

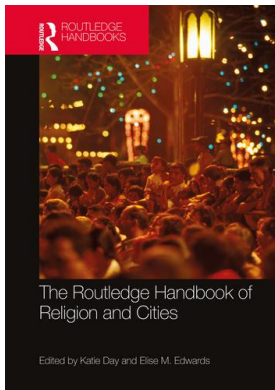
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PROTESTANT URBAN MINISTRY AND THE “HOMOSEXUAL GHETTO” IN THE 1960s

Heather R. White

“Treat Homosexuals as Human Beings.” This simple imperative was the headline of a September 13, 1963 article in one of San Francisco’s local newspapers. The words had been uttered by the Canon Robert Cromey, an Episcopal priest, in a Sunday morning sermon at Grace Cathedral. The sermon gave a bold plea for acceptance during an era in which homosexuality bore a triple opprobrium. Authoritative discourses of religion, law, and medicine tangled together, as historian John D’Emilio notes: “homosexual behavior was excoriated as a heinous sin, the law branded it a serious crime, and the medical profession diagnosed homosexuals and lesbians as diseased.”¹ Cromey’s sermon threaded through these condemning discourses with a message of acceptance. However, his plea for tolerance was still framed within medical theories of pathology. Homosexuality, Cromey explained, was an “emotional disturbance; blocked sexual development—and very hard to cure.” At the same time, this disease framework gave further reason to heed Jesus’ example of welcome for the sick and the outcast. “Let us ask God,” Cromey intoned in closing, “to open us to receive our sinful and troubled neighbors.”²

The homosexual neighbors of which Cromey spoke were most certainly within earshot of these words. San Francisco during these years was acquiring considerable attention as America’s “gay capital”—a moniker bestowed by the national magazine, *Life*, in a 1964 article on “homosexuality in America.” Grace Cathedral, located at the crowning pinnacle of San Francisco’s Nob Hill, was situated within walking distance of neighborhoods identified in *Life* as two of the largest and most notorious of America’s “homosexual ghettos.” The Tenderloin district, with Turk Street’s infamous nightlife, was half a mile south of the cathedral; and the famous “beatnik” haunt of North Beach, also famously a homosexual scene, lay one mile in the opposite direction.³ To many of these local queer denizens, San Francisco provided the rare and life-giving opportunity to find others like themselves. These havens for queer sociability, however, appeared in the pages of *Life* and in other mainstream press sources as a troubling social problem. “A secret world grows open and bolder,” the *Life* article warned; Americans soon would be “forced to look at it.”⁴

A similarly squeamish commentary on homosexuality could be found in Christian publications of this time period. Christian leaders, too, expressed alarm about what they saw as a new and growing culture of sexual vice found in America’s largest cities. These authors discussed this “problem of homosexuality” with an air of distaste, even if the intention was to be sympathetic.

One 1963 article, on the topic of pastoral counseling in urban churches, warned city ministers to expect troubling psychological problems: “certain parts of the inner cities” were “full of homosexuals, perverts, slaves to dope and drink, and other strange and lost individuals.”⁵

These descriptions of the sexual problems of the city were written to a readership that would presumably consume them as armchair voyeurs. However, not everyone could contemplate the so-called “homosexual ghetto” from such a distance; others needed only to look out the window or take a walk around the block to encounter the bars and shops that reportedly catered to a homosexual clientele. This chapter recovers the history of a cohort of clergy ministering within and adjacent to these neighborhood districts. The Rev. Robert Cromey was one of them, and his ministry and theology were transformed by what he learned about the lives of gay, lesbian, and transgender people through meeting them as neighbors.⁶ Cromey was one of a group of progressive Protestant clergy that went on to play an important role within the homophile movement of the 1960s. These organizers and activists laid the foundations for the more visible surge in gay activism following the 1969 Stonewall Riots. The history of LGBT activism has been widely perceived as a wholly secular development. An important complication to this narrative is that liberal Protestant clergy and churches with ministries within the so-called “homosexual ghetto” provided instrumental support at this critical moment of movement growth.

Religious and queer urban topographies

This history of religious support for the 1960s homophile movement has been mentioned—often in passing—by historians of queer movements and scholars of urban religion. However, in almost every case, the unexpected fact of an LGBT organization receiving support from a congregation has been regarded as a local anomaly. Dominant narratives about religion and LGBT activism have focused on clashing oppositions between conservative Christians and LGBT advocates. The sites for these conflicts are often the abstracted domains of law and policy, and the ideological differences between these dueling parties are often conveyed with geographical metaphors: as if queer activists and religious conservatives hail from wholly distant worlds.

Focusing on the material precincts of particular congregations relocates the abstracted sites of debate and challenges the perceived distance among participants. Within this smaller scale, various local studies of LGBT communities offer a counterpoint to the religious versus queer story, telling about a surprising local religious exception to what is otherwise taken for granted as the conservative, anti-LGBT religious norm. James Sears, in an article on the gay man who started up the Chicago Mattachine Society in 1965, notes in passing that a minister agreed to host the meetings in his Park Ridge church and also helped to produce the monthly newsletter. Such an arrangement, Sears surmises, was “a rarity in the pre-Stonewall era.”⁷ Historian Mark Wild, in a book on liberal Protestants and urban renewal, similarly describe the “unusual” LGBT support of Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco in the 1960s. Similar “rarities” are also mentioned in the queer community histories of Seattle, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Kansas City, New York City, Minneapolis, Atlanta, and Philadelphia.⁸ These surprising exceptions, viewed collectively, form a larger pattern. However, the local, instrumental nature of this religious support for LGBT rights has contributed to its historical obscurity.

What are we to make of this enigmatic pattern? This chapter investigates liberal Protestant churches as significant sites in cities’ sexual topographies and, conversely, it looks at the way that religious topographies encountered and encompassed queer urban life. Joining religious and queer attention to urban space helps to piece together the context and history of what might otherwise appear to be a local anomaly: liberal Protestant churches in many urban centers served as meeting places as well as instrumental resources for LGBT movements during their critical

moment of political emergence in the 1960s. Attention to the connections among these urban ministers and their support for emerging LGBT associations brings into focus a network of support for LGBT communities, facilitated by urban congregations and their ministers.

Glide Church and the Tenderloin

Glide Memorial United Methodist Church and the associated Glide Urban Center were perhaps the most important sources of support for early homophile activism. In 1963, a young Methodist minister named Ted McIlvenna was invited to direct a young adult program at the newly opened Glide Urban Center, a community organizing foundation that operated alongside Glide Memorial Methodist Church.⁹ Glide's location was the Tenderloin district, and McIlvenna was appointed to start an experimental ministry to young adults in this notorious vice district and gay ghetto.³⁵ The job put McIlvenna "right in the middle of the gay question in a hurry," as one of his colleagues later put it.¹⁰

McIlvenna, along with Canon Robert Cromey, whose sermon opened this chapter, were among a generation of young clergy in the 1960s that were lauded as a "new breed" in Christian ministry. The moniker reflected the sense that modern, twentieth-century cities had produced complex new problems for churches, which by necessity demanded a transformation in ministry. Certainly these changes compelled churches to recognize that the past could not be their guide: at the heart of the so-called "urban problem" was a demographic reckoning for downtown churches that were once home to white, middle-class congregations. The grown children of those former members had joined the post-World War II "white flight" to the suburbs. The new neighborhood residents of African Americans, Latinos, white hippies, artists, and homosexuals had little interest in the staid white Protestant liturgies preserved in those churches' Sunday services.¹¹

This mix of neighborhood conditions—this perceived "urban crisis"—also convinced this cohort of urban ministers that that status quo ministry was not an option. They approached the demographic challenge of emptying pews as a problem connected to broader social and political developments in American cities. Those churches, along with the neighborhoods around them, were being slowly drained of resources as post-war urban development catered to the rising economy of the city periphery at the expense of the city center. A generation of left-leaning clergy cast their lot with urban churches as a sign of God's preferential option for the poor and disenfranchised over the "comfortable pews" of suburban churches. Their mission, to quote Harvey Cox's encapsulation of these trends in *The Secular City* (1965), urged Christians to practice an "ascetic disaffiliation" or "holy worldliness" that involved leaving their "palaces" to step into "God's permanent revolution in history."¹²

In developing these revolutionary new ministries, urban ministers traded in Bible dictionaries for *Reveille for Radicals*, a 1946 manual for grassroots organizing written by Chicago activist Saul Alinsky.¹³ In a network of emerging urban training centers—foremost among them the Chicago Urban Training Center, founded in 1964—ministers gained skills in grassroots organizing and political advocacy. The rhetoric and strategy taught in these centers challenged the conventions of parish ministry and urged pastors to effectively turn their congregations inside out—to develop experimental programs that focused on the circumstances and needs of communities around the church. Those programs would not offer "handouts" or "charity" but should enable disenfranchised communities to identify and challenge systemic injustice. The concurrent struggles for peace and justice—African American civil rights, migrant workers' rights, the anti-war movement, housing inequality, integrated public schools, and so on—were not a backdrop to the work of urban ministry but at its very heart. A cohort of clergy activists

worked to develop ministries that responded to a Christian imperative to work for justice. For many of them, the method of ministry was activism.¹⁴

McIlvenna recounted the incident that made him realize that he needed to address homosexuality as a social justice issue. Hal Call, president of the San Francisco Mattachine Society, a secretive local association for gay men, requested that the minister accompany him to a local hotel. The two men they met there had been badly beaten in an anti-gay attack. McIlvenna recalled,

I called the local hospital and it wouldn't take them; they were homosexuals. I called the police but couldn't get them because *they* were the ones who did the kicking! When the hotel found out about it, they kicked them out.¹⁵

What McIlvenna came to understand from that meeting reconfigured for him what it meant to do “outreach” in the Tenderloin. This would not be a ministry that sought to attract young adults to existing religious services; this would be an activist ministry that worked to redress the ways that gay and transgender people were targeted and harassed without legal recourse, often at the hands of the police.

In developing this social justice strategy, McIlvenna partnered with the leaders of San Francisco's homophile organizations, which at the time numbered at six: the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis were the city's oldest homophile groups, respectively serving gay men and lesbians. The early 1960s saw the founding of a number of new groups that more directly addressed local politics. The League for Civil Education was formed in 1961 to promote an openly gay candidate, José Sarria, in the election for city supervisor. When that failed, the organization continued to publish a local gay newspaper. The Tavern Guild formed in 1962 as a mutual protection society that helped insulate bartenders, bar owners, and patrons from harassment by the police and the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board. In May 1964, the Society for Individual Rights formed as the most politically active of the groups up to that point. It met initially in Glide Church and quickly attracted a membership of around 300 people, which also made it the largest homophile organization to date.¹⁶

In the spring of 1964, McIlvenna invited representatives from all of the existing organizations to participate in a consultation that would gather ministers and homophile leaders for an extended dialogue. The aim of this event was to expand McIlvenna's collaborative relationship with these homophile organizations to include other San Francisco clergy and national Protestant denominational leaders. They planned a four-day Consultation on the Church and the Homosexual, held May 31 through June 2, which would initiate a dialogue among participants—15 clergy and 15 homophile representatives—about “the relationship between the church and the homosexual.”¹⁷ Clergy participants included about a half-dozen urban ministers from San Francisco, several national Methodist leaders, a staff person from the National Council of Churches, and an urban ministry specialist from the Chicago Urban Training Center.¹⁸ The record of this interpersonal experiment was later published in a short booklet circulated by Glide Urban Center that served as an exemplary how-to model for future clergy-homosexual consultations.¹⁹

The subtext for this little book—in the style of a queer *Pilgrim's Progress*—was the personal transformation of the presumably straight clergy as they encountered, first-hand, San Francisco's homosexual ghetto. Homophile representatives guided them on a stereotype-shattering tour of the city's queer nightlife.²⁰ At the same time, organizers were also careful to show the participating clergy that this bar scene was not the whole of homosexuals' social life. Clergy joined a homophile picnic the next day for lunch, and were subsequently shuttled out to a retreat center in rural Marin County, where they participated in a series of encounter sessions with homophile

participants. These discussions were designed to break down false barriers and build honest relations between the two groups: clergy and homosexuals.

According to all reports, these strategies—for challenging stereotypes and building new honest relationships—worked. The retreat began with awkward conversations around the coffee-pot—with participants “struggling to use words with only one meaning”—but it settled by the last day into an informal dynamic that one minister described as a “religious gay bar.”²¹ Daughters of Bilitis member Del Martin described the outcome of this gathering as an exciting “new rapport” between clergy and homosexuals.²² This rapport, according to Martin, also sparked a new agenda for clergy–homophile cooperation. A number of the clergy had pledged to organize similar consultations in other cities, to form a committee on homosexuality within the National Council of Churches, and to publish sympathetic articles on homosexuality in Christian publications.²³ In one fell swoop, the clergy allies of the homophile movement had multiplied to include a list of impressive names in ecumenical Protestant justice work.

The Council on Religion and the Homosexual

Following the retreat, the San Francisco clergy and homophile representatives created a new organization called the Council on Religion and the Homosexual. The organization’s stated goals were modestly aimed at educating church leaders about homosexuality through the vehicle of dialogue between clergy and homophile participants.²⁴ The actual impact of the CRH, however, went far beyond these reformist goals. Within the next two years, the CRH went on to take a prominent role in San Francisco queer communities’ struggle against police harassment and legal injustice. The most important of the CRH’s actions took place in early January 1965, when participating CRH clergy rallied to challenge a police raid on a New Year’s Day drag ball. In the immediate aftermath of the raid, eight clergy—including Robert Cromeley and Ted McIlvenna—called a press conference that confronted the San Francisco Police Department for their harassment and targeting of queer San Franciscans. The media attention to these clergy spokespersons helped to initiate a set of new laws and police reforms in San Francisco. The press attention—which circulated through both the alternative networks of homophile newsletters and through national newspapers—also highlighted the work of the San Francisco CRH as a model for would-be homophile and clergy activists in other cities.²⁵

San Francisco historian Paul Gabriel argues that the CRH ministers provided a “cloak of the cloth” to the cause of gay and trans rights—meaning that clergy, as authoritative spokespersons, brought respectability and credibility to these stigmatized groups’ unheeded efforts to challenge police repression and other forms of injustice.²⁶ The ministers strategically used moral privilege to help homophile leaders gain a platform to voice their concerns and to access concrete channels for political reform. Ministers of Glide Church similarly theorized this role using a different term: they spoke of their involvement as “enablers.”²⁷ This role included not only providing a kind of moral cover, but also supplying instrumental resources such as funding, meeting and office space, access to communication and publishing resources, and organizing support for direct action protests.

During the next few years, Glide Urban Center came to serve as a center for organizing and activism. Within San Francisco, Glide was an influential site for activism that might have otherwise been marginalized from the homophile organizations. Cecil Williams, an African American minister previously involved in the black freedom struggle in Kansas City, was appointed to Glide Church in 1964. Williams was involved in organizing Citizen Alert, a call-in center that responded to complaints of police abuse modeled on a similar program in Kansas City. Largely because of his leadership, the San Francisco initiative successfully recruited support from pas-

tors of black churches in the city who were also concerned with problems of police brutality.²⁸ Historian Susan Stryker’s work on transgender history recounts the significant role of Glide clergy in supporting transgender organizing and activism in San Francisco. Glide was a meeting place for Vanguard, a support group for street youth that included gay hustlers and transgender youth. It also hosted the meetings of Conversion Our Goal, a transsexual support group that started in 1967.²⁹ Clergy and congregational support thus encompassed various roles—from providing a symbolic “cloak of the cloth” to supplying instrumental support that enabled diverse activist and organizing efforts.

The CRH experiment in San Francisco also supplied a model for similar experiments in other cities, where gay men and lesbians partnered with progressive urban ministers to develop new organizations in their own city. Glide Urban Center provided formal training aimed at supporting these kinds of local experiments, and they helped to push other urban religious training programs and ecumenical initiatives to similarly address the issue of homosexual and transgender disenfranchisement. Thus, the channels for an emerging movement ran through Protestant urban ministries and ecumenical social justice networks as well as through homophile organizations. These connections provided behind-the-scenes material support as local homophile organizations began developing formal networks to coordinate as a national movement in the mid-to-late 1960s.

From the Tenderloin to a national movement

Gay and lesbian organizations in other parts of the county were amazed and captivated by these developments in San Francisco. Many of them sought to develop similar partner organizations with clergy. The San Francisco CRH thus served as a model for homophile organizations in other cities, which sought to build similar relationships of support with local progressive clergy. The CRH in San Francisco also worked to encourage similar clergy–homophile partnerships in other cities. In September 1965, San Francisco participants with the CRH met with attendees of the East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO), the umbrella organization for local gay and lesbian societies, to offer guidance about forming partnerships with clergy. Shortly after this meeting, one of the clergy participants reported that homophile groups in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York already had the tentative beginnings of formal clergy–homophile partnerships. The Mattachine Society of Washington stepped up to the plate first and had a formally established Washington–area Council on Religion and the Homosexual by May 1965.³⁰ In Philadelphia, homophile groups met with the Philadelphia Council of Churches.³¹ The Mattachine Society of New York had an active Religious Affairs Committee that worked closely with sympathetic ministers.³²

Los Angeles’s homophile organizers were also quickly prodded into action by their counterparts in San Francisco. Board members from the San Francisco CRH flew down for a meeting with Los Angeles–area clergy and homophile representatives on June 1, 1965. The meeting led to the founding of the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile (SCCRC). Jim Kepner, a founding editor of *ONE*, helped to organize this new group, and the leadership also included two local Methodist ministers, Alex Smith and Ken Wahrenbrock, and United Church of Christ (UCC) minister Clarence Colwell, who had recently moved to LA from San Francisco for a church appointment. A small but dedicated number of clergy and homophile leaders continued to meet regularly for study and discussion. When LA police raided the Black Cat, an area gay bar, on New Year’s Eve 1967, the SCCRH responded by holding informational meetings that met at clergy members’ churches. However, it was not the SCCRH but an even newer organization called Personal Rights in Defense and Education (PRIDE) that took

the helm in pushing for a more activist politics among LA gay communities—an effort joined, a year later, by yet another organization formed in the aftermath of a bar raid, the Metropolitan Community Church. The SCCRH continued to meet into the mid-1970s.³³

Letters to the San Francisco CRH told of additional consultations and councils organized in Denver, Chicago, Dallas, Kansas City, Boston, Honolulu, and Ottawa, Ontario.³⁴ The letters about the new councils on religion arrived as the homophile movement expanded rapidly; between 1965 and 1968, the number of local organizations devoted to gay and lesbian rights more than doubled. Some of these were new activist organizations, like PRIDE, in cities that had long been home to homophile associations. Many, however, were entirely new groups located outside the larger gay urban centers on the East Coast and in California. In smaller cities in the South, the Midwest, and the Pacific Northwest, new gay and lesbian organizations were on the rise.³⁵ For many of these groups, the critical connection to start them came through urban ministry programs. At the center of the fledging organizing efforts were urban ministers working on outreach in “homosexual ghettos.” The search for resources for this kind of ministry inevitably drew those ministers to the Glide Urban Center.

In Kansas City, Methodist ministers Paul Jones and Vann Anderson were both involved with the Young Adult Project. They visited Glide Urban Center, and many of their programs replicated practices used by the ministers in San Francisco. They also started a night ministry, which meant putting on the clerical collar and going into bars and nightclubs to simply be available to patrons who wanted to talk. On one night, Jones recalled, a patron brought him to the Arabian Nights, a hidden bar that catered to gays and lesbians. “It was totally strange to me,” he recalled, but he stayed and did what he usually did—simply listen to what people had to tell him about their experiences and feelings about religion. Out of these encounters, Jones and Anderson agreed to help a group of gays and lesbians organize the Phoenix Society for Individual Rights in 1966. The group met initially at Westport Methodist Church and then moved to a rented house. The Phoenix Society, with the support of Jones and Anderson, developed programming to educate area clergy, faculty, and students at the Methodist-affiliated Saint Paul Theological Seminary.³⁶

There are similar accounts of gay and lesbian groups formed with the support of urban ministers in nearly a dozen other small cities. In Dallas, Methodist minister Doug McLean, who was also connected to the Young Adult Project, became interested in helping support homophile organizing after attending a program at Glide Urban Center. He and a gay man named Phil Johnson gathered contacts—four additional gay men and three ministers—to form a group they called the Circle of Friends, which met at a house owned by one of the minister’s churches.³⁷ In Seattle, a Japanese American United Church of Christ (UCC) minister named Mineo Katagiri, who was active in an urban street ministry, had similar kinds of encounters with Seattle’s queer communities in his ministry. Katagiri’s office in St. Mark’s Cathedral was the meeting place for Seattle’s first homophile organization, which took the name the Dorian Society.³⁸ In Portland, Oregon, Harper Richardson arrived in 1966 to Centenary-Wilbur United Methodist Church with programming ideas for young adult ministry gleaned from attending a training session at Glide. Richardson started a coffeehouse and welcomed community action groups, including those of gays and lesbians. Both the church and an ecumenically supported house near Portland State University called Koinonia House served as hubs for gay and lesbian organizing in the late 1960s.³⁹ In Hartford, Connecticut, Episcopal minister Clinton Jones had already begun holding dialogue sessions about homosexuality with the city’s council of churches. Jones first established a counseling ministry for homosexuals, and he then began to support the collective organizing efforts by his clients. His church provided meeting space in 1968 for the Kalos Society, Hartford’s first homophile organization.⁴⁰ Other sources reported on new gay and les-

bian groups founded through the support of liberal ministers in Lincoln–Omaha, Nebraska; St. Louis, Missouri; and New York City—where both the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activist Alliance met in church spaces.⁴¹

These clergy saw these relations of material support as central to the mission of their churches. Cecil Williams, as a newly appointed senior pastor of Glide Memorial Methodist Church, delivered a sermon in 1968 that spoke of the church’s unique “word” on homosexuality and encouraged congregants to share that gospel. “We will be silent no longer. We know that homosexuals are not sick, criminal, or sinful,” Williams argued. “We must give the word to the professional community—the church must take the lead in showing a way to understanding the homophile world.”⁴² Paul Jones’s comments about his ministry in Kansas City similarly spoke of the church’s mission to homosexuals. Recognizing and supporting relationships were only the beginning; he envisioned increasing civil rights, a “homosexual social center,” communication and outreach, counseling, and support for homosexual teenagers. “At the foundation of all this should be the church,” he argued, which can “provide the moral legitimacy and confirmation without which self-acceptance is so tentative.”⁴³ The clergy envisioned ministries that provided material and ideological support for the homophile struggle, where homosexuals could live into the truth that gay was good.

This history of urban ministers and homosexual ghettos sparked a set of responses to homosexual and transgender people that was, at first, emphatically local and congregational. However, these local movements of acceptance soon sparked broader denominational debate and controversy. In almost every denomination, the debates that marked the erstwhile beginning of discussion over LGBT inclusion were less a beginning than a moment at which broader memberships reacted against local movements of pro-LGBT inclusion.

Opening denominational debate

These clergy–homophile partnerships reshaped ministers’ theological and biblical understandings of sexuality. The formal, published accounts of that rethinking began to appear in print in the late 1960s, and they immediately sparked controversy within the respective denominations.⁴⁴ Robert Cromey, writing for the Episcopal journal *Living Church* in 1967, maintained that Christians should “lead the way in insisting that homosexuals be given their rights as citizens and be treated as human beings.”⁴⁵ Later that same year, the *Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis* also published articles supportive of homosexual rights, and *Religion and Health*, a pastoral counseling journal, printed a speech about the homophile movement that had originally been delivered to ONE, Inc. in Los Angeles. In December of 1967, *Social Action* and *Social Progress*, both denomination-based social justice journals, published companion issues addressing homosexuality. Collectively, these publications marked an important shift in progressive Protestant discussions of religion and law, and the voices at the fore were clergy allies of the homophile movement. Taken together, these publications represented a profound shift in what liberal Protestants were willing to write and publish about homosexuality. They made an argument for Christians’ moral obligation both to include homosexuals in their fellowships and to defend their rights as citizens.

Even more than their ideas, the actions of these clergy proved to be especially controversial. Quite a few of these clergy allies acted on their belief that Christian marriage could include gay and lesbian couples. Kansas City minister Paul Jones, who worked with the homophile Phoenix Society, published a defense of what he adamantly called “homosexual marriage,” an issue that first exploded into controversy as an editorial in Kansas City’s local ecumenical Christian newspaper, and was published in revised form in 1970 in *Pastoral Psychology*. Jones put the argument

in italics: “profound relation between two members of the same sex *is not only morally permissible but is to be sought, encouraged, supported and enabled with all the powers at our command.*”⁴⁶ Jones presented same-sex marriages as a vital conduit of human and divine grace, even a sacrament. A number of other Protestant clergy allies of the homophile movement offered similar arguments for the ethical good of same-sex relationships.⁴⁷

These clergy also performed rituals of blessing over same-sex couples. The terms to describe these ceremonies varied. Paul Jones, of course, insistently called them “marriages,” and he and Vann Anderson officiated over the marriages of same-sex couples in Kansas City. In San Francisco, the ministers at Glide called them “ceremonies of friendship.” Lloyd Wake, a Japanese American pastor appointed an associate minister at Glide Church in 1967, recalled that he and other pastors at Glide officiated at “covenant of friendship” ceremonies between same-sex couples in the late 1960s. One of the ceremonies between two men at which Wake officiated opened up a national scandal in the Methodist Church when journalists reported on it in 1971.⁴⁸

Conclusion

Over the course of the next decade, between 1973 and early 1975, gay activists within mainline Protestant churches began to formally push for denominational-wide reform. These organizers founded a series of reform organization across the mainline Protestant denominations: the United Church of Christ Gay Caucus (1973); Gay Presbyterian Caucus (1974); Lutherans Concerned for Gay People (1974); Integrity Gay Episcopal Caucus (1974); Gay United Methodists (1975); American Baptist Gay Caucus (1974).⁴⁹ These “gay caucuses,” as they were called, were formed in almost every case as a support group for a church member, minister, or ordination candidate who faced public backlash after coming out as gay or lesbian. And in every case, gay caucuses garnered support from a small group of denominational sympathizers while also facing a wave of institutional resistance from the conservative majorities in their denominations. Mainline denominations create policy through mechanisms of democratic representation, and this process of majority vote virtually guaranteed formal church policies that expressed hostility toward LGBT members of the denomination. In the decades that followed, the debates over these policies remained a perennial feature of mainline Protestant institutions.

Beneath the fractious surface of these debates, however, the movements for LGBT inclusion within mainline denominations continued to be anchored in local congregations. These “welcoming congregations” could be found within LGBT city guides, where religious organizations were listed alongside gay-owned businesses and other supportive services. The scholars investigating homosexuality debates within church have consistently suggested that locations of proximity to LGBT-concentrated neighborhoods, perhaps unsurprisingly, have been a consistent influence on churches’ stances within the denominational debates. These congregations, as sociologist Nancy Ammerman notes, made the choice to “open their doors” to the recognizable presence of LGBT persons in their neighborhoods.⁵⁰

The roots of this congregation-based movement of support for LGBT people extend back earlier than is often realized. This re-situated history upturns the conventional periodization of mainline Protestant denominations’ debates over homosexuality, which are often charted from origin points in the mid-1970s. This mid-1970s origin point positions the gay caucuses and subsequent debates as a second-hand response to secular LGBT movement developments, an after-effect, it would seem, of the 1969 Stonewall Riots as a catalyst for LGBT activism. This timeline, however, is too simplistic. Professional histories of LGBT activism emphatically show that Stonewall was not a beginning, but rather an important shift within identity-based political activism that germinated two decades prior, in the late 1940s and 1950s, and began to reach

public visibility in the 1960s. The involvement of Protestant churches and clergy in this earlier history of movement activism formatively shaped both the activism that erupted after Stonewall and the movements of reform within Protestant denominations. To effectively see this early influence as a form of progressive religious involvement in LGBT organizing requires a turning away from the pyrotechnics of national debates to focus on the less spectacular, but profoundly important, dynamic of material relationships and local geographies.

Notes

This chapter is revised and updated from Heather R. White, “Churchmen and Homophiles.” In Heather R. White, ed., *Reforming Sodom: Protestants and the Rise of Gay Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), pp. 71–107.

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- 2 Joe Allison, “Treat Homosexuals as Human Beings.” *San Francisco News Call Bulletin*, September 13, 1963.
- 3 Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), pp. 66–67; Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 113–14.
- 4 “Homosexuality in America,” *Life*, June 26, 1964, p. 66; Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 202.
- 5 James G. Manz, “Pastoral Counseling in the Inner City.” *Springfielder* 27, No. 1 (March 1, 1963): p. 30; see also Alfred A. Gross, “The Homosexual in Society: The Minister Has a Primary Obligation to Relieve Guilt Feelings and Restore the Homosexual’s Self-Respect.” *Pastoral Psychology* 1, No. 3 (1950): pp. 44–45.
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- 9 Lewis Durham, *Glide Foundation from 1962 through 1967* (San Francisco: Glide Foundation, 1968)
- 10 Lewis Durham, interview by Paul Gabriel, July 18, 1998. Transcript, Shedding a Straight Jacket Collection, GLBT Historical Society, pp. 6–8.
- 11 Crome, *Essays Irreverent*, pp. 25–28.
- 12 Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 278–9.
- 13 Saul David Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946)
- 14 See White, *Reforming Sodom*, pp. 83–84; For histories of Christian urban ministries, see Clifford J. Green, *Churches, Cities, and Human Community: Urban Ministry in the United States, 1945–1985* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1996); Richard Henry Luecke, “Protestant Clergy: New Forms of Ministry, New Forms of Training.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 387, No. 1 (January 1, 1970): pp. 86–95; Mark Wild, *Renewal: Liberal Protestants and the American City After World War II* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019).
- 15 James Thomas Sears, *Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation* (New York: Harrington Park Press, Psychology Press, 2006), pp. 288–9.
- 16 Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, pp. 221–31
- 17 Kuhn, *The Church and the Homosexual*, p. 32.

- 18 Clergy participating in the Consultation were: William Black, an Lutheran urban specialist in San Francisco; Orville Luster, the director of the Youth For Service, a project of the American Friends Service Committee was the only African American at the consultation; Jan Marinessen, Penal Affairs Secretary with the American Friends Service Committee in San Francisco; Walter Press, a United Church of Christ minister from San Francisco; Robert Cromey, special assistant to the Episcopal Bishop of California; Keith Wright, UCC minister working with the National Council of Churches; C. Kilmer Myers, Episcopal clergy from the Chicago Urban Training Center; Dennis Nyberg, Methodist minister from Minneapolis; Roger Burgess and Dale White, staff at the Methodist Board of Christian Social Concerns in Washington DC; Charles Mowry and B.J. Stiles, staff at the Methodist Board of Education in Nashville, TN; Ted McIlvenna, Donald Kuhn, Lewis Durham, and John Moore were ministers at Glide Urban Center. Sources: Kuhn, *The Church and the Homosexual*; Peter Crysdale, "Dealing with What's Wrong in Our Society: A Visit with Jan Marinessen" *FCL Newsletter* January, 2000. <www.fccla.org/jannews/jan2000.html> (December 26, 2019); Demian Bulwa, "Orville B. Luster—Social Worker, Friend to S.F.'s Youth." *SFGate*, July 7, 2005. <www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Orville-B-Luster-social-worker-friend-to-2657195.php#src=fb> (December 26, 2019); C. Dale White, phone interview by the author, April 30, 2006. Referring to Jan Marinessen and Orville Luster as "clergy" is not entirely accurate (the Religious Society of Friends does not have a professional clergy), but this was the designation used by the Consultation.
- 19 Kuhn, *The Church and the Homosexual*, p. 32.
- 20 Durham, interview; Kuhn, *The Church and the Homosexual*, p. 2.
- 21 Kuhn, *The Church and the Homosexual*, pp. 3, 31.
- 22 Del Martin, "The Church and the Homosexual: A New Rapport," *The Ladder* 8, No. 12 (September 1964): pp. 9–13
- 23 Martin, "The Church and the Homosexual: A New Rapport," p. 9
- 24 Kuhn, *The Church and the Homosexual*, 32; Richard Hallgren, "S.F. Clergyman's View of the Homosexuals," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 1964, p. 1; p. 22; "Clergy Shatter Another Taboo," *Christian Century* 81, No. 52 (December 23, 1964): p. 1581.
- 25 White, *Reforming Sodom*, p. 89.
- 26 Gabriel uses this phrase in his oral history interviews with CRH ministers. See "Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual," LGBT Religion Archive Network <www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Exhibit.aspx?P=I> (May 4, 2014).
- 27 Durham, *Glide Foundation from 1962 through 1967*.
- 28 Roxanna Beryl Thayer Sweet, "Political and Social Action in Homophile Organizations" (Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1968) pp. 120; pp. 158–9; pp. 171–2; pp. 212–4;
- 29 See Stryker, *Transgender History*, pp. 69–72.
- 30 "Cross-Currents," *Ladder* 9, No. 12 (September 1965), pp. 13–14
- 31 Report by Neale Secor to San Francisco Council of Religion and the Homosexual. "Washington D.C. CRH" (October 31, 1965) Lyon/Martin file, pp. 17–16, GLBT Historical Society, p.1; See also Kimball H. Jones, *Toward a Christian Understanding of the Homosexual* (New York Association Press, 1966), pp. 126–8.
- 32 "Scanning the Conference," *Ladder* 10, No. 4 (January 1966): pp. 8–10.
- 33 Records for the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile, *ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives*; See also Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, pp. 154–65.
- 34 "General Report on the First Year Activities of the CRH," n.d., Lucas Papers, GLBT Historical Society, file 9:10, LGBTHS, p. 2.
- 35 Foster Gunnison, "The Homophile Movement in American." In Ralph W. Weltge, ed., *The Same Sex: An Appraisal of Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969), p. 119. Gunnison counts 17 organizations in 1965 and almost 40 by the end of 1968.
- 36 Interview with Paul Jones by the author, June 20, 2013; Jones, W. Paul. "Homosexuality and Marriage: Exploring on the Theological Edge." *Pastoral Psychology* 21, No. 10 (1970): pp. 29–37; On the history of the Phoenix Society, see D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, p. 200; Jackson, *Changing Times*; Records for the Phoenix Society are also located at "Phoenix Society for Individual Freedom," <www.mickeyray.com/phoenix-society.asp> (December 26, 2019). Louis Crompton. "North American Conference of Homophile Organizations Report of the Religious Committee." (December 1969) One Records, Box: Religion, file: Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile *ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives*.

- 37 J. Todd Moye, "Cathedral of Hope: A History of Progressive Christianity, Civil Rights, and Gay Social Activism in Dallas, Texas, 1965–1992." (Master's Thesis, University of North Texas, 2009), pp. 21–14.
- 38 Atkins, *Gay Seattle*, 97–98, 119.
- 39 David Grant Kohl, *A Curious and Peculiar People: A History of the Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, Oregon and the Sexual Minority Communities of Northwest Oregon* (Portland: Spirit Press, 2006), pp. 41–45.
- 40 Clinton R. Jones, "The Pastoral Counselor and the Male Homosexual." (Master's Thesis, New York Theological Seminary, 1969), pp. 166–8.
- 41 Louis Crompton. "North American Conference of Homophile Organizations Report of the Religious Committee," (December 1969). One Records, Box: Religion, file: Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives; "Church of the Holy Apostles" *NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project* <www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/church-of-the-holy-apostles> (December 26, 2019).
- 42 Cecil Williams, "A New Word and World for the Homosexual" (October 27, 1968), William Billings Papers, San Francisco Public Library; "Gay Scrapbook."
- 43 Jones, "Homosexuality and Marriage," p. 37.
- 44 Robert Cromey, "Ministry to the Homosexual," *The Living Church* January 8, 1967, pp. 18–19; Paul W. Jones, "Homosexuality and Marriage: Exploring on the Theological Edge." *Pastoral Psychology* 21:10 (1970): pp. 35–37; Robert L. Treese, *Homosexuality: A Contemporary View of the Biblical Perspective* (San Francisco: Glide Urban Center, 1966); "Robert Treese—Obituary—Bostonia Fall 2008." <www.bu.edu/bostonia/fall08/obituaries> 15 July 2013.
- 45 Robert Cromey, "Ministry to the Homosexual," *The Living Church* January 8, 1967, pp. 18–19.
- 46 Jones, "Homosexuality and Marriage," pp. 35–37
- 47 Clinton R. Jones, "The Pastoral Counselor and the Male Homosexual." Master's Thesis, New York Theological Seminary, 1969; Treese, *Homosexuality: A Contemporary View of the Biblical Perspective*; Norman W. Pittenger, *Time for Consent*. Second Revised and Enlarged Edn (London: S.C.M. Press, 1970).
- 48 Author interview with Lloyd Wake, August 25, 2005; Ron Moskowitz, "Two Men Take Vows: A Covenant of Friendship," *San Francisco Chronicle* March 22, 1971. Wake remembers that there were same-sex ceremonies in the late 1960s.
- 49 See "Contact Persons in Seminaries" (1974); Birchard Papers 3:2, FLHL. Outside the mainline, gay caucuses formed in the Unitarian-Universalist Church in 1970 and in the Society of Friends in 1971. Dignity (Roman Catholic) began in 1969. Sally Miller Gearhart and William Reagan Johnson, "The Gay Movement in the Church" in Sally Miller Gearhart and William Reagan Johnson, eds, *Loving Women/Loving Men; Gay Liberation and the Church* (San Francisco: Glide Publications, 1974).
- 50 Nancy Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*. Rutgers University Press, 1997, p. 196