

# Outreach/Service

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## Third Church More Light Time Line

### 1975 to Present

- 1975 A 'self-affirming' homosexual candidate under care of the Presbytery of NYC presented himself for ordination. The Presbytery agreed to write an overture to the 1976 GA to study the matter and offer guidance.
- 1976 GA appointed a task force to conduct a study on 'the Church and Homosexuality' in response to the NYC overture.
- 1978 The task force reported to GA. GA rejected many parts of the study, pronounced 'homosexuality is a sin' but acknowledged that 'there is always more light to break forth from the Bible through the Holy Spirit'. The clerk of GA offered the presbyteries 'definitive guidance'.
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- 1980 TPC Session reaffirmed Book of Order Section G-5.0103, "The sole criterion for membership....".
- 1981 TPC Session agreed to sponsor the support group for gay and lesbian people.
- 1983 The support group presented a 3-part series on church and homosexuality for the congregation.
- 1985 GA's Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) affirmed that the 'definitive guidance', barring lesbian and gay people from full participation in the Presbyterian church, should be binding on churches and presbyteries.
- 1985 Session held an all-day workshop at CRDS on 'Church and Homosexuality'.
- 1986 In January, Session appointed a task force to recommend specific initiatives that 'TPC can and should take in working for inclusive church'.
- 1986 In June, Session held another workshop for new elders.
- 1986 In the Fall, the task force held a 6-part series for the congregation. It also held open meetings for the congregation to discuss becoming an inclusive church.
- 1987 Early in the year, Session voted that Third Church become an inclusive (More Light) church and adopted a policy statement called the More Light Statement.
- 1987 Third Church's More Light Statement was challenged by 4 area Presbyterian Churches on its church legality.
- 1988 Presbytery PJC found no illegality in Third Church's More Light Statement.
- 1988 A majority of the Presbyteries voted yes to an amendment from GA that recommended that rulings of the PJC become church law without review and vote at the level of the presbyteries.
- 1988 In the fall, Session held a workshop for new elders.
- 1989 Synod PJC found no illegality in Third Church's More Light Statement.
- 1989 Session held workshop to discuss homosexuality issues in the Presbyterian Church as part of the GA committee work on the Human Sexuality Report.

- 1990 Presbytery formed a Task Force on Homophobia.
- 1991 TPC helped organize and host the 1991 National More Light Conference in Rochester.
- 1991 The GA task force published the Human Sexuality Report.
- 1991 In 1991 and 1992, eighteen (18) classes were held at TPC on various subjects covered by the Human Sexuality Report.
- 1992 Session approved overture to the next GA to restore the selection of elders and ministers to the church and presbyteries without restrictions based on sexual orientation.
- 1993 Continued holding annual adult education programs on the subject of homosexuality and the church.
- 1993 Members of the ML committee participated in national networking to overturn the definitive guidance.
- 1993 GA voted that churches and presbyteries should conduct a 3 years study and dialogue on the issue of whether or not the Presbyterian Church should ordain gay and lesbian members.
- 1994 Session held a workshop for new elders. It participated in the GA 3 years study and dialogue on the issue of whether or not the church should ordain gay and lesbian members.
- 1995 Continued study and dialogue as part of the 3 year GA study Session adopted an overture calling for the creation of a 'Safe Harbor Covenant' during the 3 year study and dialogue.
- 1996 Session held workshop for elders, trustees and deacons at CRDS.
- 1996 TPC helped organize and hosted the 1996 National More Light Conference.
- 1996 GA voted on Amendment B in July. Presbyteries began voting in the fall. Amendment B prohibits ordination of gay and lesbian church members.
- 1997 Session wrote and approved a statement to the congregation affirming Third Church's statement of inclusivity (More Light Statement) and opposing Amendment B.
- 1997 Amendment B was approved by a slim majority of the Presbyteries It became part of the Book of Order in June.
- 1997 Amendment A (an amendment to Amendment B) was approved by delegates to the GA held in Syracuse in June. Amendment A was voted on by all the presbyteries. It was not approved, so it did not replace the Amendment B wording added to the Book of Order in June.
- 1997 Continued to contribute time and money to local community and national advocacy groups such as Interfaith Advocates, ML Presbyterians, That All May Freely Serve and the Covenant Network.
- 1998 Worked in the local Presbytery for passage of Amendment A (see 1997). It was defeated nationally.
- 1998 Brought some of the "Shower of Stoles" to TPC in conjunction with a Adult Ed series and More Light training for church officers.
- 1999 Submitted an anti-sexual violence overture to Session which Genesee Valley Presbytery joined with other presbyteries in submitting to General Assembly. The overture passed.
- 1999 Assisted in the visit of Dr. Peter Gomes, Chaplain and Professor of Theology, Harvard, to preach at TPC.
- 2000 Assisted in the visit of the Rev. Irene Monroe, a black , lesbian woman, to preach at TPC. Helped plan the worship service and talkback luncheon.
- 2000 Submitted request to Session to concur with NYC's overture to delete Amendment B.
- 2000 Participated in the Gay Pride Parade for the 5th year in a row.

- 2000 In 2000, 2001 and 2002 supported Hot Buttons Conferences that were held at TPC for the community for education about violence in our culture, including anti-gay violence.
- 2000 John Morton wrote a letter to Session asking what it planned to do concerning the National BSA policy to ban membership to gay scouts.
- 2000 John Morton and Jim Stewart wrote a letter to the Democrat and Chronicle asking our community to encourage the Otieana Council of BSA to oppose The National BSA ban on gay scouts.
- 2000 Session appointed a committee to work with Troup 31 and The Otetiana Council on a policy of inclusivity from 2000 to 2002.
- 2001 Ralph Carter served as Chair of the Save Our Scouting Committee, working with the Gay Alliance and the Otetiana Council on a policy that will make Scouting in Greater Rochester open to all youth and leaders.
- 2001 Held a 21st Anniversary celebration of Third Churches involvement in the More Light movement of the Presbyterian church. Invited Pat Youngdahl, former associate pastor at Third Church, and her partner, Michel McKenzie back to Rochester as the featured speaker and workshop leader. Pat was the pastor involved with writing the More Light Statement.
- 2002 Committee members participated in Lobby Day in Albany. Session voted to endorse SONDA (Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act).
- 2002 Planned and led several Adult Education classes relating to Third Presbyterian Churches position on ordination.
- 2003 Committee member, Ralph Carter, completed his term (one of several) on the national board of The More Light Presbyterians.
- 2003 Celebrated passage of the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act (SONDA) by the New York State Legislature.
- 2003 Initiated The Happy Bunch, a monthly social function for gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual people and their allies.
- 2004 Presbytery concurs with Baltimore Presbytery overture to 216<sup>th</sup> GA (2004) to remove G-6.0106b from Book of Order and related Authoritative Interpretations.
- 2005 Third Church is one of almost 500 Presbyterian churches who have demonstrated commitment to a welcoming denomination.
- 2006 Third Church concurs with overture to delete Book of Order G-6.0106b. The Overture is not considered by GA since the report and the AI from the Committee on Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church is adopted instead. John Wilkinson served on the committee.
- 2006 Presbytery approves report, including authoritative interpretation, recommended by the Committee on the Peace Unity and Purity of the Church. The AI allows candidates to declare scruples.
- 2006 GA passes ordination authoritative interpretation (AI) recommended by the Committee on the Peace Unity and Purity of the Church. The AI allows candidates to declare scruples.
- 2008 Third Church ML committee writes an overture to eliminate the 1987 definitive guidance, the 1979 AI and Book of Order G-6.0106b. Session approves. DUPC and CSA concur. They take it to Presbytery for its approval.
- 2008 GA passes AI to get rid of 1979 definitive guidance and 1979 AI. GA also approves Boston Overture to reword G-6.0106b, getting rid of 1997 "fidelity in marriage, chastity in singleness" clause. (The overture needs to be approved by a majority of the Presbyteries by May 2009.)
- 2009 Presbytery approves Amendment 08-B (Boston Overture) but amendment fails nationwide.

- 2010 Third Church Session approves an overture that would reword G-6.0106(b) to eliminate "fidelity in marriage, chastity in singleness" clause in the Book of Order
- 2010 Presbytery approves overture from Third Church that would reword Book of Order G-6.0106(b).
- 2010 GA approves new overture (not the TPC one) to reword G-6.0106(b). It needs to be approved by a majority of the Presbyteries by June 2011.
- 2011 Presbytery approves Amendment 10-A (new GA overture to reword G-6.0106(b)). It needs to be approved by a majority of the Presbyteries by June 2011.