

What is a More Light Church?

A More Light Church is a Presbyterian congregation whose Session (i.e., governing board) has adopted a policy of welcoming all Christians, regardless of sexual orientation, to full participation and membership, including the right to serve as ordained officers if so called by God and elected by the congregation.

How and when did this

More Light Church movement begin?

In 1978, the General Assembly of the then United Presbyterian Church voted that gays and lesbians should be welcomed into membership but should not be ordained as deacons, elders and pastors.

Sessions and congregations dissatisfied with the concept of excluding a whole class of God's people from church leadership, began adopting resolutions proclaiming their intention to be inclusive in all aspects of their ministry, and to continue to seek more of God's light on issues of sexuality. These churches believe that gay and lesbian persons are part of God's good creation, are meant to enjoy God's gifts of love and intimacy, and are called to serve God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength.

These congregations became known as More Light Churches. The first to make such a declaration was the West-Park Presbyterian Church in New York City in 1978. By early 1998, there were 87 More Light congregations in 26 states and Washington, DC.

Do the More Light Churches work together in any formal way?

In 1992, the More Light Churches formed the More Light Churches Network to strengthen their joint witness to the inclusive nature of the gospel, and to work more effectively to change denominational policies that are a scandal to the Gospel and that continue to oppress and exclude people on the basis of sexual orientation.

For More Information...

Visit the More Light Churches Network website located at: www.mlcn.org

The David Sindt Story...

David Bailey Sindt was born in Minneapolis, MN on December 8, 1940. Growing up in the Twin Cities area, David was twice a 4-H State Champion in Gardening, and in 1962, received a degree in horticulture from Iowa State University. As an adult, David was recognized as an international authority on irises; his garden at his home in Chicago contained the largest collection of pumila irises in the world. Several of the new varieties of irises he introduced received the highest awards from the American Iris Society.

David grew up in a Presbyterian family and was actively involved in the church his entire life. After college, he went on to earn a Master of Divinity degree from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. He received his first call from the Erie Chapel Presbyterian Church of Chicago and was subsequently ordained by the then Presbytery of St. Paul in 1965. He later served the Central Presbyterian Church in St. Paul. In 1969, David enrolled at the University of Michigan, earning a Master of Social Work degree in 1971. He began working in Chicago for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

It was during the early 1970s that David began to identify himself as an openly gay man and became involved in the nascent gay rights movement. He also began worshipping at the Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church in Chicago where he became interested in ministry with the lesbian/gay community. In 1972, the Session of the Lincoln Park Church issued a call to David to serve as a part-time assistant pastor. However, the Chicago Presbytery blocked this call in 1973.

In 1974, David founded the Presbyterian Gay Caucus which was later to become Presbyterians for Lesbian & Gay Concerns (PLGC). At PLGC's 10th Anniversary celebration in 1984, David was recognized for the risks he took in establishing PLGC and for striving to make the church inclusive of all of God's people.

In 1975, David attempted to transfer his ministerial membership in the Presbytery of the Twin Cities to the Presbytery of Chicago. This transfer was denied by the Presbytery of Chicago, an action that judicial efforts within the church courts did not remedy. In 1977, David requested release from his ordination as a minister and joined the Lincoln Park Church as a lay member.

In 1979, David was nominated to the Session of the Lincoln Park Church, and although he was not elected, his nomination led the Lincoln Park Church to adopt a position paper on ordination and sexual orientation in 1980. Based on this action and others, the Session declared Lincoln Park Church a More Light Church in 1981.

David remained active in PLGC, Lincoln Park Church and various iris societies. These communities were important sources of love and support for him when he was diagnosed with AIDS in 1985. David died at home on December 3, 1986 surrounded by his loving parents, Gus and Char Sindt, and many of his friends. David faithfully held the vision that God's light and justice would break into the church and the world. His life and unending pursuit of inclusiveness and equality within the Body of Christ have touched thousands of lives and will continue to influence many in the years ahead.

The Significance of the Pink Triangle and the Rainbow Flag

The inverted Pink Triangle widely used in the gay/lesbian rights movement, as well as on the front of this brochure, is derived from the pink triangle sewn on the uniforms of gay male prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. It has now become a symbol of remembrance and affirmation.

The six-striped Rainbow Flag, also a popular symbol among gays and lesbians, and displayed on the front signboard of the Lincoln Park Church, was created in 1978 by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker to show the pride and diversity of the lesbian/gay community.

LINCOLN PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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A History of the More Light Movement at Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church and in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



*We limit not the truth of God to our poor reach of mind,
by notions of our day and sect, crude, partial and confined;
no, let a new and better hope within our hearts be stirred;
for God has yet more light and truth to break forth from the Word.*

From the hymn text by George Rawson, c.1853;
based on the words of the Rev. John Robinson to the Pilgrims, 1620.
(This is the origin of the phrase "More Light.")

Then God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." (Gen. 1:3) ♦ God's word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps. 119:105) ♦ The people who walked in gloom have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep shadows, on them light has shined. (Isa. 9:2) ♦ And Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in shadows but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) ♦ Live as children of light, for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. (Eph. 5:8b-9)

**Events in the life of
Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church:**

1970 The church begins renting meeting space to gay/lesbian groups including the Chicago Gay Alliance, Chicago Lesbian Liberation, and Mattachine Midwest.	1972 The Session calls openly gay Rev. David Sindt as Assistant Pastor to establish a ministry with the gay and lesbian community.	1973 After 10 months of deliberation, the Chicago Presbytery blocks the Session's call to David Sindt. The Session asks David to work informally with the church in ministry with gays and lesbians.	1977 The Session sends letters to the Presbytery's General Assembly commissioners, urging that they vote in favor of ordination regardless of sexual orientation.	1978 The Session votes to identify Lincoln Park as a More Light Church; the 17th such church in the denomination.	1980 The Session and congregation adopt a position paper stating that it is a congregation's right and responsibility to elect officers on the basis of all their human qualities. Based on this position, the Session sends a like-minded overture to Presbytery and requests it be approved and sent to General Assembly.	1982-4 The congregation elects an openly gay elder for a second term on the Session. After a year of judicial actions, he is successfully installed to office.	1985 The church hosts the midwinter conference of Presbyterians for Lesbian & Gay Concerns. Representatives are also sent to the first More Light Churches Conference in Los Angeles.	1988 A group of volunteers begins serving dinner every Sunday evening at Chicago House, a residence for people living with AIDS.	1988 A Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt Panel is made for David Sindt.	1991 The Session approves covenantal ceremonies for same sex couples.	1992 The church hosts the 8th annual More Light Churches Conference at which the More Light Churches Network is formally organized.	1992 The first covenantal ceremony is performed.	1993 & 96 & 97 The Session submits various overtures to the Presbytery to overturn the 1978 definitive guidance.	1995 The church begins Building Accessibility Project, stating that this is also part of its More Light ministry.	1997 The Session adopts a "Covenant of Dissent" against Book of Order G-6.0106b. Over 70 members also sign Covenant.
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Year ????
Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church hosts a Presbytery meeting at which a resolution is passed declaring the Chicago Presbytery a More Light Presbytery.

**Events in the life of the larger
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):**

1970 The General Assembly of the then United Presbyterian Church (UPC) urges decriminalization of private same sex acts between consenting adults and calls for ending discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, public accommodation.	1974 The Rev. David Sindt forms the Presbyterian Gay Caucus. This organization eventually becomes Presbyterians for Lesbian & Gay Concerns.	1976 The Presbytery of New York City overturns the UPC General Assembly seeking definitive guidance on whether to ordain a qualified candidate who also happens to be gay. The Assembly appoints a special task force to study issue for 2 years. It is chaired by Virginia Davidson; Chris Glaser is only openly gay member.	1978 The UPC General Assembly rejects recommendations of special task force and offers definitive guidance that lesbian and gay persons may not be ordained. Despite the Assembly's intent to offer this only as guidance, the denomination's stated clerk rules that the definitive guidance is binding.	1979 Presbyterians for Lesbian & Gay Concerns is finally granted official recognition by the UPC General Assembly.	1981 Three other Chicago area Sessions vote to support the Lincoln Park Church overture. However, it is defeated by the Chicago Presbytery, 111 to 79.	1983 The United Presbyterian Church (UPC) merges with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The definitive guidance of the UPC remains in effect.	1985 A judicial complaint against a More Light Church in Buffalo, NY results in a General Assembly Judicial Commission ruling that the definitive guidance has the force of church law and that More Light declarations are illegal.	1987 The General Assembly commissions a task force to study human sexuality.	1991 The General Assembly rejects the Human Sexuality Report which recommended gay/lesbian ordination.	1991 The General Assembly OKs same sex unions if not called marriages.	1992 The More Light Churches Network is organized at the 8th annual More Light Churches Conference.	1992-3 The Downtown Presbyterian Church in Rochester, NY begins "That All May Freely Serve" and hires the Rev. Jane Spahr as lesbian evangelist after their call to her as pastor is denied.	1993 The General Assembly declares a 3-year study on sexuality.	1993 & 1996 & 1997 In a historic change of voting patterns, the Chicago Presbytery approves Lincoln Park Church's overtures for General Assembly.	1995 The Stoles Project begins and witnesses to ordained gays and lesbians serving in silence.	1996 & 1997 The General Assembly passes the Fidelity & Chastity Amendment which is approved by a majority of presbyteries and more rigorously excludes gay and lesbian persons from ordained service.	1997 & 1998 The General Assembly passes the Fidelity & Integrity Amendment but it fails to pass a majority of the presbyteries.	1998 "That All May Freely Serve" establishes regional partnerships.
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Year ????
The General Assembly votes that all people called to serve may be ordained, regardless of sexual orientation. The church welcomes and affirms all people, fully and joyfully.

**Events in the life
of our world society:**

1969 The Stonewall Rebellion, a riot beginning on June 28 following an unjustifiable police raid on the gay Stonewall Inn in New York City, begins modern lesbian/gay rights movement.	1972 The first openly gay man is ordained by the United Church of Christ.	1974 The first openly gay and lesbian people are elected to public office in Michigan and Massachusetts.	1974 The American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its official manual of mental disorders.	1978 The Civil Service Reform Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation for federal civilian workers.	1979 The first "March on Washington" brings tens of thousands of lesbians and gays to the nation's capital to demonstrate for equal rights.	1981 The first cases of a mysterious disease are reported; the disease will later be called AIDS.	1982 Wisconsin becomes the first state to pass a gay/lesbian rights law.	1983 First U.S. Congressman comes out as a gay man.	1980s Onslaught of books published by Biblical scholars offering more positive interpretations of Bible sexuality.	1987 The Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt is displayed in its entirety during the second gay/lesbian "March on Washington."	1988 The Chicago City Council passes a lesbian/gay rights ordinance.	1989 Denmark becomes the first nation to legalize same-sex unions.	1993 The U.S. government's policy on gays/lesbians in the military changes to the still discriminatory: "don't ask, don't tell."	1992 Seven U.S. states have enacted legislation to ban various types of discrimination against gays and lesbians.	1995 David Sindt is elected posthumously to Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame and officially inducted by Mayor Richard Daley.	1996 The U.S. Supreme Court overturns a Colorado state provision which would have curtailed the rights of lesbian and gay persons.	1997 Over 150 U.S. municipalities have laws prohibiting various types of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
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Year ????
Congress passes legislation ensuring equal rights for lesbian and gay citizens.