to reach out:** Secular progressive organizations generally have not learned how to cooperate with these strong networks of congregations. Likewise, on the whole, these congregations have not realized their full capacity to promote social and political change on LGBT issues.

### Comparing LGBT-affirming and anti-gay denominations:

- The largest LGBT-affirming Protestant denomination is the United Church of Christ, with **1.3 million** members, an annual national budget of **\$36 million** and estimated annual giving of **\$900 million**. (Source: UCC Financial Office)
- The largest anti-gay Protestant denomination is the Southern Baptist Convention, with **16 million** members, an annual national budget of **\$282.5 million** and estimated annual giving of **\$9 billion**. (Source: Religion and Ethics Newsweekly)

## Denominational Affinity Networks

“The level of support for LGBT people throughout the Episcopalian Church varies dramatically with location. There is a well-financed and well-organized conservative contingent within the Episcopalian Church that is trying to internationalize the conflict over LGBT equality. They are trying to challenge all of the progress over the last thirty years.” —  
**Reverend Susan Russell, Integrity**

The second category analyzed in this survey includes networks or chapters of LGBT-inclusive congregations or church members, mostly organized within traditional religious denominations. There are exceptions, such as Soulforce, which is an ecumenical organization which confronts anti-LGBT religious bigotry across denominations and para-church organizations.

The networks of congregations (as opposed to the chapter-based organizations) comprise churches that have made inclusivity statements and that generally support, financially and philosophically, the goals of the national LGBT affinity groups. Because of the diversity and number of these organizations, it would be difficult to provide a full account of all of the denominational organizations (as indicated earlier, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America alone has six separate LGBT-identified organizations.) Therefore, the writers of this report chose to survey the largest and best-networked groups in each of these denominations. Further investigation is necessary for anyone wishing to get a more comprehensive picture of all the LGBT-related work being done in any individual denomination.

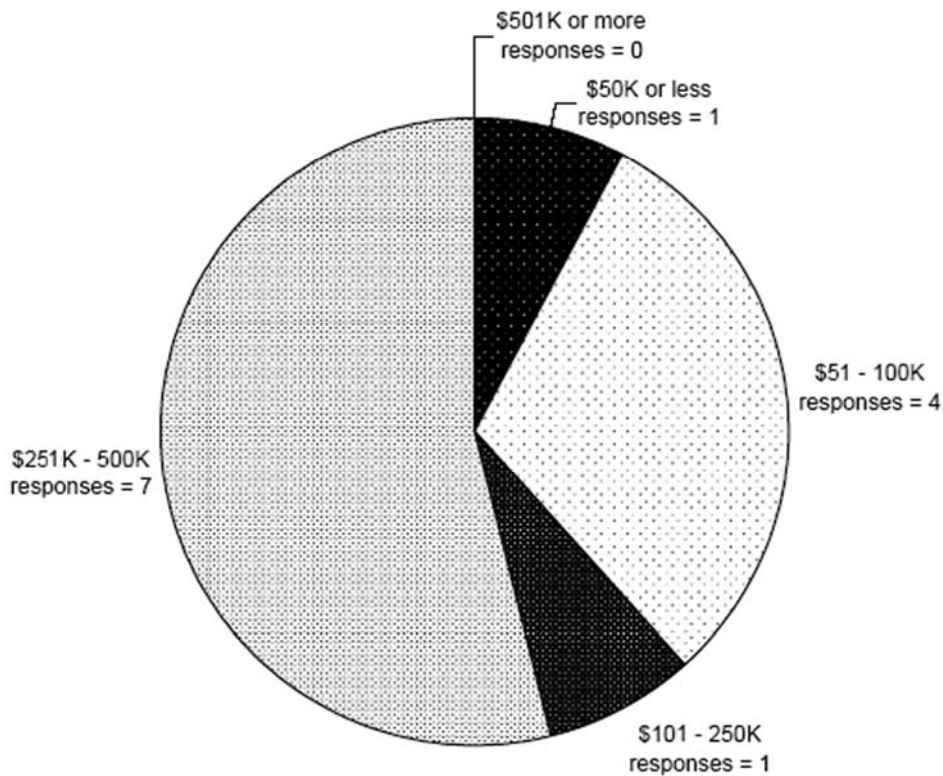
Some of the organizations within each denomination work well together and have formed strong coalitions; others have serious disagreements about purpose, strategy and degree of progressive edge. All of the groups have some degree of cooperation and cross-programming within their denominations. There have also been some efforts to build power and consolidate resources cross-denominationally, as with the **Institute for Welcoming Resources**, an umbrella group that includes **Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists**; **Gay And Lesbian Acceptance (GALA)**; **Community of Christ**; **More Light Presbyterians**; **Gay and Lesbian Disciples**; the **UCC Coalition**; **Lutherans Concerned**; the **Reconciling Ministries Network**; and **Goodsoil**, an umbrella group comprising Lutheran organizations working for change.

The Unitarian Universalist Association and United Church of Christ are represented in denominational affinity networks as well as in the denominational group, because they have LGBT denominational offices and networks of inclusive congregations that are part of

independent LGBT organizing groups (called **Interweave** and the **UCC Coalition**). In both of these denominations, there is strong cooperation between the national denominational offices and the independent LGBT affinity groups.

Organization	Founded	Affiliation	Home Office	Denominational Recognition	Membership or Mailing List	Chapters	Congregations
American Friends Service Committee	1917	Religious Society of Friends (Quaker)	Philadelphia, PA	Yes	LGBT programs mailing list: 10,000	3 regional and 1 national LGBT program	N/A
Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists	Initiated in 1991; formally organized in 1993	Baptist	Unknown	No	4,500	N/a	54
Covenant Network	1997	Presbyterian	San Francisco, CA	No	Mailing list: 10,000	57	330
DignityUSA	1969	Catholic	Washington, D.C.	No	3,600	50	N/A
Gay, Lesbian & Affirming Disciples	1979	Disciples of Christ	Indianapolis, IN	No	250	N/a	72
Integrity	1974	Episcopalian	Rochester, NY	No	2,500	60	300
Interweave	1971	Unitarian Universalist	Montpelier, VT	Yes	250	50	75
Lutherans Concerned of North America	1974	Lutheran	Saint Paul, MN	Yes	90,000	44	320
Reconciling Ministries Network	1982	Methodist	Chicago, IL	No	Mailing List: 15,000	50	196
Soulforce	1998	Christian	Lynchburg, VA	No	6,000	26	N/A
That All May Freely Serve	1991	Presbyterian	Rochester, NY	No	8,000	N/A	50
UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns	1972	United Church of Christ	Cleveland, OH	Yes	160,000	27	560
World Congress of GLBT Jews	1975	Jewish ecumenical	Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, PA	No	2,500	87	N/A
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)	1983	Interfaith/Catholic	Silver Spring, MD	No	Mailing list: 5,000	N/A	N/A
Total					317,600	455	1,957
Average					22,685	51	217

## Annual Budget: Networks



## Strengths

- **Education, Training and Resources:** These organizations have shouldered the most responsibility to educate religious people about the LGBT community. Most laypeople who are aware of resources (e.g., books, films, pamphlets, programs) proposing new theologies and interpretations of scripture that accept LGBT people have received these resources through one of these denominational affinity groups.
- **Faith and Commitment:** Many of these organizations cited as their greatest strengths their spiritual depth, the energy they are creating in mobilizing their church membership around progressive issues, and their ability to reach out to young people. This is in contrast to mainline churches that are generally seen as spiritually weak, morally uninspired and unable to reach young people. **Soulforce**, an ecumenical/interfaith organization, works outside the religious structures and supports denominational groups who work from within by taking it to the streets (in the form of vigils, protests, rallies, pray-ins, blockades and acts of civil disobedience), calling on the deep spiritual tradition of nonviolent direct action as modeled by Gandhi and King.
- **Intersectionality: Inclusion and Affirming Multiple Identities:** Most of these organizations are working to attract a diverse population across categories of ethnicity, geography, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. For instance, **That All May**

**Freely Serve** cited a three-weekend anti-racism training course as its most successful event. Most of these organizations would like to be able to do more of this kind of intersectional outreach: especially cited were weaknesses in reaching out to bisexual and transgender people. As the **Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists** said, “There is a struggle to recognize that this movement is deep and wide and goes beyond our individual experiences and comfortable lives.”

- **Organizational Capacity:** Many cited the tireless work of their volunteers, staff, and membership as their best resource. Several mentioned volunteers that work full time or close to full time in service of their organizations.

## Recent Achievements

- **Education, Training and Resources:** Several groups have produced new resources, such as books, videos and educational programs. This included **American Friends Service Committee’s** development of a *Queer Youth Anti-Militarism Survival Guide*.
- **Visibility:** Some of the organizations had significantly raised their visibility through advertising and outreach. **DignityUSA** enacted a campaign called “The Vatican Calls It Violence, Dignity Calls It Love,” about same-sex couples raising children. Integrity has had a high profile as the voice of Anglicans in America in the wake of world resistance to Gene Robinson’s consecration as bishop.
- **Events:** The most-cited successful events among Christian organizations were the denominational general assemblies. These annual, bi-, or tri-annual meetings are national denominational legislative gatherings, where these LGBT organizations offer strong legislative representation, educational programming, worship, and the opportunity to reach out to mainline church members from across the nation and across the political spectrum. In 2005, the **UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns** played an integral role in the passage of a resolution at the UCC General synod recommending that all UCC congregations enact marriage equality for same-sex couples in their churches and advocate for it in society. This makes the UCC the largest denomination to offer support for full marriage equality.

## Needs and Challenges

- **Fundraising and Staff:** All of the organizations in this section cited increased fund raising and staff as the areas in which building capacity is most needed. Most of the organizations have between one and three paid staff members. Most of the organizations would like to be able to provide more leadership training for their grassroots volunteers in order to grow their networks and multiply the effects of their leadership.
- **Organized Opposition — External:** The opposition to these organizations is well organized and well funded. For instance, there is a coordinated attempt to undermine the liberal branches of Protestantism through an organization known as the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD). The IRD has helped incubate traditionalist insurrections against liberal policies of Presbyterian, United Methodist and

Episcopalian churches, and has financing from the Scaife Foundations, the Bradley and Olin Foundations, and Howard and Roberta Ahmanson's Fieldstead & Co. It was an IRD board member, Fred Barnes, editor of the Weekly Standard, who helped promote slanderous accusations about Gene Robinson prior to the vote on his elevation to bishop. The IRD is also agitating for schism between conservative and liberal factions in the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church USA.

- **Organized Opposition — Internal:** Most of the opposition comes from within the denominations. Organized opposition to LGBT people within the denominations usually exists in numbers that far exceed those of inclusive churches. For instance, in the Presbyterian Church USA, the number of congregations involved in LGBT-inclusive networks, such as **More Light Presbyterians, That All May Freely Serve,** and **Covenant Network** is 501. The so-called Presbyterian “Confessing Churches,” which base their membership on opposition to gay people and on biblical infallibility and the exclusive salvation of Christians, claim 1,309 congregations with 439,095 total members.
- **Support and Empowerment:** Several of the organizations stated the need for their membership to overcome a sense of victimization and oppression and to begin seeing themselves as powerful voices for change within their churches. As Rebecca Voelkel of the United Church of Christ LGBT Coalition stated, “Many of our members feel like victims who need sanctuary. In fact, they need to see that although they deal with oppression, they have power; they are part of a powerful constituency.”
- **Institutionalized Exclusion:**
  - The conflicts these LGBT organizations face mainly come from overt homophobic stances of churches, questions about ordination and questions about same-sex marriage.
  - Groups like **DignityUSA** and **Soulforce** resist some of the most virulent homophobic verbal abuse coming from religious leaders in the Roman Catholic and evangelical churches. Ordination and same-sex marriage are not even on the radar screen for these churches, so their outreach is primarily about providing support to some of the most spiritually wounded in the LGBT community.
  - Mainline Protestant denominations are, at least in theory, democratically-ruled religious bodies, and LGBT affinity groups must fight battles in terms of church legislation and charges filed in ecclesiastical courts. High-profile cases, such as Rev. Beth Stroud’s trial in the United Methodist Church for admitting her sexual orientation and Rev. Janie Spahr’s trial in the Presbyterian Church for performing a same-sex marriage in Canada, highlight the efforts of the conservative movements in these denominations to completely eliminate the progressive voice from these churches. **Reconciling Ministries Network**, of the United Methodist Church, offered strong leadership this past year during the trial of Beth Stroud, the revocation of her ordination, and the church Judicial Council’s reinstatement of a minister that had denied church membership to a gay man. Due in part to **Reconciling Ministries Network’s** response, the Methodist Council of Bishops condemned parts of the Judicial Council’s ruling



and stated unequivocally that sexual orientation should not bar individuals from membership in the United Methodist Church.

## Analysis

- The mainline churches, in their history and social function, have traditionally been the backbone of American religion. All U.S. presidents and most members of Congress have identified either with one of the major mainline Protestant denominations or with centrist Judaism or Catholicism. Although their influence has waned considerably, it would still be a tremendous moral victory for the LGBT community if the mainline churches could be won for the cause of equality.
- The mainline Protestant denominations include approximately 20.2 million people. More importantly, many of their members may represent a vast “movable middle” of the American population. Although many of their members are conservative, their democratic polity processes allow for the introduction of new ideas and theological debate. Unlike the monolithic Roman Catholic Church or the cults of pastoral personality that make up the nondenominational churches, the mainline churches have processes in place such that change is possible and new voices can be heard.
- Denominations including the Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and American Baptist Churches and the Disciples of Christ regularly hold national and regional assemblies with representatives from across the country where the primary topic of debate in recent years has been the place of LGBT people in the churches. For many members of the mainline churches, issues such as LGBT ordination and same-sex blessings within their denominations are their primary point of engagement on issues of LGBT equality. If these denominations could be won over to support LGBT ordination and same-sex marriage, it would represent a vast and historic shift in the religious landscape of America.
- The work that **Soulforce** and Catholic groups such as **DignityUSA**, **New Ways Ministry** and **WATER** are doing to counter bigotry is some of the most necessary and under-resourced. Catholics account for 65 million Americans. Millions more are part of denominational and non-denominational evangelical churches, including the 16 million-member Southern Baptist Convention. The leadership of these churches is generally unresponsive to the needs of LGBT people and glacial in the pace of theological change. It is therefore important to find ways to organize the vast numbers of progressive Catholics—the majority of whom do not agree with their church’s opinions on LGBT issues—and fair-minded evangelicals, without working through the official networks of these denominations.

**In a true David and Goliath match up**, Soulforce, on May 1, 2005 led a protest against Focus on the Family, an organization run by Bush associate James Dobson which mobilizes evangelicals through virulent anti-gay rhetoric. In a nonviolent direct action, Soulforce attempted to deliver 1000 “Dear Dr. Dobson” letters to the Focus on the Family Headquarters in Colorado Springs, CO. The protesters were turned away by police and three of them arrested. The protesters did succeed, however, in forcing the headquarters to close its doors to the public for that day.

Soulforce’s annual budget in 2003 was: **\$380,000**

Focus on the Family’s annual budget in 2003 was: **\$127,974,380** – more than the top 10 gay rights organizations combined.

## SUMMARY OF ANTI-GAY OPPOSITION

The opposition to pro-LGBT denominational networks is particularly virulent and widespread. Secular conservative forces have seen the advantage of promoting rigid orthodoxy in the mainline churches in the United States. This sense of importance has not been shared by progressive secular organizations and foundations, and therefore, pro-LGBT groups in these denominations find themselves massively outgunned in terms of staff, resources and funding. **The anti-LGBT groups surveyed in this report have an average budgetary advantage of 8 to 1 over the pro-LGBT organizations in the same denominations.**<sup>4</sup>

Particularly disturbing is the Institute for Religion and Democracy, an organization which has been attempting to destroy progressivism in three of the major denominations: the Presbyterian Church USA, the Episcopal Church in the United States, and the United Methodist Church. The IRD’s board is made up of many leaders from the conservative political establishment, including the American Enterprise Institute, Concerned Women for America, and the *Weekly Standard*.

### Why it Matters:

According to Alfred Ross of the Institute for Democratic Studies, IRD’s agenda is “part of a longstanding and comprehensive agenda of ultraconservative forces to transform key elements of our mainstream consensus. The mainline denominations are another prime target, representing billions of dollars in assets as well as formidable communications capacities that exert moral influence in defining ‘Judeo-Christian values’ for policymakers and voters. Under particularly aggressive attack are the Presbyterian, United Methodist and Episcopal churches with their combined membership of 14 million. The right has already succeeded in taking over the largest Protestant denomination in the nation, the Southern Baptist Convention, and is using it effectively to advance its agenda.”

<sup>4</sup> Budget amounts for pro-LGBT and anti-LGBT organizations came from revenue line on 990 tax forms, posted on nonprofit information website, [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org). 990s for That All May Freely Serve, More Light Presbyterians, Lutherans Concerned/North America and Institute for Welcoming Resources were not publicly available and were self-reported by those organizations.

Following the accounts of the anti-gay opposition in each of these four denominations, plus the Catholic Church, is a brief update on the IRD, its mission and resources.

## Presbyterian Church USA

### Current Conflict

The discussion about LGBT issues in the Presbyterian Church USA is based primarily on standards of ordination to positions of minister and elder or deacon (ordained lay leaders). The primary conflict comes from an amendment to the Book of Order (the Presbyterian Church's constitution) known as "Amendment B," which states that:

*"Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to life either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage of a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the Confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders or ministers of the Word and Sacrament."*

The amendment was proposed by Presbyterian General Assembly in 1996, by a vote of 57 percent to 43 percent, and was subsequently ratified by a majority of the 173 Presbyteries. Most of the efforts of pro-LGBT Presbyterian groups since 1997 have focused on overturning, changing the language of, or modifying interpretation of this amendment. Several of these attempts have passed the General Assembly, but have not been ratified by a majority of the Presbyteries.

### Opposition

The anti-gay opposition in the Presbyterian Church USA is organized in part under the Presbyterian Coalition. This body is made up of sixteen organizations with missions of opposition to LGBT people, opposition to abortion, and promoting "theological purity" (such as literal Biblical interpretation and exclusive salvation of Christians). The efforts to undermine progressive values in the denomination have been carried out through the following techniques:

- 1) **Propaganda:** The Presbyterian Church USA has its own anti-gay industry. Coalition members all publish and distribute widely their "educational" resources. Most notorious among these is the Presbyterian Lay Committee's newsletter, *The Layman*. The newsletter, which has the largest mailing list of any Presbyterian publication, has called the national leadership of the denomination "a virus" and suggested a recent General Assembly that had a pro-gay measure passed was "apostate," comparing it to "a partial birth abortion." In addition, the Presbyterian Coalition publishes *Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives*, a guide for ordination committees of questions to pose to candidates for ministry to weed out progressives, and *Responding Faithfully: Making Decisions about Financial Support of PCUSA Governing Bodies in Times of Disorder* to help congregations rationalize withdrawing financial support from local and national denominational bodies for being too liberal.

2) **Working Within Church Structures:** This includes working to elect sympathetic commissioners to the General Assembly; working to systematically deny progressive candidates for church office; supplying commissioners with talking points and “educational” materials; withholding funds from regional and national governing bodies; indoctrinating youth in church camps; and filing charges against progressives in ecclesiastical court.

3) **Creating Para-Church Structures:** The three denominations targeted by the Institute on Religion and Democracy (Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and United Methodist) have historically created oppositional church structures as a means of advocating for schism. Members of the Presbyterian Coalition recently held the “New Wineskins Convocation” which essentially created an alternative General Assembly and confessional statements. Recent rulings in secular courts about the power of congregations over local property will be crucial to these organizations’ plans to seize their church property from dioceses, synods and presbyteries and form opposing denominations that eliminate progressive voices from these traditions.

<b>Resources of three anti-LGBT Presbyterian organizations</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Presbyterian Lay Committee</b>	2004	1,913,917
<b>Presbyterians for Renewal</b>	2004	1,233,370
<b>Presbyterian Coalition</b>	2003	129,474
<b>Total:</b>		<b>3,276,761</b>
* Institute on Religion and Democracy: FY2003 Total budget, \$956,190; Budget for efforts in the Presbyterian Church USA, \$46,103)		
** In addition to its annual budget, the Presbyterian Lay Committee has an investment portfolio of over 3.5 million dollars, well beyond that of any other Protestant pro- or anti-gay organizations in these denominations.		
<b>Resources of three largest pro-LGBT Presbyterian organizations</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Covenant Network</b>	2003	357,470
<b>That All May Freely Serve</b>	2004 (est.)	250,000
<b>More Light Presbyterians</b>	2005	175,000
<b>Total:</b>		<b>782,470</b>

### Next Battle

The Presbyterian Church USA has recently switched to a biennial rather than annual General Assembly schedule. During the next General Assembly in June 2006, a committee on the “Peace, Unity and Purity” of the church will present its report on ways for Presbyterians to put aside differences and reach compromise on controversial issues like LGBT ordination. Several actions in the last General Assembly in 2004 were put off pending the actions of this

committee. Several resolutions requesting the elimination of the anti-gay “Amendment B” have already been proposed. If the General Assembly passes this measure, there will be a state-to-state, Presbytery-to-Presbytery battle for its ratification that will need significant political support from national leadership.

### **Possibilities for Mobilization of Pro-LGBT Networks**

Speaking with Rev. Mieke Vandersall of the largest That All May Freely Serve chapter, Presbyterian Welcome of New York City, it is clear that the Presbyterian networks would be glad to mobilize around LGBT political issues. Many of the members of these congregations are already politically active, but have not had opportunities to act under the banner of their faith communities. Rev. Vandersall suggested, however, that political actions would have to be given significant lead time to offer full support. The lead-up to General Assembly can be all-consuming for pro-LGBT networks, and Rev. Vandersall suggested it would be difficult for progressive Presbyterian networks to participate in mobilizations until after the 2006 General Assembly.

#### **Why Presbyterian Welcome Doesn’t Get Funds from Progressive Foundations:**

Rev. Vandersall also stated that Presbyterian Welcome of New York City has been turned down for grants by Arcus, Stonewall and Open Meadows foundations either for not being an ecumenical organization or explicitly because her organization is faith-based. The ministry receives some support from the New York City Presbytery, but has been refused funds by the Synod (regional bodies that fund most of the outreach and mission ministries within the Presbyterian Church USA) for increasingly homophobic reasons.

Speaking with a representative of one progressive foundation, the authors were told that religious organizations do not receive funding from foundations because they are self-funded within their churches and religious institutions. She did not seem to fully grasp the catch-22 this creates for pro-LGBT religious organizations, who are often denied funding by their denominations because of their pro-LGBT stance.

## **Episcopal Church in the United States**

### **Current Conflict**

The current conflict within the Episcopal Church has centered on the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire. There is also conflict over the formation of a ritual for same-sex unions. These unions have been accepted by the General Convention according to the desires of local dioceses, but there has been no official ceremony added to the approved Episcopal liturgy. Liturgy, especially the Book of Common Prayer, is an essential element of Episcopal unity.

Part of the reason LGBT people have been relatively successful in the move toward inclusion in the Episcopal Church, however, is that there is no “institutionalized anti-gay agenda,” that is, there is no canonical (the Episcopal Church is governed by the Constitution and Canons) restriction on inclusion. Attempts have been made repeatedly to do this and failed.

## Opposition

The opposition exists in lots of little groups that operate (sometimes loosely) under the umbrella of the “American Anglican Council,” which dates from the early 1990s. It has always had very close ties with the IRD, sharing IRD office space for a number of years in Washington, D.C. It is now headquartered in Atlanta, where its president lives.

Having essentially lost the battle against gay ordination and same-sex blessing in the United States by the 1994 General Convention (the Episcopal Church’s governing body which meets every three years), the AAC developed the strategy of taking the issue global, stirring up the more naturally conservative provinces of the global south. In 1998 they achieved their greatest victory (with the help of then-Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, a conservative evangelical) at the Lambeth Conference (the every ten years meeting of the world’s Episcopal/Anglican bishops) by passing a resolution declaring, among other things, “the practice of homosexuality as incompatible with Scripture. Since then they have been very successful in selling this resolution to the worldwide church as “normative Anglican teaching,” even though the Lambeth Conference has no authority to declare such things. Even Rowan Williams, the current Archbishop of Canterbury and a much more moderate figure than Carey, persists in speaking of it in this way.

The AAC has used this international support to keep up a “chicken little” atmosphere of constant crisis. At the same time, mirroring the IRD tactics in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, they have been setting up alternative structures in the United States to prepare for the larger Communion to declare them to be the legitimate expression of the Anglican Communion in the United States, working to ostracize the official church in the United States and Canada. Whether they will be successful in doing so remains to be seen. The United States and Canada are under a kind of temporary suspension (albeit voluntary) from one of the major worldwide Communion bodies, the Anglican Consultative Council.

## Involvement

Integrity is mostly organized by its 60 diocesan chapters, and has 300 affiliated congregations. The American Anglican Council has 29 chapters and 316 affiliated congregations.

<b>Resources of largest anti-gay Episcopal organization</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>American Anglican Council</b>	2003	1,543,724
* Institute on Religion and Democracy: FY2003 Total budget, \$956,190.00; Budget for efforts in the Episcopal Church in America: \$155,749.		
<b>Resources of largest pro-LGBT Episcopal organization</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Integrity</b>	2003	153,154

## **Next Battle**

The General Convention for the Episcopal Church will take place June 2006 in Columbus, Ohio. Integrity will be expected to respond in some way to the trend in the Anglican Communion against the United States church. Conservatives are framing this decision as “Walking Apart or Walking Together.” They will want a moratorium on same-sex blessings and ordinations, including the resignation of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire. There *may* be another openly gay bishop to confirm. A new Presiding Bishop will be elected as well.

## **The United Methodist Church**

### **Current Conflict**

The discussion over LGBT issues in the United Methodist Church centers on two passages in the denomination’s Book of Discipline which concern same-sex marriage and ordination to the position of minister:

*“Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.”*

*“The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”*

The most recent changes to the Book of Discipline came during the denomination’s last General Conference in 2004, which took stronger stances against gay ordination in affirming the denomination’s stance that “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Leaders in the United Methodist Church who disagree with the denomination’s official anti-gay stance have taken particularly strong disobedient and dissenting stands in favor of ordaining LGBT people, blessing same-sex unions and ministering to the LGBT community. Dissenters have included heterosexual ally Jimmy Creech, who was defrocked by his regional conference for performing same-sex union ceremonies; the “Sacramento 68,” a group of 68 clergy who were present at or helped perform a same-sex union in California and who were later acquitted of ecclesiastical charges; and the “Denver 15,” a group of Methodist bishops (who are elected by their regional conferences as chief ecclesiastical officers) who called on the denomination to take a more progressive stance on LGBT issues.

Recent high-profile cases have involved the Revs. Karen Dammann and Beth Stroud, whose ordinations were threatened with revocation by charges filed in church court when they came out.

## Opposition

The strongest LGBT opposition in the United Methodist Church comes from the IRD, which has focused more of its efforts on this denomination than any other. The IRD has a subgroup called United Methodist Action, complete with an executive director (Mark Tooley) and paid staff. Other forms of opposition come from the following:

- 1) **Propaganda:** The IRD's quarterly newsletter, *United Methodist Action*, opposes progressive movement in the church by publishing inflammatory articles that denounce the church leadership as "far-left" and "partisan." Such articles have denounced an upcoming Reconciling Ministries Network conference held at a North Carolina retreat center as a "pro-homosexual rally" and labeled one of the transgender participants "a male Presbyterian minister who had a sex-change operation and now professes to be female." Typically, the articles continually call the denominational leadership out of touch and refer to the mainline denominations as in decline, but at the same time urge church members to "renew" their churches and take them back from the forces of progressivism. An association of evangelical Methodists publishes *Good News*, a bimonthly glossy magazine promoting "renewal" of the United Methodist Church, and providing amplification for the denomination's conservative leaders. A recent issue of *Good News* offered the option of contributing to the organization by automatic bank draft.
- 2) **Working Inside Church Structures:** The United Methodist Church has 63 regional conferences that meet once a year to pass local legislation and a national General Conference that meets once every four years. In addition, each conference has bishops that are elected to serve regional conferences. For anti-LGBT Methodists, influencing this process means working to elect sympathetic delegates to the regional conferences and General Conference, as well as candidates for the position of bishop, working to systematically deny progressive candidates for church office, and proposing anti-gay resolutions. One resolution this year in the Three Rivers Conference of southern Illinois equated the work of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force with that of NAMBLA. After receiving a letter from Task Force lawyers, the resolution was pulled. Anti-gay Methodists have been effective at filing charges in church court against those who they see as operating outside the Book of Discipline, such as Reverends Karen Dammann, Beth Stroud and Jimmy Creech. Conservative Methodists also sponsor a number of educational conferences, including the Aldersgate conference, which indoctrinates young pastors with anti-gay thought, and the Confessing Movement's Epworth Institute.
- 3) **Creating Para-Church Structures:** The Institute for Religion and Democracy's "divide and conquer" technique has posed the most effective threat to the United Methodist denomination. Members of the Confessing Movement of the United Methodist Church proposed a resolution at the 2004 General Convention calling for "amicable separation" between conservative and liberal factions of the denomination. The resolution was not passed, but the anti-unity forces have four years in which to drum up support before the next General Conference.



## Involvement

The Reconciling Ministries Network encompasses 196 Reconciling Congregations, 27 Reconciling Campus Ministries and 23 other Reconciling Communities and Ministries, with an estimated total population of 75,000.

There are 1,451 Confessing Churches, with a total estimated population of 643,223 members and 4,377 pastors.

<b>Resources of two anti-gay United Methodist organizations:</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Confessing Church Movement</b>	2003	291,550
<b>Good News (Forum for Scriptural Christianity)</b>	2003	1,081,401
<b>Total:</b>		<b>1,372,951</b>

\* Institute on Religion and Democracy: FY2003 Total budget, \$956,190; Budget for efforts in the United Methodist Church: \$317,260.

<b>Resources of two largest pro-LGBT United Methodist organizations:</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Reconciling Ministries Network</b>	2003	341,819
<b>Affirmation</b>	2003	13,776
<b>Total:</b>		<b>355,595</b>

## Next Battle

The next General Conference takes place in 2008. Various conferences will propose resolutions for changing the Book of Discipline in pro-gay and anti-gay directions. Reconciling congregations must fight battles each year in the 63 annual conferences across the country. According to the Reconciling Ministries Network, plans include:

- 1) Meetings between coalition partners Reconciling Ministries Network, Methodist Federation for Social Action, Affirmation, and Church Within a Church in 2005 and 2006.
- 2) Outreach projects including regional "circuit rides" for Reconciling Ministries Network staff, representation at all annual conferences, and a "coming out" campaign for moderate Methodists.
- 3) Legislative priorities such as election of delegates to the 2008 General Conference, unprecedented multilingual quarterly mailings to 1000 elected delegates, resolutions which must be voted on at 2007 annual conferences in order to be considered at General Conference, and a national themed kick-off convocation in 2007.

## **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

### **Current Conflict**

Since 1991, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has publicly and repeatedly stated its welcome to gay and lesbian people. That welcome, however, does not extend to the blessing of same-gender committed relationships, nor to the ordination and rostering of persons in committed relationships. This applies to seminarians, ordained clergy and rostered lay professionals.

The church stated in 1996 that marriage was between a man and woman. However, the church has no stated policy on the subject of blessing same-gender relationships. The Conference of Bishops's 1993 published statement did not approve the official blessing of such relationships, but also acknowledged that pastors were trusted to give pastoral care in their context. The reactions to this letter have been varied, with some synods allowing such blessings and others following the letter of the recommendation. Finally, though many will say that this recommendation is church policy, it is not a policy document.

As to ordination and rostering (becoming and remaining on the list of clergy eligible for positions), the Church has two standards regarding sexuality, codified in governance as "Vision and "Expectations": heterosexual candidates/clergy/rostered lay professionals are required to remain chaste unless or until married; homosexuals are required to remain celibate for the rest of their lives (unless, of course, they enter into a heterosexual marriage).

In 2001 the Churchwide Assembly, the highest legislative body of the church, ordered a study of the blessing of same-sex committed relationships, the ordination and rostering of clergy in such relationships, and the creation of a Social Statement on Sexuality. A task force was appointed to complete those tasks. The results of their first two tasks went before the Churchwide Assembly in August 2005. The final task was to be due for the Churchwide Assembly in 2007, but has slipped to 2009.

The task force recommendations on the first two subjects were modified by the ELCA Church Council into resolutions put before the Churchwide Assembly. The resolution that passed on blessing proposed that the ELCA continue to respect the guidance of the 1993 advisory statement of the Conference of Bishops, that the church welcome gay and lesbian persons into its life and trust pastors and congregations to discern ways to provide faithful pastoral care to all to whom they minister. On ordination and rostering, the Council put forward a resolution that would have created a convoluted process whereby otherwise qualified candidates for the ministry/clergy/rostered lay professionals in a covenanted, committed long-term relationship would have to have the approval of their bishop, congregation, Synod Council, and then the Conference of Bishops to continue their candidacy or their service in position. That resolution failed.

It must be noted, however, that the Assembly was offered a clear motion to ban same-gender relationship blessing and turned it down by a large margin. There is no ban on blessing same-gender relationships in the ELCA; there also is no official affirmation of or rite for such blessings. No congregation has been successfully disciplined for doing such a blessing. And, on ordination, though the resolution to create an exceptions process failed, again the

Assembly was offered a clear motion to affirm the current standards and require their consistent application to clergy and voted it down.

## Opposition

Opposition groups within the church are a hodge-podge of groups, but powerful nonetheless: Word Alone, Solid Rock, the Dorado Covenant, the Fellowship of Confessional Lutherans, the Texas Confessional Lutherans, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), the Lutheran Theological House of Studies, and lesser lights. They say that they base their objection to GLBT persons' full participation in the life of the church, specifically as clergy, on scripture and tradition.

- 1) Propaganda:** Opposition groups excoriate the ELCA and its leadership for having deliberately deviated from the teachings of the church, the admonitions of scripture, and traditions going back to Luther.
- 2) Threats of Schism and Para-Church Organizations:** These organizations hold up the real possibility of a split in the church should anything they dislike come to pass. As evidence that this is not idle talk, and that they may split off anyway, they have commissioned a hymnal, established the precursor to a seminary, and, of late, concentrated less on scriptural themes than on the leverage provided by the threat of leaving. Their rhetoric following Churchwide Assembly has returned to the strident and hard-line, following a more conciliatory tone struck in the three weeks leading up to and during the Assembly.

These organizations uniformly claim to welcome LGBT people into the church. But the welcome they offer is that of the emergency room: not to participate in the life of the organization, but to come because you are sick, in need of a cure.

All of these organizations provide speakers, raise funds, are staffed, hold conferences, meet in convention, have some supportive theologians and bishops emeriti, produce and distribute educational materials, and lobby the ELCA for legislation and rulings favorable to their cause.

A very real issue for them is whether they could legally take their land, buildings and property, as well as financial assets, with them if they decide to leave the ELCA. They hang favorable hopes on a 2005 California court decision that allowed a defecting UCC church to keep all of those.

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ was established by Word Alone as a stand-alone Lutheran denomination to provide a home for congregations that wanted to or had left the ELCA but did not want to join any of the other Lutheran denominations (most notably the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods). It appears that most of the 111 congregations affiliated with LCMC have not yet renounced the ELCA, but have a foot in both camps.

## Involvement

Word Alone and Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ claim 422 congregations. Lutherans Concerned North America has 320 Reconciling in Christ Congregations, 23 synods (of 65 total ELCA synods) and 44 chapters.

<b>Resources of three anti-gay Lutheran organizations:</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Word Alone</b>	2003	501,643
<b>Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ</b>	(Unreported – Church)	-
<b>Solid Rock Lutherans</b>	(Unreported – Below 25,000)	-
<b>Total:</b>		<b>501,643</b>
<b>Resources of two largest pro-GLBT Lutheran organizations:</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Lutherans Concerned</b>	2005	332,000
<b>Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministries</b>	2003	112,670
<b>Total:</b>		<b>444,670</b>

**Next Battle**

The next battles are here and now: the blessing of same-gender committed relationships went down in defeat, 183 to 220, at the July 2005 National Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. At the August 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly the same blessing failed to be either affirmed or banned and ordination/rostering of candidates/clergy/rostered lay professionals in such relationships was defeated, 490–503. None of this will deter or distract those determined to achieve equality in these issues.

**Possibilities for Mobilization of Pro-Gay Networks**

Lutheran advocates at either end of the spectrum readily see the value of, and would probably embrace, mobilization around purely political issues related to pro- or anti-gay issues. However, the large center of Lutherans, even those in LGBT organizations advocating for change, are more wary of finding their organization engaged in political activity not directly related to the religious struggle of their organization. The center-mass of Lutherans takes a much stronger separation of church and state position than those at the ends of the distribution. This is not to say they will not wish their organization to be or become politically active, but just that it will require work and finesse. Their concern would be that their organization would be “hijacked.”

**Roman Catholic Church**

**Current Conflict**

The Roman Catholic opposition to same-sex love is well documented. The hierarchical structure of the church, set up like a transnational corporation with headquarters in Rome, means that teachings that come from the highest levels hold sway throughout the world church. That is, there is no doctrinal difference between Nigeria and the United States on any issue even if local pastoral practices differ slightly. Same-sex love is considered sinful under all circumstances, same-sex orientation is considered “morally disordered,” same-sex

marriage is taught to be wrong, and the Vatican considers even same-sex partnerships “anarchical.”

The most significant statement from the Roman Catholic hierarchy on this subject is "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," the October 30, 1987 statement from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, headed by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), which states, "Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."

The letter had a chilling effect on relationships between gay Catholics and the Church, causing DignityUSA chapters to be expelled from churches all over the country. DignityUSA went from being an organization with occasional meetings with the president of the National Council of Catholic Bishops, and even being chosen Organization of the Year in 1980 by the Association of Priests of the Archdiocese of Chicago, to being an essentially outsider organization with virtually no access to the upper echelons of Roman Catholic hierarchy.

## **Opposition**

The opposition is the structure of the church. Its hierarchical, male-only, clericocentric style means that no women are involved in decision-making, few laymen are involved, and no one who is publicly known to be in a same-sex relationship has any input to the conversation.

There is no annual meeting, no open synod, no democratic procedure for working through alternative views on the questions. At the same time, transgressions of the policy are punished. For example, theologians who teach anything but the church's view are ineligible for teaching posts at Catholic institutions, and priests who stray publicly from the church's policy are reprimanded.

## **Anti-LGBT Organizations**

Given the nature of the opposition, the institution handles the opposition to same-sex love in its own without need for specific organizational help. Right-wing newspapers like *The Wanderer* and *The National Catholic Register*, however, have distinguished themselves as effective anti-LGBT platforms.

The Knights of Columbus, a Catholic men's organization and charity with holdings of more than 49 million dollars, has been vocal in the fight against same-sex marriage equality. The organization bills itself as “the largest Catholic family organization in the nation” and calls legal objections to same-sex marriage discrimination “another *Roe v. Wade* in the making.” It suggests that “advocates of same-sex marriage are determined to get the courts to impose same-sex marriage by judicial fiat, and only a federal constitutional amendment can prevent it.” The Knights of Columbus sponsors two educational programs whose mission includes promotion of anti-gay Vatican teachings, the Catholic Information Program and the Knights of Columbus Family Life Bureau, which they describe as “an institute which provides post-

graduate degree and non-degree courses of study in Theology of Marriage and Family for 111 students.”

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is headed up by William Donohue, one of the most virulently anti-gay spokespeople in the United States. He is frequently featured on mainstream news programs as a representative of the “Catholic perspective.” In April 2005, Donohue was quoted as saying, “The gay community has yet to apologize to straight people for all the damage that they have done—for contaminating the blood supply in New York City and around the country. And I find it amazing that, when people are acting so morally delinquent, that they're asking for more rights at the same time.”

<b>Resources of three anti-LGBT Catholic organizations:</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Knights of Columbus Charities</b>	2003	2,806,849
<b><i>The Wanderer</i> (publication)</b>	2002	70,498
<b>Catholic League for Religious &amp; Civil Rights</b>	2003	2,712,922
<b>Total:</b>		<b>5,590,296</b>

\* Knights of Columbus Charities totals include budget for educational programs with strong anti-gay components: the Catholic Information Program and Knights of Columbus Family Life Institute. Actual Knights of Columbus income for 2003 was 6,088,463. Net assets were 49,365,901.

<b>Resources of three largest pro-LGBT Catholic organizations:</b>	<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>WATER</b>	2003	117,661
<b>New Ways Ministry</b>	2004	146,121
<b>DignityUSA</b>	2005	233,242
<b>Total:</b>		<b>497,024</b>

### **Next Steps**

DignityUSA, New Ways Ministry, and the virtual community the Conference for Catholic Lesbians are the best known groups. Others work on AIDS, others with diocesan LGBT staff. Coalitions of progressive Catholics, such as the Women-Church Convergence (W-CC) and Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR), are made up of many groups that work on issues such as ordination (Women’s Ordination Conference), married priests (CORPUS), reproductive rights (Catholics for a Free Choice), and interreligious feminist issues (Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, WATER). Most of those groups are pro-LGBT to one degree or another.

It is hard to pin down a precise strategy because there is no process through which these concerns can be addressed with the church hierarchy. Possible undertakings include doing educational work, writing, and speaking to change the present teaching.

The following would be helpful:

1. The above-mentioned groups and many others have no regular communication, no way to discuss issues and plan common actions on LGBT issues. A meeting to explore forming such a group would be useful.
2. A good bibliography on Catholic pro-LGBT theology would be a valuable tool for educational work.
3. Discussion on how to bring these issues to the bishops' agenda would be welcome. It is rumored that a document is forthcoming on gay seminarians, widely expected to be a ban on same. Concerted response to that would be a good idea if something can be organized in the short run.
4. Media education as to what constitutes "Catholic" would be useful. That way mainstream journalists could learn that a nun or a priest is not the only form of Catholic that exists. That would go a long way toward "legitimizing" other voices.

### **The Institute on Religion and Democracy: A Major Threat to Churches' Independence**

The Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) describes itself as "an ecumenical alliance of U.S. Christians working to reform their churches' social witness, in accord with biblical and historic Christian teachings, thereby contributing to the renewal of democratic society at home and abroad."<sup>5</sup>

**Their official mission is non-objectionable, but further investigation shows the radical right-wing ideology that drives this organization.**

"Particularly in the historic 'mainline' Protestant denominations, but also in other churches, many leaders and institutions have lost their focus on the Gospel, the basis of their existence. They have turned toward political agendas mandated neither by Scripture nor by Christian tradition. They have thrown themselves into multiple, often leftist crusades—radical forms of feminism, environmentalism, pacifism, multi-culturalism, revolutionary socialism, sexual liberation and so forth."<sup>6</sup>

**IRD's interim president, Alan F.H. Wisdom further describes the activities of the organization:**

"IRD monitors denominational agencies and leaders who often claim to speak for millions but really represent only an extreme few. We report our findings to churchgoers who want to reclaim their denominations from politicized ideologies. We address the major issues of

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<sup>5</sup> Institute on Religion and Democracy. (2005) Mission Statement. Washington, D.C.: Institute on Religion and Democracy. Retrieved Dec. 7, 2005 from <<http://www.ird-renew.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKVLfMVIsG&b=356299>>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

the day — from the debates over Just War to same-sex unions. IRD’s resources are mailed to over 300,000 homes.

“We help church members battle for renewal within their denominations, arming them with facts, and helping them to reach other concerned churchgoers across the nation. IRD drafts resolutions for church assemblies and sponsors educational events seeking widespread support for church reform. This grassroots activism is carried on through our denominational programs: UM (United Methodist) Action, Presbyterian Action, and Episcopal Action.

“Within the United States, we see the breakdown of marriage and family as a major threat to sustaining our own democracy. We are beginning a program entitled *Defending Marriage is Social Justice* and will be working to see that our churches fulfill their proper role in defending marriage.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Divide and Conquer**

According to the Rev. Andrew J. Weaver, a Methodist minister who has written about the IRD, “In a document entitled ‘Reforming America’s Churches Project 2001–2004,’ the IRD states that its aim is to change the ‘permanent governing structure’ of mainline churches ‘so they can help renew the wider culture of our nation.’”<sup>8</sup>

### **Our research suggests that the IRD’s strategy for targeting mainline churches follows these guidelines:**

- 1) Undermine the national leadership of the denomination by portraying it as “leftist,” “extreme,” and “out of touch” with the average church member. Hence their claim of “monitoring” church leaders who “claim to speak for millions but really represent only an extreme few.”
- 2) Distribute propaganda and “educational materials” that portray the church leadership in this way, some of it through official IRD publications such as *Faith and Freedom* and *United Methodist Action*, and some through affiliated publications such as the *Presbyterian Layman* and the Episcopal Church’s *Encompass*.
- 3) Create right-wing para-church organizations that claim to represent the orthodox, mainstream, or “confessional” tradition of the denominations, including the Presbyterian Confessing Church movement, the United Methodist Confessing Movement and the American Anglican Council. These organizations set up alternative church governments with the purpose of promoting schism, suggesting that the differences between liberals and conservatives are too great to be mended. Their intention is to promote the collapse of national denominational government, partially through the withholding of funds, and then break off into separate denominations. Some of their ability to do this will be based on civil court legal rulings regarding

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<sup>7</sup> Alan Wisdom. (2005) Vice President’s Greeting. Washington, D.C.: Institute on Religion and Democracy. Retrieved Dec. 7, 2005 from <<http://www.ird-renew.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKVLfMVIIsG&b=356291>>.

<sup>8</sup> The Rev. Andrew J. Weaver. (July 10, 2003) *The Fighting Methodists*. Chicago, IL: Martin Marty Center at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion at the University of Chicago. Retrieved Dec. 7, 2005 from <[http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/sightings/archive\\_2003/0710.shtml](http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/sightings/archive_2003/0710.shtml)>.



whether they can take church property with them or whether that property is owned by the denominations.

**The IRD does most of their work without the awareness of the majority of moderate members of these denominations.** Most church members are aware of calls for schism and conservatives' positions that the denominational leadership is left-wing and out of touch, but have no idea that this is part of an overall, cross-denominational strategy developed by an outside organization.

## Board Members

Board members of the IRD show ties to some of the most well-known right-wing activists and writers, including:

**Diane Knippers** — (President, recently deceased.) Board member of Concerned Women for America.

**Fred Barnes** — *Weekly Standard* editor who “broke the story” on supposed sexual harassment charges against Bishop Gene Robinson in an attempt to keep him from being elected.

**Richard J. Neuhaus** — Founder of the Institute for Religion and Public Life.

**Carl Henry** — *Christianity Today*.

**Michael Novak** — American Enterprise Institute.

**Mary Ellen Bork** — Daughter of Robert Bork; deputy director of the Project for the New American Century.)<sup>9</sup>

<b>Annual Funding</b>	<b>FY 2003</b>
United Methodist Committee	317,260
Presbyterian Committee	46,103
Episcopal Committee	155,749
Marriage Project	35,953
Communications (including <i>Faith and Freedom</i> and Web site)	123,175
<b>Total annual budget:</b>	<b>956,190</b>

\* Source: IRD 990 form, FY 2003, public information.

<sup>9</sup> Tom Barry. (June 2004) Institute on Religion and Democracy, Right Web Profiles. Silver City, NM: Interhemispheric Resource Center. Retrieved Dec. 7, 2005, from <<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/org/ird.php>>.

Between 1985 and 2003, IRD has received **\$4,529,000** in grants from some of the largest and most influential conservative foundations, including:

**The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation** (gave \$1.3 million to IRD efforts between 1985 and 2001.)

**Sarah Scaife Foundation and Scaife Family Foundation**

**John M. Olin Foundation**

**Castle Rock Foundation**

**The Carthage Foundation**

**The Coors Foundation**

**JM Foundation**

**Howard and Roberta Ahmanson's Fieldstead & Co.**<sup>10</sup>

**Institute for Welcoming Resources**

The Institute for Welcoming Resources is **the first national endeavor to bring together progressive people of faith and their churches as a political force for change in opposition to the religious right's tyrannical control of the faith dialogue in America.** The Institute for Welcoming Resources (IWR) is an umbrella organization formed within the welcoming church movement in an effort to counteract the influence of groups like the Institute for Religion and Democracy.

IWR was founded in 2002 as a collaboration between welcoming church leaders in several Protestant denominational organizations that had been collaborating since the early 1990s. Since the beginning of the modern American LGBT rights movement in the late sixties and early seventies, its constituent groups have provided the guiding concepts, resources and staff for the welcoming church movement.

IWR's current convening groups include seven organizations:

**The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists** – American Baptist Churches

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<sup>10</sup> MediaTransparency.org. (2005) Institute on Religion and Democracy. Washington: D.C: MediaTransparency.org. Retrieved Dec. 7, 2005 from <<http://www.mediatransparency.org/recipientgrants.php?174>>.

**Gay And Lesbian Acceptance (GALA)** — Community of Christ (Formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, based in Independence, MO)

**More Light Presbyterians** — Presbyterian Church USA

**Open & Affirming Ministry** — The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (welcoming congregations movement of Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples)

**Open and Affirming (ONA) Program** — The United Church of Christ (welcoming congregations movement of the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns)

**Reconciling in Christ Program** — Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (Welcoming congregations movement of Lutherans Concerned North America)

**Reconciling Ministries Network** — United Methodist Church

**IWR** grew out of these organizations' collaborations, begun in 1990, to develop resources for congregations who have joined or are considering joining the welcoming church movement.

Resources include:

- *Claiming the Promise*, a Bible study that outlines pro-LGBT readings of Hebrew and Christian scriptures.
- *Shaping Sanctuary*, a groundbreaking source for LGBT-affirming and inclusive-language prayers, liturgies and hymns for use in worship.
- *Open Hands*, a magazine which this coalition of leaders published for more than 10 years as the premier resource for articles and ideas within the welcoming church movement.

**The mission of the IWR breaks into three main purposes:**

- 1) A Web-based clearinghouse for information on the welcoming church movement ([www.welcomingresources.org](http://www.welcomingresources.org)) including a state-by-state listing of all the congregations in the welcoming church movement, a bibliography of resources produced by the constituent denominational groups, and a news service which includes the publications of the IWR member groups. In coordinating resources, the IWR hopes to diminish unnecessary duplication of work and to encourage fledgling organizations in less tolerant denominations.
- 2) The convening of the Witness Our Welcome (WOW) conferences. These ecumenical conferences met in 2000 and 2003 to empower, equip and inspire members and leadership in the Welcoming Church Movement. Collectively, these conferences gathered nearly 2,000 people for worship, study, collaboration, training and organizing on behalf of God's extravagant welcome. More conferences are planned for the future.

- 3) Building the estimated 750,000–1 million congregation members involved in the welcoming movement into core teams of faith-based community organizers working for LGBT equality around the country. The IWR hopes to train individuals and churches to be effective agents of change in denominational as well as political settings.

## Funding

Though the IWR and its member organizations are doing heroic work, the effort has been severely underfunded.

Budgets for recent fiscal years included:

<b>FY</b>	<b>Budget</b>
2004	\$60,045
2005	\$58,760

**Comparison to the IRD budgets approaching 1 million dollars annually during this same period demonstrates how massively outgunned the IWR has been.**

IWR has received two grants—one in 2004, one in 2005—from the Carpenter Foundation which have helped it meet its annual operating expenses. The rest of its budget comes from contributions made by each of the sponsoring organizations.

## PART II: BRIDGE-BUILDERS

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“We prioritize working with others, and not from a place of defiance or aggression, but as a bridge, i.e. between the LGBT and spiritual community, between LGBT Hispanic Christians and the larger Hispanic Christian community.”

— **Centro Cristiano**

“We’re not focused on internal battles; we’re too busy fighting others. We’re dealing with the location and quandary of being perpetual outsiders. With Queer Asian Spirit, it’s great to be in a place where you don’t have to explain yourself, where you can be whole: Asian, spiritual and queer.” — **Queer Asian Spirit**

The category “bridge-builders” encompasses religious bodies and organizations that work at the intersection of faith, LGBT issues, and at least one other identity-based issue such as race or gender. These organizations are significant because they do not force individuals to choose among their religion, sexuality, race, ethnicity and gender; rather, they work intentionally to enable people to be “whole” in their identities and faith. While a few of these organizations focus specifically on fighting sexism in religion, the majority of the groups in this category are focused on serving communities of color.

“Bridge-builders” include a range of organizational types:

- Religious bodies that are LGBT-identified in communities of color;
- Organizations that work at the intersection of faith, LGBT issues and specific communities of color;
- Religious bodies rooted in specific communities of color that have a profound commitment to social justice, of which a commitment to LGBT issues is one fundamental component;
- Interfaith organizations or initiatives with fundamental commitments to raising HIV/AIDS awareness and fighting homophobia, sexism, racism, and xenophobia, both individually and as they intersect;

Note that the majority of “bridge-builders” have budgets consisting of less than \$50,000, at least half of them have no paid staff, and several of them have been in existence for fewer than 10 years.

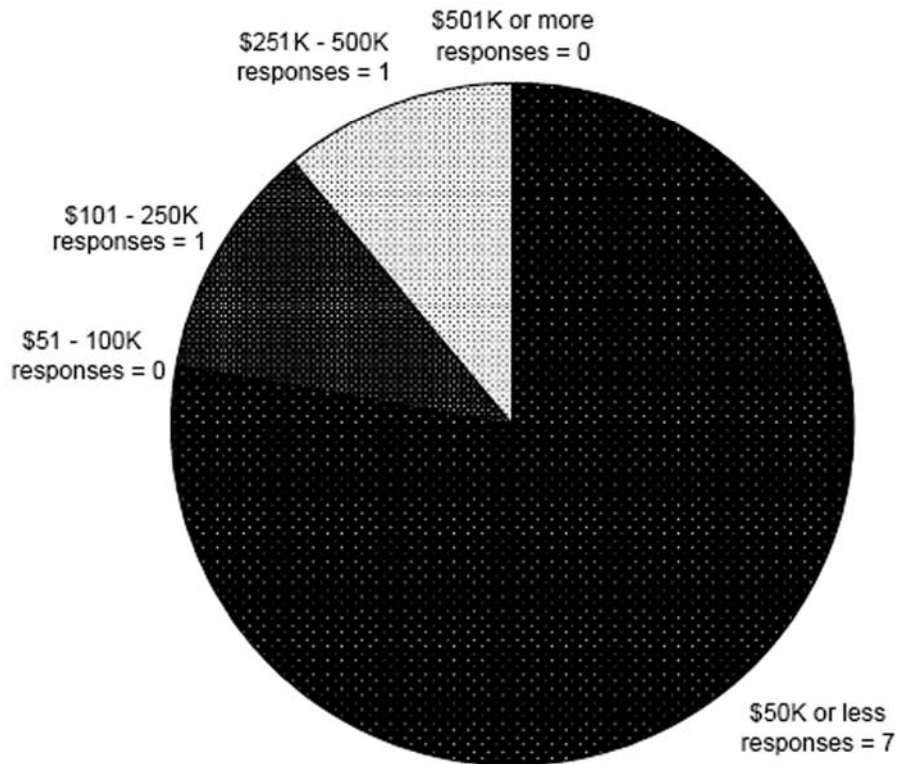
It would be impossible to provide a full account of all spiritual “bridge-builders” in the United States because they are varied, emerging and, in some cases, so community-based that they are difficult to find. The groups presented here constitute a cross-section of some of the leaders connecting spirituality and LGBT issues in African-American, Asian Pacific Islander

and Latino communities.<sup>11</sup> This is not to overlook the people of color and the intersectional work occurring within denominations and denominational networks.

Organization	Founded	Affiliation	Home Office	Denominational Recognition	Membership or Mailing List	Chapters	Congregations
African American Roundtable of CLGSRM	2001	Interfaith (primarily Christian)	Berkeley, CA	No	20	N/A	N/A
Al-Fatiha	1998	Muslim	Washington, D.C.	No	700	9	N/A
Centro Cristiano — Las Otras Ovejas del Rebano	1994	Christian	Puerto Rico; Dallas, TX	No	70	N/A	2
Equal Partners in Faith	1996	Interfaith	Washington, D.C.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
GRACE	1999	Interfaith (primarily Christian)	San Francisco, CA	No	50	1	N/A
Iglesia San Romero de las Americas	1990	United Church of Christ	New York, NY	Yes	150	N/A	1
Pine United Methodist Church	1886 (declared "reconciling" - 1994)	Methodist	San Francisco, CA	Yes	200	N/A	1
Queer Asian Spirit	Unknown	Interfaith	New York, NY	No	200	N/A	N/A
Reverend Damaris Ortega / Latino Commission on AIDS - Mujeres en Fe	Unknown	Interfaith (primarily Christian)	New York, NY	No	N/A	N/A	6
<b>Total</b>					<b>1390</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

<sup>11</sup> See also "Denominations" for the work of Unity Fellowship Church, which has primarily African-American and Latino congregants.

## Annual Budget: Bridge Builders



## Strengths

- **Inclusion and Affirmation of Multiple Identities:** **Queer Asian Spirit** explained, “It’s great to be in a place where you don’t have to explain yourself, where you can be whole: Asian, spiritual and queer.” As a result of this affirmation of multiple identities, many of these organizations have built remarkably diverse and inclusive communities. Although they have a substantial LGBT population and much of the leadership is LGBT, the majority of **Iglesia San Romero de las Americas (San Romero)**, for example, are straight and the congregation includes Jews and atheists.
- **Faith and Commitment to Justice:** The members of these religious bodies and organizations overcame profound barriers to find or launch these organizations. In spite of this struggle, their commitment to faith and justice runs deep. As **Centro Cristiano** explained, “We don’t divide out the oppressions we fight; we try to just fight against all forms of oppression and address the interconnections of injustice and domination.”
- **Partnerships and Relationships:** Because they sit at the crossroads of multiple communities, these organizations have the capacity to bridge communities and issues that are often perceived to be disconnected. **Centro Cristiano** explained, “We prioritize working with others, and not from a place of defiance or aggression, but as a

bridge, between the LGBT and spiritual community, between LGBT Hispanic Christians and the larger Hispanic Christian community.” In the past year alone, the **African American Roundtable of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (African American Roundtable)** led workshops in four black churches on sexuality and queerness. **Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)**, which networks spiritual feminists and women around the world, has launched a project supporting intergenerational women in religion.

## Recent Achievements

- **Organizational Capacity:** Many of these organizations have focused on developing their infrastructures, and the result has been an increase in their capacity over the last 12 months. For instance, **Al-Fatiha** has recruited a larger board of directors, significantly increased the number of women on its board, and substantially augmented its Web site. **Equal Partners in Faith** now has a listserv with the capacity to reach up to 200,000 individuals and organizations.
- **Visibility:** Many organizations are struggling to prove that LGBT identity can exist within their religion or that it’s possible to be LGBT, spiritual and members of an ethnic or racial community. Their very existence is a testament to how contemporary this struggle is: at least three of these organizations formed after 1997. The **African American Roundtable** is in the process of organizing “Souls a’Fire,” a national conference on black religious identity. **Pine United Methodist Church** (Pine Church) is planning its annual Pride Sunday activities to involve education, spirituality and marching in the Pride Parade.
- **Activism:** Many of the organizations highlighted the need for activism over the last 12 months of war and political conservatism. When evangelical Asian Pacific Islander (API) churches organized an anti-same-sex marriage protest in San Francisco, **GRACE** participated in an API-based counterprotest in which they were the only visible gay Asian Christians. The **Rev. Damaris Ortega** of the **Latino Commission on AIDS (Mujeres en Fe)** spoke frequently in opposition to the ascendancy of the right in faith communities. **San Romero** used writing, sermons, workshops and demonstrations to work toward developing a culture of peace.

## Needs and Challenges

- **Outreach and Communications:** Organizations highlighted the need to reach those community members and organizations they want to support, educate or work alongside. Queer Asian Spirit explained with frustration, “It’s hard for people to get to us, even when they need us.” Given that they are severely underresourced, these organizations require the timesaving tools of consolidated and accessible material. Many also cited needs such as a developed Web site. Because of their uniqueness, these organizations are inundated with national and even international requests for information, to which they feel tremendous responsibility to respond, but they often lack the capacity to do so. Al-Fatiha elaborated, “We need follow-through capacity. We receive so many inquiries, but as a volunteer-run organization, it is incredibly difficult to



address everyone's needs.”

- **Organizational Capacity:** Capacity development is most often about these organizations' desperate need for financial resources to carry out their work. These organizations have the least financial resources of the different categories of organizations. Seven out of 10 of these organizations have annual budgets that are less than \$50,000. At least half of these organizations are run entirely by volunteers. Al-Fatiha explained, “We've identified and confirmed a need. Now, we want to be in a place where financial constraints don't hold us back from delivering for the people.” **African American Roundtable** explained, “Without funding, we have difficulty initiating projects. We could be an organization akin to something like DignityUSA, but in ways that are specific to the organizing models and experiences relevant within black churches, but we lack the funding. It's a kind of privilege we just don't have.”
- **Support and Empowerment:** As many of the organizations articulated, people come to them, suspicious and hurt. These organizations try to address that hurt and bring people to a place of empowerment. As San Romero asked, “How do we empower people generally, but also from a spiritual perspective? Empowerment is one of our most important responsibilities, but to do so effectively is our greatest challenge.”
- **Invisibility, Exclusion and Institutionalized Discrimination:** Every organization in this category provided a list of communities they are excluded from. The specifics of their struggles are many. Pine Church named the fight for LGBT ordination in the Methodist Church. With reference to Catholicism, WATER cited institutionalized homophobia, the ban on reproductive choice, and the exclusion of women from decision-making at the international level. These are just a few of many examples.

## Analysis

- Because of the multiple discriminations they face and because of the groundbreaking nature of their work, many of these organizations endure extreme opposition and struggle just to survive.
- Because they meet specific community needs, these organizations are smaller than the denominations or denominational networks. However, they represent sizable communities in their own right. *For instance, LGBT Asian Christians are only just emerging as a visible community, but if organized, could represent a formidable political force.*
- Religious LGBT people of color organizations do not follow the same organizational models as their white counterparts. Although there are at least 60 acknowledged “open and affirming” black churches in the United States, they are not organized into a national structure. People of color groups develop organizing models and structures that complement their communities' experiences. When building coalitions and looking for community leaders, progressives need to appreciate the significance and strength of national denominations, such as **Unity Fellowship**, but also local religious bodies, organizations and networks of people of color.
- When secular LGBT organizations commit to anti-racism work, that commitment requires changing how they work. Nowhere is this more obvious than in religion. For

instance, the church has historically played a major role in the life of Hispanic/Latino communities. Given the nation's growing Hispanic/Latino population, where the church stands on LGBT issues is becoming increasingly important across the country. The work of organizations such as **San Romero**, **Mujeres en Fe** and **Centro Cristiano** may be one of the strongest ways that Hispanic/Latino populations see LGBT rights as their own community issue.

- These “bridge-builder” organizations are some of the best allies secular progressives have. The right today is saturated with images of religious leaders of color spouting homophobia. The message is that we have to trade rights; that racism and homophobia are oppositional to each other and that the morally righteous are homophobic. To counter these outright lies, it is critical that the voices and leadership of religious leaders of color working for LGBT equality be supported and heard.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations:**

- **Changing Hearts and Minds/Supporting the LGBT Community:** These organizations and congregations have shouldered most of the responsibility to educate religious people about the LGBT community. They provide support for thousands of LGBT people, bind up the wounds created by damaging right-wing religion, and allow LGBT people to find spiritual homes in churches and congregations across the spectrum of American faith traditions. They have often been the unsung spiritual strength of the LGBT community.
- **Networks to be mobilized:** These organizations represent nearly 2000 congregations and hundreds of thousands of people who are already networked together for the cause of LGBT equality. If approached with caution and understanding about the specific beliefs of their spiritual communities, these organizations represent a vast, untapped network of political power for the LGBT community. LGBT people of faith and their religious allies have unique skills and resources for combating the religious right. They have the potential to be the primary force in reframing issues of faith and values in American discourse in favor of a more just and progressive agenda.
- **The opposition is immense, well-organized and largely unanswered by the progressive community:** The Institute on Religion and Democracy and other anti-LGBT organizations profiled in this report represent a massive shadow conservative movement pumping millions of dollars into the anti-gay movements in America's religious institutions. These activists, many of whom are connected to the highest levels of the conservative movement, are working behind the scenes to influence the opinions of tens of millions of otherwise moderate Americans, using fear, homophobia, and calls for religious purity in denominations that hold great personal and spiritual importance for their members. Pro-LGBT groups within these denominations who apply for funds and support from progressive foundations and organizations are frequently met with the response, “We don't fund religious groups” or “We don't fund religious groups unless they're ecumenical.” The continued discomfort of secular progressives for assisting religious progressives has allowed the conservative movement to establish a major foothold in United States churches, and if this trend is not reversed, these denominations will be lost to forces of intolerance.

## **Moving Forward With People of Faith**

Progressive secular and religious organizations working in support of LGBT issues have much to gain from working with one another.

The critical next steps for secular progressive organizations moving toward meaningful collaboration require significant adaptation. Working together means including religious leaders' issues in progressive agendas and enabling them to speak in their own voices for social change. Religious organizations have historically been committed to cultural transformation. Learning from their approach to this commitment could help the progressive movement achieve more than the formal victories of legislation and litigation; a commitment to cultural transformation could provide powerful new strategies for making justice a reality in people's daily lives.

It is our hope that this inventory will help to open new streams of funding resources for the work of these groups, avoid unnecessary duplication of work, and encourage collaboration and mutual support for work currently being done to educate the public and advance equality for all LGBT people.

# APPENDIX A

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## REPETITION OF RESOURCES

There has been a great deal of concern about the repetition of programs and resources for these organizations. Most of the organizations stated that they would love to add to the number of people doing this work. It is obvious, however, that organizations with scarce resources need to avoid duplicating efforts. The two areas in which these organizations would like to see greater consolidation are educational resources and leadership development. A number of these leaders expressed a desire to see a central place for resources, LGBT-inclusive religious texts, new theological frameworks, and listings of inclusive places of worship.

In addition, these organizations seek to share practices and models for training leaders and empowering grassroots organizers, possibly forming regional, cross-denominational networks of inclusive churches and religious leaders. This kind of networking would provide a natural organizing pool for local political issues affecting the LGBT community and help the individual denominational organizations grow their constituencies. Several organizations, such as Whosoever.org, Soulforce, and the Institute for Welcoming Resources are trying to consolidate some of the educational resources of these organizations. The Institute for Welcoming Resources and Lutherans Concerned are attempting cross-denominational regional organizing networks.

# APPENDIX B

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## RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE



### **Progressive religious and faith-based organizations supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues**

#### **Research Questionnaire**

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has agreed to put together an inventory of major groups working within denominations and religious traditions to effect change for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. This inventory will ideally give prospective funders a deeper understanding of the work that is going on and the few monetary resources going into it. It is our hope that this inventory will help to 1) open new streams of funding resources for the work of these groups; 2) help to avoid unnecessary duplication of work; and 3) encourage collaboration and mutual support for work currently being done to educate the public and advance equality for all LGBT people.

The information you give us will not be shared with the general public. It will be used solely to provide an inventory of the overall resources of the LGBT religious movement, and to create ties and possibilities for collaboration with large progressive activist and funding organizations.

- 1. How many people make up your constituency (e.g., actual membership, mailing list)?**
  
- 2. How many congregations are official participants of your constituency?**
  
- 3. Give a percentage of the amount of effort and resources your organization has put into the following activities:**
  - a. Ordination of LGBT people:
  - b. Same-sex blessing/marriage:

- c. Forming support network for LGBT people in your denomination or community:
- d. Societal/Political equality for LGBT people:
- e. Other:

4. **What was your most successful activity of this year?**
5. **What are your organization's three greatest strengths?**
6. **What are three areas in which you would like to strengthen the capacity of your organization?**
7. **What are the three greatest battles you are fighting within your denomination or faith tradition?**
8. **What do you consider to be your organization's greatest opportunity, and what is standing in the way of achieving that opportunity (in addition to money)?**
9. **Do you get denominational, foundation or corporate funding? If so, from where?**
10. **We would like to develop a picture of the resource constraints faced by LGBT religious organizations. Toward that end, please provide us with a ballpark estimate of your organizational revenue:**
11. **If your organization had an extra \$100,000, what would you want to do with it?**
12. **Is there anything you would like to add?**

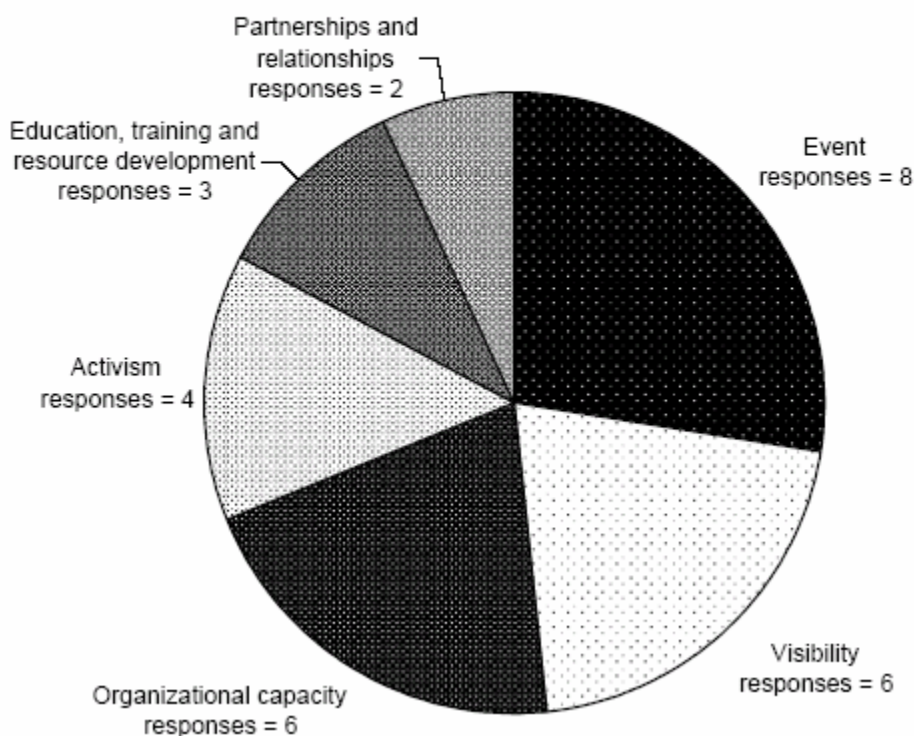
# APPENDIX C

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## RESPONSES TO QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

The following charts represent all of the organizations' responses to a series of qualitative questions about the substance of their work, the challenges they face and their visions for progress.

### WHAT WAS YOUR MOST SUCCESSFUL ACTIVITY OF THE LAST 12 MONTHS?



#### Ranked in order of frequency of response:

1. Event (8)
2. Visibility (6)
3. Organizational capacity (6)
4. Activism (4)
5. Education, training and resource development (3)
6. Partnerships and relationships (2)

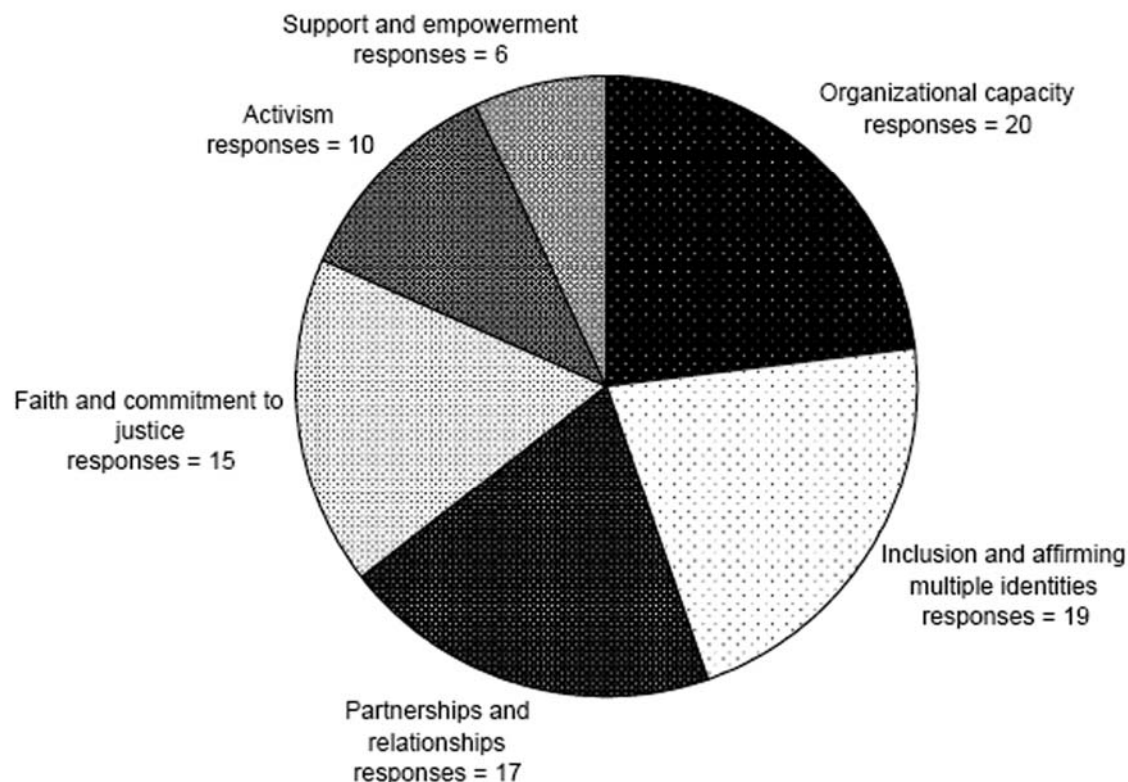
#### Categories defined:

- **Event:** Successful events included High Holy Days and special worship services; general assemblies; LGBT pride festivities; and conferences and retreat meetings.
- **Visibility:** Successfully raising the profile of the organization, progressive causes and LGBT issues.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Refining organizational structure; developing paid and volunteer leadership; fund raising; increasing communications capacity; expanding

and strengthening networks of chapters or congregations; and reaching out to new membership. Those organizations with long histories and/or institutional relationships to their denominations cited such issues as a significant strength of their work.

- **Activism:** Organizing for social and economic justice outside of the religious community (e.g., opposing anti-LGBT constitutional amendments, promoting nondiscrimination laws and supporting the protection of transgender people). Also refers to activist roles within churches and denominations, including protesting homophobic language from church officials, resisting bans on ordination and same-sex blessing, promoting pro-LGBT theologies and scriptural readings, and lobbying for pro-LGBT church legislation.
- **Education, Training and Resource Development:** Training volunteer and paid leadership; educating nonmembers and potential allies; teaching about intersecting identities; reforming seminary curricula; training openly LGBT seminarians, rabbis and clergy; developing educational resources (e.g., Web sites, sermons, training kits and films); and promoting a nuanced analysis of how to live as spiritual and socially responsible people.
- **Partnerships and Relationships:** Building formal as well as informal relationships across denominational, ecumenical, interfaith, sectarian, nonsectarian and international lines. These collaborations take place at the local, regional, national and even international levels. Many organizations talked about their unique role in bridging multiple and seemingly unlikely communities.

#### WHAT ARE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S THREE GREATEST STRENGTHS?





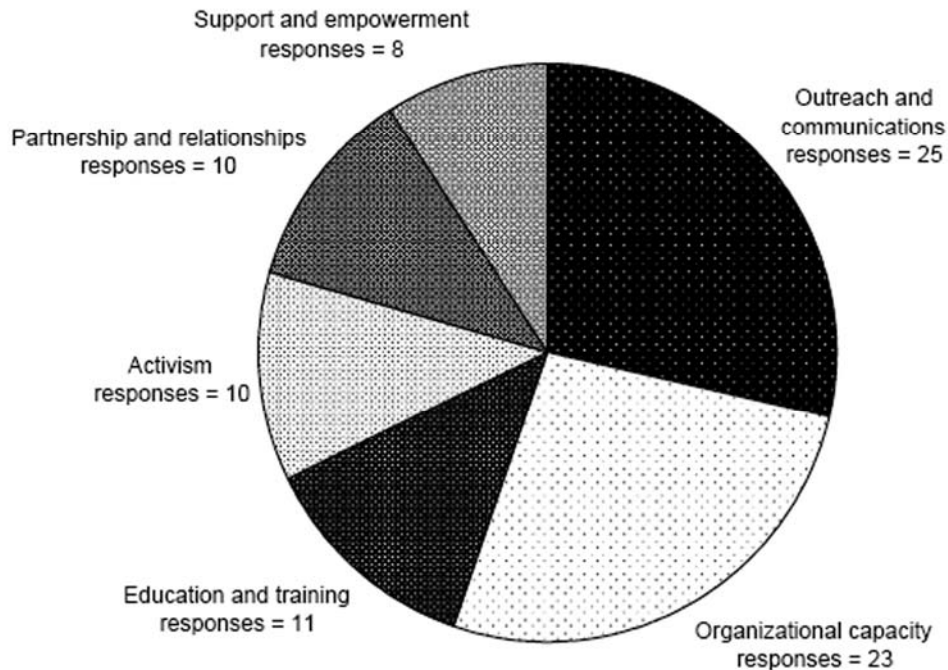
### Ranked in order of frequency of response:

1. Organizational capacity (20)
2. Inclusion and affirming multiple identities (19)
3. Partnerships and relationships (17)
4. Faith and commitment to justice (15)
5. Activism (10)
6. Support and empowerment (6)

### Categories defined:

- **Organizational Capacity:** As per previous definition: organizational structure; strength and commitment of paid and volunteer leadership; fund raising; communications capacity; networks of chapters or congregations; and the ability to reach out to new membership. Those organizations with long histories and/or institutional relationships to their denominations cited such issues as a significant strength of their work.
- **Inclusion and Affirming Multiple Identities:** “Inclusion” refers to a deep commitment to inclusion stemming from their members’ experiences of being excluded because of their faith, sexuality, race and/or progressive values. “Affirming multiple identities” refers to the reality these organizations emphasize that people can be both adherents of a faith and also be lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. For some organizations, this also incorporates additional identities, such as belonging to a particular racial or ethnic community or having a particular immigration status.
- **Partnerships and Relationships:** As per previous definition: building formal and informal relationships across denominational, ecumenical, interfaith, sectarian, nonsectarian and international lines. These collaborations take place at the local, regional, national and even international levels. Many organizations talked about their unique role in bridging multiple and seemingly unlikely communities.
- **Faith and Commitment to Justice:** Many organizations derive their greatest strength from their spiritual beliefs and the deep spiritual commitment they have to their vision of justice.
- **Activism:** As per previous definition: organizing for social and economic justice outside of the religious community (e.g., opposing anti-LGBT constitutional amendments, promoting nondiscrimination laws and supporting the protection of transgender people). Also refers to activist roles within churches and denominations, including protesting homophobic language from church officials, resisting bans on ordination and same-sex blessing, promoting pro-LGBT theologies and scriptural readings, and lobbying for pro-LGBT church legislation.
- **Support and Empowerment:** Attending to the emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of community members through pastoral care, religious communion and community building. Helping move membership from a place of being wounded victims to a place of personal and organizational empowerment.

## WHAT ARE THREE AREAS IN WHICH YOU'D LIKE TO STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY?



### Ranked in order of frequency of response:

1. Outreach and communications (25)
2. Organizational capacity (23)
3. Education and training (11)
4. Activism (10)
5. Partnership and relationships (10)
6. Support and empowerment (8)

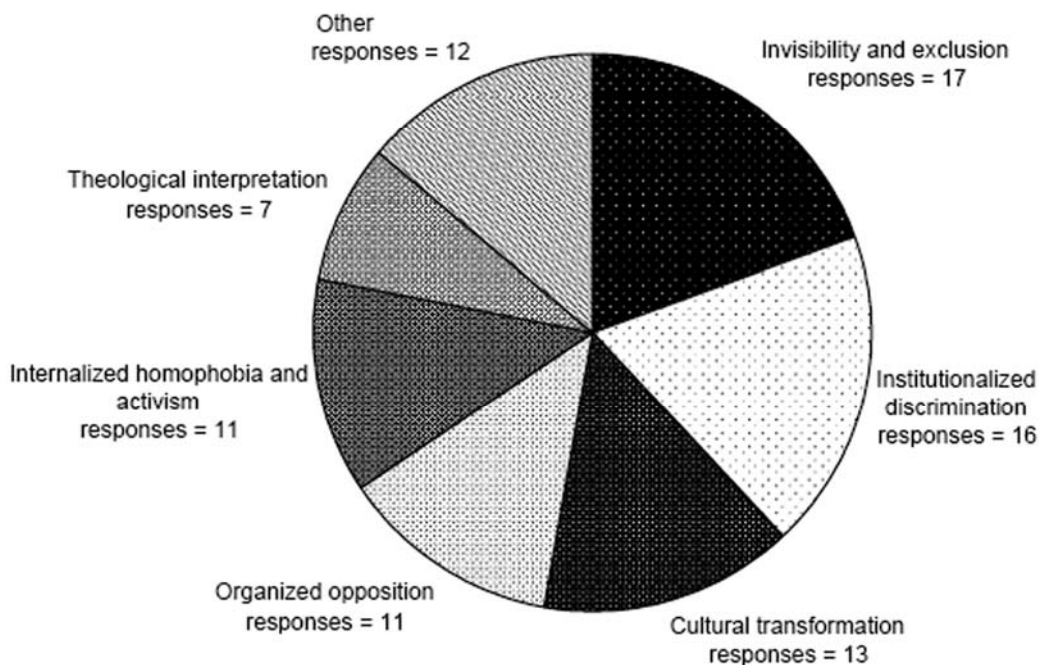
### Categories defined:

- **Outreach and Communications:** “Outreach” refers to identifying and reaching community members or allies and reaching out to homophobic opponents. “Communication” addresses the challenges of information distribution, such as messaging, developing press contacts, Web development and having sufficient communications staff.
- **Organizational Capacity:** As per previous definition: refining organizational structure; development of paid and volunteer leadership; fund raising; increasing communications capacity; expanding and strengthening networks of chapters or congregations. Here, it also refers to reaching out to new membership (especially youth; bisexual, transgender and queer individuals; and a wider diversity of ethnic and racial communities). Most organizations stressed a need for increased funding and more staff.
- **Education and Training:** As per previous definition: training volunteer and paid leadership; educating nonmembers and potential allies; teaching about intersecting identities; reforming seminary curricula; training openly LGBT seminarians, rabbi and

clergy; developing educational resources (e.g., Web sites, sermons, training kits and films); and promoting a nuanced analysis of how to live as spiritual and socially responsible people.

- **Activism:** As per previous definition: organizing for social and economic justice outside of the religious community (e.g., opposing anti-LGBT constitutional amendments, promoting nondiscrimination laws and supporting the protection of transgender people). Also refers to activist roles within churches and denominations, including protesting homophobic language from church officials, resisting bans on ordination and same-sex blessing, promoting pro-LGBT theologies and scriptural readings, and lobbying for pro-LGBT church legislation.
- **Partnerships and Relationships:** As per previous definition: building formal and informal relationships across denominational, ecumenical, interfaith, sectarian, nonsectarian and international lines. These collaborations take place at the local, regional, national and even international levels. Many organizations talked about their unique role in bridging multiple and seemingly unlikely communities.
- **Support and Empowerment:** As per previous definition: attending to the emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of community members through pastoral care, religious communion and community building. Helping move membership from a place of being wounded victims to a place of personal and organizational empowerment.

### WHAT ARE THE THREE BIGGEST BATTLES YOU ARE FIGHTING WITHIN YOUR DENOMINATION OR SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY?



#### Ranked in order of frequency of response:

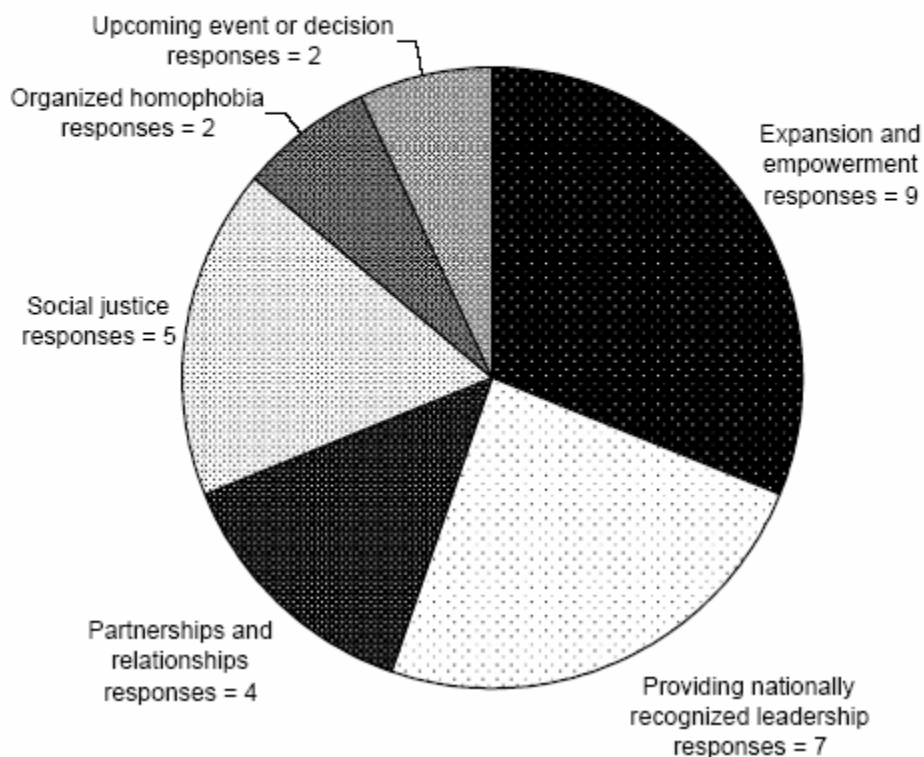
1. Invisibility and exclusion (17)
2. Institutionalized discrimination (16)
3. Cultural transformation (13)

4. Organized opposition (11)
5. Internalized homophobia and activism (11)
6. Theological interpretation (7)
7. Other = 4 (x 3) (12)

**Categories defined:**

- **Invisibility and Exclusion:** “Visibility” is the most basic struggle for LGBT religious people. This includes the struggle to exist as whole people — as religious and as LGBT — but is sometimes also about visibility as people of color in white communities, as LGBT people of color within communities of color and/or as spiritual progressives. “Exclusion” references the ways in which the experiences of LGBT people are excluded from spiritual life.
- **Institutionalized Discrimination:** The formal struggles for LGBT inclusion within denominations, such as those of openly LGBT students in seminaries, for LGBT ordination and for LGBT unions or marriages. In some cases, it also references the structural impediments against women’s full participation in the religion.
- **Cultural Transformation:** Beyond struggles for basic recognition, ordination or same-sex blessing, cultural transformation is about bringing about change that meaningfully integrates LGBT people into denominational life. This struggle is specific to denominations that have adopted at least some LGBT-inclusive policies and are now working towards deeper forms of LGBT acceptance.
- **Organized Opposition:** Organized opposition to LGBT issues can be an internal force, exercised through the hierarchy of religious leadership, or it can be external, enacted through the incursion of dollars from conservative organizations outside of the denomination. Organized opposition can run the gamut from supporting anti-LGBT ecclesiastical rules to threatening LGBT individuals’ physical and emotional safety.
- **Internalized Homophobia and Activism:** These concepts are critically related. Internalized homophobia is something experienced by both LGBT and heterosexual members of the religion. Activism refers to translation of theory into practice and the transition for concern for one’s self to concern for the broader good.
- **Theological Interpretation:** This refers to the debate over interpretations of scripture, tradition and theology as they relate to LGBT issues. It includes the conflict between the individual’s spiritual needs and the institutional hierarchy.
- **Other:** Organizations’ responses did not fall into any of these categories or they did not respond to this question.

## WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S GREATEST OPPORTUNITY?



### Ranked in order of frequency of response:

1. Expansion and empowerment (9)
2. Providing nationally recognized leadership (7)
3. Partnerships and relationships (4)
4. Social justice (5)
5. Organized homophobia (2)
6. Upcoming event or decision (2)

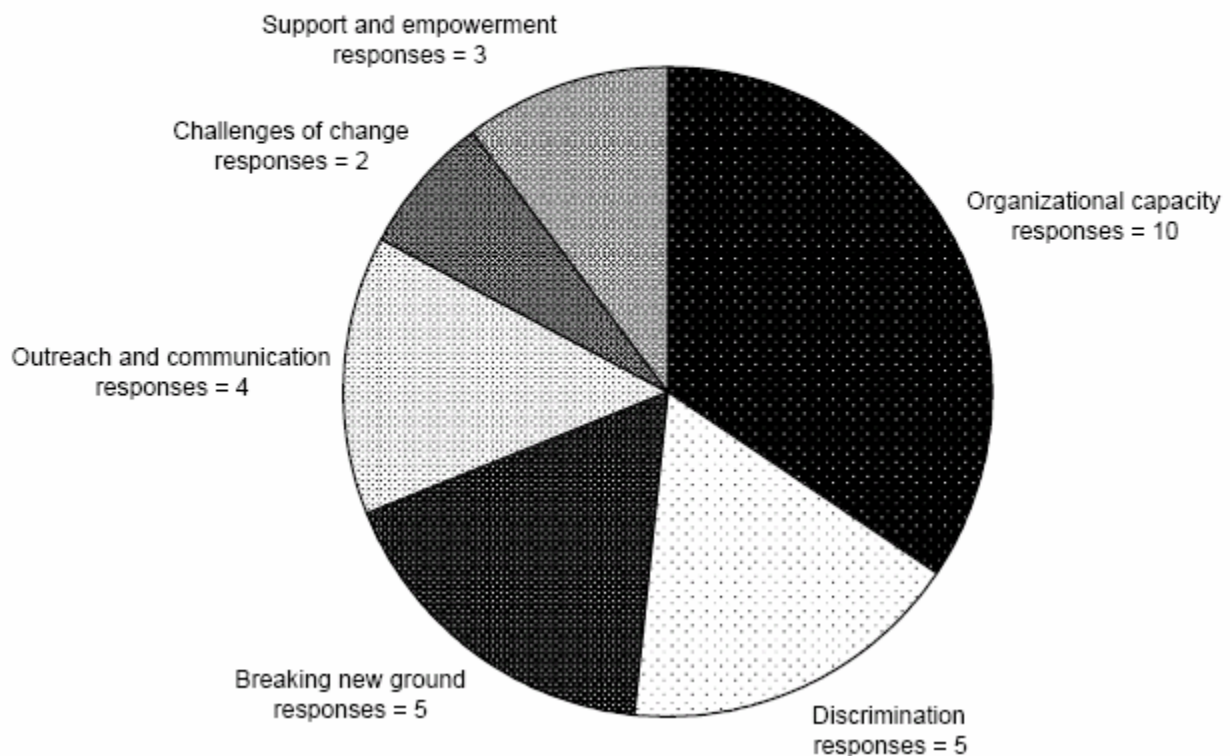
### Categories defined:

- **Expansion and Empowerment:** “Expansion” nationally, and in some cases internationally, to meet the needs of LGBT individuals within religious communities, especially those whose identity includes spiritual, queer and racial or ethnic components. “Empowerment” refers to addressing internalized homophobia, especially as LGBT religious people, and sometimes as religious people who are also members of distinct racial or ethnic communities.
- **Providing Nationally Recognized Leadership:** The opportunity of being progressive LGBT leaders within religious communities and of being religious leaders within progressive communities. One of the most commonly cited opportunities was the organizations’ abilities to use their unique perspectives as progressive religious LGBT leaders to challenge the religious right.
- **Partnerships and Relationships:** As per previous definition: building formal as well as informal relationships across denominational, ecumenical, interfaith, sectarian,

nonsectarian and international lines. These collaborations take place at the local, regional, national and even international levels. Many organizations talked about their unique role in bridging multiple and seemingly unlikely communities.

- **Social Justice:** Working toward political and social transformation through a faith-based analysis and practice. This includes both addressing homophobia and challenging other systemic forms of oppression.
- **Organized Homophobia:** Using the opposition's homophobia as a platform from which to speak or in providing a clear force to organize against.
- **Upcoming Event or Decision:** Several denominations will be making significant decisions in the coming year about the inclusion of LGBT people in their communities.

### WHAT IS THE GREATEST OBSTACLE STANDING IN THE WAY OF ACHIEVING THAT OPPORTUNITY (IN ADDITION TO MONEY)?



#### Ranked in order of frequency of response:

1. Organizational capacity (10)
2. Discrimination (5)
3. Breaking new ground (5)
4. Outreach and communication (4)
5. Challenges of change (2)
6. Support and empowerment (3)

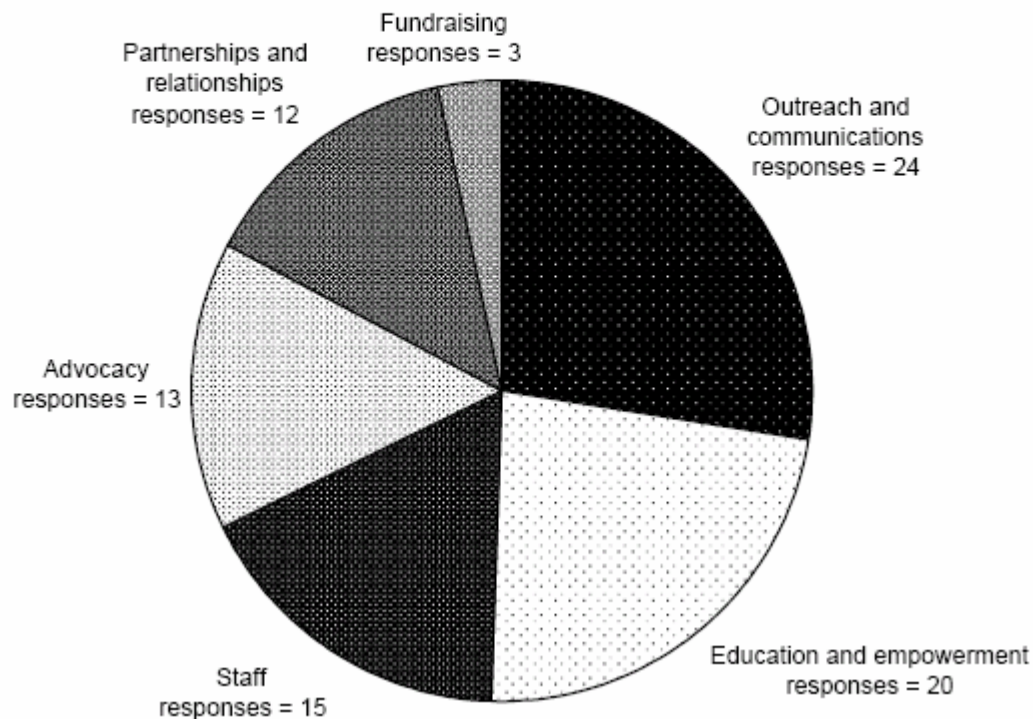
#### Categories defined:

- **Organizational Capacity:** As per previous definition: refining organizational structure, development of paid and volunteer leadership, fund raising, increasing

communications capacity, expanding and strengthening networks of chapters or congregations, and reaching out to new membership (especially youth; bi, trans and queer individuals; and a wider diversity of ethnic and racial communities). Most organizations stressed a need for increased funding and more staff. This category also includes a concern some organizations articulated in trying to be simultaneously religious and social justice organizations.

- **Discrimination:** Struggling against social and structural barriers such as sexism, racism and homophobia as independent issues and as they intersect. Overcoming prejudices against religion.
- **Breaking New Ground:** Charting new territory in areas such as community-building and conceptual frameworks, especially bridge-building among the intersections of queerness, spirituality, race and ethnicity, and economic justice.
- **Outreach and Communication:** As per previous definition: “outreach” refers to identifying and reaching community members or allies and reaching out to homophobic opponents. “Communication” addresses the challenges of information distribution, such as messaging, developing press contacts, Web development and having sufficient communications staff.
- **Challenges of Change:** Reaching out to new generations, both young and old; changes of organizational demographics; shifting conceptually from a focus on gaining church approval to being a just community of LGBT spiritual people.
- **Support and Empowerment:** As per previous definition: attending to the emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of community members through pastoral care, religious communion and community building. Helping move membership from a place of being wounded victims to a place of personal and organizational empowerment.

### WHAT ARE 3 THINGS YOUR ORGANIZATION WOULD DO WITH AN EXTRA \$100,000?



### Ranked in order of frequency of response:

1. Outreach and communications (24)
2. Education and empowerment (20)
3. Staff (15)
4. Advocacy (13)
5. Partnerships and relationships (12)
6. Fund raising (3)

### Categories defined:

- **Outreach and Communications:** As per previous definition: “outreach” refers to identifying and reaching community members or allies and reaching out to homophobic opponents. “Communication” addresses the challenges of information distribution, such as messaging, developing press contacts, Web development and having sufficient communications staff. Denominations such as MCC and Unity cited the need to expand institutional structures by adding churches. Other organizations cited the need for community-building, which includes the ability to organize gatherings and the ability to travel to meet with grassroots constituents.
- **Education and Empowerment:** As per previous definition: “education” refers to training volunteer and paid leadership, educating nonmembers and potential allies, teaching about intersecting identities, reforming seminary curricula, training openly LGBT seminarians and clergy, developing educational resources (e.g., Web sites, sermons, training kits and films), and promoting a nuanced analysis of how to live as spiritual and socially responsible people. “Empowerment” refers to volunteer and staff leadership development, forming more complete referral networks, and providing grants to grassroots work in chapters and congregations.
- **Staff:** This often refers to wanting to compensate individuals who already work full time as unpaid volunteers, the desire to have field organizers, and the need for increased staff to handle administrative functions (e.g., IT systems, fund raising, communications, maintaining membership and mailings).
- **Advocacy:** Pro-actively campaigning to raise the issues and perspectives that the organizations work for. This also includes broadening the scope of their vision to incorporate more multi-issue work for social and economic justice.
- **Partnerships and Relationships:** As per previous definition: build formal and informal relationships across denominational, ecumenical, interfaith, sectarian, nonsectarian and international lines.
- **Fund raising:** Including more effective annual campaigns, fund-raising events, and capital campaigns.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## SPECIAL THANKS

### Study Participants:

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<b>Luis Barrios</b>	La Iglesia San Romero de las Americas
<b>Pamela Byers</b>	Covenant Network
<b>Patrick Cheng</b>	Queer Asian Spirit
<b>Oneida Chee</b>	Grace
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<b>Monroe France</b>	Al-Fatiha
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**Others who helped with this project and have contributed to the faith outreach of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable:**

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<b>Phil Lawson</b>	United Methodist Church
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<b>Bishop Yvette Flunder</b>	City of Refuge Church
<b>Rev. Dr. James Forbes</b>	Riverside Church
<b>Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum</b>	Congregation Beth Simchat Torah
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**National Religious Leadership Roundtable**, a project of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, was founded in 1998. The roundtable is an interfaith collaboration of more than 40 faith leaders from across the spectrum of American belief who are working to change the public dialogue on religion and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The membership of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable acts as a think tank, an educational organization, as spokespeople and citizen advocates for change.

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<b>Swami Durga Das</b>	River Fund NY/ Majaya Kashi Ashram (Hindu)
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<b>Debbie Weill</b>	DignityUSA (Catholic)
<b>Mike Schuenemeyer</b>	UCC Office of Wider Church Ministries
<b>Rebecca Voelkel</b>	Institute for Welcoming Resources
<b>Mel White, Jacob Reitan</b>	Soulforce