





## **Addendum: Third Church and the Issue of Homosexuality**

In 1978 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church voted that it would be inappropriate to ordain “avowed, practicing, unrepentant” homosexuals as deacons, elders, or ministers. Traditionally ordination has been the jurisdiction of individual congregations and Presbyteries, and, therefore, some churches did not consider the General Assembly ruling to be binding.

More than five years ago, partly in reaction to the General Assembly decision, the Third Church Session was asked to indicate whether or not membership in Third Church and full participation in its life is open to homosexual persons. After a study of various biblical and theological materials, the Session (on April 29, 1980) adopted the following statement:

“The Session of Third Presbyterian Church reaffirms that the sole criterion for membership in the Church is a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This particular community of faith welcomes as full participants in its life and work, all who seek and/or have found, reconciliation to God and neighbors through Jesus Christ.”

Subsequently, Session was approached by Third Church members with a request to form a support group for gay and lesbian persons. Approval for such a group was given, its purpose being to provide support for persons who are homosexual and who seek to be faithful members of the Christian community.

[Editor’s Note: the original had no item “1”]

**2. The Adult Education Commission shall plan for and implement educational programs on homosexuality.**

Such programs should begin in the winter or spring of 1986 and continue into the fall. Programs should help Third Church members understand the medical-psychological, biblical-theological, and historical dimensions of homosexuality. The phenomenon of homophobia in Church and society should be examined. Last, but by no means least, the actions of the General Assembly and their implications should be studied.

**3. The Support Group for gay and lesbian persons shall be continued and encouraged.**

**4. Pastors and others working with young people shall be encouraged to be alert to young people’s concerns about sexual orientation.**



**Third Presbyterian Church  
Session Homosexuality Workshop**

Sunday, October 22, 1989  
Colgate Rochester Divinity School  
October 22, 1989

- 3:00 Drink Cider  
Fill Out Questionnaires  
Look Over Session Statement  
Welcome and Introduction Betty Iwan
- 3:15 Biblical Interpretation of Selected Texts Stephen Ford
- Theological and Polity Issues John Cairns
- Affirm Session Statement to Task Force  
on Human Sexuality Peter Oddleifson
- 4:15 Personal Stories Caryl Qualich  
Mary Lou, Ted, Dee, Wayne
- 6:00 Supper
- 6:30 Small Groups Co-Facilitators from  
More Light Committee and Gay/Lesbian Support Group
- 7:15 Plenary Session
- Reporters' Highlights
- 7:35 Discussion of Wishes for Third as a More Light Church
- 8:10 Closing Worship Lee Beckhusen  
Carrie Klinge

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Editor's notes (added March, 1998)  
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Jim Tiefenthal transferred this document from paper to electronic format in March, 1998, at Rochester, NY. Betty Iwan proofread the text. Although loving care was taken to preserve the original text, MLCN cannot guarantee accuracy.