



Principles Guiding the United Church of Christ Commitment to Sexuality Education

All of us are sexual beings, no matter what our sexual orientation or gender is or whether we are young or old; partnered, single, or celibate; widowed or divorced; able-bodied or physically disabled. It is sometimes erroneously assumed that sexual feelings begin with puberty and diminish as one approaches old age. In fact, our sexual responses begin in the womb, quickly grow to include sexual feelings, and both remain a vital part of our experience until we die. These principles guide our church mission to provide comprehensive sexuality education to our congregations.

1. *Sexuality is a God-Given Gift.*
2. The purposes of sexuality are to enhance human wholeness and fulfillment, to express love, commitment, delight, and pleasure, to bring new life into the world, and to give glory to God.
3. When making decisions about sexuality, the primary guide is Gods' call to love and justice as revealed in both Testaments.
4. From a biblical perspective, sexuality is intended to express mutuality, love, and justice. In judging whether behavior is ethical or unethical, the norms of mutuality, love and justice are the central criteria.
5. From a biblical perspective, sexuality is distorted by unethical behaviors, attitudes, and systems that foster violence, exploitation, infidelity, assertion of power, and the treatment of persons as objects.
6. In developing a just sexual morality, we need to avoid double standards.
7. A responsible and mature sexual ethic respects the moral agency of every person. When faced with ethical decisions, each of us needs to be accorded the freedom and responsibility to choose.
8. The church, at all levels, ought to be a context for discussion about human sexuality.
9. The church ought to encourage and support advocacy with those who are sexually oppressed or the victims of sexual violence and abuse. The church can and must have a role in defining and implementing public policy.

"To offer sexuality education in a congregation is to acknowledge that human sexuality is simply too important, too beautiful and too potentially dangerous to be ignored in a religious community."

- Rev. Lena Breen, Mt. Vernon, WA

Sources: Sexuality and Our Faith: a Companion to Our Whole Lives Grades 7-9. Page 94-98. These Principles were adopted by the United Church of Christ following an extensive study by the Board for Homeland Ministries requested by the General Synod of the UCC in 1983.

“Both religion and sexuality heal the split between ourselves and the universe. We discover that we are indeed ‘part of everything’ and one with the mystery of life.”

~Dorothee Soelle

Our Whole Lives Program **VALUES**

Self Worth

People are entitled to dignity and self-worth and to their own attitudes and beliefs about sexuality.

Sexual Health

Knowledge about human sexuality is helpful, not harmful. Every person has the right to accurate information about sexuality and to have their questions answered.

Healthy sexual relationships are...

- consensual (partners agree about what they will do together sexually)
- non-exploitative (partners have equal power, and neither pressures or forces the other into activities or behaviors.)
- mutually pleasurable
- safe (sexual activity bring no or low risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, or emotional pain)
- developmentally appropriate (sexual activity is appropriate to the age and maturity of partners)
- based on mutual expectations and caring
- respectful (partners value honesty and keeping commitments made to others)

Sexual intercourse is only one of the many valid ways of expressing sexual feelings with a partner. It is healthier for young teens to postpone sexual intercourse.

Responsibility

We are called to enrich our lives by expressing sexuality in ways that enhance human wholeness and fulfillment and that express love, commitment, delight, and pleasure.

All persons have the right and obligation to make responsible sexual choices.

Justice and Inclusivity

We need to avoid double standards. People of all ages, sexual identities, races, ethnicities, genders, backgrounds, income levels, physical and mental abilities, and sexual orientations must have equal value and rights.

Sexual relationships should never be coercive or exploitative.

All the following are natural in the range of human sexual experience: being romantically and sexually attracted to more than one gender (*bisexual*), the same gender (*homosexual*), another gender (*heterosexual*), and/or to those with a more fluid understanding of their own and others' gender (*pansexual*), and not experiencing sexual attraction (*asexual*).

“I believe that this is the most significant life-enhancing opportunity our religious communities could offer youth.”

~ Rev. Judith Gooch