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**Title**

Marnie Warner Oral History Interview and Transcript

**Date**

June 26, 2012

**Extant**

47 minutes interview and 1 transcript

**Abstract**

In this oral history, Marnie Warner discusses the Open and Affirming Resolution in the United Church of Christ. Marnie one of four co-authors of the resolution and a key strategist in its passage. As a deacon at Church of the Covenant (COTC in Boston) in the 1980s, Marnie discusses the challenges of AIDS ministry, but also the joy of meeting her wife, Rose Ann Olmstead, through their shared work at a women's shelter.

**Biographical**

Marnie Warner, one of four co-authors of the Open and Affirming Resolution in the United Church of Christ, was a key strategist in the passage of Open and Affirming in the Massachusetts Conference and at the 1985 General Synod. Marnie (Margaret) was born in Bethel, Connecticut, in 1950 and baptized in First Congregational Church of Bethel that later joined the UCC. She faithfully attended Sunday School, went to summer camp at Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, Conn., and was part of Pilgrim Fellowship. Marnie was the fifth generation to attend this church. She remembers her great-aunt Minnie Carter who was sent from the church as a missionary to Inanda School for Girls in South Africa for forty years. Marnie visited there in 1995. Marnie studied at Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin, and moved to Boston, Massachusetts, to get her Masters degree in Library Science at Simmons College in Boston.

While attending Simmons, Marnie became involved at Church of the Covenant (COTC) and became Clerk of Council in 1977. In the early 1980's, Marnie served on the Metropolitan Boston Association's Committee on Ministry. She was chosen as a delegate from the

Massachusetts Conference to the 1983 and 1985 General Synods which is where the Opening and Affirming story unfolds (and is told in this interview). Following that time, Marnie continued to give her time to Conference activities including chairing a search committee for two associate conference ministers and chairing the annual conference program committee. During the 1990's, Marnie developed a workshop on Making Meetings Work that she taught and trained others to teach at churches throughout the Massachusetts Conference.

At COTC, Marnie was on the Board of Deacons, Membership Development Committee and Covenant News. Being a Deacon during the 1980s was challenging as COTC shepherded many gay men through their journey with AIDS. From 1989-1992, Marnie was part of the Committee to Renew the Covenant that successfully raised \$1.3 million from church members, foundations and corporations to renovate the church and create space for non-profits.

Marnie met rose ann olmstead at COTC and they grew to know each other through a COTC project, Casa Myrna Vazquez, one of the first shelters for women experiencing domestic violence. In 1981, rosi became a minister at COTC and served the congregation for twenty-two years. In 1991, rosi and Marnie took time to travel cross country by bicycle. They both pedaled all 5,250 miles with Cycle America. After over two decades as partners, Marnie and rosi were legally married in Massachusetts at Church of the Covenant in May 2004.

Throughout Marnie's career as a law librarian, she worked to make the law accessible to anyone needing legal information. She held jobs in a law firm and at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners setting up law libraries in prisons. Since 1980 she has worked for the Trial Court overseeing and developing the services of 17 public law libraries that serve the Court, the legal community and the public. Recently she has been involved in Access to Justice.

If you asked Marnie what was most exciting about her life, she would answer that "I had the opportunity to experience many firsts in my life—in all of my professional jobs, I was the first person to hold the position; I was a catalyst in Opening and Affirming and had a front row seat to an amazing journey; and was able to legally marry my partner."

## **Scope and Content**

In this oral history, Marnie Warner discusses the Open and Affirming Resolution in the United Church of Christ. Marnie one of four co-authors of the resolution and a key strategist in it's passage. As a deacon at Church of the Covenant (COTC) in the 80s, Marnie discusses the challenges of AIDS ministry, but also the joy of meeting her wife, Rev. rose ann olmstead, through their shared work at a women's shelter.

This interview was conducted by Susan B. Echo, who served on the Coalition Council of the United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns, and the Colorado AIDS Project.

## **Access**

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/marnie-warner>.

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## **Languages**

Collection material is in English

## **Cite as**

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## **Tags**

Warner, Marnie