Finding aid of the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile Records

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile records
Collection number: Coll2008-057
Creator: Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile
Creator: Kepner, Jim (James), 1923-1997
Repository: ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives. Los Angeles, California 90007
Abstract: Official records for the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile for the years 1965-1968, including copies of the articles of incorporation and by-laws; minutes of the pre-foundation planning committee and of the Board of Trustees and general membership meetings from June 1965 to August 1968; and several contemporary membership lists. The collection also contains a notebook of the Rev. Ken Wahrenbrock, Secretary of the organization, and manuscript materials from the papers of gay activist and journalist Jim Kepner, a founder of the organization, who served as Wahrenbrock's pro-tem and later succeeded him as Secretary. These include his detailed handwritten notes of Board meetings for the years 1965-1972; a file on the 4th North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO) in 1968, to which Kepner served as a delegate; and a file of notes on the early history of the organization and its parent, the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, in San Francisco. The collection also contains a file of correspondence; informational brochures; flyers and announcements of the organization's monthly meetings and other activities; and copies of the nine issues of the organization's newsletter, Concern, published irregularly from 1966 through 1969.
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

Acquisition Information
Date and method of acquisition unknown.

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

Administrative History
The Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile (SCCRH) traces its origins to a June 1, 1965, meeting of 20 individuals in the Westchester YMCA called by the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, of San Francisco, which had been founded in 1964. The purposes of SCCRH were "to open the avenues of communication and understanding between churchmen and homophiles; to investigate and implement ways for meeting the spiritual needs and social responsibilities of homophiles; to encourage more satisfactory climate of opinion within the community on broad matters of sex and morals; [and] to seek just social treatment of the homophile community". The articles of incorporation submitted to the California Secretary of State in April 1966 were signed by the Rev. Alexander Smith, director of the Downtown Service Bureau of the Los Angeles Missionary Society of the Methodist Church; W. Dorr Legg, of ONE Institute; the Rev. Kenneth Wahrenbrock, of the First Methodist Church in Glendale; the Rev. Marjorie Likins; and the gay activist and journalist Jim Kepner. The SCCRH provided an extensive program of monthly lectures, discussion groups, and informal meetings of clergymen, church members, and members of the GLBT community; retreats and conferences exploring homosexuality and religion; "exposure education" for non-gay clergymen and church members to learn about such aspects of GLBT culture as gay bars, clubs, and organizations; assistance to churches developing policies relating to homosexuality and religion and to homosexual law reform; and training for counselors, teachers, clergymen, and others who counseled homosexuals. The organization originally utilized the mailing address of the Rev. Smith's Downtown Service Bureau; by 1970 it used the address of the Los Angeles Council of Churches on West Adams Blvd.; and by February 1971 the Venice Blvd. address of ONE Institute, of which both Legg and Kepner were officers.

Despite vigorous activity in its early years, by the 1970s the SCCRH was overtaken by more activist religious organizations, in particular the Metropolitan Community Church and Dignity, whose more militant, and even at times confrontational, stand appealed more to the Gay Liberation generation of the GLBT community. While the SCCRH continued to hold meetings as late as 1974, a notice for a meeting in July of that year ended with the statement, "[w]e hope that many of you will wish to attend, for just because groups such as DIGNITY, the Metropolitan Community Churches and the various metropolitan Community Temples exist does not mean that the need for keeping channels open toward the major church denominations is less than before. It suggests, rather, that the opportunity for developing better relations with large religious bodies is greater than ever and should not be neglected." The SCCRH appears to have ceased operations by 1975.

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection comprises the official records for the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile for the years 1965-1968. These are contained in the Minute Book / Membership Register, which contains copies of the articles of incorporation and by-laws; minutes of the pre-foundation planning committee and of the Board of Trustees and general membership meetings from June 1965 to August 1968; and several contemporary membership lists. The collection also contains a notebook of the Rev. Ken Wahrenbrock, Secretary of the organization, with his correspondence, copies of Board minutes, and other materials on the organization for the years 1965-1967. The bulk of the remaining manuscript materials derive from the papers of Jim Kepner, a founder of the organization, who served as Wahrenbrock's pro-tem and later succeeded him as Secretary. These include his detailed handwritten notes of Board meetings for the years 1965-1972; a file on the 4th North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO) in 1968, to which Kepner served as a delegate; and a file of notes on the early history of the organization and its parent, the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, in San Francisco. The collection also contains a file of correspondence from 1966 to 1971 (the letters from 1975 and 1984 represent letters of inquiry written to the organization after it has ceased activities); informational brochures; flyers and announcements of the organization's monthly meetings and other activities; and copies of the nine issues of the organization's newsletter, Concern, published irregularly from 1966 through 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.)
Box 1 : 1 Minute Book / Membership Register 1965-1968
Box 1 : 2 Articles of Incorporation 1966
Box 1 : 3 By-Laws 1966
Box 1 : 4 Board of Directors. Minutes (Jim Kepner) 1966-1972
Box 1 : 5 Board of Directors. Minutes (Miscellaneous) 1966, 1971
Box 1 : 6 Boyd, Don 1966-1970
Box 1 : 7 Brochures 1966-1972
Box 1 : 8 Correspondence 1966-1971, 1975, 1984
Box 1 : 9 Counseling 1968
Box 1 : 10 Kepner, Jim. Notes circa 1968-1969
Box 1 : 11 Miscellaneous No date
Box 1 : 12 4th North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO) 1968
Box 1 : 13-21 Programs 1966-1974

Physical Description: 9 folders.

Box 1 : 13 1966
Box 1 : 14 1967
Box 1 : 15 1968
Box 1 : 16 1969
Box 1 : 17 1971
Box 1 : 18 1972
Box 1 : 19 1973
Box 1 : 20 1974
Box 1 : 21 No date
Box 1 : 22 Stationery No date
Box 2 : 1-2 Wahrenbrock, Ken 1965-1967

Physical Description: 2 folders.

Box 2 : 3 Concern (newsletter) 1966-1969