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## Council on Religion and the Homosexual Collection

### Collection number: Coll2008-065

ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives  
Los Angeles, California

Processed by:

Michael P. Palmer

Date Completed:

November 11, 2008

Encoded by:

Michael P. Palmer

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Processing this collection has been funded by a generous grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.



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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Council on Religion and the Homosexual collection

**Dates:** 1965-1990

**Bulk Dates:** 1965-1973

**Collection number:** Coll2008-065

**Creator:** ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives

**Collection Size:** 1 archive carton.0.4 linear foot

**Repository:** ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.

Los Angeles, California 90007

**Abstract:** The collection consists of miscellaneous materials relating to the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, founded in San Francisco in 1965, primarily for the period 1965-1973.

**Languages:** Languages represented in the collection: English

### Access

The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.

### Publication Rights

Researchers wishing to publish materials must obtain permission in writing from ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives as the physical owner. Researchers must also obtain clearance from the holder(s) of any copyrights in the materials. Note that ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives can grant copyright clearance only for those materials for which we hold the copyright. It is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain copyright clearance for all other materials directly from the copyright holder(s).

### Preferred Citation

Council on Religion and the Homosexual Collection, Coll2008-065, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

### Acquisition Information

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Collection transferred to Archives from Subject Files, October 2008.

### Processing Information

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### Administrative History

In the early 1960s, as social change accelerated across the U.S., progressive clergymen increasingly took to the streets to minister to marginalized persons. The Rev. Ted McIlvenna, who worked for the Glide Urban Center, a private Methodist foundation in downtown San Francisco, witnessed the oppression and violence homosexuals faced, and to improve the situation sought a dialogue between clergy and homosexuals. With the support of the Methodist church, McIlvenna convened the Mill Valley Conference from May 31 to June 2, 1964, at which sixteen Methodist, Protestant Episcopal, United Church of Christ, and Lutheran clergymen met with thirteen leaders of the homosexual community. Following the initial meeting, the participants began plans for a new organization that would educate religious communities about gay and lesbian issues as well as enlist religious leaders to advocate for homosexual concerns. In July 1964, the participants, along with several other clergymen and homosexual activists, met and formed the Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH), which was incorporated in December of that year. The CRH was the first group in the U.S. to use the word "homosexual" in its name. This coalition of clergy-almost all heterosexual-and homosexual leaders proved to be mutually beneficial: homosexual leaders received the "cloak of the cloth" to sanction their activities, while clergy expanded their sphere of social justice ministry.

Within a month of its incorporation, the CRH was the focal point of an event many historians consider an important turning point in San Francisco's GLBT history. To raise money for the CRH, other homophile groups planned a costume ball to be held on New Year's Day, 1965. When the 600 ticket holders arrived for the event, many dressed in drag, they were greeted by scores of uniformed and undercover police, who took photographs of them and harassed them on their way into the ball. When the police demanded entrance to the event, they were blocked by CRH lawyers; the police then arrested three lawyers and a ticket taker. The following day, the (heterosexual) clergymen on the CRH held a press conference, severely criticizing the San Francisco Police Department. The mayor and a city judge sided with the CRH, and the police were humbled into an apology. This event is considered an important turning point in San Francisco's GLBT history in that it brought the city's GLBT communities together and inaugurated a new phase of gay organizing.

In June of 1965, the CRH published *A Brief of Injustices: An Indictment of Our Society in Its Treatment of the Homosexual* to implement the challenge of change. It also sponsored several symposia, including a "consultation" in August 1966, and the "Symposium on the Life and Style of the Homosexual", in October 1968. The CRH was especially active in the political arena, supporting gay organizations candidates' nights, where audiences repeatedly demanded that San Francisco politicians endorse a civilian police review board. The CRH also supported formation of Citizens Alert, a 24-hour hotline that provided lawyers, photographers, and other assistance to victims of brutality. Four years before the Stonewall riots in New York City, usually cited as the birth of the Gay Liberation Movement, the police had greatly curtailed harassment of gay bars in San Francisco and had begun meeting with homosexual groups. The CRH added credibility to the plight of the GLBT community, giving it a voice with the media and the establishments of societal authority. Throughout the 1967-68 local elections, the CRH held candidates' nights and endorsed gay-friendly candidates. The CRH was instrumental in the creation of the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile in 1965, and its success led to the formation of organizations with identical names in other cities, including Boston, Milwaukee, Washington, DC, and Winnipeg, Canada.

The CRH helped immensely to bring the plight of the GLBT community into public view in the 1960s and to foster dialogue within mainline Protestant churches. It was instrumental in ending harassment by police and in bringing about legal reform. However, it made much greater strides in the political/legal arena and in society at large than in the churches it represented. In fact, the failure of the mainstream churches to progress quickly enough led to the founding of a new church to minister specifically to the GLBT community, the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), in Los Angeles in October 1968. Although the CRH continued its activities through the 1970s and into the 1980s, by the early 1970s it had been overtaken by more activist religious organizations such as the MCC and Dignity, whose more aggressive stand appealed more to the Gay Liberation generation of the GLBT community.

Sources:

Council on Religion and the Homosexual, *CRH: 1964/1968, Essays on Homosexuality*, 3 (1968).

McAdams, Kathleen A., "The San Francisco Council on Religion and the Homosexual", OASIS CALIFORNIA, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of California, [http://www.oasiscalifornia.org/history/San\\_Francisco\\_Council\\_on\\_Religion\\_and\\_the\\_Homosexual\\_.html](http://www.oasiscalifornia.org/history/San_Francisco_Council_on_Religion_and_the_Homosexual_.html) (accessed November 11, 2008).

Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, LGBT Religious Archives Network, <http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Exhibit.aspx> (accessed November 11, 2008).

### Scope and Content of Collection

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The collection consists of miscellaneous materials relating to the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, primarily for the period 1965-1973. The materials include copies of the articles of incorporation for the Council, general information brochures on the Council, papers (largely flyers, meeting announcements, and newspaper clippings), newsletters, publications, papers relation to a "consultation" (seminar/workshop) held in San Francisco in 1966, two unpublished articles on homosexuality and the church, and a photograph of Dick Gayer, Paul Hardman, and CRH lawyer David Clayton, taken during hearings in the lawsuit Council on Religion and the Homophile v. PT&T held before Commissioner Vukasin in 1969.

#### **Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Council on Religion and the Homosexual (San Francisco, Calif.)

Gays--California--San Francisco

Homosexuality--Political aspects

Homosexuality--Religious aspects

Homosexuality--Societies, etc.

Police--Community relations

#### **Related Material**

Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile Records, Coll2008-057, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

- Box 1 : 1        **Articles of Incorporation 1965, no date**
- Box 1 : 2-17    **Papers 1965-1987**
- Box 1 : 2        **1965**
- Box 1 : 3        **1966**
- Box 1 : 4        **1967**
- Box 1 : 5        **1968**
- Box 1 : 6        **1969**
- Box 1 : 7        **1970**
- Box 1 : 8        **1971**
- Box 1 : 9        **1972**
- Box 1 : 10       **1973**
- Box 1 : 11       **1974**
- Box 1 : 12       **1975**
- Box 1 : 13       **1976**
- Box 1 : 14       **1977**
- Box 1 : 15       **1980**
- Box 1 : 16       **1987**
- Box 1 : 17       **no date**
- Box 1 : 18       **Articles 1966, no date**
- Box 1 : 19       **Consultation. San Francisco August 22-24, 1966**
- Box 1 : 20-22    **CRH Affiliates 1972-1990**
- Box 1 : 20        **CRH Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1972-1973**
- Box 1 : 21        **CRH New England (Boston, Mass.) 1970-1972**
- Box 1 : 22        **CRH Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada 1987-1990**
- Box 1 : 23       **General Information Brochures no date**
- Box 1 : 24       **Newsletters 1967, 1973**

- Box 1 : 29     **Photograph of Dick Gayer, Paul Hardman, and CRH attorney David Clayton, at hearing before Commissioner Vukasin, in lawsuit Council on Religion and the Homosexual v. PT&T 1969**
- Box 1 : 25-28     **Publications 1965-1969**
- Box 1 : 25     *Brief of Injustices 1965*
- Box 1 : 26     *The Church and the Homosexual 1965*
- Box 1 : 27     *Essays on Religion and the Homosexual* , vol. 1 / *Essays on Homosexuality*, vols. 2-3 circa 1965-1968
- Box 1 : 28     **Miscellaneous 1967-1969**