

Two chapter excerpts from my doctoral dissertation:

By the Shores of Babylon We Wept: An Exploration of the Institutional Response of the Unitarian Universalist Association to Clergy Sexual Misconduct Between 1991-2005

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Abstract

This study describes and analyzes the institutional response of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to clergy sexual misconduct from 1992 to 2005. Through the analysis of organizational proceedings, interviews, archival documents and historical references, qualitative case study methodology is used to investigate two research questions: 1) What has been the response of the UUA to clergy sexual misconduct? and 2) What theology/ideology guide(s) the UUAs' institutional response to clergy sexual misconduct? The research findings indicate that increased inclusion of female clergy, influenced by the women's movement, Unitarian Universalist women's advocacy, and the sexual revolution were some of the factors that influenced the UUAs' institutional response to clergy sexual misconduct. The research identifies obstacles that have impeded more aggressive support of victim/survivors leadership and opens a space for the emergent identities of victim/survivors. Data gathered suggests there is a critical need for more rigorous theological reflections to foster dialogues among the diverse theologies of UU clergy and laity. By providing examples of how the UUA is working to eradicate clergy sexual misconduct, this research demonstrates how faith communities can achieve safe congregations, and empower victim/survivors, while moving toward a new restorative justice paradigm. New and fresh voices, perspectives and analyses are introduced to develop a richer understanding of clergy sexual misconduct and UUAs response to this growing problem.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA) Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct

A number of events and circumstances have been selected that chronicle the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA) response to clergy sexual misconduct since 1991. These efforts reflect some of the most important ways in which the UUA sought to facilitate a culture change to address clergy sexual misconduct. This culture change reflected an increased intolerance of clergy sexual misconduct that began to include new language and knowledge to replace the institutionalized forms of knowledge that made women particularly vulnerable to clergy sexual misconduct. Additionally, the culture change in the UUA resulted in greater transparency and sensitivity for victims/survivors. There was an increased urgency in the UUA as a result of the mounting media coverage of Catholic church scandals, several incidents of high profile misconduct within UU circles, and the attention of many clergy and laity who were challenging the prevailing norms that appeared to tolerate clergy sexual misconduct.

The investigation of the UUA's institutional response to clergy sexual misconduct, roughly approximated the following phases: Phase I – investigation, research and reconnaissance; Phase II – analyzing the findings and making recommendations; and Phase III development of a plan and implementation of same to address the reduction and eventual elimination of clergy sexual misconduct. It appears that each phase utilized staff presence for

oversight and employed a kind of “clearinghouse approach.” This approach essentially coordinated all the multiple stakeholders and their efforts. There were various levels of checks and balances achieved through reporting up a chain of command. It appears that currently all the decision-making and information flow are centralized. Ultimately, either the Executive Vice President/Recording Secretary or the President report and provide updates to the UUAs Board of Trustees.

The reaction of a small group of individuals galvanized the UU Women’s Federation and Women and Religion Committee to issue a joint call concerning this most recent incident of clergy sexual misconduct. This was a pivotal moment in the UUA’s response to clergy sexual misconduct. In general, there were varied responses. The Task Force on Congregational Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct (TFCRSM) noted some of the reactions in its report. Initial reactions were varied and intense: many denied the Executive Vice President/Recording Secretary or the President reported and provided updates to the UUA’s Board of Trustees. In one such report Kay Montgomery, Executive Vice President/Recording Secretary of the UUA Board of Trustees shared the poignant story of a victim/survivor that helped to keep the issue front and center with UUA Board of Trustee members, thus personalizing this troubling issue:

I want to tell you a story. A couple of weeks ago, David Hubner received a letter from a woman, not asking for retrospective justice but simply telling her story. The story of growing up in a complicated, difficult family and the church being her anchor. Of her Unitarian minister becoming a good friend of her family’s. And then another minister starting at her church and seeming to be kind and caring. He began to “counsel” in her adolescence and eventually turned the counseling sessions into sexual sessions that became more and more sexualized and, eventually, included verbal abuse. She tells of being filled with guilt and shame and the relationship going on until the minister died a few years later. She says, ‘I have lived as if I were a good person for almost thirty years, but my shame is so much a part of me that it colors my whole life. I know, intellectually, that I was vulnerable and exploited to satisfy the needs of a pedophile [...] I have spent hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars in therapy and will likely spend more to undo the damage.’ She asks for anonymity personally but is willing for her story

to be shared so that we can minister more effectively to people who have been exploited. This, I think, speaks for itself [...] ¹

Others were enraged at an apparent institutional unwillingness to confront the issues or to hold offenders accountable, and resolved to affect change. Others remained blissfully unaware of the problem in the UUA.”² Others remained blissfully unaware of the problem in the UUA.³

Therefore, this chapter reveals the findings of the UUA’s responses to clergy sexual misconduct via archival, interview and actual cases that demonstrate the relevancy of clergy sexual misconduct. The findings are presented in the following manner: 1) the emerging responses of UUA in thematic format including infrastructure initiatives, training, policy and procedures; educational material and public acknowledgement; 2) thematic findings from the interviews and archival searches; and 3) discussion of the linkages between the two thematic sets of findings. The thematic findings from the interviews are categorized as follows: 1) culture shift; inclusion of women; responsibility/accountability; power and control; sexual revolution; and ethics and 2) intersectionality of clergy sexual misconduct to these thematic findings.

Infrastructure Initiatives

Infrastructure initiatives refer to the creation of organizational structures established to begin the UUA’s systematic examination of clergy sexual misconduct. For example, a clearinghouse meeting was called for November, 1991 that brought together representatives from the following groups: the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), the UUA Board of Trustees, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC), UU Minister’s Association (UUMA),

¹ Report of the Executive Vice President to the UUA Board of Trustees, by Kay Montgomery, Executive Vice President (Boston: UUA).

² Task Force on Congregational Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct (Boston: UUA, 1994).

³ Ibid.

Ministerial Sisterhood UU (MSUU), UU Women and Religion (UUWR), Women and Religion (W and R) and Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) that considered UUA's responses and gaps to the overall picture of clergy sexual misconduct. This body of members became known as Task Force One and they have continued to meet three times a year until the present. Task Force One, now known as Unitarian Universalists for Right Relations (UURR), has continued its work of identifying gaps in the system and suggesting responses to clergy sexual misconduct. In January, 1992 Task Force "One" was created by the UUA Board of Trustees in response to the discussions held at GA in Hollywood, Florida in 1991. A joint call to action was issued by the UU Women's Federation and Women and Religion that was prompted by the silence following disclosure around a specific incident of misconduct. The Call to Action invited attendance at an open hearing on the unspeakable subject of clergy sexual misconduct.

Moreover, a number of feminist-identified women rallied upon hearing about the latest incident of clergy sexual misconduct. In retrospect, their actions ushered in a new era and thus, became a pivotal moment in the life and culture of the UU community. It was if though women and their allies had taken a stand and declared, "no more." The resolute tone of the call to action" communication served notice to UUA and sexually misconducting ministers that regardless of the avoidance and fear engendered by the issue, it would not be business as usual. The call to action statement read:

We recognize that many of us would rather avoid the issue of sexual misconduct because it is a difficult issue that frightens and disturbs us. We join our voices together with concern for the victims, families, congregations, and clergy.⁴

⁴ Patricia Hoertdoerfer and William Sinkford, eds., *Creating Safe Congregations: Toward an Ethic of Right Relations – A Workbook for Unitarian Universalists* (Boston: UUA, 1997), 143.

Recently, Lynn Thomas, District Executive for the Clara Barton District of the UUA reflected on the UUWF's and the Women and Religion Committee's controversial call to action in 1991 when she stated:

What I remember was that at the Women's Federation (meeting) in Fort Lauderdale . . . the issue came up and then some discussion from the floor. I remember women speaking about having been abused by clergy and it (the discussion) was deteriorating quickly and I remember Teresa standing up and saying, "good-bye innocence."⁵ And she probably said it far more theatrically. There was some clear drama. And she said "good-bye innocence" about three times and people started sitting down. Out of that the Federation began: a) a newspaper clipping campaign to gather literature, any literature about sexual assault (I believe); b) Taskforce One which was ultimately responsible for the current Safe Congregations Handbook. They met a number of organizational representatives . . . and, of course, the Women's Federation and there were several more constituency groups.⁶

Twenty-eight individuals responded to the Call to Action to share information about the nature and scope of the problem to identify the gaps and to brainstorm solutions. In 1998, Task Force One received funding to hold a Second Circle conference. The Second Circle represented those individuals impacted by misconduct besides the survivor and perpetrator that were harmed by the occurrence of clergy sexual misconduct.

The Moderator of the UUA, Denny Davidoff, attended an early Task Force One meeting that transformed her understanding about the seriousness of clergy sexual misconduct. Consequently, she helped develop the UUA Board of Trustees Task Force, which became known as Task Force Two. According to Reverend Elinor Artman, member of the UU Women's Federation, Task Force Two spent two years intensively exploring all aspects of clergy sexual misconduct including, "interviewing ministers, congregants, victims, complainants and outside resources." A major work of Task Force Two was the creation and training of "District Response

⁵ The names were changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.

⁶ Lynn Thomas, Personal interview by researcher, Palmer, MA. June, 2006.

and Renewal Teams” that were intended to serve as resources to the District staff around the country.

Meanwhile, another Task Force, the Task Force on Congregational Response to Ministerial Sexual Misconduct, was appointed by the UUA Board of Trustees in March, 1992. Their charge was to help congregations respond to incidents of clergy sexual misconduct and prevent further incidents. A preliminary work plan was developed at the September 1993 meeting that included the following:

- 1) a proposal to train District Field staff and lay leadership that would parallel those provided at UU Minister Association Chapters;
- 2) a statement for discussion and dialogue on the “Theology of Sexual Ethics” and
- 3) resources and recommendations to promote prevention, education and long term healing in congregations.⁷

While the Task Force initially established strategic partnerships with UUA affiliate organizations, District Field Staff and District Presidents, they also wisely met with lay members of affected congregations, UUA staff, Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) and District Field Staff who had experience dealing with clergy sexual misconduct. The Task Force continued its information gathering at GA in Calgary to gather comments and concerns regarding their critical work. They reported progress in mainly four areas: training programs, paper on theological reflections, workshop and study resources and congregational guidelines and resources. The Task Force encouraged “ongoing dialogue, input and coordination of efforts.” One of the Task Forces’ concerns was the potential for the difficult and complex topic of clergy sexual misconduct to polarize ministers and laity. Thus, they cautioned the UUA and its affiliate

⁷ Task Force on Congregational Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct (Boston: UUA, 1994).

organizations to remember that the well-being of both ministers and congregations was intertwined.⁸

A consultation on the adjudication of cases of “Conduct Unbecoming” ministers was held in Boston, Massachusetts on February 20-21, 1995. The following representatives attended: Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association: Wayne Aranason, Doug Gallager, Paul Johnson; MFC Diane Miller, Midge Skwire, Milly Mullarky; UUA’s district and Congregational Services: Bill Linkford, Roger Comstock, Nancy Bowen-Martell; UUA Board Jean Kapuscik; UUA Task Force on Congregational Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct – Elinor Artman; Task Force on Sexual Abuse and Clergy Misconduct – Kay Aler-Maida; Board of Review – Deborah Pope-Lance; UUA Administration and Consultation Facilitator: Kay Montgomery. Their focus included the following:

- 1) Relationships and protocols among UU staff and UUMA Good Offices at the early stages of conflict that involved potential conduct unbecoming ministers;
- 2) Clarity on the current MFC rules and policies for adjudicating unbecoming conduct with special attention to unwritten policies governing the formalization of complaints and the process of investigating them in advance of an MFC finding that a hearing is necessary;
- 3) Follow up in the congregation during and after a complaint had been adjudicated and the role of UUA staff, district and UMA Good Offices in the follow-up.⁹

A Consultation titled, “On Procedures for Adjudicating Conduct Unbecoming a Minister” was held in 1995. Participants included: UUMA, UUA, MFC, Board of Review, UUA Board of Trustees, Task Forces I and II, Departments of Ministry and Congregation Services, the Executive Vice President of the UUA, and the UUWF. In response to a call from the UUA

⁸ Hoertdoerfer and Sinkford, eds., *Creating Safe Congregations*, 106.

⁹ Task Force on Congregational Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct (Boston: UUA, 1994).

Executive Vice President, Kay Montgomery, at the 1995 GA in Spokane, Washington a Safe Congregations Resolution was passed that had been drafted by Task Force One.

In 1998 the UUA Administration created an interdepartmental team, Staff Coordinating Team-Sexual Abuse and Misconduct (SCT-SAM). SCT-SAM has continued its work and a version of it continues even today though the Panel no longer meets. Instead, the “Muir Panel” meets in its place. Their final report was issued in 2000. They included the leaders of Task Force One in their interviews, and reaffirmed the findings of Task Force Two.

Safe Congregations Landscape – Dialogue

A one-day dialogue on the current landscape and resources was held on September 17, 2004 by the UUA’s Safe Congregation Team. The Team was comprised of: David Hubner, Director of Ministry and Professional Leadership; Pat Hoertdoerfer, Director of Children’s Family and Intergenerational Programs; Kay Montgomery, Executive Vice President; Betsy Stevens, UUMA Representative; and Tracey Robins-Harris, Director for Congregational Services and Team convener. Attendees included the following: Elinor Artman (UU minister); Marge Corletti (LREDA); Susan Manker-Seale (UUMA); Qiyamah Rahman (UUA/Thomas Jefferson District); Bill Welch; Fred Muir (Chair of Right Relations Task Force); Gini Courter (Moderator UUA); Mary Katherine Morn (minister); Tera Little (UUA/Pacific SW District); Toni Tollerude (UUMN); Susan Archer (LREDA); Beth Norton (UUMN); and Ken Sawyer (UUMA) and Denis Meacham (Addictions Ministry). Some of the discussion subsequently noted in the follow up communication from facilitator, Tracey Robinson-Harris suggested foci for future discussion that included:

- Restorative Justice - Focus on Restorative Justice with the intention of assembling a packet of materials to be available on line and offered to congregations;
- Training - Mentor training will be offered through LREDA along with ongoing training for religious professionals; role of training for District Staff;
- Partnerships – the involvement of UU seminaries was discussed; contact with UU Trauma Ministry to clarify their role and explore collaboration;
- Resources – attention paid at length to need for a response team for support of congregational staff in crisis.

Training and Education as a Prevention Strategy to Institute Change

Furthermore, Ronald Heifetz differentiates three situational scenarios that accompany changes requiring new information to institute new situations.¹⁰ According to Heifetz these situational scenarios are: 1) a technical situation where the problem is clearly defined and a solution clearly applied; 2) a technical/adaptive situation when the problem is clearly defined but the solution requires learning and 3) adaptive situation when both the problem and the solution are unclear and new learning is required. The unsavory situation of clergy sexual misconduct that the UUA faced was clearly adaptive—both the problem and the solution were unclear and new learning was required. Successful training to affect institutional change required commitment from the top-level leadership and then systematic visioning and team learning. Once the UUA agreed upon an articulated analysis of clergy sexual misconduct they set about to systematically create an organizational environment that promoted a shared vision of safety in their beloved community. To accomplish this they utilized training methodology and written policy and procedures. They made what appeared to be sincere attempts to build trust and make amends for tolerance perpetuated by its “good ole boy network.”

¹⁰ Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

Hence, November 1991 represented a significant event in the UUA's institutional response to clergy sexual misconduct. It was significant because it was one of the first widespread national trainings undertaken by UUA since the high profile misconduct incident in the summer of 1991. Furthermore, the training was in direct response to Task Force One's recommendation for training. The November, 1991 training that was solely devoted to ministers, the facilitator invited the participants to articulate their hopes for the event. Some of the following comments reveal the general tenor of the ministers as they prepared to embark on this important educational milestone addressing the difficult topic of clergy sexual misconduct:

- Engage in honest conversation about the complex factors that lead to or away from misuse of power by clergy and others;
- Come up with avenues to support ministers so they handle intimacy issues better
- Learn about what others are doing about his issue;
- That we are able to have both emotionally and intelligently a greater understanding of what it means to women who are abused and congregations who are involved with clergy who have participated in sexual abuse;
- There will be honesty about this issue in our group which will reflect outward to the denomination. That lay persons (women's) perspectives will be of utmost importance in how we deal with the issue. That this begins an honest exploration of power and power relationship in our denomination structures;
- That we find a process for dealing with people's concerns, hurts and alienation in a positive way. That we find ways to strengthen our denomination – with clergy, and laity through the work that will ensue. . . That we'll be able to put this issue into the context of the larger movement – to gain a perspective. To initiate and support concrete resources. . . That the day will be understood as a religious exercise. That, in a spirit of love and kindness, we will begin a process of transformation for us and the denomination.¹¹

In addition, several other participants noted their fear that nothing would come of the day's session. There were also some anxieties voiced about the potential to inflict emotional pain, and the tendency to simplify the issues, while aligning with the victim and being overwhelmed.

Comments reflective of the concerns of ministers included the following:

¹¹ Minutes from November 1991 ministers training.

- That people will get too hung up on sex and not pay enough attention to issues of power and control. That real feelings and fears can't be expressed openly;
- Won't be balanced in its compassion for the whole story – historical remembrance of inequality
- That anger and pain, instead of energizing reflection and insight may overwhelm compassion and logic;
- Scapegoating of any particular group (for example, older males) rather than seeing the problem with realistic inclusiveness;
- That I will cry. That we'll run out of time. That we won't go deep enough;
- That anger and pain block our creative energy rather than unlock it.¹²

While many ministers acknowledged the complicity of some of their colleagues' "unbecoming behavior", others like the following quoted minister chose, instead, to take issue with women that were erroneously perceived as "innocent and vulnerable victims" and that all the bother is simply a "misdirected overreactions to alleged clergy sexual misconduct. The minister perceives efforts to address clergy sexual misconduct as "reactionary Puritanism." The minister clearly takes issue with women being cast as "victims":

What appalls me as I read the expose in the UU World is the underlying perpetration of the oppressor/victimization model. The women are depicted as vulnerable and tenuous in their own decision-making. The dynamics of human sexuality cannot be really categorized into moral exhortations. In the real life, the situation is far more complex and egalitarian. There are resourceful women who initiate, call and control the shots. What worries me most is a misdirected over reaction to alleged clergy sexual misconduct. It can spawn a dangerous and pernicious type of McCathyism in the form of a reactionary Puritanism that undermines all spontaneity of embracing and verbalizing this quasi-religious form of cleansing our ranks through forced sensitivity sessions before we fully understand what we are doing may prove more harmful and restrictive to our professional leadership. Whereas liberal clergy do not take the vow of chastity, poverty or obedience, we are then expected to be on the frontier of new knowledge, expanding the range of human sexual options from our pulpit. The gender lines of demarcation keep changing, almost imperceptibly, which complicate our role in counseling, teaching and preaching. Until we have a clear and uniform consensus on sexual ethics, an unequivocal standard of more procedure, we cannot cast stones at one another.¹³

¹² Ibid.

¹³ A minister's letter to UUA dated November, 20, 1992.

In correspondence dated November 20, 1992, a minister that had participated in a training conducted by Reverend Marie Fortune wrote a letter to the UUA expressing his dissatisfactions about the video shown to ten clergy teams trained by Fortune. This initiative was a multi-group effort with significant funding from the UUA that represented a major institutional commitment. These clergy teams subsequently served as train-the- trainers in many UU Minister's Association chapters and theological schools. The reactions to the training revealed that:

In the videos used in (Marie) Fortune's workshop, a woman who bakes pies for a minister and looks at him with cow eyes is seducing him, whether she realizes it or not . . . Nor is this blaming the victim rather, it is denying that a woman can be reduced to a mere victim. It is insisting that she always remains a human being, a moral agent, and it is insisting that all moral agents bear some of the responsibility when they get undressed and have sex with someone else – or even when they bake pies from mixed motives. To assume less is to demean and dehumanize these women.¹⁴

The Meadville Lombard Theological School (MLTS) in Chicago, Illinois, one of two UU identified Seminaries in the country, prepared two Midwinter Institutes for its faculty and students on clergy sexual misconduct in the mid 90's. Fortune, on another occasion was the featured speaker at the 1993 Institute for Religious Professionals. The 1996 Institute's theme, "Turning Back the Tide of Violence" was presented by Geoffrey Canada and Thandeka, a UU minister and faculty member at MLTC.

As a result, in 1994 a series of Congregational Strategies Workshops were held to increase the level of knowledge about how to help congregations prevent, respond to and recover from incidences of clergy sexual misconduct. The UUA believed one of the most important ways to accomplish this was to assist District Field staffs in developing their district resources. The

¹⁴ Ibid.

clergy teams leading the training had been trained by Marie Fortune as part of a project sponsored by the UUMA and by a member of the Task Force on Congregational Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct.

Policies and Procedures

In a diverse and changing world, increasingly, policies and procedures offer practical and ethical guidelines that govern conduct and appropriate interactions between the parties involved and UUMA. In the mid 1980s several UUMA chapters seriously grappled with incidents of clergy sexual misconduct, shaping responses, and suggesting revisions of the UUMA guidelines. Records from the UUA reveal that only one incident of clergy sexual misconduct occurred between 1968 and 1978. However, a dramatic rise was noted between 1984 and 1994 when there were 22 complaints of clergy “ethics issues” Thirteen of these incidents took place between 1990 and 1993 according to John Weston, Settlement Director for the UUA.¹⁵

One significant strategy to change the institutional response of the UUA to clergy sexual misconduct was a review of the UUMA guidelines that govern professional conduct. From 1985 to 1987, the UUMA Guidelines were revised to include several statements of sexual ethics as part of their standards in regulating minister’s ethics and establishing new protocols. The cultural norms that had previously promoted a more permissive culture and were subsequently challenged, in 1991, continued to demonstrate the need for ongoing reevaluation and revisions. The fact that the MFC, the UUA body that credentials and provides oversight for ministers, took no action based on a misconduct case based on the rationale that there was no official

¹⁵ Notes from John Weston, UUA Settlement Director, Boston, MA to researcher, Charlotte, North Carolina, Summer 2003.

complainant so there was nothing they could do. However, the local UUMA chapter lodged a complaint with the UUMA and the minister was “reprimanded” by the UUMA Executives.

The MFC adopted a Professional Code as early as 1951. After consolidation of Universalists and Unitarians, in 1961, a new Code of Professional Practices was developed. However, the specific language addressing clergy sexual misconduct did not occur until the mid-1980s. In 1988, a new Code was adopted that identified ministers “as sexual beings in the practice of ministry.” Almost all of the 23 Districts in the UUA have developed covenants that address ethical conduct and relations. Similarly, all of the mid- to large-sized congregations have “safe congregations” policies and possess a range of education and training on said topic. Family-sized churches, fifty or less, often do not have the fiscal or human resources to spare for training. Furthermore, because of their false sense of safety based on their perception of themselves as a church family, they tend not to be safety conscious about clergy sexual misconduct.

Creation and Dissemination of Educational Materials

On the other hand, creating new learning opportunities about clergy sexual misconduct required sophisticated curricula and other educational publications for dissemination among clergy and laity. The UUA World Publication devoted an entire issue to clergy sexual misconduct.¹⁶ Collegium, an association of liberal religious scholars formed at Meadville Lombard Theological Center, published their “Occasional Papers Number Three.” In 1993, it was devoted exclusively to Feminist Thought on Sexual Ethics, and addressed some of the key

¹⁶ The UU World, is the official publication of the UUA. It is sent to voting members of UU congregations.

concerns on clergy sexual misconduct.¹⁷ The UUA's extensive website on Restorative Justice utilizes electronic technology to display and disseminate information about clergy sexual misconduct accessible to its members and District Staff.¹⁸

UUWF sponsored a publication in March, 1992 titled, *Finding Our Way: Responding to Clergy Sexual Misconduct* that surveyed 40 religious and professional organizations and denominations were surveyed about the existence of policies on clergy sexual misconduct. Research findings indicated that most faith communities did not have specific policies regarding clergy sexual misconduct. UUA had developed very comprehensive policies that some considered cutting edge for the times.

A worship resource packet was developed for congregations using an integrated "head and heart" approach. The packet's content included worship materials intended to provide ritualistic healing for congregations recovering from clergy sexual misconduct. Additional congregational guidelines and resources have since been developed. Two of the major publications produced by UUA include: "Creating Safe Congregations Workbook: Towards An Ethic of Right Relations" and "The Safe Congregation: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in Our Faith Community." Four of the six essays in the former document were written by Task Force One and Two members.¹⁹

¹⁷ Collegium is an association of liberal religious scholars that was formed at Meadville Lombard Theological Center in 1975. It is comprised of academic and independent scholars that meet once a year to discuss works in progress.

¹⁸ Unitarian Universalist Association, Restorative Justice, available from <http://www.uua.org/cde/csm/toc.html>, accessed 1 September 2006.

¹⁹ Patricia Hoertdoerfer and William Sinkford, eds., *Creating Safe Congregations*; and Hoertdoerfer and Muir, eds., *The Safe Congregation Handbook*.

Public Acknowledgement – Institutional Shift

Less public, but even more challenging to the UUA's historic pattern of non-response to clergy sexual misconduct, was a letter from Kay Aler-Maida and Natalie W. Gulbrandsen, both executive members of the UU Women's Federation. On March 10, 1992 Aler-Maida and Gulbrandsen penned a letter to Bill Schultz, then President of the UUA. The letter expressed their concerns about the pervasive culture of mistrust that characterized the denomination/movement as a result of the UUA's failure to respond appropriately to the disclosure of misconduct at the 1991 GA. Aler-Maida and Gulbrandsen's solution called for disclosure of clergy sexual misconduct to restore the broken trust brought on by the crisis. Eight years later a public apology was extended at the 2000 General Assembly.²⁰ Kay Montgomery, the Executive Vice President of the UUA, with tear-filled eyes extended a heart felt apology witnessed by thousands of UUs. Montgomery essentially stated that the Association had largely failed the people most hurt, the victims and survivors, and pledged to implement the Muir Report – Restorative Justice. Excerpts from her historic speech follow:

Cases of clergy misconduct continue. Although they are few, the damage they leave is far greater than we can even suppose. The Department of Ministry and the MFC continue to refine their understanding and responses. Many recommendations of Task Force Two (the UUA Board Task Force) remain unimplemented. First steps have been made towards an advocacy program for complainants. The UUMA is officially involved only when there is a minister-minister complaint, or a request for Good Offices support. The UUMA guidelines have not been revised to reflect the learnings of the past 15 years. It is the congregations that remain essentially uninformed, and deeply wounded by past silences about and mis-management of misconduct. This is where the future work lies.²¹

²⁰ According to Fred Muir, Chairperson of the Right Relations Committee, the apology was in response to the Clergy Sexual Misconduct's Panel recommendations. Questions evidently still remain about actions taken by the UUA regarding the other recommendations.

²¹ UU Committee for Right Relations, "UU for Right Relations Minutes," Unitarian Universalist Association, 16 October 2000, (www.uua.org); available from URL (accessed summer, 2005).

Montgomery commented hopefully on the Safe Congregations Panel Report chaired by Fred Muir and offered the following vision:

It (Safe Congregations Panel Report) offers hope, rather than retributive justice. But for victims and survivors, the commitment of trust was often illusive and missing. Fulfilling our promise as a dream unfulfilled, The Association, “has largely failed the people most hurt by sexual misconduct in our congregation. Other denominations have done better than we have. The brave and the hurt have been left unministered to. . . I am profoundly sorry . . .and I ledge that this gap, this failure, will be remedied. This last year, we have tried a nascent approach for victims and survivors. Based on this report, we will change and we will bend toward justice . . . (for) there is only us.”²²

Institutional Accountability

Rebeka Miles maintains that a “do-nothing-approach” is the most common response of non-offending clergy to other misconducting colleagues.²³ Likewise, the UUA, like other denominational organizations, was initially slow to respond to clergy sexual misconduct. This was especially true when the perpetrator was a charismatic high profile clergy such as a senior minister. Almost without exception the responses to cases involving such clergy in earlier years were either completely ignored or dismissed. A female minister respondent recalls one of the first such cases:

The first case that went before the MFC that pushed people’s understanding was

The _____ case. The problem with the _____ case was it all kind of fell open at General Assembly (GA). I think it was the _____ it was Minneapolis actually. Purportedly, David Pohl said to _____ after discovering this case of a woman he Counseled that he then had sexual relations with, “Is there anything else we need to know before dealing with this unregrettably circumstance?” No, she’s the only one he said. Within an hour or two at GA there were one or two others. What roasted the socks of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee t that time, not that there were multiple victims who could be substantiated. _____ had something like

²² UU Committee for Right Relations, “UU for Right Relations Minutes,” Unitarian Universalist Association of America, 16 October 2000, [www.uua.org]; available from URL (accessed summer, 2005).

²³ Rebekah L. Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide*, 104-105.

24-25 women that came forward and the belief is that there are many more. ____'s issue was he was narcissistic and had a compulsive behavior. A vulnerable Woman would come into his office and ask for counseling as her minister and he was unable to not intimate and sexualize that encounter.²⁴

Less there be any confusion or doubt, accountability is the responsibility of the institution that bears oversight for the professional conduct of its clergy. So while aspersions might be cast on those ministers that looked the other way, ultimately, it is the institution that sanctions the ministry of its clergy and is, therefore, responsible for their professional conduct. In this instance, that oversight entity is the UUA.

Charges that the UUA's earlier responses to clergy sexual misconduct were biased in favor of high visibility senior ministers appear to be confirmed from this female minister respondents report:

____'s misconduct happened while David Pohl was Director of Ministry at UUA . . . It was in the newspapers. . . magazines. . . He got involved with a married parishioner. The husband came in for counseling. Later ____ wrote a letter advising him how to improve his marriage. When the husband found out he was furious. The husband did not file a complaint and ____'s wife did not want to file a complaint. So nobody sent a complaint. There was a lot of head-in-the-sand behavior. So on one did anything.

Upon investigation, the issue according to UUA staff was not bias show toward high profile senior ministers, so much as there imply was no "complainant." According to past policy, the MFC must have a complainant to act on allegations of misconduct. This problem has been addressed so that actions can be taken by the UUA as the complainant so that the onus is not on the victim/survivor to come forward.

²⁴ No attribution is made due to the sensitive content.

Failure to disclose information about a misconducting minister's history has been a problem in the past with the Settlement Department and congregational search committees. When seeking new minister to call to their congregations, information was oftentimes being withheld about past misconduct. One respondent describes how upset a congregation was that learned about their minister's past misconduct after the fact:

The _____ congregation was miffed. He had done this previously. The congregation was pissed at the UUA because they didn't tell He had engaged in this behavior previously. He was still in the pool (of qualified UUA minister). He was supposed to get 25% of his annual compensation and severance if he was terminated. They were so pissed that they voted to reduce his annual compensation to zero. He called in the UUA to defend him against the "horrible" people who would not give him his severance. His contract stated he had to conduct himself in accordance with the UUA guidelines. If I fail to conduct myself in accord with UUA guidelines this contract is null and void. This is what ministers contracts should say but it doesn't.²⁵

Even John Weston, the Settlement Director at the time, raised questions about past practices as he assured his constituency that the problem was under control:

. . . Should information be withheld from a committee with a "need to know" Out of compassion for the (misconducting) minister or because a person in authority "knows better"? . . . Is there any question that a search committee that asks a direct question – "is there any evidence of sexual misconduct by this minister?" deserves a direct answer. What about the committee that fails to ask such a question: should the committee be allowed to identify its candidate publicly, and the congregation perhaps to call its next minister, only to receive through backchannels disturbing information the department could have provided earlier? And should the Department then conclude that past sexual misconduct, though it may not disqualify a minister for ministry in theory, in practice disqualifies the minister from being listed by the Department? . . . But there must be consistent practice, widely understood, that allows enlightened and temperate decisions to be made in a context of trust by search committees and congregations.²⁶

To its credit, the Settlement Office has been able to use its new communications

²⁵ No attribution made due to the sensitive content.

²⁶ John Weston, untitled interoffice memorandum to Field Staff. 2000. Photocopied.

technologies to compile a “Ministers’ File” that is forwarded to the search committee. The file contains a brief interpretation of the contents of the ministers’ file kept at headquarters in Boston. The file content will already have been viewed and possibly corrected by the minister who is entitled to include comments. This practice eliminates the past practice of withholding information. Furthermore, this system opens up the process between minister and congregations and removes the Settlement Office from its past practice of withholding information. Furthermore, this system opens up the process between ministers and congregations and removes the Settlement Office from its previous role of “middleman.” While, the Settlement Department still interprets and conveys the information it has about ministers, it views the search committee as the authoritative interpreter of the information. The Department is obligated to convey information that it has in its possession and is further required to inform the minister. The minister in turn, has the right to include any commentary he or she desires. Recently, some very celebrated misconducting ministers have recovered their fellowship status according to one respondent. It appears this checks and balances implemented by the Settlement Department will be tested

In still another instance, UUA staff handled an exit interview process with a minister and congregation dissolving their mutual ministry. The respondent recalls how the UUA withheld information about the minister’s misconduct in order to transact a generous severance package. While this is surely an exception, there were instances noted by this researcher that suggests that there might have been a conflict of interest in the past to represent both the congregation and the minister:

_____ went in and advocated for a generous separation packet. The misconduct process was just beginning. The church was furious once they found out about the misconduct. They didn’t know about the misconduct

(at the time the separation packet was negotiated). _____ got a very good separation packet (for the minister) and then left. He knew about it but didn't tell them (the congregation) about it (the misconduct).²⁷

The establishment of a neutral point of contact for congregations and victim/survivors centralized the complaint process and eliminated the possibilities for cronyism. Moving the task of handling complaints from the Director of Ministry and Professional Leadership/Executive Secretary of the MFC to the Director of Congregational Services as recommended by the “Restorative Justice for All Report” and the Ad Hoc Task Force on Ethics in Congregational Life accomplished the following: 1) neutrality, 2) a sense of safety and 3) a show of good faith to those appointed bodies that recommended the change. The changes were part of the larger effort to address structural deficiencies in the existing process for adjudicating clergy sexual misconduct complaints to ensure a safer experience for the victim/survivor/complainant.

However, upon close examination of the UUA's Programs and Services: Ethics and Safety document produced by Congregational Services, it appears the description of the process for handling complaints of misconduct disavows any responsibility and accountability. Instead, it disappointingly lays responsibility on the individual congregations. Thus, it reads like a disclaimer in its statement:

Unlike many other religious bodies, the UUA is an association of member individuals and independent congregations. The role of the UUA is to provide support to its member congregations. It does not govern them. In our tradition of congregational polity, each member congregation has the power to ordain, call/hire, supervise and dismiss ministers and other staff; and to do so independently of the UUA. It is the congregation, not the Association that takes responsibility for regulation of its own policies and staff.

In the same document, District Offices are listed as resources for issues of sexual misconduct and boundary violations.

²⁷ No attribution is made due to the sensitive content.

Some archival searches indicate that UUA should pay more attention to instances where laity are guilty of sexual misconduct. The following letter from a female minister cites examples of the kinds of harassment that some clergy experience at the hands of laity. And while it appears that the majority of instances in fact involve male clergy perpetrating sexual misconduct, it is important to acknowledge that laity are not exempt from sexual misconduct. However, the onus, should always be on the minister because s/he is the professional that has covenanted with God and their chosen faith community and congregation to serve in the sacred role of minister and spiritual leader. While laity accountability is a worthy futuristic goal to strive for, most laity do not formalize their relationship in such an intentional and dedicated way as clergy are doing. Nor have the laity chosen a career to be in service as a spiritual leader as has the clergy. However, the following letter reveals the extent to which appropriate boundaries can potentially be violated by laity:

I feel that there also needs to be some examination of the congregations' (in general) responsibilities when it comes to sexual ethics and boundaries . . . I think it is important for the laity to focus on ways in which they have been remiss in terms of setting appropriate sexual boundaries . . . I am certainly sensitive to the issues of blaming the victim: but in religious congregations such as ours, where power is a non-hierarchical partnership, and where ministers are called and dismissed by vote of the congregation, the lay leadership in a congregation is not in a one-down or victim stance in relationship to a minister. A great many ministers have themselves been victims of sexual harassment by members of their congregations. For example, 1) a male parishioner who pursued a new, young female minister around the room at a welcoming party attempting to feel her up, 2) female parishioners offering a male minister sexual "comfort" shortly after his wife died, 3) bets being made by female parishioners as to who will be the first to bed the new male minister, 4) a male minister whose wife is called and propositioned whenever members are aware he is out of town, 5) a single woman minister whose boyfriend received three propositions from married women parishioners shortly after they first appeared publicly as a "couple," 6) a male minister who was told that if he did not submit to a woman's sexual advances she would say that he seduced her, 7) numerous ministers of both genders who have to avoid being alone with a certain sexually aggressive parishioners and are then rebuked for being "unpastoral" for not visiting. In our polity, it is the laity in local

churches that have the power to impose sanctions on other ministers or laity who misbehave . . . I feel that a focus on helping laity learn to set appropriate sexual boundaries is equally important, particularly since the laity, unlike the clergy, have so far not been addressed as to their responsibility.²⁸

UU Culture Shift

Some common themes are evident upon close examination of UU culture that impacts the issues of sexual misconduct by both clergy and laity. UUism is a movement of come-outers, that is, the majority of members have come from some other faith tradition or no faith tradition at all.²⁹ Despite their best efforts to retain young people the statistical fact that the vast majority of UUs are come-outers has not changed very much over time. In addition, most members appear to be alienated from their past religious upbringing and practices. David Bumbaugh, a faculty member at MLTS in Chicago, contends that people who have orphaned themselves from the communities in which they were reared possess an ambivalence about that fact.³⁰ UUs want to be recognized as part of a valid religious movement, but do not want that movement to be confused with the kind of religious community from which they escaped. There exists among UUs a growing need for common structures in which to affirm, assure and confirm UU identity. There exists what Bumbaugh poignantly describes as a “deep and underlying fear of the community’s power to expose and reject UUs as pretenders and impostors who desire but who are not actually a community of like-minded people who share common values.”³¹ UUs tend to avoid any conversation that has the potential to expose significant differences lest it is discovered that the

²⁸ Letter written in 1993 by a female UU minister and accessed by researcher in the UUA files in Boston. Due to sensitive nature of the content, no attribution is made.

²⁹ David Bumbaugh, “Beyond the Seven Principles: The Core of Our Faith” in *The Journal of Liberal Religion*, Spring 2005 vol. 5 #1(journal on-line); available from http://www.meadville.edu/ll_JournalLRv5n1_Bumbaugh.htm; Internet; accessed 1 September 2006.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

community does not actually effectively serve its members who have sacrificed everything. UUs tend to “circle the wagons” because many view themselves as beleaguered and misunderstood. As a result they possess a sense of distress that surfaces about being unacceptable and being out casts. They demonstrate an underlying fear of exposure, of inadequacy and of the concomitant need to know, “how are we perceived by the larger community.”³² Bumbaugh asserts that this is a dynamic that is seldom examined but that is constantly at work in UU congregations, shaping how they do religion. It often determines how they hear each other.³³

As majority “converts” UUs refuse to be defined by their communities of origin, but at the same time Bumbaugh asserts they are unable to rid themselves of their communities of origin and therefore long for acceptance. This fierce determination to be true to themselves forces them to live in a kind of spiritual duality. According to Bumbaugh, UUs are “an anti-establishment movement with roots deep in the establishment. Bumbaugh identifies UUs as a high-achieving people with an abiding fear of failure. “We are a counter-cultural movement which owns and claims a rich culture. We are individualists who dream of a blessed community. We live in boundary zones; move between our worlds, embodying . . . an ongoing critique of each (world), precisely because of their marginal status.”³⁴

Women in Ministry

Almost without exception respondents, when asked what caused or created the change in the UUAs response to clergy sexual misconduct, overwhelmingly attributed the change in the UUAs institutional response to the increased numbers of female ministers. Primarily, women’s

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Bumbaugh,. “Beyond the Seven Principles, Internet.

inclusion in the bastion of male ministry inevitably changed the cultural norms of UUA and of the ministers. The influx of female clergy ultimately produced a critical mass that individually and collectively challenged the permissive culture that had accommodated the misconduct of ministers over the years. One individual likened it to the “fox guarding the roosters.”³⁵ In 1875 a woman complained that among almost 700 Universalist ministers, only ten were female.³⁶ If female clergy were almost nonexistent among the Universalists then they were practically invisible among the Unitarians who were even more reluctant to ordain females. Hence, a smaller number of Unitarian clergy claimed the right to be called Reverend. Unitarian Universalist records show that between 1957 and 1978 the Unitarian Yearbook showed that among its 538 ministers only nine were female, and of those women none were settled or called as parish ministers.³⁷ By the 1980s female clergy surpassed males in being ordained and called to UU churches.³⁸ According to Tucker, in the mid 1990s, of 1200 ministers, one of every four was female. Currently, female clergy comprise fifty-one percent of fellowshipped ministers in the UUA.³⁹

Drawing her conclusions from the larger societal context, UU Historian, Cynthia Grant Tucker, linked the remarkable and rapid progression of female clergy to the 1963 debut of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*. While most scholarship addresses Friedan’s impact on dissatisfied homemakers, Tucker draws an astute observation. That is, church women,

³⁵ Identity of this individual is intentionally withheld by researcher.

³⁶ Cynthia Grant Tucker, “Women and the Unitarian-Universalist Ministry: A Historical Overview” in *Leaping From Our Spheres: the Impact of Women on Unitarian Universalist Ministry*, ed. Gretchen Woods (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Ministers’ Association, 1998), 46.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁹ Fellowshipped ministers are credentialed by the UUA and thus receive the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval” that they are in good standing with the UUA and all the requirements. Thus, making them eligible to be called “Reverend” and they enter the pool of qualified ministers to be called UU congregations and to community ministry.

specifically UU church women, were impacted by Friedan's feminist revolution which resonated with their activist/woman centered values. Just how did the presence of female clergy make a difference in the response of the UUA to clergy sexual misconduct? Several respondents noted the change in the ministerial culture as a result of the presence of female clergy that often included heavy drinking and dirty jokes, characteristic of minister's gatherings prior to women's inclusion. One respondent noted the following:

Birth control, women coming into the ministry changed things, for example, dirty jokes ceased after women were present. Another changing norm was the heavy drinking. When I first arrived in the 70s ministers would sit up all night drinking. In a couple of years this heavy drinking ceased (because of women).⁴⁰

Thus, women's presence changed the norms governing interactions and established more appropriate boundaries and guidelines and how ministerial colleagues engaged one another. Sylvia Howe, UU minister, noted the highly "sexually charged" ministerial gatherings that many of her female colleagues encountered in their early years based on her study on power, sexuality and ministry.⁴¹ The respondents observed that being "hit on" was the generally accepted norm at that time. Kay Montgomery, Executive Vice President of the UUA, noted the difference of the increased presence of women on the UUA staff and on the MFC. She posited that, "so that the habit, that is, "old boy behavior" was no longer acceptable. . . I used to regularly meet with clergy chapters and large church ministers and the change in those groups was quite dramatically different (as a result of women coming into the ministry)."⁴²

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⁴⁰ Due to the sensitive nature of this content no attribution is made.

⁴¹ Sylvia Howe and Paul L'Herrou, *The Law and the Spirit: Power, Sexuality, and Ministry in Unitarian Universalism-Selected Essays 2001* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association, 2001) , 75.

⁴² Kay Montgomery, interview by researcher, Boston, MA. August, 2005.

another. Sylvia Howe, UU minister noted the highly ‘sexually charged’ ministerial gatherings that many of her female colleagues encountered in their early years.⁴³ The respondents observed that being “hit on” was the generally accepted norm at that time. Kay Montgomery, Executive Vice President of the UUA, noted the difference of the increased presence of women on the UUA staff and on the MFC. She posited that, “. . . the habit, that is, “old boy behavior” was no longer acceptable. . . I used to regularly met with clergy chapters and large church ministers and the change in those groups was quite dramatically different (as a result of women coming into the ministry).⁴⁴

Another way that women created institutional change in the UUA, though not specifically related to clergy sexual misconduct, at that time, was through the use of their organizational machinery and political clout which they used to galvanize their collective voices to take effective action at the 1991 GA. As early as 1977 a small group of UU feminists crafted a resolution to the 1977 GA in Ithaca, NY calling for a “search within the UUA for the religious roots of sexism.” The resolution was unanimously adopted as the “Women and Religion Resolution.”

Years later, the UUWF and the Continental Women and Religion Committee used their formidable influence to call together Task Force I on Clergy Sexual Misconduct. Their actions would prove to be far more significant than anyone could have realized at the time. Their actions essentially challenged the institutional norms that had permitted clergy sexual misconduct to go almost unchecked except within the most egregious instances. Furthermore, this incident involved a Senior Minister. Research findings indicate that high-ranking ministers that engage in

⁴³ Sylvia Howe and Paul L’Herrou, *The Law and the Spirit: Power, Sexuality, and Ministry in Unitarian Universalism-Selected Essays 2001* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Ministers’ Association, 2001), 75.

⁴⁴ Kay Montgomery, interview by researcher, Boston, MA. August, 2005.

clergy sexual misconduct in the past tended not to face the same consequences as other ministers who were engaged in clergy sexual misconduct, if they faced any at all. Meanwhile, the UUMA, the professional organization for UU ministers, began a much needed revision of its guidelines. In an effort to affirm the UUMA's good work the UUWF Board passed a resolution in February 1992 that recognized the UUMA for the newly revised "Ministerial Codes of Conduct."⁴⁵ While the UUWF was congratulatory of the UUMA's progress in establishing appropriate guidelines they were not pleased that the update was only sent to Presidents of District Boards, ministers and seminarians. Essentially UUWF perceived ignoring some of the guidelines that provided leadership initially. Then UUWF President, Phyllis Rickter, wrote a letter pointing out the UUMA's exclusionary practices and reminded them that their silence about the misconduct could lead to continued damage among the constituency.⁴⁶

Ethics

Moreover, traditional ethics involves the study of human conduct with a focus on attitudes and actions considered to be "right" or "wrong."⁴⁷ Christian studies trace its discourse on ethics back to the sixteenth century.⁴⁸ Ethical teaching describes ways in which one should make choices and decisions and take actions. Contemporary ethical theories include natural law, biblically based theories of neighborly love, human rights theories, and patterns of ethical reasoning as well as ethical assessments of individual actions and social structures. The range of

⁴⁵ Betty B. Hoskins, *Comforting the Bystanders and Cleansing the Religious Community in Unitarian Universalism-Selected Essays 2001* (Chicago: Collegium, 1993), 34

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ McKim, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 94.

⁴⁸ Margaret A. Farley, "Ethics and Moral Theologies" in *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* ed. Russell and Clarkson, 88.

sub-specialities includes medical ethics, social ethics, sexual ethics, ecological ethics and others. Therefore, this section focuses on sexual ethics pertaining to clergy sexual misconduct.

Changing mores and norms in society created the need for a fresh look at specific guidelines and protocols in the UUA to remove any gray areas of behavior within the ranks of ministerial conduct. Examination of the UUMA's "Code of Professional Practice" (CPP), the document that seeks to set appropriate boundaries for all UU ministers, reveals a very solid and well-written document that touches on the essentials while leaving some areas totally open for interpretation. For example:

As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that this profession gives me and refrain from practices which are harmful to others and which endanger my integrity or my professional effectiveness. Such practices include sexual activity with any child or with an unwilling adult, with a counselee, with the spouse or partner of a minister or person in a congregation in our District, with interns, with students for the ministry, with other field staff in my District, and in any other such exploitative relationship.⁴⁹

It appears that the UUMA leaves a very definite gray area in its "Code of Professional Practice" in the following statement:

I will not engage in sexual activities with a member of the congregation who is not my spouse or partner, if I am married or in a committed relationship. If I am single, before becoming sexually involved with a person in the congregation, I will take special care to examine my commitment, motives, intentionality, and the nature of such activity and its consequence for myself, the other person, and the congregation.⁵⁰

While the Code of Ethics is very clear about married ministers indulging inappropriately with anyone other their partner, there appears to be a definite gray area for single ministers. The UUA and a number of other faith communities have granted its single clergy the option to date eligible congregational members. This rationale is based on the compassionate notion that

⁴⁹ Code of Professional Practice of the UUMA as revised at the 1987, 1988, 1992, 1996 and 1998 Annual Meetings (Boston, MA), 1998.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

ministers are just like other healthy human beings with the same kinds of needs for love and affection and a social life. Herein lies the problem; ministers are not like laity. When a minister begins to date a congregant, the parishioner relationship no longer exists. Is the ministers' goal to satisfy their needs for intimacy and romance or to pass to the spiritual needs of their congregations? "The Code of Professional Practice" specifically states, "I will not abuse or exploit that trust for my own gratification." Furthermore, it restates the same theme in the very next paragraph using almost identical language, "I will not exploit the needs of another person for my own."

While a minister has sexual feelings, the implications of acting on them are far different from those of an individual who is not a minister. Encouraging ministers to act on their attractions with members can lead to disastrous results. The boundaries get too blurred and the power dynamics do not disappear simply because the UUMA decrees it is acceptable. Such power dynamics exist whether they are named and acknowledged or not. Most laypersons dating ministers assume they are "consenting adults" entering into a relationship with another consenting adult. However, their consent does not change the power dynamics nor their vulnerability. It appears that the UUA is providing adequate training and awareness for ministers to negotiate the "troubled waters" of clergy sexual ethics. In a system when one of its most powerful members, the minister selects one or two or three or whatever member of individuals to date, they are risking disrupting congregational dynamics and focusing attention on the minister's social life. This approval leads to two concerns. It is not possible for the minister to single out someone as special and therefore worthy of attention from the minister without affecting the other members. This creates tensions and problems for members vying for the minister's time and attention.

Rights, without responsibilities and training are a setup for failure. Many workplace protocols have been devised because it has been determined that it is not wise for co-workers to date. While workplace protocols have changed somewhat, the original rationale for such norms has not. When a serious dating relationship begins in a workplace setting, ideally one of the individuals transfers. The same, it seems, would apply within the church setting. Perceptions of the church, and relationships between single clergy and eligible church members vary.

Correspondence from a minister to a District Executive reveals the shared concerns about ministers dating “eligible” members and the recognition that the UUMA Professional Practices were written “nearly twenty years ago.” The writer more than insinuates that the guidelines are outdated:

[Y]our experience as a District Executive makes your reflections about ministers dating compelling and important. Over the last ten years I too have pointed out as frequently as the opportunity presented itself to do so that guideline ambiguities about ministers dating those whom they serve has generated numerous regrettable situations as has the guideline which stipulates the marital status of the congregant determines their eligibility for an intimate or sexual relationship with a single minister. These guidelines were written nearly 20 years ago; two decades of experience shows they need to be rewritten. Thanks for offering your thoughts to the committee chartered with doing so.⁵¹

The development of codes of ethics included not only ministers, but field staff (individuals co-employed by both the UUA and District Boards who were primarily comprised of clergy with a few laypersons). In addition, young adults sought to and successfully developed codes of conduct.

As clergy, field staff was bound by the UUMA Code of Ethics. However, additional ethical guidelines, while almost identical, were developed that forthrightly addressed issues of sexuality, power and boundaries:

⁵¹ Deborah Pope-Lance, Correspondence to researcher, Charlotte, North Carolina, 31 January, 2005.

As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that this profession gives me and refrain from practices which are harmful to others and which endanger my integrity or my professional effectiveness. Such practices include sexual activity with any child or with an unwilling adult, with a counselee, with the spouse or partner of a minister or person in a congregation in our District, with interns, with students for the ministry, with other field staff in my District, and in any other such exploitative relationship.⁵²

The document further elaborated what course of action field staff should take upon discovering evidence of clergy sexual misconduct:

If, in the course of consulting with a congregation, I find that there is evidence of "conduct unbecoming" on the part of a UUMA member or a member of LREDA, I will not first discuss such matters in a public report. Instead, I will inform both the minister involved and the governing board of his or her church of the evidence, outlining to them the possible actions that could be taken, such as filing a complaint with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee or the UUMA and then allowing the church leadership to decide if this is what they want to do.⁵³

This research revealed ample evidence of written ethical guidelines for UUA staff that included not only religious leaders that is, ministers and religious educators but UUA staff in general. Young Adult and Campus Ministry had developed Code of Ethics for Peer Leaders that outlines very specific guidelines. The issue of consent, power and control and abuse of power are only some of the issues addressed in the four page "Code of Ethics" created by the Continental UU Young Adult Network. The document defines a "healthy" relationship as, "consensual, non-exploitative, mutually pleasurable, safe, developmentally appropriate, caring, based on mutual expectations and respectful."⁵⁴

In an effort to revamp its protocols addressing clergy sexual misconduct, the UUA established the Ethics in Congregational Life Program (ECLP). The Program is headed by the

⁵² Excerpted draft of Code of Ethic written by Roger Comstock, May 15, 2001.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Director of Congregational Services. Its stated purpose is to, “develop and/or make available to congregational leaders education, training and other resources and services.” The goals of the Program are to support leaders in creating safer space within their congregations, encouraging right relations among persons who are part of the congregation, and encouraging just relations between the congregation and the larger community. The primary responsibilities of the ECLP are: 1) receive and investigate complaints; 2) coordinate support services to affected individuals and congregations; 3) present cases for adjudication by the MFC; 4) involve a corps of volunteer investigators and volunteer liaisons to provide pastoral support and process information and advice to the complainant and 5) include an education and training component for congregational leaders.

Power and Control

This research revealed that a deep ambivalence about authority exists among UUs. According to David Bumbaugh, many UUs long for an authority that has the power to affirm their acceptability and yet they resent and fear any authority that might have the power to define them as unacceptable — whether that authority emanates from Boston headquarters, some historic formulation of the faith, the preacher in the pulpit, or the committee on social concerns.⁵⁵ This tendency to challenge authority coupled with UUs emphasis on individualism sheds some light on why the continued gray areas in ministers codes of ethics. Many UUs do not want anyone telling them what to do. They tend to ignore any authority, including their own. Howe noted the varied approaches to power that minister’s assumed during the 60s and 70s as well as offering some personal insights:

⁵⁵ David Bumbaugh, “Beyond the Seven Principles: The Core of Our Faith, Internet.

There was a belief that we could move from hierarchical structures and power inequalities to all being on an undifferentiated, level playing field with little or no recognition of the inherent power differences between ministers and lay person, between men and women, which did, in reality, continue to exist. A parallel attempt to reduce hierarchy led many ministers to deny the inherent difference and healthy boundary between clergy and laity. A question discussed among colleagues at the time (1960s-70s) was, “Why should ministers be expected to conform to a higher moral standard than the members of their congregations? During a time when ministers were considered “just one of the folks,” it was a reasonable question.⁵⁶

Sexual Revolution

According to Howe, before the mid-1970s behavioral norms were clear, at least in theory – sexual relations were only for married couples. And while the “rules” were clearly ignored in many instances, one respondent revealed a common ground bottom line and the rationale for secrecy, “Of course, we knew that the rules were broken, but it happened (infidelity) in secret so that the appearance of sanctity of the family was maintained.”⁵⁷ A number of respondents noted that the sexual revolution influenced inappropriate behavior on the part of UU ministers. The following respondent took note of the long-term effects of misconduct on congregations even years later:

I know ministers in the 60s when you indicated you were having trouble in your marriage they arrived at your house the next week with their massage oil and incense sticks. That is not competency. That is some kind of perverted sense of ones privilege in the world. What shifted the sexual revolution? I was talking to an elder colleague . . . He reminded me that one of my predecessors in this congregation I am serving was notorious and eventually was encouraged to move on to bigger and better pastures as well. When he was serving a church in the area at least five women came to her and told her that clergy sexual misconduct was going on. This is a minister who was there in the 60s who went on else where and

⁵⁶ Sylvia Howe and Paul L’Herrou, “The Law and the Spirit: Power, Sexuality, and Ministry” in *Unitarian Universalism-Selected Essays 2001* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Ministers’ Association, 2001), 75.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

misconducted as well. Eventually he was encouraged not to pursue parish ministry.⁵⁸

Several comments obtained from interviews also confirmed that some UU clergy succumbed to the sexual acting out that characterized the sexual revolution:

General Assembly hospitality suites in the late 60s and early 70s were reserved for UUA districts to get together with other members. This very legitimate use was distorted with a lot of drinking and hooking up. It was a cultural thing this involvement with other persons was joked about and common behavior among ministers. The culture was a very free kind of culture. It was like adolescent boys acting out. It was the time of Hugh Hefner. Liberal ministers were more vulnerable because they didn't have the ethical context of other denominations. (misconducting minister's name) marked the end of this era and such behavior. It dealt a death blow to the old norms that reflected a, "why don't we just love one another". The case of (misconducting minister's name) was very tough on some staff.⁵⁹

Another respondent's comments again reinforce what others have already said, that is, the sexual revolution was a real phenomenon that clearly had an impact on some UU clergy:

Many UU clergy were very much in the midst of the sexual revolution. While some of the sexual acting out took place in many denominations I maintain that there was more visible acting out among UUs.⁶⁰

Another minister confirms the fact that the sexual revolution took its toll on some ministers. Additionally, this particular respondent/minister provides some insights into the rationale of some sexually acting out ministers:

Let us not forget that we UU ministers back in the 1970s were in the forefront of the sexual revolution, liberating our congregations, supporting trendy, societal fads as open marriage, the joy of sex and "do your own thing." We played with fire and some of us got burned. One generation of UUs knoweth not what the previous generation advocated.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Deborah Pope-Lance, interview by researcher, Boston, MA September 2005.

⁵⁹ David Hubner, interview by researcher, Boston, MA. September 2005.

⁶⁰ Kay Montgomery, interview by researcher, tape recording, Boston, MA November 2005.

⁶¹ Sylvia Howe and Paul L'Herrou, "The Law and the Spirit: Power, Sexuality, and Ministry" in Unitarian Universalism-Selected Essays 2001 (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association, 2001), 75.

On the average it takes a congregation ten years to heal from clergy sexual misconduct. This interim minister/respondents' comments allude to the long-term effects of clergy sexual misconduct. Fourteen years following the original misconduct the interim is seeking ways to chip away at the denial and other lingering emotions of the members. Understanding the long term effects of clergy sexual misconduct and second circle fall-out are essential to any pastor of a congregation where there has been a history of misconduct.⁶²

My presenting the larger historical overview of the sexual revolution in the sermon proved a good indirect way of addressing the issues of ministerial sexual misconduct that occurred here in the 60's. (that minister is now deceased). Some of the congregation had retreated into denial of the past abuses, apparently because they thought it might sully their reputation with prospective candidates in their current search. I had been looking for individuals who were here in the congregation at the time of the abuses who would be willing to make private confirmation of the widely rumored abuses. This sermon led one such individual to confirm & share extensively about the abuses, and gave me leads to several more. Where do I go next with all this?⁶³

Hearing numerous accounts of sexual acting out during the so called sexual revolution one might speculate whether the behavior was a result of the changing societal norms, UU's liberal theology and/or UUism's emphasis on individualism. While there is some merit to each hypothesis, Sylvia Howe's theory casts a different light on UU culture that she asserts influenced UU ministers. UUism, she contends, has a tendency to "leap ahead without the support of its roots." She cites the civil rights movement, the anti-vietnam war movement and the sexual revolution as times when UUs leaped because they were strong on "wings" that is, personal and institutional convictions that led to public witnessing against injustices. Conversely, UUs are

⁶² Second circle refers to those individuals, including congregational members and family and friends of the victim/survivor and misconducting minister that are affected by the misconduct.

⁶³ Interim minister. Personal correspondence.

weak on roots she maintains, that is, foundation, be it theological and/or ideological. Howe noted the tendency of some UU toward sexual experimentation in her comments:

[M]any wanted to be on the cutting edge of this free and casual exercise of sexuality. Experimentation of all sorts occurred in our congregations. Boundaries were set aside. Open marriage, specifically understood as meaning sexually open marriage, became quite prevalent. General Assembly became a meeting ground for those wanting an opportunity to explore away from home. As Paul was registering for GA one year, he heard one of the volunteers at the registration table quite openly ask another, whom had apparently just met, I see that you are wearing a wedding ring. Do you have an open marriage? Professional leaders of congregations, ministers were not exempt from being swept up in this sexual tide, and sometimes were in the forefront. Boundaries were not part of the dialogue, but clearly boundaries were being torn down, and those who attempted to maintain clear boundaries were often derided . . . Sexual acting out by male colleagues seemed at times to become a sport. The consequences of this game were widely ignored.⁶⁴

Another respondent noted a very troubling realization that many misconducting ministers early on felt they were awakening women's sexuality. This same individual came in during the early years of female ministers and indicated she was sexually harassed by both ministers and lay members. She eventually had to change her phone number to an unlisted number because an alcoholic church member was harassing her.

The following minister's comments allude to the commonly held "fifty mile rule" that is still practiced by some UU ministers today who strive to maintain a social network outside of their congregations:

When I entered the parish ministry in 1960, sexual ethics were not explicitly addressed. If you could not control your libido or go into therapy, there was the 50 mile radius rule. (That is) you conducted your "affair" 50 miles from your parish, the guidelines were: be discreet, be careful and be incognito.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Sylvia Howe and Paul L'Herrou, *The Law and the Spirit*, 75-76.

⁶⁵ Minutes from the November, 1991 minister's training conducted by UUA. No further information available.

Another respondent, Diane Miller contended that the “50 mile rule” was an absurdity and that it was the wrong sort of guidelines to encourage. Her comments echo others about the “anything goes” attitude of the 60s and 70s:

In the 60s and 70s there was a permission granted: “it was all good” “more was better” “a way to related to people and express love.” All the things in the general culture were in UUism. If you slept around, swore, then you were hip. It was the whole era. The constraining ethics that would have been adhered to in other traditions didn’t apply. Our ministers had failed do their thinking around the sexual revolution. So, the legacy of that remains. So many people involved in “open marriages, a relationship with a parishioner” today would be called misconduct was simply having a relationship (then).⁶⁶

Legal Considerations

A legal issue highlighted by Reverend Lucinda Duncan, a member of the Sexual Ethics Seminar, had to do with the UUA’s legal guidance. Lawyers, given who they are, tend to watch closely for issues of liability. Duncan noted that the UUA’s legal advice has sometimes influenced the UUA’s response in favor of the institutional well-being rather than victim/survivor. To provide any funds for the victim/survivor would indicate guilt according to UUA’s legal advisors, and thus, the UUA’s protocols did not allow financial support for the victim/survivor. However, in at least one instance, a misconducting minister and his wife were provided funding for marital counseling. This example points out a fundamental failure of the UUA to center its response in a victim/survivor focus that utilizes the values of feminist theology that places the woman or victim/survivor at the center of its analysis. Advocacy for victim/survivors appeared to be one of the weakest links in the UUA’s response to clergy sexual misconduct. Duncan’s statement clearly addresses similar concerns and she aligns herself with the victim/survivor in her observation that expresses her concerns that the UUA’s legal counsel,

⁶⁶ Reverend Diane Miller. Interview. Boston, MA. 17 October 2005.

holds as its first priority the protection of the Association from law suits. While this may not be the intent of the UUA, the fact that the recommendations to implement an advocates program and provide funds for victim/survivors was not implemented, questions the nature of the UUA's support for victim/survivors. Along the same lines, the Safe Congregations Panel sent a letter on January 20, 2006 inquiring about the status of its recommendations. One of its concerns was the treatment of victim/survivors and complainants and whether justice and restoration are possible for victims. The Panel has been supportive of the UUA and appears to have enjoyed a favorable and mutually supportive relationship to date. However, it is the contention of this researcher that victim/survivors and their advocates have cause for concern. The conceptual framework that the UUA operates from can at the most produce some basic policy and procedural changes over the short term. Furthermore, it can and has created a few structural changes that make it more difficult for misconducting clergy to retain their fellowship once convicted of clergy sexual misconduct. However, without an analysis that questions the very foundations of power and reflect on a theology of power as a faith community, it is not very likely that the UUA can shift the UU culture toward a vision of justice. Such a culture instead thrives on individualism, challenging authority, denial of institutional and personal power and a distrust of rules and guidelines.

Adjudication

It costs the UUA approximately \$50,000 to \$100,000 to adjudicate a misconduct case. "They are passing on those costs," contended one respondent. "I am waiting for someone to hold a misconducting minister accountable for the expense as a result of their misconduct, she stated half in humor and half seriously. According to this same respondent, the expenses are a result of the investigation process, that is, the cost of sending people out to conduct an investigation and

interview people. “It is the cost of pulling everyone together. It is the cost of attorneys and feeding everyone. It is expensive,” she stated.

Identifying the Theological Foundation That Guides the UUA’s Institutional Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burden, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

-Isaiah 58:6.

As a covenanting community, UUs champion the sacredness of human life and honor the “inherent worth and dignity of every person.”⁶⁷ This widely held belief is embraced by most UUs and is articulated in the first, second and third Principles and Purposes of the UUA that identify the belief in: 1) the inherent worth and dignity of every person; 2) justice, equity and compassion in human relations and 3) acceptance of one another. These declarative statements clearly express primacy for the sanctity of life.

This section focuses on the second research question: What theology/ideology guides the UUAs institutional response to clergy sexual misconduct? The researcher will describe the findings and conclude with an analysis of those findings. The researcher has already noted the UUA Principles and Purposes that guide many UU’s values and behaviors. However, in a creedless religion such as UUism there is an even greater need to be grounded in theology/ideology to provide clarity. The emphasis in UUism is on the community of believers and their covenantal relationships with one another. When individuals are in integrity with one another and honoring their covenants they are said to be in “right relations.” When the trust is broken or the bonds of friendship are broken due to some rift then they are out of right relations

⁶⁷ Excerpted from the Principles and Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

or out of integrity. The word covenant means promise. One promises to hold one another in the bonds of friendship. UUism is a covenantal religious community. Thus, violations of the covenant constitute broken-ness in integrity and in the community.

There are several factors that explain the failure of the UUA to center its response to clergy sexual misconduct in a theological perspective: 1) diversity of theologies poses challenges; 2) UU's inadequate response to sin/evil; 3) reluctance to engage reverent language and 4) congregational polity.

Background

The paper trail of research documents testified to the longevity of the issue and the UUA's historical efforts to address clergy sexual misconduct beginning most noticeably in the early 1990s. The incident that enraged a sufficient number of UUs eventually challenged the UUA to change the institutional and thus the individual norms that governed clergy sexual misconduct. So while there was a proliferation of documents and infrastructure initiatives that reflected the UUA's efforts there did not appear to be parallel efforts signifying a theological perspective. Using a simple definition of theology to frame this discussion, the researcher will guide the reader through the analysis of the findings: "Theology—the study of religion and of religious ideas and beliefs; a branch of theology treating God and God's relation to the world; reflecting on the ultimate meaning and value of life"⁶⁸ Ultimate meaning and value are approached differently depending on the theology embraced. The researcher's findings suggest that the UUA has not, for the most part, used a theological grounding to inform its institutional

⁶⁸ Henry Bosey Woolf, ed., *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974) 707. This definition was also augmented by the researcher.

response to clergy sexual misconduct.⁶⁹ While the UUA stepped up with considerable commitment and resources to address the issue of clergy sexual misconduct after the 1991 GA incident their institutional response has been almost exclusively guided and framed from a “secular” or humanistic perspective. Extensive efforts by the researcher only uncovered two documents generated through the UUA that explicitly addressed clergy sexual misconduct using a theological foundation and approach. The first, a six page document written in April, 1994 by Reverend Lucinda S. Duncan, titled, *The Role and Purpose of Our UUA Principles as Language, Framework, Ground and Guide*. This document emphasized the role of UUA as a “religiously centered, rather than a legally self-protective, Association.” It essentially addressed the needs of emotional systems with conflicting priorities and claims and encouraged these systems, that is, the UUA, ministers, MFC and families to seek guidance in their Principles and Purposes. Duncan highlighted a problem that this researcher noted with the UUA’s legal guidance that sometimes fails to address the needs of victim/survivors in favor of the institutional well-being. On at least one occasion several years ago when the researcher inquired about counseling for a victim/survivor this researcher was told that to provide any funds for the victim/survivor would indicate guilt and thus the UUA’s protocols did not allow financial support for the victim/survivor. However, the misconducting minister and his wife were being subsidized to attend marital counseling. This example points out a fundamental failure of the UUA to be victim/survivor focused. Advocacy for victim/survivors appeared to be one of the weakest links in the UUA’s response to clergy sexual misconduct. Duncan’s statement clearly addresses similar concerns and she aligns herself with the victim/survivor in her observation that

⁶⁹ These statistics were taken from a report conducted in 1998 as part of a campaign called, Fulfilling the Promise.

expresses her concerns that the UUA's legal counsel, holds as its first priority the "protection of the Association from suit." Duncan consistently grounds her discussion and arguments in theological language with the constant reminder, "we are a religious association that values open and responsible access to information" and she consistently places her decision within a theological framework. She articulates the purpose for using religious language as follows: "If we cannot discuss, mediate and decide about alleged violations of clergy sexual ethics in the language and framework of our religious heritage and future, then we cease to function as a theologically grounded religious association." The other document, a seven page discourse written by Reverend Thomas Mikelson and published in 1995 was the only other report that analyzed clergy sexual misconduct from a theological perspective.⁷⁰ Mikelson chaired the Sexual Ethics Seminar (SES) and the paper focused on fourteen points that primarily addressed the following: 1) the congregation as a place of safety that is inherently vulnerable by virtue of its openness as a spiritual community; 2) the roles of ministry including that of sexually healthy religious professionals; 3) the presence of power dynamics and awareness of appropriate boundaries and 4) naming sexual relationships and/or sexualized behavior between a minister and a congregant as abuses of clergy power and authority. Duncan and Mikelson, as members of the Sexual Ethics Seminar began meeting monthly in the fall of 1990 with its members comprised of: Lois Ames, Charles Reinhart, William "Scotty" McLennan, Deborah Pope-Lance and Rita Van Tassel.⁷¹ For two years the SES gathered materials, read and reviewed information

⁷⁰ This fact was confirmed by Mikelson who acknowledged there was no follow-up to his knowledge. One other document that reflects on clergy sexual misconduct from a theological perspective is a one page document contained on the Restorative Justice website.

⁷¹ Upon retirement, Charles Reinhart resigned and was replaced by Richard Fewkes. In addition to these members, Donna DiSciullo and Pat Sheppard spent considerable time reading and commenting on the final document.

and most importantly, engaged in rigorous theological reflections. Why the emphasis on the UUA grounding its response to clergy sexual misconduct in a theological perspective? If the UUA was a non-profit as opposed to a faith based organization it would not be necessary or expected that the institutional response would reflect a theologically grounded response. But it is faith based, and while it is comprised of diverse theologies that are an integral part of who the UUA is and this researcher feels its theologies ought to rightfully inform the UUA's response to clergy sexual misconduct. Reverend Susan Pangrel, Dean of Student Affairs at Meadville Lombard Theological School contends, "If we are religious tradition then we need to be able to think theologically." So what prevented the UUA from thinking theologically about the issue of clergy sexual misconduct?

Diversity of Theologies

While the diversity of theologies within UUism reflects a richness of voices that contributes to the breath and depth of UUism it can also pose some challenges. In a 1997 campaign titled, "Fulfilling the Promise" survey findings from over 9,000 respondents reflected the following theological demographics: humanists comprised forty-seven percent; earth or nature-centered comprised nineteen percent; theist comprised thirteen percent and Christians comprised nine percent of UUs. In a more recent study, James Casebolt devised twenty theological labels from which respondents were invited to choose. The respondents selected the following: humanist (fifty-four percent); agnostic (thirty-three percent); earth-centered (thirty-one percent); atheist (eighteen percent); Buddhist (seventeen percent); pagan (thirteen percent)

and Christian (thirteen percent).⁷² The theological diversity alone is enough to intimidate the faint hearted. While others might find such theological diversity chaotic many UUs thrive on it, taking full advantage of the worship experience to influence liturgy. Worship services typically include diverse rituals and sermons drawing from many theologies. Worship experiences routinely include animal blessings, water communions, “talk backs” and experiential worship. In smaller congregations guest speakers from the community assume the pulpit to talk about topics ranging from their travels abroad to quantum physics relationship to spirituality to theology. And while one can appreciate the richness that these diverse theologies reflect in congregational life, this researcher would be remiss not to make passing mention of the tensions between such groups as the humanists and Christians or the pagans and Christians. These conflicts have been known to surface between the minister and the congregation, but most likely emerge between members. In one instance, the minister was a Christian UU and his congregation was primarily humanist. The minister eventually resigned after his Committee began to request his sermons in advance for the purpose of editing the “God talk” in them. The situation deteriorated to the extent that the Committee was editing the minister’s sermons with a red pen and returning them. UU ministers are actually entitled to “Freedom of the Pulpit,” that is, the right to freely express themselves from the pulpit. Clearly this Committee violated this ministers’ right to freedom of expression. The point of this story is to acknowledge that diversity of theologies is an important part of UU community and yet it comes with its challenges.

This researcher believes that UUA did itself an injustice by not emphasizing theology more and inviting participants from its major faith traditions to espouse its reflections on this

⁷² Tom Stites, “New Survey of UUs Shows Theological Differences, Common Values in The World” (Boston: *The World Magazine*, May/June 1998) or Tom Stites, New Survey of Theological Differences, CommonValues <http://www.ua.org/WRLD/0598feature4.html>.

troublesome issue—clergy sexual misconduct. This in itself would be a learning experience because of the soul searching that some of the faith communities would be forced to engage. For example, one interpretation from the Buddhist community is reflected in the controversial comments of Stephen Butterfield, an English professor. Though not a UU, Butterfield asserts that the purpose of adopting rules is to learn awareness and not to invoke sanctions for wrongdoing. The “sin” or violation is a “lapse of awareness” which can then be transformed into an occasion for honesty and further mindfulness by the confession.⁷³ Butterfield views the power disparity between the teacher and student as nothing more than an illusion. Buddhists apparently have very different ideas about spirituality and sexuality. Some faith communities and theologies might speak of “sin.” UUs tend to name the misconducting behavior of ministers as broken-ness and “missing the mark.” Perhaps the failure to more forthrightly address the concept of evil and sin has prevented the UUA and other UUs from using such language. Has there been a time that the UUA and has named an action as “evil?” Yes, one of those historic moments was documented in the recently published book, *Soul Work: Anti-racist Theologies in Dialogue* in which thirty-two participants explored the spiritual dimensions of UU’s anti-racism work.⁷⁴ One participant argued for viewing racism “not only as a matter of institutional structures and social power disparities, but as a profound evil.”⁷⁵ Some of the participants perceived their work as “soul work.” This researcher contends that without a theological component to end clergy sexual misconduct the UUA’ work may remain shallow as one participant asserted about anti-racism efforts. Reverend Dianne Arakawa, the first fellowshipped Asian-American UU minister,

⁷³ Stephen Butterfield, Accusing the Tiger: Sexual Ethics and Buddhist Teachers in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Summer, 1992) 46-51.

⁷⁴ Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley and Nancy Palmer Jones, *Soul Work: Anti-Racist Theologies in Dialogue* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003)

⁷⁵ Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley and Nancy Palmer, *Soul Works*. 110.

reminded the participants of the following:

[R]acism will not be dismantled with one rational methodology. . . but when “we as a community of faith exert our moral and ethical persuasion for the Common Good [...] We need to consider what is salvific, redeems lives, and makes them as holy as the stars that are set in the heavens [...] We need to look at and to lift up feeling, faith, and religious community.”⁷⁶

One explanation for why the UUA’s stronger and more advanced anti-racism efforts may have more to do with the having been on the “Journey toward Wholeness” for a much longer time than their commitment to safe congregations.⁷⁷ Therefore the UUA has internalized a greater understanding of the dynamics needed to address racism. Perhaps the study of history has also helped many UU’s to claim its prophetic voice that can often be recovered through a prophetic understanding of history and religion. Apparently the stakeholders felt comfortable exploring anti-racism from a theological perspective.

James Luther Adams, one of the great contemporary UU theologians, refers to the watered down version of liberal religion as “chronic theological thinners of liberal religion.”⁷⁸ It is the failure to engage in rigorous theological reflections that possibly has produced the watered down version of liberal religion that Luther Adams speaks about. Luther Adams went abroad and met concentration camp survivors and activists fighting against facism. When he returned to the United States of America he, in fact, came to view white racism as “our Nazism”. Luther Adams believed theology is a living tradition and not the study of a “fossilized doctrine.” Clearly Luther Adams viewed theology and practice as two different matters. During World War II many theologians worldwide failed to lift their voices, individually or collectively to address Hitler’s

⁷⁶ Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley and Nancy Palmer Jones, ed., *Soul Work*, 161-62.

⁷⁷ This is the actual name of an anti-racism training.

⁷⁸ James Luther Adams, *The Prophethood of All Believers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 23.

genocidal attacks against the Jewish people, gays and Roma, also known as Gypsies. This moral stumbling that caused the designated leaders of God to ignore such blatant atrocities was more recently repeated in Rwanda. The genocide in Rwanda claimed the lives of over 600,000 individuals. Thus, the same cultural climate that allowed the institution of slavery to flourish in this country, allowed genocide in Rwanda. The same cultural climate that allowed the institution of slavery to flourish in this country, allowed genocide in Rwanda. The same cultural climate that allowed the genocide against the Jews, that permit modern day slavery here and abroad is the same moral stumbling that institutions can so easily fall victim and prey to if not being constantly vigilant. Thus, clergy sexual misconduct is a moral stumbling block for UUA, for all ministers and all UU's.⁷⁹ The failure to name the evil in its midst is nothing short of moral stumbling.

Evil

Unlike some UUs, Luther Adams did not appear shy about his use of the term “evil.” He even talked about “satanic forces” independent of human moral control which he believed was simply a “demonic distortion of human relatedness crying out for a change of heart, mind and will.”⁸⁰ But Paul Rasor, UU theologian and director of the Religion and Social Issues Forum at Pendle Hill, a Quaker study center, lends his cautionary voice in a very different direction that deserves serious consideration by UUs. Rasor contends that UUs failure to develop a strong theology of evil has weakened UUs prophetic voices to resist evil. One of the concrete areas this

⁷⁹ I thank M. Shawn Copeland for the use of the term, “moral stumbling” which allowed me name the paralysis of will that many denominational leaders initially succumbed to, resulting in a failure to act. I a terming their inaction, “moral stumbling”.

⁸⁰ George K. Beach, ed., *James Luther Adams: The Prophethood of All Believers*. 13.

is noted is in the area of anti-racism/anti-oppression and multiculturalism. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words enrich Rasor's assertion and remind the reader that what when prophetic voices are silenced. "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."⁸¹ Rev. Dianne Arakawa reminds UUs of some of their failures and moral stumblings around anti-racism work:

Like most of you, I can recount the tragedies of the past that still plague our Association: from the settler Indian wars of the seventeenth century in Massachusetts, Puritan policies related to slavery, the mixed Unitarian response to abolition, the unjust labor practices at the turn of the century, and the racist statements of our denominational presidents in the first half of the last century to the slowness to engage in the Civil Rights movement on the part of some of our congregations, the derailing of the Black Empowerment movement in the sixties, and the lack of support for congregations and clergy of color from Ethelred Brown's time to our present [.]⁸²

Compounded by the fact that many UUs do not embrace the concept of original sin UUs are further handicapped in their language and their abilities to articulate a theology of evil. Instead, UUs use such language as "missing the mark" rather than sin/evil. Rev. Kim Beach believes that UUs "get worried when they talk about evil (because) they feel they're dipping into dualism, and they have taught that dualism is bad and monism is good. Beach notes that Luther Adams had a great deal to say about evil and even resorted to terms like demonic which he used to reference "principalities and powers" of the New Testament.⁸³ Adams referred to the satanic as pure evil and the demonic as the distortion of the good. Thus evil was seen as self-perpetuating and self-justifying.

The diversity of theologies within UUism simply makes it challenging for the

⁸¹ Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley and Nancy Palmer Jones, eds. *Soul Work: Anti-racist Theologies in Dialogue* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003), 1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 119.

denominational leadership, UUA, to speak with one voice. While this feat is seldom achieved within denominational ranks it is noteworthy when it does occur. So it would be too easy to lay the absence of theological reflections at the feet of UUs theological diversity. If this is the case, why have UU Christians not generated a body of scholarship that explains clergy sexual misconduct?

What does it mean to be Gods human creatures who are the objects of others oppressive behaviors or the perpetrator of such behaviors or worst still the perpetrator? While many UUs have rejected notions of women's inferiority and women as evil seducers of men they have failed to generate thoughtful reflections that provide a theological grounding that informs a UU specific response to clergy sexual misconduct. Thus much remains to be explored in UU generated literature in the context of UU traditions and theology on the topic of clergy sexual misconduct.

UUs strong social justice orientation is a result of their identification with the "downtrodden, the dispossessed, disinherited, with the exploited and the oppressed."⁸⁴

UUs principles view human life as sacred and encourage right relations among individuals. Acts of clergy sexual misconduct break faith with these beliefs. Furthermore, the breach of professional boundaries and breaking of trust denies authentic love or agape love, a concept while usually attributed to theism can be applied to UUism. UUA's failure to grapple with the theological underpinnings of its response to clergy sexual misconduct points to a serious deficiency in moving forward with a visionary and prophetic voice. It also pointed out a number of long standing concerns: 1) theological diversity 2) reluctance to tackle language of reverence; 3) failure to produce contemporary theologians possessing prophetic vision and voices; and 4)

⁸⁴ Cornel West, *Prophetic Theology*, ed. *Prophetic Reflection: Notes on Race and Power in America* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1993). 223.

their resistance to internalizing and naming power as a crucial ingredient in clergy sexual misconduct. This researcher believes that inviting reflections amongst the laity and clergy representing the dominant theologies and eventually all the theologies within UUism will go a long way in getting at the core beliefs that represent some common theological grounding for UUs. So while this process maybe time consuming and certainly will not eliminate clergy sexual misconduct in our lifetime it will create some common language and bonds across the vastly diverse theologies represented in UUism. By doing so this allows UUs to stand as allies with victim/survivors while holding perpetrators accountable through a model using Restorative Justice. Clergy sexual abuse is an affront to the Gospel or good news of UUism and goes against what it means to “honor the inherent worth and dignity of all.”

The ministry of UU is to clearly hold its prophetic voice and “name violence as sin and take action to end it.”⁸⁵

Christian identified UU’s might embrace a concept of “imago dei” that is, the notion that humans are made in the image of God. As an integral part of their theology, Christian identified UUs and other theists might also recognize concepts of good and evil - right and wrong. In contrast, many non theist UUs would not embrace what they perceive as binary thinking that appoints a God figure to symbolize all that is good and a devil that symbolizes the bad in the world. Many humanist identified UUs while holding no notions of God, do profess belief as a covenanting community that champions the sacredness of human life. Humanist identified UUs like most other UUs honor the bonds and closeness of community although they may not share common theologies. Theologies that promote the sanctity of community is a commonly woven

⁸⁵ Doehring is a liberal Christian feminist theologian who has written and spoken extensively on clergy sexual misconduct. , 19.

thread that is consistent with many world religions. Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr.'s theology of oneness that recognized humankind as one family ultimately produced the concept of "Beloved Community." Given UUs dedication to social justice issues and public witnessing it was not surprising that there would be a justice paradigm guiding the efforts to address clergy sexual misconduct. What was surprising was the lack of a theological framework. Yet the "chronic theological thinness" of liberal religion that James Luther Adams references suggests the validity of his observation.⁸⁶

The Transformative Power of Social Action – Standing with the Oppressed: Prophetic Voices and Social Witnesses

We will not solve the problems of the world from the level of thinking we were at when we created them. – Albert Einstein

Institutions are slow and cumbersome to change. UUA is no exception. Assuming moral responsibility is an important and necessary approach to changing the institutional culture that determines the response to clergy sexual misconduct. Such an approach maintains the institutional vision for transforming cumbersome institutions and naming clergy sexual misconduct. To that end, UUA has kept faith with its vision of social justice by claiming the inherent worth and dignity of each and every individual. While UU's distinctive faith claims should not make them morally superior to others it should encourage their prophetic voice in standing with the oppressed.

Advocacy groups have had a major role in moving institutions toward living out their missions and purpose. The UUA has not been without its own committed passionate groups that

⁸⁶ George K. Beach, ed., *James Luther Adams: The Prophethood of All Believers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985) 23.

have helped stay the course in its witness efforts of justice seeking and accountability. While this research has addressed some of the institutional endeavors to shift the culture toward a zero tolerance of clergy sexual misconduct, the research focus now shifts to victim/survivors.

UUA's definition for survivor identifies several stages of healing that include: 1) personal safety, 2) reconciliation of the victim/survivor's story and 3) restoration of the community. What is missing from this model is the recognition that part of the individual healing is the opportunity for the individuals to transform their individual suffering and trauma into empowerment through acts of social activism. The telling of women's stories is a powerful way to break the conspiracy of silence and give voice to victim/survivors. However, stopping short of activism, that is, efforts to create institutional change, sanctions and creates an individualistic approach to the problem rather than naming it as a societal problem reflective of models of dominance and power. Thus, the intervention then assumes a counseling and empowerment model for the women and misconducting ministers. While that is an important component, it begs the issue for social change that evolves out of social activism. Hence, treatment of the experience as opposed to the r of social change, reduces the solution to a matter of social services. Developing survival mechanisms that challenge gender oppression addresses the spirit of the conceptual framework of feminist theology. While the option to engage in social activism should always be voluntary, it must be presented as part of the woman's education and the institution. Victim/survivors involvement in speak-outs, rallies, support groups, and court advocacy is an extension of the empowerment model that testifies to the belief that the "personal is political and the political is person." Likewise, individual and institutional change must be viewed using a similar conceptual framework, that is, the dialectical relationship between the two provides a dynamic tension juxtaposed one against the other.

So what would accountability to victim/survivors look like utilizing feminist theology? Since UUA has not utilized feminist theology this researcher draws on examples outside of UUA. In the battered women's movement, batterers programs that seek to address violence against women using an empowerment model, solicit the wisdom and accountability of battered women's advocates. What does this accomplish? By do so, male allies demonstrate their willingness to take leadership and directions from women and thus begin a process of publicly letting go of some of their male privilege and power. This small effort to redistribute power challenges the socialization of male activists that have oftentimes internalized notions of female misogyny and thus male power. This process of examining power dynamics forces an internal and external confrontation within male allies as they begin to reflect o male privilege and reconfigure and dismantle power dynamics in their lives. From the very beginning this dismantling of male privilege sets into motion a paradigm shift that provides a different model for institutional and individual power. The societal norms granting males power and privilege are so pervasive that male activists can come up in women's spaces such as women's movements and expect to assert their power and privilege because that is what they are used to doing. They are quickly checked. Thus, those individuals that are not sincere do not stay around because it is simply too much trouble to do all the necessary work to be accountable to women and keep one's ego under control and in check. Controlling male ego around women is an important intervention in male privilege for males who have been socialized to believe they are more intelligent and therefore, more capable leaders. The process can be likened to peeling an onion layer by layer.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ For one of the best examples of males that have been doing this work over time and are genuinely committed to the process contact: Men Stopping Violence, Inc.

Is Nothing Sacred? The Voice and Story of A Victim Survivor

While there are countless and nameless individuals that deserve equal attention the following individual portrayed in this research symbolizes the courageous ability of victim/survivors to transform from the soul threatening experiences of clergy sexual misconduct. The individual in question was able to heal, continue to grow and develop and most important, to love again. She moved forward to help countless others through their courage and grace:

UNITARIAN GUILTY ON SIX CHARGES. Northboro, Massachusetts Minister Mack W. Mitchell, 56 at the time, was convicted on six of twenty-three charges of sexual assault involving a Tibetan woman who testified he sexually abused her as a teenager after offering to sponsor her education in this country. “I came here with a lot of wonderful dreams, and my dreams were shattered,” said Kim who is now 37. With the conviction, “I can dream again and become a whole person again.” Rape and assault-battery charges are still pending against him by another Tibetan woman.⁸⁸

The victim, Kim was 16 years old when she left a Tibetan refugee camp. Reverend Mitchell had served approximately 27 years at the UU church. Kim, in a recent interview on the Oprah Show contended that, “My life was hell.” One week after she arrived the inappropriate touching started that eventually escalated to rape. When Kim realized what was happening to her she tried to make the minister cease his abuse. Instead, he threatened her. He made her believe her parents would go to prison. Mitchell tried to intimidate her into believing that no one would take her word over a respected minister like himself. Kim recalls that over the six years things got worse. “He started to use foreign objects to penetrate me. He got sicker and sicker. I didn’t understand how a man of God could do this.” Kim recounted her feelings as she prepared to testify against her rapist, “A week before he bought my two cousins over two members of the congregation approached (me) with suspicions they had that something was going on. I testified

⁸⁸ “Unitarian Guilty on Six Charges,” Worcester Telegram & Gazette, 15 May 1992.

against him. It was very scary and frightening. I came out with the story because he was going to victimize my cousins.”

For many years Kim attempted to put the past behind her. In 1995 she attended the World Conference on Women in Beijing as part of the Tibetan delegation. She shared these poignant words, “I found strength and solidarity with women from around the world who shared their struggles and vision in a way that made many of our cultural and ethnic differences secondary . . . I started to see the connections between my own experiences and that of many others. I discovered I had buried so many feelings and beliefs and as they emerged I was able to express myself with a sense of authority I never knew I had. I was able to move through the anger I was holding and use that energy for positive change . . . It has fueled my activism for Tibetan human rights . . . I now co-direct the Massachusetts-based Trafficking Victims Outreach & Services Network”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ For a complete description of Kim Phuntsok Dolma Meston’s story see <http://www.uswomenwithoutborders.org>

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS – RECOMMENDATIONS – ANALYSIS

The purpose of this research was to explore the institutional response of the UUA to clergy sexual misconduct between 1991 and 2005. As such, the research topic, clergy sexual misconduct, is merely one aspect on a continuum of gender-based violence that women experience globally. The grave consequences of clergy sexual misconduct are worth repeating here because of the enormity of the emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual impact on the victim/survivor and secondary victims. The impact of clergy sexual misconduct is in part due to the perpetrators' role that grants them access to the inner sanctums of individuals and family members' lives and, represents the ultimate betrayal of trust and intimacy. It is status and power of clergy as spiritual leaders and pastors that produces such long-term "soul wounding" and herein lay the egregious nature of the crime. While this social problem has gained visibility due to the recent Catholic scandals, it is still not as widely understood as other forms of societal violence such as child and woman abuse, elder abuse and other forms of sexual assault.

Summary of the Research

The literature findings were categorized into four themes: 1) clergy power and status; 2) boundary violations; 3) effects of clergy sexual misconduct on victims, clergy and congregations; and 4) institutional accountability. The examination of the literature

on clergy power and status revealed very different perceptions about power among UU clergy and non-UU clergy. All of the traditional research sources tended to address mainstream denominations and clergy.

The researcher was only able to obtain UU generated literature and research through denominational publications or directly from denominational headquarters. Working against these limitations, the researcher ascertained that many mainstream denominations are experiencing a declining interest in religion that has impacted their growth and the perception and role of ministers. This declining interest is due in part to 1) changing values of individuals that no longer view religion or a personal relationship with God as important; 2) scandals associated with the faith community; 3) the rise of materialism and secularism and 4) women's reaction due to the church's resistance to women's full participation. However, even with all these factors mitigating against religious affiliation, Americans still appear to demonstrate a strong propensity for religious practices such as church attendance and church giving. As "representatives of God" the church still holds power and sway but in some instances the research indicated this is declining with the changing roles of the church and the clergy.

Among UU clergy, the boundaries tend to be more easily blurred because of the appearance of non-hierarchical relationships and sometimes flat congregational structures. This is particularly evidenced in the interpersonal relationships between the minister and laity in the following ways: 1) laity tend to call clergy by first names and vice versa; 2) clergy seldom wear cleric robes except for "high church" occasions; 3) single/eligible ministers are permitted to date single/eligible members; 4) sexual intimacy is viewed as a natural part of human relations and is therefore, not considered immoral, sinful or "evil" and 5) UUism is non-creedal and, therefore there are not commonly held beliefs and theologies that create a unifying identity and a sense of

connection.⁹⁰ Non UU scholarship does not address these differences in values and perceptions, which clearly have powerful implications in the congregational culture and interpersonal relationships between clergy and laity. Many of the sources cited the combination of power, isolation, naiveté, poor training in power dynamics and lack of supervision as factors that raise the risks of misconduct.⁹¹ The fact that clergy's power and status tends to be equated with God creates the potential for the abuse of power and a tension between spirituality and sexuality that can be reverent and/or seductive. None of the literature addressed this although some of the feminist theologians touched on it. However, this is not as much a factor with UU's because of the diverse theologies that do not embrace the Christian notion of "God." Furthermore, because some of the research analyses only examined power as the root cause of clergy sexual misconduct they may be less inclined to look at issues of sexuality. In addition, in hindsight, since this research focused on the institutional response of the UUA to clergy sexual misconduct it might have benefited this researcher to conduct a more rigorous examination of institutional power dynamics and theories of organizational culture.

The researcher's review of the literature identified six frameworks that explain clergy sexual misconduct: 1) individualist; 2) social-structural; 3) theological; 4) dominant-feminist and 5) systems theory. The individualist framework locates the source of the violence within the individual. The implications for treatment would suggest long term therapy. The social-structural framework locates the source of the misconduct in the larger social context that predisposes

⁹⁰ UU's are not required to adhere to any system of beliefs or opinions in order to become a member of a congregation. In contrast, Christianity is a creedal religion that adheres to the Apostles' Creed that begins, "I believe in God the Father Almighty."

⁹¹ Marie M. Fortune et al., *Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship*. (Seattle: Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1997); Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*; Grenz and Bell, *Betrayal of Trust*; and Rebekah L. Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

individuals to violent and predatory behavior. The obvious interventions are to work to change the social conditions of society. One example of the cultural framework contributes promiscuous pastors' behaviors to those of plantation culture during slavery. This framework considers particular cultural nuances that might explain such a phenomenon. The theological framework explores the moral choices of the individual. While, basically, these choices have to do with right and wrong there are variations that examine issues of alienation and materialism. The dominance/feminist framework locates the source of the problem in gender aggression. Males choose to use violence against women because they can. The final framework is systems theory that maintains that clergy sexual misconduct is a reflection of the larger systems acting out its needs in a symbiotic relationship. This researcher chose the dominance/feminist framework although there are aspects of all of these frameworks that could logically explain clergy sexual misconduct. However, the use of violence against women as part of their male privilege reveals the oppression of women and patriarchy. This framework is equally applicable when the perpetrator of clergy sexual misconduct is female. In the few instances of female aggressors this researcher contends that the female minister is simply using the power and privilege of her ministerial role to violate others in a less powerful role. In this instance the emphasis is on the power dynamics and not necessarily the gender. With male ministers, power is conferred to them as males and as ministers which they misuse to victimize women and children.

The literature on the effects of clergy sexual misconduct on individuals, congregations and clergy was remarkably consistent in its findings. The literature depicted the grave effects of clergy sexual misconduct on not only the victim/survivor but on the second circle, that is, the family of the victim/survivor, congregational members, the larger community, the clergy member and his family and friends. The fact that it takes on the average of ten years for a

congregation to heal from the ravages of clergy sexual misconduct speaks volumes about the soul wounding that takes place. The literature review surfaced some of the most significant scholars associated with the topic and the versatile roles that many of the clergy/scholars/practitioners play. Their scholarship provided a particular richness other lacking in some disciplines.

The in-depth data analysis of this case study revealed that the UUA has taken seriously its primary commitment to ensure the provision of safe congregations. To this end the UUA has garnered its fiscal and human resources to address clergy sexual misconduct within its ranks. It has established a formidable, though loosely assembled infrastructure since the early 1990s that primarily consists of volunteers from around the country with UUA staff providing monitoring and oversight. The various established bodies described herein have compiled an impressive array of documents investigating the problem from almost every dimension, except theologically. At a time when other denominations had made little in-roads on the problem, UUA had already developed policies and procedures and established protocols that provided guidance primarily on a national, District and congregational level in the 1990s.⁹² Many districts also took the initiative to develop resource materials and training. While training and experience were key factors for District Field Staff, others learned by trial-and-error in providing effective consultation support for congregations impacted by misconduct. Early in the process, the UUA contracted with Reverend Marie Fortune, then Executive Director of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, now known as Faith Trust, Inc. to provide training utilizing a train-the-trainer model. Various bodies, appointed by the UUA to address various

⁹² Mary Moore, *Finding Our Way: Responding to Clergy Sexual Misconduct* (Boston: UU Women's Federation, 1992).

aspects of clergy sexual misconduct were usually comprised of industrious and competent individuals with good organizational skills that produced admirable outcomes. In most instances the UUA appeared to maintain its integrity and credibility in following policy and acting on the recommendations of these bodies. Failure to act on certain key recommendations was noted by this researcher. With infrastructure in place, the UUA was able to develop, publish and disseminate educational materials and training curricula intended to educate its constituency about clergy sexual misconduct. From its emphasis on training it appears that the UUA believed that providing information and new competencies would bring about a change in the clergy. It was difficult to assess how successful these training efforts have been. What the research on institutional change indicates is that change of such a magnitude requires a long-range plan that incorporates multiple approaches. This use of a coordinated and systematic approach to bring about the desired outcome can be witnessed in the Battered Women's Movement and the Rape Crisis Movement where such efforts over a long period have made impressive inroads to provide services to victim/survivors even though the statistics do not suggest "success." It was not clear how strategic the UUA was in its response to clergy sexual misconduct. It appears this may be a critical period as it seeks to shift its paradigm from "Retributive Justice" to "Restorative Justice." The implications of this new paradigm cannot be adequately assessed at this time.

The UUAs "staff liaisons" often served in the role of facilitator, accountability person and holder of sacred reports and documents were an important one given the number of individuals and committees convened to address clergy sexual misconduct. Some of these groups and individuals have diligently served since the early 1990s while others have reinvented themselves in different but equally needed and relevant groups. Yet, in spite of an infrastructure and the proliferation of groups and bodies addressing clergy sexual misconduct the UUAs

current developmental efforts are more challenging to identify. This current phase appears to lack the strategic approach that characterized UUAs earlier phases in previous years, or it may simply be that there are less archival documents that the researcher was able to track. Restorative Justice appears to be the agreed upon vision and, therefore, the next growing edge for UUA. The UUA has erected an impressive web page that is accessible to all congregations with resources that include pamphlets, reports, literature and resource materials as well as links to related web sites.⁹³ The Congregational Services Administrator has set up an “Ethics and Safety” web site that is updated regularly.

Women’s Inclusion and Activism - Analysis

Moreover, gender issues were forced to the forefront of national politics in this country in the 1960s because of the entry of women into the labor market, women’s activism, the availability of birth control that loosened family forms and granted women greater role flexibility, and ushered in an era of cultural permissiveness. Within the UU context ministry experienced equally dramatic events. The fact that now, one in four UU ministers are females has changed and expanded the world of ministry as well as the range of problems confronting clergy. The outpouring of stories by female members of violence and abuse in pastoral counseling sessions surprised male ministers when it was reported across faith communities that had courageously opened its doors to female ministers. This marked change was due to now having female ministers available and females’ comfort level with telling them about sexual abuse. Inclusion of rituals and introduction of women’s leadership styles changed congregational

⁹³ Congregational Services, “UUA Restorative Justice” (Boston, Mass.: UUA, 2006) accessed 1 September 2006); available from <http://www.uua.org/cde/csm.toc.html>;

life forever. By the 1980s UU women were being ordained in greater numbers than their male counterparts.⁹⁴ This pattern continued into the 1990s. While most women were called to small congregations that were serving one hundred or fewer members, since 1980 women have been called to some of the larger churches in about the same numbers as their male colleagues.⁹⁵

Marked increases in the numbers of female ministers offers new opportunities for ministers and lay persons to work together on issues particularly affecting women such as reproductive rights, violence against women and sex education.

The findings of this research revealed that the UUA stepped up its efforts considerably once women advocates challenged the history of male privilege that had permitted clergy sexual misconduct to continue. This is an important dynamic because it identifies women's voices and organizing efforts as one of the critical sources of power among UUs. While the UUWF and the Women and Religion Committee were the "kick-ass" contingent within the UU community. That same power and militancy does not appear to be present today among women activists and more diplomatic strategies have replaced the "in-your-face" modus operandi of earlier years. The Women and Religion Committee is no longer a national body although several districts have very strong and viable district-wide Women and Religion Committees. The UUWF remains the sole, and by far, strongest voice for UU women. Besides providing funding to feminist/womanist activists and scholars, the UUWF's primary foci today includes: reproductive rights, violence against women and sex education. However, it is strategically poised to wield organizational power for women. The power from the periphery is oftentimes more powerful than the

⁹⁴ Cynthia Grant Tucker, "Women and the Unitarian-Universalist Ministry: A Historical Overview," in *Leaping From Our Spheres: The Impact of Women on Unitarian Universalist Ministry*, ed, Gretchen Woods (Boston: UUMA, 1998), 48.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 49.

institutional power held by institutions such as UUA. Activists on the periphery remain free to draw strength from numerous resources. Furthermore, they do not have to worry about jeopardizing their livelihood. Those in the center, such as UUA, are dependent on its power for their strength. UUWF draws its strength from the periphery and multiple constituencies. They can be appropriately outraged and engage in advocacy without having to consider the effects on their livelihood. Becoming financially astute and generating fund sources that are not strictly tied to UUA provides a financial base.

The UUA's appointment of Reverend Diane Miller in 1993 as the Director of Ministry, an influential position also brought a feminist theological perspective to UUA along with other colleagues at a time when it helped to emphasize the changing cultural norms that had for some time included more women. Another female minister, Reverend Carolyn S. Owen-Towle, was the first woman to run as a candidate for the Presidency, the highest office in the UUA. While she ran unsuccessfully against Reverend John Burhrens, another woman candidate would not run again until 2000 when Reverend Diane Miller resigned her position as Director of Ministry to run against the first African- American candidate, Reverend William Sinkford. Along with a gay white male minister, UUA members were polarized around issues of race, gender and sexual orientation. One can draw interesting historical parallels to the era of Susan B. Anthony when she and other women suffragists withdrew their votes from Black males to support the vote for white women's emancipation. Unfortunately, the timing and politics created some strong polarizations among key constituents that under other circumstances would have supported any one of these capable candidates. At the 2001 GA the members spoke and Reverend William Sinkford was elected the first African-American President of the UUA.

While women provided the accountability and oversight to push the UUA toward addressing clergy sexual misconduct, neither the UUA nor UU women have embraced a conceptual framework that centers its work in the reality of victim/survivors lived experiences. While the UUWF and some committee members have championed the cause of victim/survivors they have failed to bring victim/survivors into leadership in a critical mass. The token victim/survivor is usually included on Committees and their voices are added to panels and other critical venues. While this takes nothing away from the efforts of individual women advocates, the overall leadership of the UUAs efforts is still pretty much in the hands of staff, a few advocates and in general non-victim/survivors. The only places where this researcher noticed a considerable gathering of victim/survivors was a weekend retreat for women who have experienced clergy sexual misconduct called, "Is Nothing Sacred?" This retreat grew out of the experience of two survivors of UU clergy sexual misconduct. The other was at "Second Circle" gatherings that provide safe space for victims of clergy sexual abuse and their supporters.

UUAs definition for survivor identifies several stages of healing that include: 1) person's safety, 2) reconciliation of the person's story and 3) restoration of their community. What is missing from this model is the recognition that part of the individual healing is the opportunity for the individuals to transform their individual suffering and trauma into acts of social activism. The telling of women's stories is a powerful way to break the conspiracy of silence and give voice to victim/survivors. However stopping short of activism renders a very individual treatment of the experience as opposed to the power of social change that comes with social activism. Developing survival mechanisms that challenge gender oppression addresses the spirit of the conceptual framework of feminist theology. While the option to engage in social activism should always be voluntary it must be presented as part of the woman's education.

Victim/survivors involvement in speak-outs, rallies, support groups, and court advocacy is an extension of the empowerment model that testifies the personal is political and the political is personal. Likewise, individual and institutional change must be viewed using a similar conceptual framework, that is, the dialectical relationship between the two provides a dynamic tension juxtaposes one against the other.

So what would accountability to victim/survivors look like using a feminist theology conceptual framework? Since UUA has not utilized feminist theology this researcher draws on examples outside of UUA. In the Battered Women's Movement batterers programs that seek to address violence against women using an empowerment model solicit the wisdom and accountability of battered women advocates. What does this accomplish? By doing so male allies demonstrate their willingness to take leadership and directions from women and thus begin a process of publicly letting go of some of their male privilege. This small effort to redistribute power challenges the socialization of male activists that have oftentimes internalized notions of female misogyny and thus male power. This process of examining power dynamics forces an internal and external confrontation within male allies as they begin to reflect on male privilege and reconfigure and dismantle power dynamics. From the very beginning this dismantling of male privilege sets into motion a paradigm shift that provides a different model for institutional and individual power. The societal norms granting males power and privilege are so pervasive that male activists can come up in women's spaces such as women's movements and expect to assert their power and privilege. Those individuals that are not sincere do not stay around because it is simply too much trouble to have to do all the work necessary to be accountable to women and keep ones ego under control. Controlling male ego around women is an important

intervention in male privilege for males who have been socialized to believe they are more intelligent and capable leaders. The process can be likened to peeling an onion layer by layer.⁹⁶

While this researcher saw evidence of understanding about power dynamics in UUAs institutional response to clergy sexual misconduct there did not appear to be any understanding about institutional power. A feminist theology conceptual framework goes beyond an affirmative action model that would simply require an institution to hire a victim/survivor as an advocate and fill a quota. This is a more systematic attempt to begin to address and dismantle (male) hegemonic power in ways that is so uncomfortable that it disrupts up old power paradigms, sometimes precluding many organizations ever engaging this process.

Power and Control - Analysis

“Who holds the power in this congregation?” While it was a simple enough question, almost without exception UU board members struggled, often unsuccessfully, to answer this question posed by the researcher. Very seldom did they name themselves without extensive probing. This researcher believes that UUs’ reluctance to name and claim their power originates in the desire to be non-hierarchical, honor the democratic process and their emphasis on equity. UUs’ in proportion to their total numbers possess a disproportionate amount of power and privilege derived in part from their socio-economic status. While these factors alone are glaring indicators of privilege, the final, and in this researcher’ opinion, the most important indicator of privilege is many UUs apparent lack of awareness about their power. Such unawareness about white skin privilege, class and other privileges is a red flag. With historically marginalized

⁹⁶ For one of the best examples of males that have been doing this work over the long haul and are genuinely committed to the process contact: Men Stopping Violence, Inc. msv@menstoppingviolence.org

populations, such as people of color, there is almost a hypervigilance about these factors. The lack of awareness among people of color can carry negative consequences that potentially can impact their very survival.

Thus, the model is flipped for people of color and whites. It is a luxury not to be aware of these privileges or the lack of them. This lack of awareness fits with the general unwillingness to address internal class issues. In order to forthrightly address these issues UUs would have to acknowledge their privileged status and the implications of wealth redistribution. These are difficult issues for white liberal middle class Americans. And they are made more difficult for white middle class American UUs who want to genuinely view themselves as the champions of the poor and oppressed. Thus, power dynamics will remain the last frontier of understanding for the UUA and its ministers since clergy sexual misconduct is about power and the misuse and abuse of power. Thus the UUA would benefit in its efforts to shift from viewing the problem as one “out there” to looking “in side.” Uncovering the dynamics of power and privilege related to race, class and gender within the context of UUism is no easy task nor are they solely relegated to the issue of clergy sexual misconduct. It is believed that based on analysis of the interviews and archival documents that clergy sexual misconduct is a problem deserving the UUAs attention and requiring a systematic approach to eradicate. Linking gender and class in a manner that does not reduce gender to class involves a challenge that could inform the UUAs institutional response to clergy sexual misconduct.

Findings about Process

Research findings about the process that is triggered upon identifying suspected clergy sexual misconduct appears to have undergone many changes over the years. In earlier years there

was no point person to track down responsibility for the portfolio of clergy sexual misconduct. That has been corrected. The Director of Congregational Services is the institutional point person for complaints on clergy sexual misconduct. Similarly, there was no crisis response in place. Now the Director of Congregational Services follows protocols to initiate a process. Institutional protocols are still not standardized and greatly depend on the resources of the district and the experiences or lack of same of the District Executive.

Another factor that affects the response is who the clergy sexual misconduct is reported to. A congregation may report the clergy sexual misconduct to the District or to the UUA. Most typically, either of those two parties notifies the other. But in earlier years there have been times when the right hand did not know what the left hand was doing. A more coordinated response is evidenced on the national level and on the district level. However, there is certainly room for improved coordination between the two which has been evidenced in recent times. However, depending on the resources of the individual District the protocols may still vary on the District level and be district driven.

Another previous protocol that complainants sometimes found distressing involved the resignation of misconducting ministers. Why would everyone be disappointed if the minister chose to simply resign? In the past, once a misconducting minister resigned before their hearing they could not be charged. Such protocol has since been changed and the UUA will in fact proceed with charges whether the individual resigns or not.

Legal Considerations

A legal issue that Reverend Lucinda Duncan highlighted has to do with the UUA's legal guidance. Lawyers, given who they are, tend to watch closely for issues of liability. Duncan

noted that the legal advice has sometimes influenced the UUA's institutional response in favor of the institutional well-being. To provide any funds for the victim/survivor would indicate guilt and thus the UUA's protocols did not allow financial support for the victim/survivor. However, the misconducting minister and his wife were provided funding for marital counseling. This example points out a fundamental failure of the UUA to center its response in a victim/survivor focus that utilizes the values of feminist theology that places the woman or victim/survivor at the center of its analysis. Advocacy for victim/survivors appeared to be one of the weakest links in the UUA's response to clergy sexual misconduct. Duncan's statement clearly addresses similar concerns and she aligns herself with the victim/survivor in her observation that expresses her concerns that the UUAs legal counsel, holds as its first priority the "protection of the Association from suit." While this may not be the intention of the UUA the fact that the recommendations to implement an advocates program and provide funds for victim/survivors was not implemented questions the nature of the conceptual framework that the UUA is operating from. The safe Congregations Panel sent a letter on January 20, 2006 inquiring about the status of its recommendations. One of its concerns was the treatment of victim/survivors and complainants and whether "justice and restoration are possible for victims." The Panel has been very supportive of the UUA and appears to have enjoyed a favorable and mutually supportive relationship to date. However, it is the contention of this researcher that victim/survivors and their advocates have cause for concern. The conceptual framework that the UUA is operating from at the most can produce some basic policy and procedural changes over the short term. Furthermore, it can and has created a few structural changes that make it more difficult for misconducting clergy to retain their fellowship once convicted of clergy sexual misconduct. However, without an analysis that questions the very foundations of power and fails to reflect on

a theology of power as a faith community, it is not very likely that the UUA can shift the UU culture toward a vision of justice. Such a culture instead thrives on individualism, challenging authority, denial of institutional and personal power, and a distrust of rules/guidelines.

Recommendations

Three key recommendations emerged from this research project. Several other recommendations, too important to dismiss, will be discussed following the primary recommendations. The primary recommendations, offered for possible consideration in addressing the UUAs efforts to eliminate clergy sexual misconduct, roughly fall in three categories: restorative justice, theological reflections and victim/survivors empowerment:

1. Restorative Justice - Conduct a follow-up session with the “think tank” on “Restorative Justice.” Invite some scholars and practitioners that have a well developed grasp of the concepts. Have them present and pick their brains. Develop a plan of action on training the think tank, UUA staff, District Field Staff, ministers and seminaries;
2. Theological Reflections - Reconvene the Sexual Ethics Seminar to initiate theological reflections and invite feedback from laity, clergy, and seminarians for the purpose of compiling collections of theological reflections on clergy sexual misconduct. Representation should be solicited from the diverse theologies comprising UUism, beginning with the primary theologies, humanism, earth based religions, Buddhism and Christianity. Invite sermons and papers on power dynamics and engage in theological reflections on said topic with the intention of understanding how to place victim/survivors at the center of an analysis of justice that allows the UUA to break ranks and stand with the victim/survivors. This will begin a different conversation and allow the UUA to reconfigure social relations. Possibly this conversation and the one on Restorative Justice are one and the same.
3. Victim/Survivors Empowerment – Provide funding to victim/survivors and congregations that experience clergy sexual misconduct. Provide funding to encourage leadership opportunities for victim/survivors to assume ownership around advocacy in the larger network of victim/survivors. Encourage and provide networking with other faith communities and activist organizations working to eradicate clergy sexual misconduct.

Additionally, other important areas for consideration include: education and training, interventions, and transparency. Education and training – While the laity was not the focus of this research, future research focused on laity might be helpful in examining the role and responsibilities of laity in helping to set appropriate boundaries to prevent clergy sexual misconduct. Funding and convening an interdisciplinary national conference on clergy sexual misconduct in the next two to five years allow the UUA to expand its understanding of clergy sexual misconduct and explore what other faith communities are doing about this serious issue that saps the fiscal and human resources. Invitations to key feminist/womanist scholars, theologians and activists from the faith community and seminaries to present papers and workshops would create the opportunity to generate theory and praxis. Extending invitations to all the denominations and faith communities promotes collaborative efforts to eradicate clergy sexual misconduct. Providing district wide crisis teams to conduct education and provide support in conjunction with District Field Staff during and after misconduct is an important protocol that currently exists but must be reinforced. Finally, trust is the first casualty in clergy sexual misconduct. Thus, promoting transparency between the UUA and congregations through publicizing annual statistics on clergy sexual misconduct and the status of said cases will serve to nurture a culture of trust.

This researcher agrees with the words of Kay Montgomery, Executive Vice President of UUA, and so this report concludes with her simple and telling words, “Our work in this area (clergy sexual misconduct) is far from complete.”

*For those among us who have experienced abuse
-- we are truly sorry
For those among us who have inflicted abuse
-- may new learning and grace redeem us
For those of us who have stood by in silence*

-- *give us the courage of our voice*

From this day forward may we be creators of safe and sacred space.

- Donna DiSciullo, a leader in the Unitarian Universalist campus ministry and a retired minister wrote these words for the religious community.