



JPD Newsletter

Connecting all Unitarian Universalists in the Joseph Priestley District:
Southern New Jersey, Delaware, Eastern and Central Pennsylvania, Maryland,

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District of Columbia, Northern Virginia

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UUs Rally Around Legislative, Social Issues in Many JPD States

Pick your issue: Equality Marriage for LGBTs, raising the minimum wage, reproductive rights, health benefits for low-paid workers of large companies – UUs are involved and on the move, often working closely and with the help of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ).

Telephone calls, postcards and e-mails to legislators helped override the veto of the Fair Share Health Care Bill (Wal-Mart Bill), requiring big companies to contribute fairly to their employees' health. Towson UU Church, Lutherville, MD, UU Fellowship of Southern Maryland, Leonardtown, MD reported on their participation.

Accotink Church, Burke, VA voted to support a Virginia Fair Wage Act to raise the minimum wage in the state. Several churches hosted Living Wage Sunday Services related to the Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend. The Immediate Witness Task Force of Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA gathered 93 signatures on a petition asking Congress for further consideration of reauthorizing the Patriot Act.

The pro-LGBT Day, or Equality Maryland, scheduled its February rally and Lobby Day in Annapolis, with members of First Unitarian Church of Baltimore, UU Congregation of Columbia, MD Davies Memorial UU Church, Camp Springs, MD and other UU churches participating.

The Welcoming Committee of Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA voted to have a BRUU presence at the January Virginia Lobby Day in Richmond. Concerned citizens met with legislators to encourage them to oppose a resolution for a Constitutional amendment, recognizing only marriage between one man and one woman and forbidding civil unions, domestic partnerships and other legal status to be established in Virginia or recognized in Virginia when done elsewhere. Accotink UU Church members also participated in the Lobby Day.

Besides UUs for Social Justice, the UU

Legislative Ministry of Virginia helps to provide a consistent and coherent voice for UU principles.

In Pennsylvania, the Freedom to Marry Lay-Led Ministry of the Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, sponsored a January concert and its Second Annual Freedom to Marry Rally in February, with members stationed at a busy intersection at rush hour holding signs supporting same-sex marriage.

And, early in February the UU Church in Cherry Hill, NJ was part of an Interfaith Marriage Equality town meeting, in early February which dealt with the "civil rights movement of our time."

Church Vigils Oppose Torture

The Social Justice Council of River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD organized two area-wide religious vigils opposing U.S. torture policies and practices. They were held opposite Vice President Cheney's house, the Naval Observatory, in December.

Members of the UU Congregation of Columbia, MD and Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD joined the silent, peaceful vigil, using candles, flashlights and signs.

River Road's SJ Council said the purpose was "to tell the Administration, our community, and the world that we oppose torture of any kind by anybody."

Cedar Lane Holds Special Collections for Arlington Church

The Board of Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD held special collections to help UU Church of Arlington, VA meet the cost of removing mold, which has contaminated large areas of the church building. A faulty HVAC system and water leaks caused the contamination.

The estimated cost of renovation, not covered by insurance, is nearly \$800,000. The congregation has pledged \$400,000, with the remaining amount to be covered by a loan. Church activities are being conducted in a small, uncontaminated space.

Three Cedar Lane parish ministers will match the collection up to \$1,000 from discretionary funds.

**2006 Joseph Priestley District
Spring Conference
March 31– April 1, 2006**

Doubletree Hotel, Crystal City, Arlington, VA

Theme: Spirituality of Generosity

Keynote Address: Gini Courter, UUA Moderator

**Main Line Church Hosts Winter Meeting
of Partner Church Council**

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA was host for the annual winter meeting of the UU Partner Church Council. The February snowstorm forced cancellation of a Saturday evening program and of Sunday services at six local churches.

Participants reported on the Council's successful travel service and on the status of more than 160 active international congregational partnerships.

Other highlights included the showing of a video on community development in the Philippines and reports on Northeast India (Khasi Hills) Unitarian schools and churches seeking partners, and on two Transylvania villages using new community assessment processes promoting effective change.

**Sandwiches Galore at Germantown Unitarian
Society's MLK Service Activity**

Philadelphia-area and other JPD churches met at the Unitarian Society of Germantown, Philadelphia, PA to make 1,000 lunches to be distributed to various social service agencies in the tri-county area for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service in January.

Following the morning of sandwich-making and lunch, was a "Let Freedom Roll" campaign to support raising the minimum wage.

JPD churches reporting participation so far were: First Church, Philadelphia, PA, BuxMont UU Fellowship, Warrington PA; UU Church of Delaware County, Media, PA; UU Congregation of Columbia, MD.

Accotink Holds "Season for Nonviolence"

Accotink UU Church, Burke, VA is taking part in an interfaith "Season for Nonviolence," that started January 30 and continues through April 4.

During the 64-day demonstration, promoting the power of nonviolence to heal, transform and empower lives and communities, Accotink adults and

children are signing a "Pledge of Non-Violence" display poster and individual pledges and practicing acts of non-violence. Special candle-lightings at Sunday Services will note weekly milestones. Notices of daily actions will appear in the weekly Order of Service.

The Season of Nonviolence commemorates the respective 50th and 30th memorial anniversaries, of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

What's Happening...The Unitarian Society of Germantown, Philadelphia, PA marked the end of its 140th anniversary year in January with an exhibit of original letters and manuscripts of famous Unitarians. It includes a handwritten poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson and letters written by Charles Darwin, Julia Ward Howe, Louisa May Alcott, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and others...UU Church in Cherry Hill will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year...BuxMont Fellowship has raised \$12,139.25 in January-November 2005 for its Split Plate donation to charities....Main Line Martin Luther King, Jr. Association honored the Racial Justice Task Force of the Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA at its annual January celebration as an organization that helped "make Dr. King's dream a reality on the Main Line."

What We Care About....Through its Social Action Committee, UU Fellowship of Centre County, State College, PA raised \$961 to buy heatsheets, space blankets, large enough for two people, for those left homeless by the Pakistan earthquake....Chili cook-out of UU Church of Lancaster, PA will benefit Milagro House, providing a variety of social services to many Spanish-speaking area residents. UUs of Sterling, VA church raised \$12,000 for more than a half-dozen area social agencies through its Split Plate donations in 2005.

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