

“Openly Gay and Lesbian Clergy Called by Predominantly Straight UCC Congregations”

From 113 sent, 65 surveys were received (plus six too late to include) for this study. Three were removed for being outside the parameters; three pastors sent two surveys representing two different congregations. Therefore the following represents 59 pastors and 62 congregations. Some questions were given multiple responses and therefore may not add up to a total number of responses of 59 or 62. For instance, on the first question, one responder indicated she had been raised in both the United Church of Christ and another denomination, making the total number of responses seem higher than the 59 pastors in the survey. In several other questions, no answer was given, also affecting the totals for those questions.

1. Were you raised in the UCC? (See Chart)

Yes - 17
No – 43

2. If not, what denomination(s)?

United Methodist/Methodist - 14
Catholic - 3
Baptist (ABC, SBC) - 8
Presbyterian - 9
Lutheran - 4
Disciples of Christ - 1
Episcopalian - 1
Other - 10:
 Church of Christ;
 Assembly of God;
 Evangelical Church in Germany;
 Eastern Orthodox;
 Continuing Congregational;
 Christian Independent;
 Christian Church (not Disciples);
 Church of the Brethren;
 Plymouth Brethren;
 Christian Reformed.

3. How many years have you been ordained? (See Chart)

Less than 1 year - 2
1-5 years - 19
6-10 years - 8
11-20 years - 15
21-30 years - 12
More than 30 years - 2

4. Were you ordained in the UCC? (See Chart)

Yes - 46

No – 13

If not, what denomination?

United Methodist - 1

Catholic - 1

Baptist - 1

Presbyterian - 4

Lutheran - 2

Disciples of Christ - 1

Other - 3

5. Did you leave *primarily* because of LGBT issues? (See chart)

Not Applicable - 17

Yes – 20

No – 5

Mostly - 1

Partly - 9

Baptists being pulled to the right;

Catholic authority issues and ordination of women (2);

Theology (2);

United Methodist episcopacy;

Kicked out/asked to leave by bishop (2).

6. How many churches have you served and been out as an openly gay man or lesbian – including current?

1 church – 33

2 churches - 16

More than 2 churches - 9 (some had served multiple interims)

7. How many years have you been at the church you have chosen for this study?

Less than 1 year - 4

1-5 years - 37

6-10 years - 14

10-20 years - 2

More than 20 years - 0

What is your position?

Sole - 31

Associate - 10

Senior Pastor - 14
Other - 3

8. Are you an interim pastor?

Yes - 4

Do you think being an interim makes a difference?

Perhaps congregation is more willing to take risks for a shorter period.

9. Were you the first openly gay or lesbian clergyperson in this congregation?

Yes - 52

No - 10

10. Had the congregation dealt with homosexuality before considering your call?

Yes - 50

36 of these responses listed the Open and Affirming (ONA) process

No - 10

Other - 2

11. If yes (other than ONA process), in what ways?

Some of these responses are positive, while others reflect negative experiences which led to greater openness:

Previous pastor came out while pastor (3);

Issue raised by previous pastor outside the ONA process (2);

Openly gay interims (2);

Long history of civil rights activism;

New gay couple in church was welcomed (2);

Our Whole Lives curriculum;

Church had had gay members for years;

Gay member with AIDS;

Organist died of AIDS;

Two members were refused a Holy Union and left the church;

Dealing with Boy Scout policies (2);

Voted against ONA;

Voted against openly gay pastor (that church then went through ONA process and hired the same person who had previously been rejected);

Church fired previous pastor for marching in gay pride parade;

Pastor had affair with Council member;

Conference Minister prepared search committee for the idea of a gay pastor;

Daughter of church "matriarch" came out.

12. Was the church Open and Affirming (ONA) before you arrived? (See Chart)

Yes - 30
No - 25
In Process (started to work on it) - 3
Considering (talked about starting it) - 2
Other – 2
Church was founded as ONA

13. Is it ONA now? (See Chart)

Yes - 41
No - 13
In Process - 4
Considering - 3
Other – 1
Church has closed

14. Do you believe their ONA status affected their readiness to call a gay pastor?

Yes - 28
No - 8

How?

Those who answered yes:

Most homophobic people left at the ONA vote;
They put an employment non-discrimination clause in the by-laws;
Consistent with ONA;
Church eager to act on ONA;
They wanted pastor to do LGBT outreach;
It paved the way;
Gave a certain “ease”;
Gave them basic information;
Sexuality is a non-issue now;
Prepared openness;
Already aware of public perceptions;
It demystified gay people and created a norm of acceptance;
They kept ONA in front of them.

Those who answered no:

Many thought vote was premature;
Not ONA but liberal;
They were well-meaning;
Didn't know what the congregation's reaction would be;
Caused a flurry of unexpected conflict;
They thought they had open attitudes.

15. What percentage of the search committee voted to recommend you?

100% - 55
More than 90% - 2
More than two-thirds - 2
Other – 3
 Founding pastor;
 Hired (2)

16. Were there any openly gay members on the committee?

Yes - 21
No - 38

How many?

1 person - 12
2 people – 5
More than 2 persons - 2

17. What percentage of the congregation voted to call you?

100% - 16
95-99% - 23
90-94% - 12
80-89% - 3
68-79% - 3
Two-Thirds - 1

18. What percentage of persons voting at the congregational meeting was required?

100% - 0
80% or more - 5
75% or more - 5
Two-thirds or more - 21
More than 50% - 15
Others Didn't Know or Say

Note: several stated they had personal goals – such as not accepting the call if not at least 80%, even though congregation only required a majority or two-thirds.

19. At the beginning of your pastorate, did you hear people express fears? (See Chart)

Check all that apply:
34 We will lose members

Rank Top 3:
22

27	We will lose pledges or other income	18
18	Families with children will leave	9
22	We will be overrun with LGBT people	12
33	We will become a “gay church”	22
23	You will try to bring a “homosexual agenda”	14
13	The media will make this a big issue	5
6	Neighboring churches will cut their ties to us	1
13	We will be ridiculed by our friends and family	4
10	Other:	1
	Unnamed members aren’t happy;	
	He’s not like us;	
	Shouldn’t be around children (2);	
	Children at school will be taunted for having a gay minister;	
	We’ll lose male members;	
	Conservative backlash;	
	Can we start a new church with a gay pastor?	
14	NO FEARS EXPRESSED	

20. What did those persons who objected state as the primary reason? (See Chart)

Check all that apply:	Rank Top 3:
22 Their biblical interpretation	16
17 Morality	11
12 Issues related to children	10
18 Discomfort with any discussion of sexuality	13
20 No concrete reason given	12
7 Other:	4
We can have gay leaders but not pastors;	
Visceral discomfort with too many;	
Marriage issues;	
Unexamined homophobia;	
Town is homophobic (rural area);	
Fear of not succeeding in new church start;	
Didn’t want LGBT to be only focus.	
16 NO OBJECTIONS STATED	

21. If they objected on biblical grounds, did they also object to women as pastors?

Yes - 4

No - 18

22. How were the fears and objections addressed?

Cottage meetings shortly after I arrived so they could get to know me, ask questions and dispel fears, meetings with staff, youth, etc., prior to election so they could ask anything;

Search committee and interim had extensive conversations with “anti” people; Leadership ignores unnamed complaints and advises me to do the same thing, saying that these same people complain about every pastor;

In general, people were reassured by my overall tenure as their pastor - those fears were unrealized;

Most people had faith that my call was God’s will. Many people had decades-long relationships with those that were upset. People were encouraged to give me a chance. Most did. Less than 5 people left;

Sadly, they were not. The church had larger and more threatening (other) conflict to work through;

Search committee called every single member 1 on 1;

An open house was held the day before the vote. No objections were raised.

Most were eager and pleased to have a chance to meet me and my partner;

We kept being the church. I kept being a person. Shortly after I came we had several deaths, some of them very public figures. I do a good funeral.

The community realized that I was not a green-eyed monster. I was a good pastor;

Conversations with the interim;

Sermons;

Senior pastor set the tone – supported me and provided pastoral care to the objectors;

Keeping track of demographics;

Our ONA process was 7 years. It required a lot of patience, compassion and commitment to the vision of inclusion. Some people did leave when we voted, but many more would have left if we hadn’t voted;

People could write their issues on paper. Each was read and dealt with one by one during a congregational meeting;

Most of those who objected left the church – however, the one who stayed has had open and frank discussions and agreed to let me be their pastor despite initial objections;

Lots of visiting among members;

Being visible in the community;

There was definitely a “if they don’t like it they can leave” stance with many of the members. So we lost a few members – I made calls and visits to them and no one ever voiced their disapproval to me directly - it came through the chairperson of the Deacons;

Just getting to know me and my partner, and discovering we were called into ministry together;
I told them why I chose to consider a church that was not predominantly LGBT, how I understood my ministry to all members;
They weren't;
Support of the core leadership to move against our fears with faith helped each person move forward;
In-depth Bible study;
Membership commission committed to remain a "mixed" church;
The Senior Pastor went to each committee and then to people who might be concerned and had extended conversation with them;
The association minister was used as part of congregational forums;
Search committee wrote a letter and then made phone calls to every member;
Retired ministers in the congregation talked about making sure they look at gifts/skills for ministry;
Time, resignation and acceptance of new and different people;
Long/involved visitation period one month before vote and again the week before;
There was a church split – 40 people left and started a new congregation. Most of the fearful people stayed behind and that church has just left the UCC;
Talking to Senior Pastor;
Negative: Pastor Parish meetings where others appeared who were anti-gay.
Also addressed through hate mail and threats to my home address.

23. Do any of these concerns still exist?

7 - Not Applicable
21 - No
5 – Yes
5 – Not aware – haven't heard anything
3 – Probably some
4 – Yes, but reduced (greatly reduced)
2 – Probably not
3 – Hardly any, very little, seldom
4 - An occasional comment - not wanting to become a gay church
(some by gay people)

The "anti-people" left, but some may not be speaking out now;
Members said, "Let them go if they don't like it";
Just a member or two who are/have been long-term "nay-sayers" about many things;
Major conflict has subsided, but we'll see what's lingering;
A few people still struggle but they stay in covenant;
They see ME now and not a gay man;
I think the illusion of celibacy makes it easier for them – though some have expressed a hope that I might meet "someone special";
Still some discomfort around discussions of sexuality. Most have diminished greatly;

Lingering concern: negative media attention and “what will neighbors say”;

Surprise: concern about teaching middle school confirmation – “too early to be exposed to sexuality, as though middle school students don’t talk about sex”;

Two new concerns arose:

1) General Synod vote on marriage equality;

2) Big fight over TV ad – “intolerant”;

Church is getting larger – a different issue;

They asked me to resign.

24. Did any persons say they left because an openly gay minister was called?

Yes - 33

No - 29

25. What percentage of active membership actually left?

Zero – 25

Less than 1% - 13

1-5% - 10

6-10% - 6

More than 10% - 4

3 churches had 1/4 to 1/3 leave, including one that lost 4 of 12 persons;

One church lost 60%, going from 41 members to 18.

26. What was the size of church membership at its peak? (See Charts)

Total of all churches in survey – 24,964

(Of 62 churches, only 44 reported a peak membership and corresponding year, i.e. 1965)

Average size at peak – 567 (although the range of peak sizes is 40-2,300)

27. Membership when the pastor arrived:

Total in the 44 churches that reported a peak – 9,905

This is a loss of 15,059 members, or a decline of 60% from its peak years.

Total in 11 churches that reported attendance when the pastor came and current – 1,265

Total of all churches in survey – 11,170

Average size when pastor arrived – 203 (although the range is 40-1,000)

Membership today (2005):

Total in the 44 churches that reported a peak – 10,972

An increase of 1,067 members, or an increase of 11% from when the pastor started

Total in the 11 churches that reported only when the pastor arrived and current – 1,445

This is an increase of 180 worshippers, or an increase of 14%

Total of all churches in survey – 12,417

This is an increase of 11% when considering all the congregations in the survey.

Average size today – 226 (the range is 15-1,840)

28. How many new members have joined since you arrived?

Total of 59 churches that answered this question – 2,158

29. What percentage of the total membership was LGBT when you arrived? (See Chart)

4 churches had percentages of 20% or more of its members LGBT; none more than 50%

3 churches were 10% LGBT

31 churches were less than 10% LGBT

21 churches had no LGBT members

30. What percentage of the *new* members is LGBT? (See Chart)

12 churches had no new LGBT members (except the pastor)

In 14 churches, fewer than 10% of its new members are LGBT

In 23 churches, between 10% and 40% of its new members are LGBT

In 6 churches, up to 50% of its new members are LGBT

In 2 churches, more than 50% of its new members are LGBT – one with 60% and one with 75% new

31. What percentage of your total membership is LGBT today? (See Chart)

8 churches still have no LGBT members

In 10 churches, less than 1% of its membership is LGBT

In 28 churches, less than 10% (more than 1%) of its membership is LGBT

In 14 churches, the membership is between 11% and 40% LGBT; one church is now 45% LGBT

No churches in this study report more than 45% of its members to be LGBT

32. What are some reasons for joining stated by new *non*-LGBT persons? (See Chart)

- 24 - Welcoming/openness to everyone/warmth
 - 14 - For sake of/good atmosphere to raise children
 - 10 - Wide variety of persons/diversity
 - 18 - Progressive/liberal/inclusive theology
 - 12 - Justice oriented (including LGBT issues)
 - 10 - Progressive community/open minds/safe to think
 - 10 - Good worship
 - 2 - Mission/community oriented
 - 14 - Specifically because it's UCC and/or ONA
- Other:
- For LGBT relatives (3);
 - Didn't want to attend a "gay" church;
 - It's less segregated.

Comments:

- "This is what Jesus wants";
- "This is what church is supposed to be";
- "The Spirit is present";
- "There is a spiritual depth";
- "This represents hope for the future";
- "It's 'cool' to have a lesbian pastor."

33. Do long-time members describe their experience of church any differently now? (See Chart)

- 5 - It is more active/lively/upbeat
 - 7 - It's healthier; has a better well being
 - 10 - There is new life, a renewed hope for the future
 - 6 - There are new families and (surprise) more children
 - 5 - They are discovering all kinds of new things, including about God
 - 3 - They are proud
- Other:
- To soon to tell;
 - A wistfulness for when we knew everyone;
 - Not as formal (2);
 - People are more loving to one another;
 - They are more invested in church;
 - It means something to them now;
 - Still having difficulty with ONA;
 - Surprised at how many new babies.

Comments:

“I don’t want to miss a Sunday”;
“How can we be more ONA?”

34. Did any who left come back?

Yes - 14

No - 26

How many?

43 reported from those 14 churches

35. Did they give any reasons?

Because I reached out to them and remembered their names;

They appreciated my sermons and ministry;

Issues were with former pastor;

They missed their faith family;

They had preconceived ideas of what a gay pastor was and realized it was not true;

The church stayed connected with them;

They feel they have come around.

36. What was the average size of worship attendance at its peak? (See Charts)

Total of all churches in survey – 12,350

(Of 62 churches, only 37 reported a peak and corresponding year, such as 1965)

Average size – 334 (range from 60-1,000)

37. Worship attendance when the pastor arrived?

Total in the 37 churches that reported a peak – 2,970

This is a loss of 9,380 worshippers, or a decline of 76% from its peak year(s)

Total in 13 churches that reported when the pastor arrived and the current year –
1,089

Total of all churches in survey – 4,394

Average size - 87

Worship Attendance today (2005):

Total in the 37 churches that reported a peak – 3,785

An increase of 815 worshippers, or an increase of 27% from when the pastor

started

Total in the 13 churches that reported only when the pastor arrived and current – 1,175

This is an increase of 86 worshippers, or an increase of 8%

Total of all churches in survey – 5,435

This is an increase of 22% when considering all the congregations in the survey

Average size – 109 (range from 17-450)

38. Do you feel any growth or decline in membership or worship attendance can be attributed to having a gay pastor? What were other factors, i.e. aging membership, increased evangelism or community outreach? (GISS = God Is Still Speaking campaign)

- #1 Major factors: emphasis on evangelism (in sync with GISS), better preaching and worship
- #2 I'm not sure but our attendance is up dramatically; concerted efforts in evangelism, GISS, Synod vote
- #3 Decline and growth about the same. Decline due to those who left and several who have died/moved away. Growth due to new members. Evangelism efforts are way up
- #4 We are a small, rural congregation with mostly aging members in a heavily Catholic area. We are struggling with membership and financial issues and have been for years. What happens in the next 3-5 years will impact how long this congregation will survive
- #5 I think folks would say it was tough but they learned who they really were
- #6 Yes, growth, but also aging membership; increased evangelism with GISS very important
- #7 More activities, more Christian ed., additional and different services
- #8 Only in the sense that I've brought a range of experiences as a gay man that contributes to more openness, more creativity, and less willingness to take crap than my predecessor. Our biggest growth challenge is an aging membership in a declining community. To add, congregational power dynamics related more to my predecessor's ministry had more effect than my orientation. I have challenged this power in both direct and indirect ways. Overall, I think the congregation is healthier now than it was when I arrived
- #9 The growth doesn't have to do with my queerness but my other gifts and to my unique calm and grace amidst conflict.
- #10 Death and moving away accounts for most of our loss
- #11 Membership decrease is largely due to a "clearing of the rolls." Other decreases can be attributed to death and then to dissatisfaction with having a gay pastor.

- New members came initially because of who I am and the fact they wanted a church that would call a gay man
- #12 We have grown
 - #13 The UCC national ad campaign has helped our growth very much
 - #14 Yes, possibly. This is a conservative area. Few people visit, most didn't stay. A number of deaths and people moving away out of state – aging membership
 - #15 No
 - #16 No. Previous pastors were damaging to the congregation – poor sexual ethics (straight). Current senior pastor was and is rebuilding and encouraging health in the congregation
 - #17 Yes! I've even heard folks say that the endurance, compassion, and the way I have had to know myself presents itself in a dynamic way. Synod vote helped
 - #18 Maybe increase because of gay pastor – more likely is increase in worship and program activities and diversity – not just LGBT but racial
 - #19 No – again, downtown location is dying neighborhood. No one lives around the church anymore.
 - #20 My sexuality really isn't a big conversation point – I don't sense any resistance, at least. I think our recent growth is due to a change in leadership after the previous staff members retired/resigned. There is more energy and new strong worship and pastoral components.
 - #21 Nothing related to ONA – cultural changes; older members who attend more regularly are dying
 - #22 Some LGBT people have come because I'm gay and they like that. Some non-LGBT folks want to part of this cultural moment. Some growth has been because of economic growth in the area. Some (not a lot) has been because of evangelism. Most has been because of word of mouth and the Holy Spirit, of course.
 - #23 No growth
 - #24 If anything, my ministry drew people in – it helped them see that the church is more liberal than the church's reputation
 - #25 No decline. I think the GISS campaign has given us visibility that we didn't have before, and the church's increased evangelism has been a big factor
 - #26 My first year membership declined by 5. We had 4 deaths and relocation. This past year we have had 6 new people join us for worship regularly. That I am gay is not their primary reason but it is, for several, a real bonus
 - #27 Little growth would be attributed to my sexual orientation. Only related growth factor would be that my orientation isn't an issue. Our growth can mostly be attributed to quality worship, increased mission and renewal of evangelism efforts.
 - #28 I have tried to really listen to the congregation. I have used a huge amount of humor – always a lifesaver, I think! I've also encouraged everyone to ask of all the people they know, "Do you have a church home?" Pretty revolutionary for New England, I gather. Increased evangelism has been important.
 - #29 They were an angry church. While we grew a bit (to more than 25) for some time while I was there, there was an underlying anger about the merger in 1970; about the previous gay pastor (years earlier) and about selling the building (1 year before I arrived). I don't think the gay thing was significant at all.

- #31 There was a little decline, but the new folks came and joined. Some impact was that many had come for the previous pastor who recently left. No interim – he was only here 18 months.
- #32 We've really worked on our outreach
- #34 Worship attendance about the same as years past. No significant change.
- #35 I think it had little to do with my being gay. I think I asked the church to look at hard issues – like the reality of their finances and their resistance to change. They accepted people who all looked and acted like they did, but they could be openly hostile to members of the neighborhood who were predominantly Puerto Rican and Portuguese. I think the real damage done to this congregation occurred in the 1970s when the original building burned down, allegedly at the hands of their pastor who was later accused of sexual misconduct and then committed suicide and then the second case of sexual misconduct 20 years later. They were a bunch of hurtin' cowboys who needed some honest, tender, loving care and some attention. My lesbian family was the most stable "parenting" they had in many years.
- #37 To some degree – the LGBT's who joined and are active do – in part – because of the minister
- #38 We do have some modest growth because of the GISS ad, and perhaps my presence (meaning, church where there are two women, one of them gay, which speaks more to the congregation's ability to be welcoming)
- #39 No, not at all
- #40 No. Increase in membership and attendance attributed to the active leadership and vibrant ministry of the pastor who happens to be gay. The church is responding to the ministerial enthusiasm.
- #41 We are an aging congregation and have experienced many deaths over the last few years. When I arrived we barely had a Sunday School. But we have started to attract families with children through incorporating children in worship and offering special family focused activities for all ages.
- #42 We only grew because of the faith of the congregation and community. We lost aging members and we had a good CE program. And families appeared for our pastorate and then the following woman pastor when I left. We had a strong youth program.
- #43 I'd like to think it was because I was an effective preacher and worship leader! Attendance increased – some was curiosity, but the novelty wore off and people liked what they experienced in worship. We did reach out to the community.
- #44 I think the LGBT folks who joined would've joined even if I wasn't gay. Other factors – positiveness and accessibility of the new pastor.
- #45 I'm not sure previous years' attendance was counted/calculated accurately. The overall attendance seems to be up although a drawback of being more flexible/open in a culture that is increasingly busy/distracted is that I think we struggle to "compete," but me being gay has had little or no effect, in my opinion.
- #46 Growth definitely – evangelism in the LGBT community works. The GISS campaign is a huge boost for us.
- #47 No. But I do think being a gay pastor makes growth slower and more difficult to achieve in our current cultural climate. It's much easier to start a church and grow a church with those (conservative) values.
- #48 Absolutely. This is probably the first job I've ever held where being a lesbian was a plus in the hiring process and in the growth of the congregation. Many of the

- new members have articulated that the MCC church here was simply too foreign to them liturgically, and they simply wanted to find a community that held a diversity of gays and straights in tension, especially for their children.
- #49 Yes – We have become a place where all are fully welcome. This provides us with a “niche” market.
- #51 We get lots of free LGBT coverage.
- #52 My job was mostly dealing with Sunday School and Christian Education. The Sunday School had 33 children when I arrived in 1994 and 127 when I left in 1999. We had 12 teachers in 1994 and 30 in 1999.
- #53 I don’t think it is about me as much as it’s about how the congregation deals with itself and each other. It’s more about how they do (or don’t) handle conflict. Several other non-gay conflicts have also caused members to leave.
- #54 Yes. The congregation has taken advantage of the Still Speaking campaign with banners, yard signs, and t-shirts. They have also intentionally increased advertising visibility (including in the LGBT paper)
- #55 I think the growth in gay and lesbian members/friends is attributed to my lesbianism; other growth and occasional loss is due to a variety of factors.
- #57 The decline is certainly due to aging membership and the number of deaths. Growth is due to evangelism, outreach, justice focus, and some say, the worship I lead.
- #58 Yes – growth and decline. It’s been an interesting dynamic, however the congregation is definitely getting younger. Other factors in the decline – aging membership.
- #59 No. Aging membership.
- #60 No. Some people were commuting a great distance and with increased traffic have found churches closer to their homes where neighbor kids attend. Some haven’t like some changes in worship times and Sunday schedule.
- #61 Yes, absolutely. Calling me forced people to figure out where they stood on a range of social justice issues – they come to be active in a justice-seeking congregation.
- #62 Growth – yes. We attracted new members and grew financially. Gay clergy presence encourage inactive members to become active.
- #63 We are an extremely liberal area of the country and I don’t think a gay pastor plays much of a role in people’s decision to attend.
- #64 There had been a decrease during the interim, also conflict around the prior pastor. Folks have now put it behind them and come back to church.
- #65 We had great growth due to my gay-lifestyle. An older member commented she was not sure she liked growing so fast – because she didn’t know everyone’s name.

39. Has the God Is Still Speaking campaign had an impact on worship attendance and membership?

Yes - 17

No - 11

Not Sure - 4

Negligible/Minimal – 15

Greater Pride in the UCC/Stronger Identity - 11

Comments:

A real shot in the arm;
Not as much as we hoped;
We had a big fight over the TV ads – “intolerant of differing beliefs.”

40. How many Sunday School children did the church have at its peak? (See Charts)

Total of all churches in survey that reported a peak – 5,586
(Of the 62 churches in the survey, only 31 reported their peak attendance)
Average size – 180 (range of 9-1,000)

41. Sunday School attendance when the pastor arrived?

Total of the 31 churches that reported a peak – 1,053
This is a decrease of 4,533 children, or a decline of 81% from its peak

Total from the 23 churches that did not report a peak - 605

Total of all churches in survey – 1,658

Average size – 31 (range of 1-200)

Sunday School today (2005):

Total from the 31 churches that reported a peak – 1,448
This is an increase of 395 children, or a 38% growth rate, since the pastor started.

Total from the 23 churches that did not report a peak – 854

This is an increase of 249 children, or a growth rate of 41%

Total of all churches in survey – 2,392

This is an overall increase of 44% since the congregations hired an openly gay pastor.

Average size today – 44 (range of 2-220)

42. Have stewardship pledges or offerings: (See Chart)

Grown - 34
Declined - 2

Stayed mostly the same – 20

Comments:

We stopped dipping into reserves;
Giving is up but pledges are down;
Pledges up 14%;
Pledges up 40%;
Pledges doubled;
When I arrived we had a \$43,000 deficit but now we have a surplus;
First stewardship campaign in 10 years;
Added a capital campaign (2);
Biggest giving and budget in history;
Pledges grew 1st year but declined the 2nd;
Some left, some new ones came in;
2-3 year of flatness but then changed positively;
Very concerted effort at stewardship;
It's challenging because new people are not giving at the rate of older members;
Giving has grown but fewer pledging units;
"These people give until they can't give anymore and then they give more."

43. Was your arrival covered in the local media?

Yes - 33

No - 28

Local Newspaper - 27

TV - 1

Other - 1 (United Church News)

44. If yes, would you say the media coverage was primarily:

Negative – 1 (about a month of letters to the editor)

Sensational - 2

Positive - 20

Neutral - 2

Not About Being Gay/Lesbian - 7

45. Have you received any hate mail?

Yes - 17

No - 42

About how many pieces?

1-2 pieces - 5

3-9 pieces - 5

More than 10 letters - 3
Some every year - 4

46. Have you received any death threats?

Yes – 2
No - 59

47. Has the church building ever been vandalized because of LGBT issues?

Yes - 2
No - 57

48. What, if any, reaction was received from neighboring churches or local ministerium?

The overwhelming number of responses was positive; some negative and mixed.

49. Do you perform same-sex unions/marriages?

Yes - 58
No – 1 (only Senior Pastor does)
Never asked - 3

In the church?

Yes - 41
No - 8
Never asked - 13

50. When you came, what policies or practices, if any, did the church have regarding same-sex unions?

Most stated there were no policies in place.

Discretion of the pastor;
Always assumed;
Treated as any marriage;
Previous minister did them privately;
Members had worked against the (anti-gay) marriage amendment;
Basically unstated due to ONA vote.

51. What issues have you faced related to performing or not performing same-sex unions/marriages?

Most stated they faced no issues.

Will be looking at it in light of the Synod vote;
 Looking to change language of the policies to make it inclusive;
 Will ask Council or Deacons if I get a request;
 Asked to confer with Deacons first;
 Not in sanctuary until voted upon by congregation;
 This needs work, and could be divisive;
 Congregation wants to advertise our services;
 Agreed not to when called until congregational vote as part of ONA process;
 Some LGBT don't want a "wedding";
 Some wish we would call it a Holy Union instead;
 Opposed at first but then a year-long conversation led to agreement that pastor
 has discretion;
 "Not at the altar where my father's casket lay" – this is what caused our huge
 blow-out.

52. Did you have any fears or apprehensions, specific to your orientation, at the beginning of your pastorate? (See Chart)

Check all that may apply:		Rank top three:
40	There will always be some tension around my sexuality	26
36	Some people will never fully accept me	26
16	Some will be insensitive to LGBT visitors	6
20	Some won't accept my partner/spouse	7
18	I won't be invited to some homes or events	9
29	I will have to monitor what I say in sermons or conversations	21
18	Will my job performance be judged by different standards?	14
27	Pressure to do well so people can't say gay clergy are a bad idea	20
9	Other:	8

Will they put me out in a few years or make it so uncomfortable we will feel forced to leave?

Immense loneliness in rural community;

Fear that a homophobic person will accuse me of sexual misconduct;

Desire to be seen as a pastor who is lesbian vs. a lesbian pastor;

Having to constantly come out to new people;

Tension about introducing dates;

Will I be accused of being "too gay?"

Living in a fishbowl;

Will the congregation think it was worth it in the end?

Being divided by or distracted from my primarily straight church

community ministry by my non-church gay friendships and interests

53. How do/did you handle and overcome, if applicable, such pressures and concerns?

- #1 Strive to do the best job I can and remain faithful to God and my call, and my partner

- #2 I have a wonderful pastoral relations committee that I confide in. They helped me by holding private meetings with those most uncomfortable.
- #3 Awareness, support from colleagues and pastoral relations committee, prayer, support from family and friends, general self care
- #4 I just ignore it and go with the flow. My being lesbian is only part of the issue. At times the larger issue seems to be that I'm female, however these are members who have been complaining for years and have stopped attending years ago
- #6 I seek balancing my life between hard work and retreat from same. I have good gay friendships (mostly with other ministers or church folk in other congregations)
- #7 Work harder than others – be more excellent – be always watchful and cautious
- #8 I don't make it an issue. I get out of town regularly for a break I have a social network in a nearby city
- #9 I try to be me. But so far, while out in name, I'm not all that out in action – though I try.
- #10 Just be myself
- #11 Time. As people got to know me some of these eased considerably to the point of disappearing. The most apprehension I still have is around sermons - although I spoke very openly and personally about this when I returned from Synod. The response, where there was one, was overwhelmingly positive
- #12 Nothing really became a real concern
- #13 I try to be myself
- #14 I am clear about boundaries related to touch and do not work alone with children. I accept that some will not accept, but I continue to model acceptance
- #15 Honest regarding my view of myself as a pastor first. Trying not to make too much of who I am as a lesbian
- #16 Over time I was able to relax and settle in. This was my first pastorate so some concerns were related to that, I'm sure
- #17 Naming them when they occur and talking to people about what happened
- #18 Therapy, talking about it
- #19 I mostly did my best and tried to be authentic to myself and my God
- #20 I try to remember that these are feeling and not facts that I may be projecting on people, that which I am learning about myself. I also find that having a spiritual director really helps in talking through issues like this
- #22 I did my job and proved that I could be a minister. This went a long way towards acceptance
- #23 Trying to relax, have faith, and be myself
- #24 I feel it fair to say I came into this a bit naively – feeling empowered, not really scared. Reality hit hard a few months into my ministry
- #25 Slowly...allowing folk to get to know me for myself and not as just a gay man. It's a great congregation and the pressure I felt in my last church (still in the closet) are all gone
- #26 At first I was worried that being a lesbian would/could be an issue but over time, as I have gotten to know the congregation and visa versa, this worry has really diminished
- #27 For the most part, yes. There is always the ongoing issues around how visitors and potential new members will react
- #28 These fears/concerns seemed to take care of themselves as we got to know one another. I tried to put people to work, to keep them busy!

- #29 Ha. Years of counseling. Internalized oppression is a strong thing and I think I still think I have to be perfect. Even when I know it is not good for me to act that way
- #31 I'm a realist with ideals
- #32 I saw this was unfounded
- #33 With time, I just became less anxious. It also helped at the end of the first year to share my story with the congregation and passing of the ONA helped as well
- #34 Talked lots with Council/Deacons/Transition Team about these various responses. Held a session with all church leaders and invited to "name" their biggest fears, brainstormed about how to deal with them and assess validity of them
- #35 I sought support of other gay clergy
- #37 Never materialized
- #39 There were no pressures
- #40 The test of time
- #42 They got to know us and other members and family members came out and PFLAG was ongoing and we had the 2 years of ONA study. Not a problem
- #43 I've been out so long I'm not really affected by being out. I tend to deal directly with people, assure people who are concerned that I am very open to discussing them/hearing them. And I wouldn't serve a church that could not accept who I am.
- #45 Don't want to be perceived as "one-note" pastor; so I often work to avoid specific reference to LGBT issues
- #46 These concerns were my own, not the congregations – they let me be me, and I have allowed myself to do the same
- #47 Move on
- #48 I try to frame the ownership of the hurtful comments as belonging to the 'commenter.' I have had to learn how to keep company with difficult feelings and know that people will continue to project their unexamined homophobia whether or not I'm a good preacher or a good person. Knowing that the homophobia is theirs is one thing, not internalizing it is one of my most challenging and consistent spiritual practices. I am intentional about developing means of spiritual support outside of the church's environs and expect very little from my conference office in terms of individual support around being one of the few out and ordained clergy in the area. They are simply too understaffed with regular church issues to attend to the nuances of this issue.
- An additional spiritual view I try to keep in focus is the prophetic nature of ministry as an out gay person, I find no small amount of comfort reading the Hebrew prophets, extrapolating (proof-texting!) to my own ministry. I know that what I do is considered radical in many Christian circles, and that *radical* in those circles is dangerous and evil. But I believe that Jesus was a dangerous man as well, and because of his courage to confront the dominant paradigm I too am willing, most days, to keep on keeping on. We are fond of saying at this church that the most difficult thing about valuing diversity is valuing those who don't.
- #49 Having come out of another denomination's environment, I felt totally free to be who I am. I do not consider myself a lesbian pastor – but rather a pastor who is a lesbian. I love being a pastor and doing what I do – I think that is what people primarily respond to

- #51 The congregation was wonderfully affirming – and I still have concerns that we not focus too exclusively on LGBT concerns
- #52 It was such a huge welcome and such enthusiasm for my ministry with and among them that those fears dissolved quickly
- #53 I just did my job, prayed, and hoped that time would ease people’s fears
- #54 I am open but not “in your face” with everyone I meet. I attempt a balance of social justice issues in my sermons. I attempt to “love” everyone I meet, allowing that some folks will never accept me but will have a difficult time explaining why
- #55 Part of how I have handled it is simply by maturing. I’m better at distancing myself from other people’s crap!
- #56 I have worked to be more comfortable with myself and have opened myself, my spouse, and my children for all to see
- #57 I simply did my “job” the best I know how and worked to have people come to know me personally
- #58 Good support system – denomination is very supportive
- #61 Just by powering through and especially by having a partner who is much braver than me
- #62 Talk to Senior Minister and colleagues and wife/partner
- #63 I have lots of friends who are supportive and a good sounding board for my paranoia
- #64 I found that my fears were unfounded
- #65 With depression – severe depression and little or no help from my association, conference or national church. I took an intentional sabbatical from ministry

54. Do any of these concerns still exist?

- #1 Sure, and they’ve been raised again but in a different way
- #2 None really
- #3 Most certainly – all the time, although I would say that, after two years, people know I can do the job well
- #4 Some other things – it’s really not a big deal
- #5 No
- #6 Yes, both – in some ways even more, as I am getting tired and much in need of my first-ever sabbatical next year!
- #7 Yes
- #8 Yes and I expect them to continue – its part of being a public figure
- #9 Yup. I’m a young, new pastor, still cutting my prophetic teeth
- #10 Not much
- #12 No
- #13 No
- #14 Yes
- #15 I still feel tension around being seen and seeing myself as a pastor who is lesbian, especially when it comes to anti-gay legislation
- #16 Yes, in my current parish, but to a lesser degree
- #17 Nope
- #18 Of course
- #19 Yes, but more subliminally

- #20 All of my “issues” really are issues of old baggage that I carry with me from my time in the conservative Christian church. There has never been a time that any of these have been raised by other people in regard to me
- #22 None
- #23 Yes
- #24 New pressure arose – had to monitor what I said in sermons
- #25 To little or no extent
- #26 Certainly. I know some will never fully accept me. This isn’t a concern so much as a reality. But I don’t think about it much really. I can’t worry about something I have no control over
- #27 To a lesser degree
- #28 No
- #29 Yes, although I work hard to fight it every day
- #31 None in a big way
- #32 No
- #33 Sure
- #34 Sure – some, but I think the congregation has a better sense of me and my ministry
- #35 Yes
- #37 No
- #40 No
- #42 No
- #43 No
- #45 Yes – more due to some who are malcontented in broader ways, but would use my orientation as an excuse to complain – it has happened several time
- #46 No
- #47 Yes. Move on from my center anyway
- #48 I truly believe, 4 years into this ministry, that being an Open and Affirming Congregation in this century is an ongoing radicalizing process and requires continued attention to the details of doing such a very new thing. We are a new wine skin, there’s simply no old wine that will serve. To be sure, we gather insight from the civil rights movement and the women’s movement, but this queer movement strikes at the very core of the church’s hold on human sexuality for the past 2 millenniums. There will be casualties, my heart being amongst them, but I believe in the resurrection and so does my heart. This small intentional community also fills my heart with love for them; they are so courageous and loving and willing, and broken and perfect. This church has changed me forever, hope lives in me - because of their trust in my call.
- #51 Yes, that I not only be the gay pastor, unable to really speak to the wider congregation and society
- #52 No
- #53 To an extent
- #54 Yes
- #55 Not really
- #56 Not specifically in this church
- #57 No
- #58 Yes, somewhat. I still question being accepted
- #59 No
- #60 Mostly no. Still feel pressure, desire to do well

- #61 Sure – we do not go to everyone’s homes. People still see us as friends but not spouses – change takes a long time
- #62 For the most part I feel very supported
- #63 Yes
- #64 My sexuality is basically a non-issue
- #65 I am in a new church which is 50% LGBT. They want what the last church didn’t want

55. Are you aware of ever *self-censuring/limiting* how often you speak about LGBT issues? (See Chart)

0 = Never; 10 = Always

- 0 - 7
- 1 - 3
- 2 - 3
- 3 - 11
- 4 - 1
- 5 - 8
- 6 - 4
- 7 - 5
- 8 - 11
- 9 - 5
- 10- 3

What factors might contribute to this?

- Bad experiences in previous churches;
- My own internalized homophobia;
- Let my straight colleagues deal with their problem – homophobia is a straight issue, not a gay one
- Don’t want to seem “harping”;
- Don’t want to seem to be pushing agenda;
- I try to make sure my ministry touches on many issues and concerns;
- Some people are afraid and I don’t want to push them;
- Don’t want to be seen as a single issue person;
- I’m aware there is a limit;
- In Massachusetts there is a gay issues fatigue – can’t we just move on?
- Probably over-conscious;
- Try to avoid being “self-serving”;
- My own fear;
- Social conservatism of the congregation;
- Still relatively new and need to build trust that this is not my only “agenda”;
- Senior minister’s discomfort with conflict;
- It’s just not an issue here;
- I would mention things related to LGBT and for some people, they would hear these items and not the 10 others I also mentioned;
- I often avoid specific reference to LGBT issues so those who are malcontented in broader ways cannot use my orientation as an excuse for complaints – it has happened several times;

Budget restraints – don't want to create pretext;
For some the mere mention of my partner makes it a "gay sermon";
Before speaking I run through my mind, "how many times have I spoken
about..."

Has anything changed with time?

I realized these people want me to be me;
Much more comfortable now;
Resigned to feeling isolation;
Definitely less pressure – I am regarded now as a good pastor and
preacher who happens to be gay;
I'm more comfortable because I know them better;
Less concerned;
Hard breaking old habits of watching every word at my old church;
I worried more in my first year than I do now;
It's only getting better!
When you have ONA discussions, all is freer;
I don't worry as much about the small group of those who are unhappy
with other things;
I've decided to resign.

Other Comments:

Nothing I've said has changed a mind, but I know being who I am has
forced people to examine their unfounded cultural hatred – in light
of their love for me.
I was often the only LGBT person in the room. Sometimes that made me
speak about the issue, at other times it was too scary. It was too
heavy a mantle to carry for "the LGBT people," "my people."

**56. Are you aware of pressure *from others* to limit use of LGBT issues? (See
Chart)**

0 = No Pressure; 10 = Tremendous Pressure

0 - 22
1 - 7
2 - 8
3 - 9
4 -
5 - 5
6 - 2
7 - 1
8 - 4
9 -
10 - 1

Has anything changed with time?

With time, changes have come;
Gay members have expressed concern that there are too many LGBT
coming (4);
I've decided to resign;
They are more comfortable with me – trusting;
I notice a gay issues “fatigue” (in Massachusetts);
The congregation as a whole seems more comfortable with itself;
I think I ignore stuff like this;
I don't let it stop me.

Other Comments:

I mention gay issues here and there and nothing has come of it. But I'm
still aware there is a limit;
Most pressure is self-imposed;
The Senior Minister gets feedback;
I provide a listening ear to hear their fears, concerns, etc. without being
judgmental;
One member told me he was glad I wasn't “radical.” I laughed and
realized that people were going to “see” what they wanted;
Some (straight people) want me to say more about LGBT issues!

57. Are you comfortable speaking about your personal life as an openly gay man or lesbian? (See Chart)

1 = I never speak about my personal life; 10 = I speak freely

1 -
2 - 3
3 -
4 - 1
5 - 8
6 - 1
7 - 4
8 - 8
9 - 6
10 - 30

Has anything changed with time?

Trust is increasing;
It's easier now that we have children;
I'm not afraid of openness anymore;
In personal conversations but not from the pulpit, yet!

Other Comments:

I always consider the audience and my personal safety;
I separate what is personal and what is private;
When I limit conversation, it's out of respect for others;

Self-disclosure is my decision;
With professional boundaries/ethics, of course.

58. If you feel any pressure regarding the above, would you say it is more internal or external? (See Chart)

0 = No Pressure; 1 = More Internal; 10 = Mostly External

0 - 21
1 - 9
2 - 3
3 - 4
4 - 3
5 - 13
6 - 1
7 - 2
8 - 2
9 - 1
10 - 1

Comments:

There are always those moments when we choose – will this or won't this be an educational moment. It can get exhausting.
Hard to separate – external causes internal. It's a trap;
I am encouraging seminars on internalized homophobia in my present church
Perhaps I worry too much;
I realize I'm projecting my internalized homophobia on others;
It's hard/annoying to deal with heterosexual assumptions;
It's in response to old wounds from earlier pastorates.

59. Have you ever been closeted in a previous pastorate?

Yes - 35
No - 18
Not Applicable - 10

60. If yes, were you out to a select few members in the other congregation(s)?

Yes - 21
No - 11
Not Applicable - 28

61. Based on your experience alone, do you believe it is "better" to be open or not? (See Chart)

1 = Much more difficult; 10 = Much better/more liberating

1 -
2 -
3 -
4 -
5 -
6 -
7 -
8 - 4
9 - 2
10 - 53

Comments:

Different and better for us now;
Not for everyone;
I think it's a matter of vocation;
Yes, however, I don't presume this for others;
Fear of being outed is exhausting;
I couldn't go back;
Personally it has more integrity. It is also fairer to the congregation in the end;
Rather be unemployed than closeted and working;
I understand the reasons not to be out, but I confess I feel one's ministry becomes inauthentic;
It is difficult at times;
It depends on the congregation (and part of the country);
I am quietly changing others' perspective with my witness;
Can't imagine any other way now;
But it makes for a harder search process;
I regret it took so long to find the UCC;
It can be life threatening as well as life changing and must be undertaken as an individual risk (no one should be pressured).

"I don't think there's a better or worse. In my first 2 churches coming out would have ended my ministry with them. Certainly I'm happier being in a church where I can be out. But that's not all there is to ministry. I'd lie to think that my work in the first 2 churches was not valid even though I withheld such an important part of myself."

"Keeping it a secret is too much work! Ministry is hard enough already. And by being open, I can never be accused of misleading or deceiving the congregation. It also eliminates speculation about my personal life – although it does not eliminate gossip."

62. Do you ever think it would be easier to serve a predominantly LGBT congregation; or have a desire to do so? (See chart)

Yes - 8

No - 33

Rarely/Sometimes - 9

Comments:

- #1 Only a little, in a few ways. People are people
- #2 Sometimes I think it would be easier, but I think part of my call is to help people see gay pastors can lead in any setting. I hope my ministry will help straight people in their own learning
- #3 It's better because it is more honest and a better means of furthering the cause, not because it's easier
- #4 It would be easier in some ways and harder in others. I've been a part of, but not the pastor of, predominantly LGBT congregations and think I deal with less issues now
- #5 No. I prefer a congregation that is diverse
- #6 Too many walking wounded; lacking in balance/integration; too much a "ghetto" for me
- #7 Yes. I am occasionally concerned that my gifts and experience could be better used in a mostly LGBT congregation
- #8 No and no. Although I would like to serve an ONA congregation
- #9 Yes, although I'm not a gay pastor – I'm a pastor. My life is in Christ, not queer politics. But, all the same, I'd love to preach Jesus to queers.
- #10 Probably not. No
- #11 Absolutely to both. With LGBT being a non-issue, we can move on to other, more pressing, things
- #12 Not sure if it would be easier or not; I would be open to the possibility
- #13 No
- #14 Yes!
- #15 No. No desire at all. I would and will serve the congregation I was called to regardless of the number of LGBT folks
- #17 Nope
- #18 Yes! It's lonely to only socialize with heterosexuals at church
- #19 No
- #20 No, I don't think it would be easier or better. I am more than my sexuality, and I don't really want that to be the defining point of my ministry
- #21 Definitely not. I think the church needs to represent the whole community. I'd never want to serve a predominantly LGBT church
- #22 No – people are people. Personally, I never wanted this. I like the diversity.
- #23 Easier
- #24 No, if I wanted that I would have joined the MCC – I prefer integrated communities
- #25 I think church is church, whether LGBT or otherwise. We still have the same political stuff, joys and concern, what have you...It may be of a different nature, but still the same stuff
- #26 I don't know if it would be easier, but I think it would be wonderful. I often look at a text and see that if I were preaching to a predominantly LGBT congregation that the sermon would be very different
- #27 Rarely, if ever. My call is to be a bridge between all people. I would get bored and frustrated with one dimensional ministry

- #28 No. I was involved in an MCC congregation for 6 months after I came out. Lots of drama! I didn't like the idea of a "gay ghetto." In my present situation, I feel like a bridge between the gay and straight worlds
- #29 It's also more honest to the congregation. "Presumed" heterosexuality is a strong force
- #31 Actually, I like the mix of church people...hard to know if it'd be easier. I think there would be other issues, which I've run into, and now that I think about it – other expectations too
- #32 No
- #33 Not sure. First of all, there are only a handful of predominantly LGBT congregations and none in Massachusetts. Secondly, that's no guarantee of "health" in a church. ONA? Yes
- #35 I have never wanted to serve a predominantly LGBT congregation. I was a member of a nearly "exclusively" LGBT denomination and felt that the vision of ministry was short-sighted
- #37 In some ways possibly easier, but in significant other ways, about the same
- #38 No interest. Body of Christ, etc. I like the full range! But I am lucky to live in the progressive northeast/Boston, so it's easy for me to pontificate.
- #39 Not really
- #40 I'm sure that pastorate would have its own set of problems, just different
- #41 I feel called to a mixed, diverse congregation. I feel part of my ministry has been in quietly changing people's perspectives and experience of gay men through the simple witness of my life
- #43 I have done so – easier in some regards, but the pastoral issues can be very challenging. I might do this again some day, but it depends entirely on the congregation – their make-up, etc.
- #44 I like diversity. I am blessed to have a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and ONA congregation
- #45 Yes, I've thought about that but I love my little church and the mix of people
- #46 No. I like living in the "real world" where I'm not the status quo and know it. I have much more effect on other peoples lives around LGBT equality
- #47 I don't think it would be easier. I have no desire to do so. I think things would be "crazier" if all LGBT, so much more difficult
- #48 No, I have no desire to do so. I desire the diversity of God's creation to feel the balance of life, otherwise I would have sought ordination in the MCC
- #49 No – I really do like the diversity
- #51 I don't have a desire to do so. I believe strongly the church is supposed to be a place of diverse people coming together in mutual concern and support
- #52 Not really. It would be fun to do a new church start with ONA from the beginning
- #54 I know the great needs of the LGBT community but feel that my call is to all God's children, not just one group
- #55 My partner used to belong to a church that had a large LGBT population (including ordained staff) and I've always said I'd never want to work there. Bu that was more to do with the overall personalities of the congregation and me than it does with its LGBT folks. I know it sounds precious, but I try to go where I believe God is calling me
- #56 I do feel it would be easier, but I have no desire to do so. People are all the same, LGBT or straight, and I want to minister to everyone

- #57 I love the diversity of a “mixed” congregation – I wish this one would move more toward multi-cultural
- #58 Yes, I am more drawn to addressing LGBT issues
- #59 Yes it would (be easier) except that the LGBT Christian community is quite a wounded one overall
- #60 No. No desire to do so
- #61 No – LGBT communities collect the wounded. Predominantly LGBT churches are often unhealthy. I think balance is very important
- #62 I do think about it. It seems as if it would be very liberating. However, I believe it’s part of my call to educate the wider community
- #63 I can’t imagine such a place
- #64 I never think about that
- #65 I presently am. What the church did not want in the past, my new church wants

63. If you have seriously considered leaving pastoral ministry, how much is related to sexual orientation? (See Chart)

0 = I have not considered leaving; 1 = sexual orientation is not the biggest factor; 10 = is the biggest factor

- 0 – 19
- 1 - 10
- 2 - 1
- 3 - 3
- 4 -
- 5 - 4
- 6 - 2
- 7 - 2
- 8 - 6
- 9 -
- 10 - 10

Comments:

Most who listed “10” have left their previous denominations to join the UCC;

I did leave for a while. We desperately needed a respite from homophobic parishes and local church search processes;

I left because I couldn’t be myself. I came back five years later because I’m called to it;

My growing frustration is with church and ministry in general, only part about being a lesbian;

It’s my call.

64. Do you feel there are any unique joys to ministry as an out gay or lesbian pastor?

- #1 Hmmm. I guess we do get to “rock” a few people’s worlds, just by who we are.

- #2 I think people tend to be more open with me, particularly when they are struggling with sexual orientation in their family or in themselves.
- #3 Yes, I get to serve as a change agent in this regard – in society, the church, and in individuals’ lives and families.
- #4 That’s hard to say – because it’s who I am.
- #5 No. But the freedom to be oneself is always the key for all clergy.
- #6 Absolutely! Clear responsibility, cutting-edge mission/ministry
- #7 I feel I am more able to feel others pain, especially women and other oppressed minorities.
- #8 If there are, I have not experienced them here. In general, my time here has been more burden than blessing. I don’t think my sexual orientation is a factor in that.
- #9 Definitely. While in this church, I am not of it. I have a life outside and I am not consumed by this church, which helps me serve better.
- #10 Yes. My outsider’s perspective makes me sensitive to the out breaking nature of the gospel.
- #11 Kismet, synchronicity, integrity – you are who you are. The gay part isn’t separated from the “Christian” or “Pastor” parts.
- #12 Not in that sense, but I enjoy the freedom in the congregation of everyone knowing.
- #13 Yes – It’s wonderful to be me!
- #14 The fact that I’m not hiding, my ministry to other LGBTQI etc, is strengthened. It’s a more mature way to do ministry. Be honest. Be yourself, ask others to do the same. Then people can create authentic relationships.
- #15 No
- #17 I think it’s a direct insight to the marginalized. I think there is a definite feeling of standing with the persecuted. And all of this means we’re more open and affirming of all of God’s people on life’s journey.
- #18 Yes
- #19 Yes. I understand Jesus’ “little ones” better
- #20 People who have been wounded because they (or someone they love) are gay finally have someone they can relate to and share their experiences. It’s like a light being turned on and hearing (fully) that God’s loves even us – and especially that we are not hopeless and out of the realm of God’s grace.
- #21 I don’t know. That’s like unique joys as female, brunette, Caucasian.
- #22 I do think it makes relating to the early Church’s mission and ministry easier. The early Church was a ministry with the rejected.
- #23 Absolutely: The joy of being yourself; of being able to welcome others while knowing how it feels to be unwelcome; of being a positive gay role model; helping others to come out of various closets.
- #24 No fundamental secrets
- #25 The joy of truly being who God intends me to be.
- #26 Yes. As an openly lesbian minister I have the opportunity to directly and indirectly change people’s attitudes about LGBT people. And I have the ability to serve as a role model for others. How exciting is that!?
- #27 Yes. I have more freedom and permission to be non-traditional in all aspects of my ministry (worship, theology, administrative style, etc.)
- #28 Absolutely. We now have about 30 persons who are LBGT in the congregation. My strong sense is that they feel being ministered to by a gay pastor is very

- important. I'm very much part of our congregation's rainbow fellowship which meets monthly.
- #29 You never get hired by really conservative churches! So the boundaries of what you can talk about are expanded from day one. We did a series on rape in the Bible, and no one in the congregation thought it was odd. I don't know that every straight pastor can do that.
- #31 Well, getting to be part of others' growth, hope and even good jokes is pretty wonderful. It's an expansive thing, relaxing too...like the realm of God
- #32 Not having to live in fear
- #35 I personally think "hiding" is sin – because hiding separates us from God. So to live our truth to the glory of God is always more positive than hiding who we are.
- #37 Only as you are able to be open and share your life and family experiences more freely.
- #39 You have more freedom
- #40 The pride of being recognized by the LGBT community
- #41 It's an exciting time to be a gay pastor because society's and the church's views of homosexuality are changing. We have a chance to really make a difference.
- #42 The pastoral opportunity with LGBT families and the resource that I am in the community and area where I have served.
- #43 Yes – you have a chance to turn people around on the issue by being a good pastor, teacher, leader, etc. By showing others we are not single-issue people. By inviting honesty on their parts. By letting loose the Holy Spirit!
- #44 I believe I'm good at what I do. There is no need to censure my words/actions. I can be me, which is much more than a gay pastor.
- #45 I think I've been blessed to see life through "lenses" I might otherwise not have had as a middle class white male.
- #46 Yes! I have the opportunity to open people to something they may not have experienced before and held misconceptions of.
- #47 Get to feel/experience the power of the gospel from the margins, which empowers the prophet in me. I don't think I'd have the prophetic courage or a justice passion without the gift of my sexual orientation.
- #48 A glimpse now and then from a closeted seminarian that I serve as a beacon of light for them. And a hope that whatever courage this call my have required of me might serve the church universal that I so love. But even when that institution fails me, I hold fast to the courage of the man from Nazareth, what his vision cost him and gained the world.
- #49 Freedom; new found energy; deep gratitude
- #51 I feel especially approachable because I am also so vulnerable – they all know my story – and they are free to tell theirs; they sense they will be accepted, as I have been accepted too.
- #52 Yes – it makes a huge difference in the lives of LGBT folk and others who are disenfranchised.
- #53 Yes – the witness and "home" to the disenfranchised makes it almost worthwhile. When the trans woman began to come to our church I felt like maybe I had made a difference.
- #54 Absolutely! The opportunity to help people truly see that gay and Christian can/do go together. I am a Christian who happens to be gay!
- #55 I don't know. My partner and I talk a lot about finally feeling "normal" (which is a good thing). I do believe that minority experience is an invaluable too in ministry.

Jesus clearly had a closer relationship with those who were oppressed. As a middle-class suburban white professional, anything that challenges my assumptions of privilege only makes me a better pastor.

- #56 People who listen to my story know that I understand prejudice and heartache and family struggles personally. I believe it makes me easier to come to.
- #57 I can truly help many who are struggling with all kinds of issues. I have been pure joy to be out and to have my partner “minister” along with me. Just this week several people said they felt they had called both of us.
- #58 Yes, seeing people reconnect with God after being oppressed by the church.
- #59 Bringing freedom and all of myself
- #60 You know about the experience of the outsider
- #61 Freedom begets freedom and there are many people longing to be free.
- #62 The joy comes from being the whole person God has created me to be. I do think that I have more empathy/sympathy/understanding for the oppressed and outcast (more than my white middle class privilege would otherwise allow).
- #63 The opportunity to risk with people and experience their positive responses.
- #64 The joy for me has to do with no longer being in the closet. I am very clear that many folks have different “secrets” in their lives and my part helps me with understanding.
- #65 Yes – in my new church there is a non-judgmental atmosphere – our theme song is “All Are Welcome.” I am at the height of my spiritual self and journey.

65. Are you currently partnered/married?

- Yes - 47
- No - 11
- Other – 3 (divorced; long distance)

66. Do members acknowledge your relationship?

- Yes - 45
- No - 0
- Other – 2
 - Some do, some don't;
 - Only a few

Comments:

- We were just married in the church (2);
- They threw a bachelor party for us;
- They pay my partner's health insurance;
- A few do/some don't;
- But not the same as a heterosexual marriage

67. If you live in a parsonage, does your spouse/partner live with you?

- Yes - 12
- No – 2 (out of state)

68. Do/did you face any issues related to your spouse/partner living in their parsonage?

Yes - 1

No - 11

Comments:

None

69. What would you share with someone considering a call to serve a congregation as an openly gay pastor?

- #1 Be certain of your call. Try to do as much work as possible on your own internalized homophobia, before you start serving churches. They'll have plenty of work that they'll need help with. Take care of yourself and your relationship with your partner.
- #2 To be honest about your sexual orientation in your profile. It is best to "come out" as early as possible. I came out in my last parish and it ended in disaster despite the fact it was an ONA congregation.
- #3 Being a pastor is hard work and a hard life. Being openly LGBT makes it harder. But, if you really love the work, and have a strong sense of self and a mature personality, you can probably do it with joy and effectiveness.
- #4 Let your full self be known and let the congregation know you as a complex person with lots of passions, who just happens to be gay. My congregation knows me as a ballroom dancing, diehard Red Sox and Patriots fan, much more than they think of me as a lesbian pastor.
- #5 Be clear you like the people and are comfortable with the vision and the work they have done.
- #6 Emphasize overall gifts/charisms. Not all openly gay people (in fact, most!) are gifted to be pastors! Make sure you're interested/able beyond just wanting to push a cause.
- #7 Be honest. Investigate completely the congregation's position on ONA. Ask about the blessing of same-sex unions.
- #8 Candidates should be open with the search committee at the earliest possible opportunity. I am not explicitly open on my profile, but I disclose the information to the committee chair during the first telephone conversation and certainly before making a site visit. If they express reluctance, respect their views and do not try to "talk them into it." Emphasize your skills and gifts for ministry, but do not hide or minimize your sexual orientation. Do not promise to be celibate if you are not committed to celibacy. Finally, do not assume that an ONA congregation is more ready for a gay pastor than one that is not. Be prepared to discuss boundary issues – you bring them up because they probably won't. Boundaries may include declining to respond to a question that seems intrusive.
- #9 I think that being an out pastor is, de facto, transformational for a church. Churches are not comfortable acknowledging the sexuality of any of their pastoral staff – even the married ones with children. Being out and queer is, by definition, an affront to the culture of denial and silence. As I am not in a relationship, this congregation has not had to directly face it in any real, physical

way. Thus far, it's been a theoretical endeavor, which many can and do choose to avoid. I hope, at some point (even if I have to hire someone to play the role) to bring a boyfriend to church and introduce them to him. It would be hugely eye-opening to many people to see me with my partner. To see the normality of it. But also to see the abnormality of it. People need to get over their "ick factor." I think, also, out queer pastors should never forget that they are called to be followers of Christ. Jesus should direct their ministry, not their sexuality. Their sexuality can inform their following, but what their following is ultimately God's call for us as a chosen people.

- #10 Be yourself. Be professional. Relax.
- #11 Do it. It is the fairest thing to do for yourself and the congregation. Be patient, God isn't yet finished with this great church of ours, but "things" do still take time. Trust that when a call comes it will be the right one and start out by loving your congregation warts and all.
- #12 Be open to the possibility – allow them to get to know you and love as the complete person you are. Encourage search committees or congregations to contact congregations where this has been done successfully.
- #13 Be as open as possible with the search committee and congregation!
- #14 Be who you are. Be consistently yourself and be honest, otherwise you live in fear. Unless you can and find a church job. If you're starving, you have to decide for yourself.
- #15 Go for it. I believe we often create issues ourselves that are related to our discomfort, self-hatred, etc. I would strongly urge a person to get clear with themselves and their identity before being exposed to/in a congregation. Also, I would encourage folks to be advocates for themselves – build relationships with Association and Conference Ministers – become known as a person.
- #17 Have a lot of support for the search process. Ask, ask, and ask who the queer out colleagues are and make relationships with them immediately.
- #18 No one likes to be surprised – don't surprise your congregation by being closeted and model courage, joy and "normality" of gay life!
- #19 Be yourself. Be honest and don't apologize for being you.
- #20 Be honest, open and ethical. (What I would tell to a straight person as well!)
- #21 You must be true to yourself. Honesty, integrity, and integration (personal wholeness) are essential to the task.
- #22 Know yourself first. Have a rock solid faith. Have a strong integrity. Just be a minister – don't play into other's fears. Love everyone equally and they will love you equally.
- #23 Trust in your calling and the spirit's guiding. Win them over with your openness and love. Even if the vote to call is not overwhelmingly positive, be glad for the positive ones, and realize that you may be able to help change the nay-sayers.
- #24 Be patient. Be gentle and be prepared for the challenges- support systems are a must!
- #25 Go for it...It's much easier and healthier to be out, but know there is a wilderness before the promised land. Be ready for rejection, but let God's grace lead you through it.
- #26 Never hide or deny who you are. If they don't bring up your orientation in interviews, do it yourself. Give people space and time to get to know you, if you are called.

- #27 Be open and honest about yourself and your hopes and fears. Ask the congregation to do the same. Ask them specifically what they will do to support you in the event of problems around your sexuality.
- #28 Go for it! While many gay clergy colleagues have left the ministry, I knew that I had a pastor's heart and wouldn't be happy until I was serving a church again. It took 5 years and 12 different jobs before I received my present call. I've never looked back!
- #31 Be clear with the search committee. Make clear you have many facets. People may say it's a "non-issue" but remind them as long as it's a problem someone, it's an issue. "Make love your aim."
- #32 Make sure congregation has been through the ONA process.
- #33 It's challenging and incredibly rewarding. Try it. Make sure you have lots of support outside the church.
- #35 I personally think "hiding" is a sin – because hiding separates us from God. So to live our truth to the glory of God is always more positive than hiding who we are. I think it is important to be comfortable with who you are and not be ashamed of or hid who you are.
- #37 Be honest from the beginning with the search committee.
- #38 Never flinch from being exactly who you are. There will never be a better time to insist on full acceptance than at the beginning, during the "honeymoon" period with a congregation. If you act like everything's cool/normal, then they will respond accordingly. If you act like you are hiding some awful secret (like it's something to be ashamed of), then it creates a tension for them, not knowing how to handle the odd unspoken undercurrent. Pastors must model that Christ's love is for all! I also think fidelity is important for all pastors, gay or straight.
- If there is this certitude/confidence.....if there is a casual but resolute ability to know you are called by God to be both gay and a pastor, then you can step into your authentic *voice and authority*.....and leave behind (hopefully) the personal politics. I think some congregations are worried that an openly gay pastor will want to be a banner waver, wearing rainbow stickers on their stole every Sunday. I am sure there's a need for that in some places, but that's not my own personal call.
- I am so not interested in that. I'd rather talk about the gospel.....the good news for ALL!
- #39 Be as open as possible
- #40 Be open and honest about who you are. Don't be discouraged about rejection. Keep a positive attitude, and trust that God will lead you to the right congregation. It will take time, so be patient.
- #41 The search will probably take longer, and there will be frustrations and disappointments in the search process. But it is worth it! I can't imagine being a minister without being fully and authentically myself. It would feel spiritually dishonest.
- #42 Be out, take your spouse for interviews, get the committee to making housing and jobs available to spouse while you talk the other nuts and bolts. Find out if there is a skeleton of LGBT in their church before you go – that tripped us up many a time.
- #43 Be who you are, not just as an LGBT person, but who you are as a Christian, a human being. Share the things you care about with them. Let them know this is a journey with no right or wrong answers. Make yourself available for honest and

- candid conversation without being defensive. Find the pastoral moment in the questions or comments.
- #44 The same as anyone else – be you- know who you are – your strengths and weaknesses. Be a pastor.
 - #45 I support openness so long as this person understands the likelihood that call as an “out” person will be difficult.
 - #46 Be you. Don’t make a big deal about it. When questions come up, answer them. Let folks see you as a person so your sexual orientation just becomes another aspect of you (like hair color). Don’t hide. If they don’t want you for you, another church will – but at least you’ve given them the opportunity to say “yes” to who you are (and to come face to face with their prejudices otherwise).
 - #47 Have fun. Be real. Be loving through it all. Practice good Family Systems process.
 - #48 Give ‘em my email and my blessings
 - #49 Be genuine and sincere as a person, first; as a pastor, second; as gay as an integral part of you are as a person/pastor.
 - #51 Be yourself. Don’t go to a place where you feel you have to hide your authentic self from the congregation or community.
 - #52 Do it.
 - #53 Do it. Follow your heart. Ministry is inherently painful and difficult for all kinds of reasons. Don’t let this be the one reason to stop following God’s call.
 - #54 Patience! Keep yourself open to God’s call regardless of the area of the country of the name of the church. Be ready to be an example and a beacon for others. Allow God’s spirit to guide you.
 - #55 It is really hard to differentiate between homophobia and normal resistance to a new pastor, but it’s important to try. My parishioners were confused too. It has helped me have strong support and to get help figuring out what may have been to be supported by the person who hurt me. I don’t think this is all that different advice I’d give to anyone. My partner and I also found the transition from the privacy of the closet to the openness of being out a little hard to negotiate.
 - #57 I would share the joy of giving served this congregation
 - #58 I realized that some folks don’t really understand the issues facing gay clergy. I would recommend having severe open dialogues with the congregation prior to accepting the call.
 - #59 Go!
 - #60 Go for it!
 - #61 Get a strong system of support – be very careful at developing friendships within the congregation. Don’t underestimate the need for self-care.
 - #62 Be comfortable with who you are and be willing to meet others “where they are.”
 - #63 I’m not sure I have anything specific – except to be aware that everyone has parts of themselves or their lives they feel trepid about. And just your being open is a big help to them.
 - #64 Be yourself. Let your gifts for ministry shine through. Sexual orientation is only one part of who you are.

70. What advice would you give a congregation or search committee regarding calling an openly gay pastor?

- #1 Focus on competencies for ministry and the pastoral needs of the congregation. Make sure that the pastor's gifts and the congregation's needs are well suited. This will contribute to your successful ministry together.
- #2 Do not let sexual orientation stand in the way of judging our skills and ambitions as a pastor. Focus on the match.
- #3 Go through the ONA process first and make sure that people know that an ONA declaration means that GLBT profiles will be considered.
- #4 Call the person whom God is telling you is your next pastor and don't worry about anything else.
- #5 Be honest with yourselves and the candidate as to what issues will arise.
- #6 Recognize the fact that one who has the integrity of being out can/will be a plus, focus on the overall strengths/gifts for ministry (not on orientation).
- #7 Be honest and make sure the congregation is ready.
- #8 Realize a gay pastor who is open with them places a high value on honesty and authenticity. A search committee should have no hesitation in asking questions about how this person's sexual orientation might impact the conduct of his or her ministry – but ask the same thing of a straight candidate, who might be single. Partnered or unpartnered, any pastor, regardless of sexual orientation, has a personal and private life.
- #9 Announce early and openly. Give the congregation a chance, before the candidate is introduced, to get comfortable with the idea that a candidate is queer. But, very soon afterward, put a face to the concept. The congregation should be calling a pastor, not a sexuality. The congregation needs to see the gifts and talents that makes a candidate rise to the top of the profiles pile. The congregation and the candidate should be VERY careful not to introduce the candidate in such a way that it sounds like: "S/he's the best candidate, except s/he's gay. But s/he's still the best!" Being queer isn't a bad thing. I introduced myself as Christian, and talked about how my queer identity informs my understanding of the communion table (being open to all) and the church community (one of liberation and justice). My queer identity was neither the totality of my being, nor a black mark on my reputation that should be overlooked to see all my other gifts.
- #10 Don't make more of it than it needs to be.
- #11 Keep focused on what you are looking for and not on what you don't want. You may surprise yourself with a grace-filled change for the better.
- #12 Treat them exactly as you would any other candidate; if partnered treat that person the same way you would another candidate's wife or husband.
- #13 Be as open as possible about the pastor and have house meetings, etc. to open communications.
- #14 Oh, God! Grow up! Get over it, already! Take to them about skills and gifts for ministry and choose the best candidate. If the person is LGBT, do your groundwork with the congregation. Work ahead on the issue and expect more trouble when the issue becomes a person. Be honest with the candidate.
- #15 We're just people! Discriminatory "hiring" practices are not tolerated in so many areas, why are they tolerated in Christ's church?
- #17 There is an adjustment between thinking this is a good idea and seeing it in front of them. Keep talking, be open, have a lot of time to process with people.
- #18 Talk with other congregations – UCC or not – in your community or outside of it with GLBT pastors. Invite them to talk with your congregation. Talk with and

- write PFLAG to your church (there's no better advocate than a parent!). Be proactive. Discuss and pray before you encounter issues of call!
- #19 Take risks like Jesus and the Early Church. Be counter-cultural and live the gospel!
 - #20 Get past the labels of gay and straight to decide if this is the person who is right for your church. They are more than their sexuality!
 - #21 Be thoughtful. Be realistic. Take a chance – based on an individual's gifts and graces for ministry. It's good to stretch, be prophetic. But, not all congregations can do this yet.
 - #22 Have a strong faith when issues arrive. Be ready to stand by your LGBT minister.
 - #23 Look for the best pastor available to serve the needs of your congregation. If she or he happens to be gay, recognize that this pastor's sense of call and commitment must be strong, and that she/he probably worked through some extra challenges to follow that calling. This person may also have a deepened compassion for reaching-out and connecting with others who have felt disenfranchised from the church. Be open and prayerful of the spirit's guidance.
 - #24 Be honest with candidate as to where your church is in terms of ONA. Recognize there are unique challenges in being a gay pastor. Create a pastoral relations committee if not in place.
 - #26 Assess their strengths as you would any other candidate. Then ask yourselves in what ways the person's sexual orientation is a gift that your congregation needs. If you can't see the gift then perhaps the fit is not right.
 - #27 Be honest with yourself in answering the question, "Are you ready for a GLBT pastor?" Make sure the hiring is not done to 1) make a statement, or 2) cater to the agenda of 1 or 2 people on the search committee
 - #28 Because my congregation didn't know how the church would react, the search committee wanted to keep my orientation a secret. I told them I couldn't possibly do that! So the search committee ended up writing a letter to the membership, as did I – in which I came out to them. The letters were mailed together. I think being open and honest from day one carried the day.
 - #31 Don't be afraid to ask the questions you may just want to/need to. Be honest as possible about the congregation. Be prepared to support/inform – to "come out" in your own ways. Be led by your vision, informed by your fears. Not vice versa.
 - #32 Make sure congregation has been through the ONA process.
 - #33 It's a blessing. I know incredibly gifts GL pastors. Try not to see them as a gay or lesbian pastor, but a pastor who is lots of things, as well as gay or lesbian. And do not underestimate the resistance or anxiety this will create among the congregation. Deal with it openly and honestly and patiently.
 - #35 Ask them to consider the implications for the church and ask if they would support their pastor and the ministry. Don't be ashamed of who you are.
 - #37 Reflect, study, inform yourself and congregation prior to the calling process
 - #38 Try to process through as much of the issue as you can BEFORE the pastor arrives. Whatever it takes to have open and honest dialogue – make it happen!
 - #39 Be sensitive
 - #40 We're not as scary as you think! We are not the enemy. Be open and honest about your fears and concerns. Talk with other churches who have an open LGBT pastor. Trust that God will lead you to select the right pastor for you, regardless of your sexuality.

- #41 They should interview and consider all potential candidates who appear to have the gifts and experience they are looking for. They should open themselves up to God's movement in the search and call process and prayerfully consider all candidates. If they listen with their hearts to how God is calling them, they will make the right decision. And if God calls them to choose an openly gay pastor, God will help them make the ministry a blessing to the church and the community.
- #42 ONA first would help, interview the family, get a sense of what you feel before you invite someone in, be sure they are out to the church NOT just the search committee. And make the intro to the church NOT about orientation any more than with a non-LGBT candidate. Make a life shift to openness and affirmation in all ways, not just the LGBT orientation and lifestyle. Be faithful and hopeful and sure, God is still speaking on this and means business – we are all the children of God.
- #43 Talk honestly before the search begins about whether they are open to considering an LGBT pastor. Of course, the issues might be different for the bisexual and transgender pastors. If the search committee considers an LGBT candidate, go through all the potential fears and questions with the candidate and be very prepared for presenting their candidate. Take it upon yourselves to respond to questions and concerns – don't put the candidate in that position
- #44 You should be able to put this issue behind you. Listen to God. Put your "money where your mouth is," i.e. if you are already ONA, then what's the difficulty? If you aren't ONA, then think how this really doesn't matter.
- #45 Be explicit in stating the need for the pastor to care for his/her personal life, i.e. taking vacation, a weekly day off, etc. And to be ready for negative community reaction.
- #46 We don't necessarily need a gay realtor or a gay couple to stay with – we like heterosexuals too! Ask questions and be open about who the congregation is and how they may feel. Check your expectations at the door – we're just people.
- #47 Be not afraid. The sexual orientation of the minister is not a criteria for fitness to pastoral ministry.
- #48 Don't look at the process as calling an openly gay pastor; look at it as calling the best candidate possible.
- #49 Be open to the person's gifts, abilities, and unique/special sensitivities; sexual orientation is one of the gifts the pastor brings to ministry.
- #51 Don't call a gay minister if you don't mean it.
- #52 Do it.
- #53 It will be hard at first – but well worth it. Be open to one another, be open to the Spirit. Talk, talk, talk.
- #54 Keep yourself open to the people God sends your way. Don't hold on to prejudices or stereotypes. Allow God's spirit to guide you.
- #55 To be gentle with each other. This is a hard thing to do. Be in touch with neighboring congregations who have already done this and learn from their experience. If possible, go through the stages of presenting the candidate slowly. Attend to the people who are frightened or angry. Chances are their pain is about something else entirely. Remind yourselves that you are changing the world, and it's bound to be tough.
- #57 Pay attention to the gifts that the person brings to the ministry/pastorate. Fully support both the minister/partner within the community as well as the church.

- Open their hearts to see God's love at work. I would also invite the congregation to talk to lay folk from other congregations who have had an openly gay pastor.
- #58 Talk openly with the congregation about the skills the pastor brings to the church. Be very specific about issues that will affect the congregation, and be honest that some folks will leave in response, but others will come to the church also.
 - #59 Go!
 - #60 Go for it!
 - #61 Do your homework. Ask the hard questions within your committee before you interview. Know people's fears, thoughts, questions, and represent them fairly to the candidates.
 - #62 Be sure you are willing to be totally open and affirming – not just tolerant. Don't be afraid to ask questions, get educated, and start conversations.
 - #63 Do it! Anyone willing to risk that with you is willing to risk other things with you.
 - #64 Carefully introduce your candidate. Mention sexual orientation but don't define the candidate by it. Give lots of extra time for the congregation to consider it. Give extra opportunities for the candidate and members to meet prior to the vote.

71. What advice, if any, would you give to an association or conference minister involved in placement?

- #1 See answers for #69 and 70. Also, find out which churches in your areas have successfully integrated openly gay and lesbian pastors. Match up search committee chairs of successful churches with the committee's that may be introducing out pastors for the first time for coaching and support.
- #2 None other than what is stated above. Competence and fit should be the primary focus in placement, search and call.
- #3 Encourage churches to go through the ONA process NOW so that when they go through the search process, the committee will know whether or not to consider LGBT profiles. Make it clear to the churches that they WILL receive such profiles.
- #4 Be honest about what a congregation might do, but encourage pastors and congregations to interview lots of different kinds of pastors.
- #5 Be sure the congregation has done their homework on these issues.
- #6 See answers for #69 and 70
- #7 Encourage the Association or Conference to adopt a non-discriminatory clause and encourage congregations to endorse it. Have a statement that is shared with the applicant affirming the placement office's position on LGBT ministry candidates.
- #8 Placement staff should be candid with candidates about the openness of a congregation to LGBT candidates. In a couple of cases, I have found placement staff more excited about the possibility of having an openly gay pastor in the conference/association than candid openness about a particular congregation.
- #9 Area Ministers should not be in the process of selecting candidates for churches. It is the church's responsibility to do the work of discernment and figuring out. Area minister's should help search committee's identify what the needs of the congregation are first – good preaching, pastoral care, charisma, mission, whatever. And then, the search committee should have a conversation: what if someone who has all the strengths that we're looking for – what if they're black,

- queer, woman, disabled, etc. The search committee needs to find what's important, and then contemplate what biases they might have to seeing what's important.
- #10 If you've got personal issues in this area, recuse yourself from the relevant searches/placements.
 - #11 Hmm. Provide the best candidates to those seeking churches. Lead! You have a moral authority and responsibility to connect the right pastor with the right church. Don't be afraid to do that, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, etc.
 - #12 Gay or lesbian clergy have as many gifts to bring to ministry as any straight clergy. Help them, help search committees not to be "blinded" by homophobia.
 - #13 My conference minister was very supportive and helpful to me and the congregation.
 - #14 Focus on experience, training, references, etc. Focus on gifts for ministry. In other words, treat them like a candidate. Be supportive where you can, and always honest about the church. Help churches look at the issue before a candidate comes along.
 - #15 Be honest with both congregations and pastors. Don't set either up for unnecessary failure if at all possible. Be honest about your own attitude and beliefs and work on them if necessary. Get to know GLBT candidates as people, advocate for them if you can.
 - #16 The Association minister for this congregation was a very strong advocate for me. He got to know me personally and encouraged the search committee to do the same prior to judging me by the profile and by sexual orientation alone.
 - #17 Get these profiles out! Ask churches to consider us – give us a special nod of "worth checking out."
 - #18 Why does the denomination still list "family status" and age on the profile? It puts sexual orientation and age into "play" as a consideration. Talk through sexual orientation with search committee before search at annual congregational meetings. It's an issue of call.
 - #19 We need advocates for LGBT pastors.
 - #20 Examine your own biases, though don't let them enter into the process.
 - #21 Gosh – that would depend on the players.
 - #22 My Association and Conference Ministers have been very supportive; hard for me to answer this, having not known the opposite. In the call process it's important for Assn. Min. to remain somewhat neutral, but to stamp out prejudice when it comes up.
 - #23 Do your job fairly and openly. Match the gifts/skills needed with the gifts/skills of the candidate. Don't let congregations off the hook – help them all become the fully inclusive body of Christ.
 - #24 Check in, one on one, with new pastors on a regular basis. Form clergy groups for new pastors (like Connecticut)
 - #26 Don't limit GLBT candidates to ONA or "liberal" congregations in an effort to "spare them the pain of rejection." Churches need to meet LGBT pastors and see their gifts and talents. It is so much harder to reject a real person than it is a category of persons.
 - #27 Make sure you are open and honest with the candidate and congregation. If you want a GLBT person to serve a congregation that no one else wants, say so. Conversely, if the congregation thinks there will be tension and conflict because of the call, say so.

- #28 I think it's important for any LGBT candidate to have a pretty solid idea how open the people in a prospective church will be. That can get lots of preliminary stuff out of the way. People need to be forthright about preferences on all sides.
- #31 Please keep search committees informed of the talents and gifts of all candidates. We are a people with so much to give the UCC. Name the issue with committees – are you ready? Will you ever be? What makes the difference (is it theology or mere anxiety)?
- #32 Make sure congregation has been through ONA process
- #35 I found it so helpful to have honest feedback about the level of acceptance in a particular Association or church. It protected me a bit from the rejection I might have experienced as a result of putting myself out there for examination. I think it would be important to have association and conference ministers advocate for GLBT clergy in the search/call process.
- #37 Continue encouragement of search committees/churches to become ONA prior to calling. Be open and honest about churches and potential candidates.
- #38 This sounds simplistic but the best thing that could happen is for the work of ONA to intensify and spread within the ranks of heterosexual Christians. The WORST person, in my opinion, to advance a congregation towards a welcoming stance is a gay pastor serving that congregation. It's too much weight on the pastor, I think. Far better is my own situation, which is ideal: the congregation did their soul-searching before me, for all the right reasons, not because they like me personally or feel loyalty to me as an individual. Luckily, all the work had been done prior to my arrival.....and therefore I get to be fully myself without having to be a single-issue pastor.
- My gay identity is not something I "lead" with, i.e. it's not the first thing I feel people need to know about me. My great hope is that one day it will simply become old hat—no need to spend much time talking about it at all. This is not to say that I shrink from discussing gay rights etc. I have preached about it, certainly. I am proud of who I am, and it took many years to arrive at this place of self-acceptance. I am not closeted in any way....how could I be? I am legally married and have two children!! (My wife and I each had a baby, the dads are known to us—two gay men who've been together 25+ years). We simply are a family-- we simple "are". I am so lucky—I get to be a regular pastor in a wonderful church, leading a totally "typical" family life in a suburb. It's wildly exotic when you think about it: this raging normalcy. The Holy Spirit's move.....radical
- #39 Ask them about their (the Association or Conference Minister) personal sexual behavior
- #40 Communicate, communicate, communicate! Don't hold back information from the candidate "not wanting to hurt their feelings." The candidate doesn't need to "imagine the worst." They should be told the truth. Think "outside the box" and offer unique arrangements to match congregations and candidates that you feel would work. Trust God's guiding spirit.
- #41 My area minister had a key role in suggesting my name to this church, based on her knowledge of me to reluctantly apply for the interim position (she twisted my arm!) and she also worked with the search committee to consider me. The committee didn't find out until five minutes into the interview that I was a gay man. Some of them later admitted that if they had known up-front, they probably wouldn't have interviewed me.

- #42 Let the conference become ONA and your staff be trained to be open and affirming and just with all candidates, not just LGBT. Take the time to open the files to be sure that all candidates who qualify are offered possible interviews, etc. Go with candidates to a church where the treatment was not just, as ours did, and make a reconciliatory meeting happen. Call the conference minister together often to be assured they know what the association/conference believes regarding LGBT candidates. Pray to be open AND affirming – this is not a tolerance issue but a faithful commitment to send folks where they are called. God calls through congregations.
- #43 Our committees on ministry are so uneven throughout the UCC system that the experiences of LGBT pastors is equally uneven. Some are treated with respect and openness, others are overtly told there is no chance for them and will not support them in doing so. There is dire need for training for committees on ministry to deal with LGBT ministers seeking calls, standing, etc. Association and conference staff also need to be trained about the placement process. What special steps should they take, especially if a search committee wants to recommend an out pastor? How can they counsel them in good ways to handle this? A/C staff need to feel comfortable about the supporting the candidacy of LGBT pastors – to discern the qualifications and gifts as they would with straight candidates. Not all LGBT pastors are equally qualified; not all should be presented as candidates. We must all be honestly confronted with our areas of need and growth. Just because we are LGBT and out doesn't mean we should be called
- #45 Be proactive. And sensitive. My experience is that conference staff sometimes make one of two errors: 1) putting candidates into impossible situations to “educate” the committee; 2) that the candidates are pigeon-holed and never submitted to non-ONA churches.
- #46 Be open and honest. Know your own prejudices. Know your congregations.
- #48 This is a unique and prophetic ministry. It deserves the kind of pastoral care that people on the front lines of any civil rights battle deserve.
- #49 Encourage them to reinforce the invitation – no matter who you are, no matter where you are on life's journey, the welcome is for clergy and laity alike.
- #51 Be clear to churches not to hire a gay person if they expect them to be straight.
- #52 Do it.
- #54 Be as “intrusive” as possible in every church's search process, feeding them profiles of all qualified persons. Be open to conversations (blunt) with everyone who is searching a call about specific churches and association climate.
- #55 Get help from a neighboring congregation who has called a gay or lesbian pastor.
- #57 Our Conference Ministers have been extremely supportive. I would invite other conference ministers to talk with them. I would encourage them to look at the gifts and skills for ministry and not make an issue of orientation. I would encourage them to help with the discernment process as was done here.
- #58 Identify supportive churches in the association or conference to assist the church in transition.
- #59 Do not “censor” for churches, what they might or might not be open to. Hold churches accountable to their calling.
- #60 Help people and churches find the best match. Be clear about places that might be open and those not so.

- #61 I suppose the advice is to get involved, be present – our inclination is to stay out of it and let congregations work it out, but congregations need help/education on this issue.
- #62 Give plenty of opportunities for education. Be very open and clear about your stand. If it's OK to be GLBT use "inclusive" language (clergy spouse/partner, etc.) Make sure people don't have to guess if they are welcome.
- #63 It's your job to lead – lead by example, acknowledging a congregation's discomfort should be different than enabling it.
- #64 Meet with the search committees at the beginning to discuss their feelings about which candidates they will consider.

72. The church's setting: (See Chart)

Rural/small town - 13
Small city - 11
Suburban - 20
Urban/inner city – 18

Original Denominational Affiliation of churches in the survey: (See Chart)

Congregational Christian - 44
E & R - 5
Formed since merger - 7
From another denomination - 6

Survey Participants:

Gender:

Male - 27
Female - 32

Race/Ethnicity:

All Euro-American

Age: (See Chart)

Younger than 30 - 1
30-39 - 9
40-49 - 28
50-59 - 18
60+ - 3

Years out of the closet:

Less than 1 - 5
6-10 - 17
11-20 - 23
21-30 - 7
30+ - 5