

# RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION



## In the Home In the Congregation In the Schools

*In the tradition of WE AFFIRM, Religious Organizations Support Reproductive Choice, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice has compiled excerpts of official statements of religious denominations and traditions on the importance of sexuality education. The URL or publication for each excerpt is noted.*

*Major faith traditions representing millions of Americans support comprehensive sexuality education. In keeping with our nation's constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, they oppose civil laws that would impose specific religious views about sexuality education on all Americans.*

*The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is a national organization of 40 religious groups and faith traditions committed to preserving reproductive choice as an integral part of religious freedom. Perspectives in this document come from both RCRC member and non-member organizations.*

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### **American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.**

“We are committed to providing programs of education and support to guide and nurture persons making choices about singleness, marriage, divorce, remarriage and parenthood.”

“We are committed to working with others for public policies and practices which enhance the status of families and empower them to do their unique work of nurturing succeeding generations of citizens.”

*American Baptist Policy Statement on Family Life No. 7036:6, June 1984<sup>1</sup>*

### **Central Conference of American Rabbis**

“... Experience with the Reform Movement's youth programs indicates that Reform Jewish youth are as sexually active as their peers. In addition, every scientific study that breaks down participants by religion shows the same results.

“Therefore, the Central Conference of American Rabbis resolves to:  
Support federal, state, provincial, and local legislation to provide for the inclusion of comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education in the public schools on all levels (from grade school through high school), while opposing federal, state, provincial, and local funding exclusively for abstinence-only programs.”

*Sexuality Education, Adopted by the 114th Annual Convention of the Central Conference Of American Rabbis (organized rabbinate of Reform Judaism) March 2003<sup>2</sup>*

### **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

“THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Ft. Worth, Texas, July 21-25, 2007, encourage all manifestations of the church to participate in proactive prevention by:  
Engaging in age appropriate health and sexuality education paired with Christian spirituality for adults and youth.”

*General Assembly Resolution NO. 0725 (SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY) PROACTIVE PREVENTION: SEEKING COMMON GROUND ON THE ISSUE OF ABORTION<sup>3</sup>*

### **Church of the Brethren**

“Education for family life is appropriate also within the public school. It is needed to supplement instruction in the home and church. Public school instruction should include information about the body, sex organs, and the reproductive system, but the emphasis should be on values and relationships. Teachers who are responsible for this task should be well trained and themselves be worthy models of mature and responsible sexuality. The church supports responsible family-life education in the public school as long as the religious commitment of all students and residents of the community is respected. Family-life education will not solve all sex, marriage, and family problems. The task requires the coordinated efforts of home, school, and church.”

*Statement, 1983 Annual Conference Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective, Family-Life Education 1983<sup>4</sup>*

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<http://www.abergr.org/summit/reports/Resolutionofconcernforfamilylife-MidAmerica.doc>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/resodisp.pl?file=sexed&year=2003>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.disciples.org/ga/resolutions/0725/>

## Episcopal Church

“Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention of the Episcopal Church strongly urge dioceses and congregations to provide a safe, hospitable environment for frank conversation with youth and young adults about human sexuality, to share and teach accurate information, and to promote dialogue, within the context of the Baptismal Covenant;”

*General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000 (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 202.*<sup>5</sup>

“Resolved, That we encourage the members of this Church to give strong support to responsible local public and private school programs of education in human sexuality.”

*General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Detroit, 1988 (New York: General Convention, 1989), p. 687. No. 1988-A089, 1989*<sup>6</sup>

## Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

People of all ages need information and experience to understand and responsibly live out their sexual identity in the varied relationships of their lives -- as child or parent, sister or brother, spouse, friend, co-worker, neighbor, or stranger. This church affirms the importance of ordering society and educating youth and adults so that all might live in these relationships with mutual respect and responsibility.

Education about sexuality should emphasize monogamy, abstinence, and responsible sexual behavior, as well as practices intended to prevent the transmission of disease during sexual intercourse.

*Sexuality: Some Common Convictions Adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on November 9, 1996.*<sup>7</sup>

## Islam

“Islam is explicit about many aspects of human sexuality. Also, based on the numerous hadith showing the Prophet's willingness to discuss these matters openly, it should be obvious that education about matters related to sex is acceptable.”

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[http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:21h63fCpIH0J:www.brethren.org/ac/ac\\_statements/83HumanSexuality.htm+Human+Sexuality+from+a+Christian+Perspective&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us](http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:21h63fCpIH0J:www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/83HumanSexuality.htm+Human+Sexuality+from+a+Christian+Perspective&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution.pl?resolution=2000-A046](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2000-A046)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution.pl?resolution=1988-A089](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=1988-A089)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.elca.org/socialstatements/sexuality/>

“Explaining anatomy and the changes one's body experiences during puberty are essential for enabling young people to grow up with a healthy self-image. Also, in an age where sexual activity in many countries begins at an early age, Muslim adolescents must be informed to better enable them to deal with peer pressure. Sex education can be taught in a way that informs young people about sexuality in scientific and moral terms.”

“Regardless of the challenges of each society, young people must be adequately informed. Also, in some Muslim communities, individuals are encouraged to marry at young ages. They need to be educated regarding sexuality prior to the marriage such that they know what to expect and can consider their options for birth control prior to consummating the marriage.”

*An Islamic Perspective on Sexuality by Muslim Women's League September 1999*<sup>8</sup>

## Mennonite Church USA

“We call on pastors and congregational leaders to address issues of sexuality and appropriate sexual expression in sermons, in Sunday school classes, and in premarital counseling.”

“We commit ourselves to provide Christian education about human sexuality for both young and old and to foster understanding of various means by which pregnancy can be prevented when it is not desired.”

*Statement on Abortion Adopted by Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly Atlanta, Georgia July 2003*<sup>9</sup>

## Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The 206th General Assembly (1994):

1. Supports the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Surgeon General in planning and implementing comprehensive school health education that includes age and developmentally appropriate sexuality education in all grades as a part of human growth and development curriculum for youth.

2. Calls upon state legislatures to require that all schools provide comprehensive kindergarten through twelfth grade human growth and development education that is complete, factual, accurate, free of bias, and does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability.

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[http://www.mwluca.org/topics/sexuality/sexuality\\_pos.html](http://www.mwluca.org/topics/sexuality/sexuality_pos.html)

9

[http://www.mennoniteusa.org/NewItems/delegates/statemen\\_t\\_abortion.pdf](http://www.mennoniteusa.org/NewItems/delegates/statemen_t_abortion.pdf)

1994 Statement-PCUSA, 569-570 "The Challenge of Choice: 30 Years of Affirming Reproductive Choice; Presbyterians and Roe v. Wade, 1973 to 2003" November/December 2002

### Reformed Church in America

General Synod recommended the following:  
To request that regional synods and classes "develop regional and local strategies for sexuality education."

*Summary of General Synod Statements on Abortion (Minutes of the General Synod 1990, p. 101)*<sup>10</sup>

### Unitarian Universalist Association

"WHEREAS the REAL Act (Responsible Education about Life) will establish the first ever federal funding stream for medically accurate, comprehensive sexuality education;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates of the 2007 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association call upon Congress to support passage of the REAL and PATHWAY Acts and urge member congregations and individual Unitarian Universalists to immediately petition congressional representatives to co-sponsor these bills;"

*Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education Legislation, 2007 Action of Immediate Witness*<sup>11</sup>

"Be It Further Resolved, that the 1994 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association urges member congregations to advocate the availability of comprehensive, objective, unbiased, up-to-date, age-appropriate, sexuality education curricula in public schools, including information about:

- The reproductive system and its functions;
- The proper use of all forms of contraception, including the option of abstinence;
- Sexually transmitted diseases, their prevention and treatments;
- Sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape (including date rape), and incest, as well as their prevention and treatment through counseling, information, and resources;
- Pregnancy counseling and options including information about organizations such as Planned Parenthood and Birthright."

*Sexuality Education in Public Schools, 1994 Resolution of Immediate Witness*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>

<http://www.rca.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=492&srcid=491>

<sup>11</sup>

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/socialjustice/statements/31604.shtml>

### United Church of Christ

#### IV. A STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION

5. "Sex education beginning early in elementary school, as called for by the Surgeon General, is a major component of the effort to contain the AIDS pandemic. Curricula need to address the physical, social and ethical nature of human sexuality and teach skills for responsible personal decision-making."

6. "Government funding of research, service, education, treatment and prevention must become a global priority."

*A Pronouncement Health and Wholeness in the Midst of a Pandemic, Adopted by the Sixteenth General Synod June 25-30, 1987*<sup>13</sup>

### The United Methodist Church

"We recognize the continuing need for full, positive, age-appropriate and factual sex education opportunities for children, young people, and adults. The Church offers a unique opportunity to give quality guidance and education in this area."

*Human Sexuality The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2004*<sup>14</sup>

"Children, youth, and adults need opportunities to discuss sexuality and learn from quality sex education materials in families, churches and schools."

*Pornography and Sexual Violence Adopted 1988; Revised and Adopted 2000, The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2004*<sup>15</sup>

### The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that United Synagogue supports comprehensive sex education; Encourages parents to talk to their children about sexuality and sexual health in a Conservative Jewish context; Calls upon the U.S. Congress to cease funding of abstinence only education; Opposes funding of abstinence only education on federal, state, provincial and local levels; Encourages the support of the inclusion of components of age appropriate comprehensive sex education in public schools; and encourages components of age appropriate comprehensive sex education in Solomon Schechter schools, Camps Ramah, Kadima, USY and Koach.

<sup>12</sup>

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/socialjustice/statements/14260.shtml>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/1987-A-Pronouncement-and-Proposal-for-Action-Health-and-Wholeness-in-the-Midst-of-a-Pandemic.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=1728>

<sup>15</sup> <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=4&mid=935>

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that United Synagogue will develop age-appropriate educational materials to be used in day schools, synagogue schools, youth groups and homes.

*Comprehensive Sex Education (2007) Resolution passed at the international biennial convention 2007*<sup>16</sup>

**National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.**

“The Committee assists participating denominations and organizations in:

- The life-long nurturing task of families
- Strengthening marriage, parenting and familial living through programs of education and leader development

- Addressing human sexuality throughout the life cycle
- Supporting families in a time of many cultural changes
- Providing remedial strategies for problems affecting families, preventative strategies for enhancing the health of families, and advocacy regarding public policies that impact families.”

*Committee on Family Ministries and Human Sexuality, Education and Leadership Ministries Committee Mission*<sup>17</sup>

**Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice Member Organizations\***

Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options • Episcopal Church • Washington Office, Presbyterian Church (USA) • Women’s Ministries, Presbyterian Church (USA) • United Church of Christ • General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church • General Board of Global Ministries, Women’s Division, United Methodist Church • Caucuses/Organizations • Catholics for a Free Choice • Christian Lesbians Out (CLOUT) • Church of the Brethren Women’s Caucus • Disciples for Choice • Episcopal Urban Caucus • Episcopal Women’s Caucus • Lutheran Women’s Caucus • Methodist Federation for Social Action • Rabbinical Assembly, Conservative Judaism • United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism • Women’s League for Conservative Judaism • Central Conference of American Rabbis, Reform Judaism • North American Federation of Temple Youth, Reform Judaism • Union for Reform Judaism • Women of Reform Judaism, The Federation of Temple Sisterhoods • Women’s Rabbinic Network, Reform Judaism • Jewish Reconstructionist Federation • Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association • Society for Humanistic Judaism • Caucuses/Organizations • American Jewish Committee • American Jewish Congress • Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith • Hadassah, WZOA • Jewish Women International • NA’AMAT USA • National Council of Jewish Women • Women’s American ORT • American Ethical Union • National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union • Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations • Unitarian Universalist Women’s Federation • Young Religious Unitarian Universalists • Continental Unitarian • Universalist Youth Adult Network • YWCA of the USA

\*Coalition membership does not require or imply conformity to all the actions and initiatives of the Coalition

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.uscj.org/Sex\\_Education7473.html](http://www.uscj.org/Sex_Education7473.html)