



JPD Newsletter

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

January-February, 2007

Vol. 12 No. 3

UU Churches Cope With Gay Intolerance

Three JPD churches in recent months have coped with gay intolerance that has taken many forms.

The rainbow banner, affixed to the church sign of UU Church of Delaware County, Media, PA, was stolen a year ago. It was replaced last fall, but on the night of a meeting, sponsored by an Interweave group, the sign was stolen again and returned a few days later shredded and burned.

UUCDC members attended nightly vigils beside the sign for several days. Later, a special service reaffirming the church as a Welcoming Congregation was held.

Late in November, a member of UU Community Church of Augusta, ME presented a new rainbow flag to the church during a Sunday service. UUCDC's newly-installed minister, Rev. Peter A. Friedrichs, was a former ministerial intern at the Augusta church. The flag is now flying.

Plans are underway to make the flag vandal-resistant. A member has designed a metal "rainbow flag sculpture" to be fabricated and dedicated in the spring.

Since last summer Cedarhurst Unitarian Universalists, Finksburg, MD, has experienced three attacks: damage to plain-glass windows with a BB gun; hate messages, attacking the church's theological beliefs, written on an outside table; and dismantling of a peace pole in the church's meditation garden.

Rev. Henry Simoni-Wastila said that although some members were made afraid and anxious by the attacks, others chose a path of forgiveness and expressed concern for the vandal.

The experience of Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Jersey Shore (UUCSJS), Oceanville, NJ has taken a different form.

Since 2004, the UU congregation has met at the Catholic Campus Ministry in Pomona, NJ, adjacent to Richard Stockton College.

UUCSJS invited the founder of a nonsectarian organization providing outreach and support to LGBT

students at religion-based education institutions to be guest speaker at a November 5 worship service.

Learning of the event through publicity, the Roman Catholic Knights of Columbus men's organization expressed disapproval to the Diocese in Camden, whose lawyers ordered the congregation to vacate the building by 8 PM Saturday, the day before the November 5 service. A lawyer for the congregation pointed out that the group had a 90-day termination clause in its lease.

The speaker was unable to attend because of illness, but was re-scheduled to speak at a December 6 service to be held at Stockton College. He received a warm welcome.

UUCSJS's lease with the Diocese has been terminated and the church is looking for a new home until its own church building, for which it has bought land, is built and completed in 2008.

New WellSprings Congregation on the Move

WellSprings Congregation, the new Chester County church brought into being by Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA, will begin its first regular Sunday services January 21. This follows a first public in-gathering in November.

Two new half-time employees were hired, an administrator, with help from a \$20,000 JPD Chalice Lighters' grant, and a "director of equipping", whose job is to find persons to realize their spiritual potential and commitment to service to WellSprings and the community. Ninety-five MLUC members have pledged to support the new congregation for five years and 22 others, including WellSprings participants, have matched a \$50,000 grant.

WellSprings is off and running.

Mt. Vernon Church Proposes Study/Action Issue on Women's Reproductive Rights

The Reproductive Rights Task Force of Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA is drafting a position statement on the current state of women's reproductive rights.

This has developed following recent legislation at the state and national levels, court rulings, and pharmaceutical practice that have restricted women's access to abortion and birth control.

The Task Force seeks to collaborate with other like-minded UUs on the wording of the proposed Study-Action Issue. Contact: Lynn Alsmeyer-Johnson at lynn@alsjohn.com.

UUs Support Projects to Aid the Homeless During Winter Months

With a recognition of the special cruelty that winter inflicts on the homeless and the elderly poor, JPD UUs support many projects to ease this suffering.

Members of First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, PA have committed themselves to preparing food and serving 22 homeless men the first Wednesday and the fourth Friday of every month. This effort is in cooperation with the WinterShelter Project of a nearby Episcopal church.

From January 1-7, UU Church of Lancaster, PA will provide shelter for homeless guests when the city's homeless shelters are full. Volunteers are on duty from 7 PM, when guests are signed in, until 7 AM the following day. In its second year, the program runs from December through March.

Volunteer teams from Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD will prepare dinner, bag lunches or donate breakfast food for 36 homeless persons at a shelter for a week starting Dec. 31.

In a move to extend ongoing activities of providing food, clothing, school supplies and holiday gifts to homeless people and children, members of Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA will provide shelter and warm meals to the homeless on Thursday nights during February and March. The church also prepares and distributes food to homeless shelters once a month, year-round.

Throughout the JPD area, many other UU churches and fellowships have ongoing programs that provide food to homeless shelters, as well as special holiday programs that provide activities and gifts for these shelters' children, especially vulnerable at that time of year.

Muriel A. Davies Honored at River Road UU

Despite having fractured her hip six months earlier, Muriel A. Davies walked and participated in her ordination as Minister Emerita and celebrated her 100th birthday on November 19 at River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD.

The widow of A. Powell Davies, minister of All

Souls Church, Washington, DC in the 40's and 50's, she has been a supporter and leader of major expansion of Unitarian Universalism in the Joseph Priestley District, helping to found River Road Unitarian Church in 1959 and later the Sugarloaf Congregation of UUs in Germantown, MD.

What's Happening.....Rev. Mary McKinnon Ganz will be installed February 18 as settled minister at UU Church of Arlington, VA... Rev. Colin Bossen is serving as interim minister at UU Fellowship of Pottstown, PA... Besides their monthly publications, two churches have added a second publication. The Latin American Task Force of Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA publishes *Que Pasa*, focusing on economic justice and human rights in South America. The Music Ministry of Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA publishes quarterly *QUARTER NOTES*, reporting on upcoming music events under the Ministry's sponsorship...UU Congregation of Fairfax, VA was host to a first, day-long, Liberal Religious Revival, with some 180 UUs from nine Northern Virginia UU congregations attending. It focused on growing vital congregations, retaining youth as members, creating innovative worship services, and building more effective UU social justice work with other UUs... UU Fellowship of Harford County, Churchville, MD is field-testing a new curriculum for couples, "Principles of Commitment." The workshops aim to help partners nurture intimacy, spiritual connection and emotional fulfillment in their commitments, both gay and straight...For the first time, UU Congregation of York, PA held two days of special events, marking November as American Indian Heritage Month. Tepee-raising, drumming, dancing and a worship service with storytelling were among the highlights.

Joseph Priestley District of the UUA
100 W. 10th St., Suite 1008, Wilmington, DE 19801
302-778-4564; Fax: 302-778-4590; office@jpduua.org
District President: Elyse Reznick
District Executive: Rev. Dr. Richard G. Speck
District Administrator: Cristina Sanchis
Administrative Assistant: Jill Conway
Director for Growth and Extension: Pat Infante
Dir. for Lifespan Faith Dev.: Rev. Carol Ann Taylor
Director for YA & Campus Ministry: Lyn Cox
Development Director: Joan Priest
Coordinator of Youth Activities: Jan Taddeo
District UUA Trustee: Rev. Linda Olson Peebles
JPD web: www.jpduua.org
Editor: Bette Austin, E-mail: office@jpduua.org
JPD Newsletter is published six times a year.
Deadline, March-April Issue: February 10, 2007.