



PRESBYTERIAN HERITAGE

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Silent protest for LGBTQIA+ inclusion at the 203rd General Assembly, 1991.

Illuminating the Past

MORE LIGHT PRESBYTERIANS RECORDS

This Spring, PHS received 48 cubic feet of original More Light Presbyterians (MLP) records from Rutgers University Special Collections and Archives.

The records, which date back to the organization's founding in 1974 are now processed and accessible to the public for the first time.

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RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE EXHIBIT REPORT

In early 2024, the Presbyterian Historical Society was awarded a \$94,750 grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. to develop a traveling exhibit prototype of photographs from its Religious News Service Collection. The exhibit, *Faith & Justice in the 1960s: Religious News Service Covers Civil Rights*, provides a window into news coverage of the Civil Rights Movement from 1961 to 1965, illuminating some lesser-known stories of people of faith who fought for justice, transforming the United States.

The first venue for the exhibit prototype was the Religion News Service's 90th Anniversary Symposium & Gala, held at the Fordham Lincoln Center in New York City on September 10.

If additional funding is awarded by Lilly Endowment, Inc.'s Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative in 2025, the prototype exhibit will serve as a template to develop other traveling exhibits that tell the story of religion news reporting in the mid-20th century.

Learn more: www.history.pcusa.org/rns



JOURNAL PREVIEW

In the Fall/Winter 2024 issue of *The Journal of Presbyterian History*, Frederick N. Seay considers the career of Rev. Thaddeus McRae, a Unionist and abolitionist Presbyterian pastor ordained in Mississippi who held strong to his beliefs while ministering in Texas during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Also, Arua Oko Omaka highlights the role of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and Canairelief in the humanitarian response to starvation in Biafra during its war with Nigeria in the late 1960s.

Call 215.672.1852 to receive *The Journal* or visit www.history.pcusa.org/journal

Medicine for Biafra.
RNS, 1968.



Illuminating the Past

MORE LIGHT PRESBYTERIANS

(continued from page 1)

What were the records of the chief grassroots LGBTQIA+ advocacy organization in the PC(USA) doing at Rutgers in the first place?

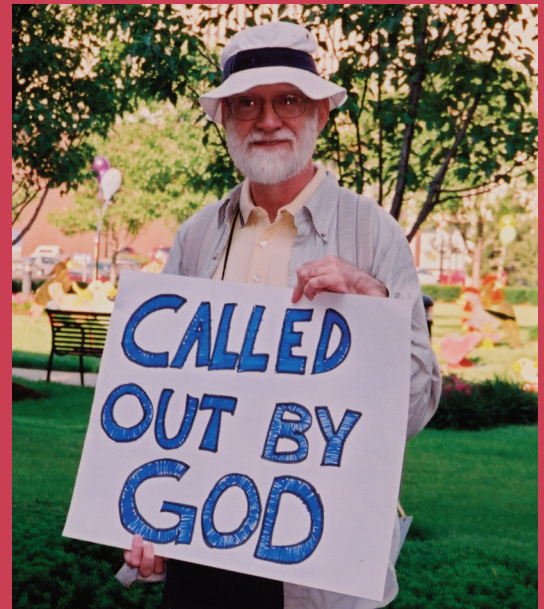
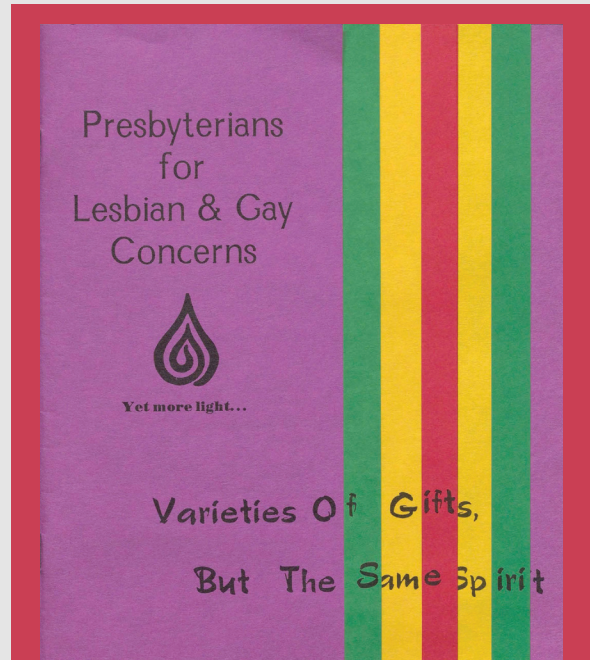
At the time of the records transfer, the PC(USA) at the national level was still hostile to queer Presbyterians. The 1996 ordination requirement known as Amendment B required candidates for ministry to “live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.”

At the time, PHS represented the national structure against which More Light was lobbying. We also held more than 30 cubic feet of Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns (PUBC) records, amply representing the right wing of the church.

So, looking for a home, the records’ steward James Doig Anderson gifted the material to his employer, Rutgers University. PHS got in touch with Jim in 2022 and he eagerly affirmed that material so fundamentally Presbyterian should be in the Presbyterian national archives. That same year, we started building a relationship with Rutgers, culminating in transfer of MLP’s records to PHS in March.

The earliest records in the collection are the first letters David Bailey Sindt sent in early 1974 when he sought out advocates for gay/queer concerns within the Church. These letters initiated the formation of a new Presbyterian LGBTQIA+ rights group, which met for the first time at the 1974 United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (UPCUSA) General Assembly in Louisville, Kentucky. At that assembly, Sindt held up a sign that said, “Is Anyone Else Out There Gay?” From this action and Sindt’s previous grassroots organizing efforts in the months prior, the Presbyterian Gay Caucus (PGC) formed.

In 1979, the General Assembly recognized the group’s official status. PGC renamed itself in 1980 to Presbyterians for Lesbian/Gay Concerns (PLGC). In 1984 PLGC participated in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Consultation on Homophobia, where PLGC members Chris Glaser and the Reverend Janie Spahr presented.



Top: Pamphlet created by Presbyterians for Lesbian/Gay Concerns, 1993.

Bottom: Jim Anderson at the 203rd General Assembly, 1991.

Right: David Sindt’s pamphlet promoting his work breeding iris flowers, 1978.





Video of this historic event, along with select letters written by David Sindt are now available in Pearl Digital Collections, the Society's online archive.

In 1999, PLGC merged with the More Light Church Network to become More Light Presbyterians. The More Light records, which can be accessed by visiting the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, intimately document the movement's presence at each General Assembly, their annual conferences and regional gatherings, and their communications and advocacy efforts. They also reveal how LGBTQIA+ Presbyterians held together in the face of a series of defeats: the minority report of the Task Force to Study Homosexuality in 1978; the 1991 rejection of the open and affirming posture of the Special Committee on Human Sexuality; the 1996 passage of Amendment B; and the 1998 fall of Amendment A.

Amidst the hardships and perseverance, there were moments of joy and humor. Jim Anderson, who served as More Light's Communications Director from 1993 to 2003, compiled letters, sermons, prayers, essays, news items, and photographs to help with the organization's storytelling and outreach efforts. Anderson's collection often mixes intimate and professional spheres—in the

files, one finds private lamentations, righteous anger, and in-jokes between friends. One of Jim's correspondents routinely signs off as a celebrity. What a surprise to find "Clint Eastwood" telling Anderson about his summer travel.

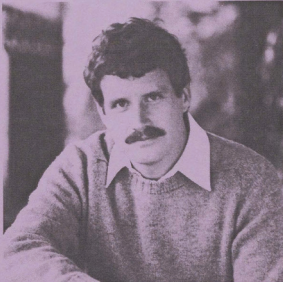
PHS is honored that the More Light Records are joining the Pam Byers Memorial Collection, PHS's effort to document all sides and perspectives on the forty-year movement for gay ordination and LGBTQ marriage rites in the church. This initiative includes over 25 sets of personal papers, organizational records, oral histories, audio-visual materials, and websites, many of which offer insights into the life, ministry, and witness of LGBTQIA+ Presbyterians in the PC(USA) and in society.

Read more: www.history.pcusa.org/morelight



The Gay & Lesbian Cultural Lecture Series
in memory of Lionel Cuffie
presents

Chris Glaser
"The Relationship Between Sexuality and Spirituality"





Chris Glaser, denied ordination as an openly gay Presbyterian minister, is the author of *Uncommon Calling: A Gay Man's Struggle to Serve the Church*.

Thursday, March 9, 1989
Bishop House, Room 101
(adjacent to Brett and Demarest Halls)
8:00 P.M.
College Avenue Campus, New Brunswick

Sponsored by Rutgers College Dean of Students
and Rutgers University Lesbian/Gay Alliance

For more information call 201/932-7107 or -7886

Top: Flyer advertising Chris Glaser lecture at Rutgers University, 1989.

Left: David Sindt (left), 1981.



NEW ORAL HISTORIES: PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN IN PUERTO RICO

This summer, PHS visited Puerto Rico to record oral histories with ten ordained women. Each participant was introduced to the Society by Rvda. Blanqui Otaño, the first woman ordained in Puerto Rico.

The video interviews, available in Pearl Digital Collections, are connected by each woman's deeply Caribbean ministry. From Costa Rica to Venezuela, from the Dominican Republic to Nicaragua, their experiences with seminary, ordination, and their personal challenges and accomplishments have been documented and added to PHS's collection of over 200 oral histories. Compelled by their faith, and inspired by liberation theology, the women interviewed ministered to the impoverished in cities and across isolated rural areas.

PHS first visited Puerto Rico in 2018 in an effort to build relationships and learn more about the record-keeping needs of Presbyterians on the island. That trip, along with outreach in the years that followed, helped archivists identify areas for collaboration with the Rvda. Otaño, as well as Sínodo Presbiteriano Boriquén. These partnerships are helping PHS document the vital voices of Puerto Rican Presbyterians.

Watch oral histories with ordained Puerto Rican women and learn more about the Presbyterian Historical Society's efforts to preserve records from the Sínodo Presbiteriano Boriquén: www.history.pcusa.org/puertorico



CAMPAIGN UPDATE

PRESERVING THE PAST, EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

In the Spring of 2023, PHS launched a three-year Campaign: Preserving the Past, Empowering the Future. Our goal is to raise \$500,000 by the end of 2025 to increase our outward facing engagement across the denomination and to the wider community.

With objectives to expand educational outreach within PC(USA), to strengthen community-based collaborations and to create a welcoming environment, the response has been encouraging. We have raised close to \$325,000.

As a result, we have already been able to complete one major project. In the summer of 2024, we installed an ADA compliant access ramp. And we will continue to make upgrades to furnishings and technology in the public reading room through the end of next year.

We are grateful for those who have answered the call to support this Campaign and welcome additional support. Please consider a donation of any size to help us reach our financial goal so that PHS can continue to meet the archival needs of the denomination.

To donate, visit history.pcusa.org/campaign.





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Presbyterian Heritage is published twice a year by the Presbyterian Historical Society, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) View a digital version at www.history.pcusa.org/history-online

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OCTOBER 27: REFORMATION SUNDAY

Argula von Grumbach published letters and poems supporting Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon, and she directly challenged the University of Ingolstadt in Germany over the arrest of a Lutheran student. Download this year's Reformation Sunday bulletin insert to learn more about this Protestant woman writer and reformer:

www.history.pcusa.org/reformation-sunday

