



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

## **Guidance to Military Chaplains Endorsed by the Unitarian Universalist Association from the Rev. Sarah Lammert, Ecclesiastical Endorser September 5, 2013**

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**Welcoming and Affirming Stance** - Unitarian Universalism (UU) is a caring, open-minded faith community. Unitarian Universalists extend a warm welcome to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals, families, and communities. We work to promote acceptance, inclusion, understanding, and equity for LGBTQ persons of all ages, abilities, colors, and genders, both within our denomination and in society at large. We are committed to protecting the civil and legal rights of LGBTQ people and families across the country.

In keeping with our long tradition of affirming the worth and dignity of all people, I expect that UU chaplains will continue to provide affirming counseling, worship, religious rites, and support to GLB service members and their families. (See Appendix 1 for more details on this history and commitment).

**Pastoral Ministry** – UU chaplains are expected to provide individual pastoral care to GLB service members as well to provide couples counseling, pre-marital counseling, and family support. Chaplains will provide support for trainings, events, and retreats such as strong bonds programs that are inclusive and welcoming of GLB service members.

**Religious Services & Rites of Passage** – UU chaplains will support the comprehensive religious program (as planned and implemented through the authority of their Commanders) that addresses the religious, spiritual and pastoral needs of all military members, including GLB members. UU chaplains are encouraged to explore the opportunity to extend open and affirming religious services, either discretely UU or as a part of the Protestant offerings in your setting (and example might be a liberal and welcoming Christian service open to all). UU chaplains are encouraged to make an extra effort to be available to officiate at same-gender marriages for service members (especially given that some of their interfaith colleagues will, by virtue of doctrine or belief, be unable to perform these ceremonies).

**Pluralism and Collegiality** – UU chaplains work in a plural environment and I expect you will bring the highest ethic of respect and compassion to bear in your collegial relationships with chaplains of other faiths, as well as in your everyday work with service members. While working cooperatively with other Chaplains I expect that any services, retreats or other events you participate in will support our faith's long standing practice of affirming LGBT people.

The women and men who serve in our country's armed forces deserve our respect and gratitude. As Unitarian Universalists ministers, we are committed to supporting them in their spiritual journeys. I am confident that UU military chaplains will perform their ministry for our troops in a professional and expert manner.

## Appendix 1

# Unitarian Universalism and LGBTQ Issues: History & Facts

Unitarian Universalism is widely known for its commitment to welcome and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals and families.

We are one of the few religions that ordains openly LGBTQ people, and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) also provides assistance in their settlement. Our LGBTQ clergy (who are permitted to partner or marry) participate fully in our faith community as pastors in some of our largest congregations.

Unitarian Universalism is proud to perform commitment ceremonies and marriages for couples regardless of gender, and has publicly supported this practice since 1984. The UUA actively encourages member congregations to work for [marriage equality](#) in their communities, and leaders continuously advocate for marriage equality on a national level.

[Resolutions and actions on immediate witness](#) have been passed at General Assembly on many secular LGBTQ issues, including discrimination, AIDS, the military, sexual education in public schools, marriage equality, and the employment non-discrimination act.

The UUA offers a [Welcoming Congregation program](#) to help congregations become more welcoming to LGBTQ people, and 63% of Unitarian Universalist congregations in the United States are recognized as Welcoming Congregations.

The denomination has had [sexuality education](#) inclusive of issues of sexual orientation since 1971 and adult curriculum on LGBTQ issues since 1972. The UUA also expects all ministers to show ministerial competency in the area of human sexuality before being approved for ordination.

Learn [more LGBTQ history and facts](#) about Unitarian Universalism, or read about [Unitarian Universalism and LGBTQ equality in the news](#).