

PRESS RELEASE

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*For Immediate Release*

### **Unitarian Universalist Seminarians to be Trained in Sexuality Issues and Ethics**

(Boston -- February 9, 2010) -- Rev. Peter Morales, President of the [Unitarian Universalist Association](#) (UUA), announced today that candidates for the Unitarian Universalist ministry will be required to demonstrate competency in critical areas relating to human sexuality.

Effective this year, the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee, the body responsible for the formation and credentialing of ministers, will implement sexuality competencies in a range of subjects pertaining to pastoral ministry, including reproductive health, gender identity, sexual orientation, domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual ethics and safety within congregations.

Morales said, "We are proud to formalize our commitment to issues of sexual justice, ethics, and health in our congregations. Ministers have a moral responsibility to address the needs of our parishioners in these profoundly important and deeply spiritual areas."

The UUA has long championed the rights of sexual minorities and offered comprehensive sexuality education for all age groups. Now it is the first major religious denomination in the country to require that its candidates for ordination demonstrate the capability to address sexuality issues in ministry.

Rev. Debra W. Haffner, Co-founder and Executive Director of the [Religious Institute](#), explained the urgent need for this kind of training for all seminarians. During a press conference heralding the release of the Religious Institute's report [Sexuality & Religion 2020: Goals for the Next Decade](#), Haffner said, "All clergy, whether they are Baptist or Roman Catholic, Muslim or Jewish or Protestant, have people in their congregations who need help dealing with unplanned pregnancies, a child who is coming out, a marriage under duress, domestic violence in the home, unresolved issues surrounding assault."

Haffner, who is a Unitarian Universalist and a member of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, applauded the UUA's new competency requirements for seminarians and urged other denominations to adopt similar requirements, saying, "Sexuality is too central to our lives, too connected to our spirituality, and too potentially harmful for the silence in our faith communities to continue."

Rev. Wayne Arnason, Chair of the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee, explained the committee's unanimous decision to require competency in the areas of Sexual Health,

Sexual Boundaries, and Sexual Justice. Arnason said, "Because our denomination has been a leader in human sexuality education and in advocacy for equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, our ministers have been expected by our members and the larger culture to have training and knowledge in human sexuality. It was high time for us to frame exactly what we expect as a basic level of competency for all our entering ministers."

*The Unitarian Universalist Association is a faith community of more than 1000 self-governing congregations that bring to the world a vision of religious freedom, tolerance and social justice. For more information on the UUA, including recent press releases and news articles, please visit our online pressroom at [www.uua.org/pressroom](http://www.uua.org/pressroom).*

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