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### ***SOUTHWEST, WEST & NORTHWEST***

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## **Passings**

*Please note: There is no set charge for notices in this section about our members; however, donations are always appreciated.*

**JAN GRIESINGER:** longtime peace and lesbian feminist activist and ordained minister of Athens, Ohio, died December 9, 2022, at the age of 80. For the past several years, she had been dealing with communication and mobility issues.

Born in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1942, Jan was the oldest of five children. She grew up in Barrington, Illinois, and at age 15, she began teaching Sunday school. Her politically active parents raised her to be an independent, critical thinker, and to "speak as though I had some idea of what I was talking about." She went to DePauw University, and she was the only woman majoring in religion in her 1964 graduating class. She was also president of the United Campus Christian Fellowship. "The formal study of theology and the Bible fascinated and challenged me," she said.

In 1970, a time when few women worked in ministry, Jan received a master of divinity from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, and she was ordained that year by the United Church of Christ. She was drawn to campus ministry after seeing other activists engaged in it. She said, "The injustice that we see all around us does not always have to be."

Jan's activism began early on. In 1967, she participated in the Vietnam Summer, going door to door mobilizing opposition to the war. She was arrested at a draft resistance sit-in, and in 1968, she marched with Martin Luther King Jr in an anti-war protest.

With the rise of the women's movement, feminism captured Jan's imagination. She became aware of the oppression women face and the dangers of illegal abortions, rape and battering. In 1969, Jan met her life companion, Mary Morgan, in a women's liberation group, and together they created Dayton Women's Liberation, which offered women counseling, educational literature, medical referrals, and other services. Jan also helped found an abortion clinic, the Dayton Women's Health Center, and the local battered women's shelter, My Sister's Place.

Around the same time, Jan began applying for campus ministry positions. Although she had experience, even the places that wanted to hire a woman weren't interested in her because they wanted someone who was "a little more quiet and a little more submissive." Finally, in 1976, the United Campus Ministry in Athens offered her a job, and she worked there for nearly three decades, retiring as director in 2004.



Jan Griesinger

Jan came out in 1977, and from then on she worked as an out lesbian pastor. She helped start Ohio University's first gay center, Open Doors, which still exists today. For 13 years (1984-1997), she was a national coordinator of the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns. She was also involved in forming a number of other activist groups, such as Free South Africa, the Coalition to Overcome Racism, the Middle East Peace Coalition, and the Central America Solidarity Committee.

In 1990, Jan co-founded Christian Lesbians OUT (CLOUT), described as "a national ecumenical organization of proudly progressive, actively anti-racist, creatively spiritual, milagro-bound, out Christian lesbians," and for six years, she was the group's coordinator. She later wrote: "I love doing this work. I get energy from working with people for systemic change. ... I continue to see myself as an activist, demonstrating, I hope, not only a feminist perspective but an international anti-racist, anti-capitalist commitment."

Jan's social justice activism reached far beyond the ministry. In 1979, she and Mary bought 151 acres of land in southeast Ohio outside of Athens, and they started a womyn-only intentional community and land trust, the Susan B Anthony Memorial Unrest Home (SuBAMUH). Explaining the term "unrest" in the name, Jan said in an interview, "There has to be a lot of 'unrest' before women get justice in the world." Jae Haggard, publisher of *Matze*, wrote, "Jan and Mary (who died in 2015) are two of the dynamic lesbians who have been so instrumental in our Landyke movement."



**JOANNE WIMBERLY:** died on November 6, 2022, of lung cancer/pneumonia. From Missouri to Willits, California, via the world. R.I.P.

—Linda B

For nearly two decades, starting in 2000, Jan was actively involved with Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC), first as an intern, then as the bookkeeper, mail collector, steering committee member, and even co-director. Jan also loved singing and noted the emotional importance of spirituals in her life and ministry. Until recently, she sang with the Calliope Feminist Choir. A longtime subscriber to *Lesbian Connection*, she was an LC contact dyke for more than four decades. Jan said her life had been a journey of doing what needed to be done.

Medical issues during Jan's last years forced her to leave her beloved home at SuBAMUH and move to assisted living and then nursing care. Sadly noting that there still aren't many safe spaces for women, she said she hoped SuBAMUH would continue as a womyn's land trust, but she wasn't sure if that could happen.

An activist to the end, Jan donated her body to Ohio University's med school. She is survived by two of her sisters and numerous other family members, as well as her beloved friend and caregiver, Fawziah. A memorial for Jan is being planned for sometime in the spring. Donations in her memory can be made to OLOC, SuBAMUH, the Calliope Feminist Choir, United Campus Ministry, or Mt Zion Baptist Church Preservation Society.