



UU Matters

(June 2010: Vol. 5 No. 5)

The Mt. Vernon Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
~A Welcoming Congregation~
1600 Isabella, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864; (618) 241-9644

MVUUF is now a Welcoming Congregation!

In the words of Paul Oakley, Taskforce for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns:

Sunday, May 16, 2010

We're a Welcoming Congregation now!

This morning, after our worship service, at our annual meeting of the membership, Mt. Vernon (IL) Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (MVUUF) voted to take on the mantle of Welcoming Congregation, indicating a proactive inclusion of Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexuals, Transgender and anyone else "not necessarily straight."

We began this journey in the summer of 2007 with the Board of Trustees approving the formation of a standing Taskforce for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns, whose first task was to lead the congregation through the process culminating in the vote which took place today. The initial members of the Taskforce, a standing committee of the fellowship, were Diane Schwitz, Shannon Green, and Paul Oakley. That fall, the Taskforce began planning, buying the Welcoming Congregation Handbook, preparing for the workshop series, and leading the congregation in a worship service introducing the process and focusing on sexual(ity) and gender equality.

In January 2008 we met for our first Welcoming Congregation Workshop. We held these workshops on Wednesday evenings once a month until the fall of 2009, when we completed the full series presented in the handbook. Along the way, a couple of times through each calendar year, the Taskforce led worship services to bring the work of the workshops and the welcoming message to the full population, since naturally, not every person was present at the workshops.

In October 2009, after completing the workshop part of the process, we had a meeting of the membership to consider the changes needed to our bylaws and the commitments we would need to make to be a Welcoming Congregation. In December the Taskforce tackled specific wording to recommend to the Board, including changes to three sections of our bylaws and the creation of a Welcoming Congregation Covenant. In January the Board approved the wording as presented, put the vote on the agenda for today's meeting, and presented the full congregation with these changes for feedback. No additional changes in wording were suggested. And today we voted!

It was UNANIMOUS! In addition to the explicitly inclusive language included in the Bylaws, the Welcoming Congregation Covenant is an important document showing future members and reminding current members precisely what we as a congregation have committed ourselves to.

On Pride Sunday, the last Sunday of June, the Taskforce on LGBT Concerns will lead a Pride service celebrating our congregation's (more fully) coming out, as it were, as a Welcoming Congregation.

Our next step is to present the required documentation to the UUA to have this status certified. But we are now a Welcoming Congregation. Celebrate with us!

Here is the text of the Welcoming Congregation Covenant, which is incorporated by reference into the Bylaws:

Welcoming Congregation Covenant

We, the members of Mt. Vernon Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, approve and affirm the designation of this Fellowship as a Welcoming Congregation, in compliance with the recognition requirements of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

We covenant to be inclusive and expressive of the concerns of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender persons at every level of congregational life—welcoming not only their presence but the unique gifts and particularities of their lives as well.

We covenant not to assume anyone's affectional or sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Vocabulary of worship shall reflect this perception; our worship shall celebrate diversity by inclusivity of language and content.

We covenant to fully incorporate throughout all programs, including religious education, an understanding of the experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender persons.

We covenant to maintain in our bylaws and other official documents an affirmation of inclusion and a nondiscrimination clause affecting all dimensions of congregational life, including membership, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals.

We covenant to engage in outreach to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender communities, through our advertising and by actively supporting other LGBT affirming groups.

We covenant to offer congregational and ministerial support for services of union and memorial services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender persons, and celebrations of evolving definitions of family.

We covenant to celebrate the lives of all people and welcome same-gender couples, recognizing their committed relationships, and equally affirm displays of caring and affection without regard for sexual orientation.

We covenant to nurture ongoing dialogue between people of different affectional or sexual orientations and gender identifications, and to create deeper trust and sharing.

We covenant to encourage the presence of a chapter of Interweave (the Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender concerns) when such a chapter is feasible.

We covenant to affirm and celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender issues and history during the church year.

We covenant, as an advocate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people, to work to promote justice, freedom, and equality in the larger society. We shall speak out when the rights and dignity of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender people are at stake.

We covenant to celebrate the lives of all people and their ways of expressing their love for each other.

Sunday Morning Service Schedule

(Mt. Vernon UU Fellowship services are held each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. All Sunday morning services are held at the fellowship building and are open to the public unless otherwise stated. If you are interested in leading a service or delivering a sermon, please use the Service sign-up sheet at the back of the sanctuary.)

6 June: Open Reading & Music; No Designated Leader

13 June: Shannon Green will read the sermon, *Spiritual Growth* by Rev. Richard R. Davis, sermon to UUCS January 7, 2006.

20 June: Open Reading & Music; No Designated Leader

27 June: The Taskforce for LGBT concerns will coordinate this service in celebration Pride week and of our Fellowship's recent vote to become an officially recognized Welcoming Congregation. After the morning service, join us at Mount Vernon's Veteran's Park for a Pride Picnic. The West Shelter has been reserved from 11:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The Fellowship will provide cake for dessert and some recreational items. Please bring a dish to share and any other fun park games you can think of! Bring your friends and family too! Hope to see you there!



Other Upcoming Events

(All Upcoming Events are held at the fellowship building and are open to the public unless otherwise stated.)

2 June: Board of Trustees Meeting
-First Wednesday of Each Month-
-6:30 p.m.-

Meeting open to anyone interested in MVUUF business.
Board of Trustees: Nina Peacock, co-chair; Kelly Taylor, co-chair;
Diane Schwitz, co-chair; Adam Stone, secretary; Angela Czapiewski, treasurer.

4 June: Drum Circle
-First Friday of Each Month-
-7:00 p.m.-

Bring a drum or other percussion instrument to play at this relaxed and informal drum circle, or simply come to listen and enjoy the good vibrations.

13 June: Social Justice & Action Taskforce
-Second Sunday of Each Month-
-Following Social Hour-

Join this group to learn about and discuss social justice concerns and actions. This group discusses issues that affect local, national, and global communities. This group seeks out various projects and issues to take action on as individuals, as a group, and/or as a congregation. (You may want to bring a sack lunch.)

23 June: Meditation Group
-Fourth Wednesday of Each Month-
-6:30 p.m.-

27 June: Pride Picnic
-Following the Sunday Morning Service-
-Veterans' Park, Mt. Vernon-

The West Shelter has been reserved from 11:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The Fellowship will provide cake for dessert and some recreational items. Please bring a dish to share and any other fun park games you can think of! Bring your friends and family too! Hope to see you there!

Other UU Matters

Mingling of the Waters:

On Sunday, September 12 (the first Sunday after Labor Day), Donna Beaumont will be leading the “Mingling of the Waters” ceremony introduced last year. Attendees are encouraged to save water samples from their travels or other spiritual experiences (for example, the Summer Solstice) over the summer to bring to this service.

Submission Guidelines:

All submissions for UU Matters should be emailed to Luke Sanford Crawford, at LukeSanfordCrawford@yahoo.com. Submissions for the July edition must be emailed no later than **Monday, June 21**.

Service Leaders/Speakers:

If you are leading a service or speaking in a service, you need to email Luke directly with the title, date, and synopsis of your service/sermon.

Other Meetings:

If you are coordinating a special meeting or event that is open to the public, you need to email Luke with the date and description of the event.

Programming Committee:

Someone from the Programming Committee should email Luke a list of upcoming service leaders and speakers each month.

Personal Submissions:

UU Matters could be an opportunity for you to share your personal work relating to UUism, to the MVUUF congregation, or to liberal religious thought in general. Please consider sharing your photography, poems, short stories, “deep thoughts,” etc. See “Submission Guidelines” above.

Considering MVUUF membership? Please ask a Board of Trustees member for a prospective member folder, or a membership form.

Treasury Matters: Financial contributions may be made in the offering basket located on the round table at the back of the sanctuary. If you would like to mail contributions instead of putting them in the offering basket, you may mail them to: MVUUF, 1600 Isabella, Mt. Vernon, IL, 62864. Please make checks payable to MVUUF. If you would like your offering to be used for a specific purpose, please clearly mark that purpose on the memo line on your check or on the envelope in which you place your offering.

Library Matters: The MVUUF Library catalogue is available online. The catalog can be accessed at www.librarything.com/catalog/MVUUF

Contact Information: If you are looking for more information about the Mt. Vernon Unitarian Universalist Fellowship or would like to be added to our mailing list, you can do so in the following ways:

1. By Mail: The Mt. Vernon Unitarian Universalist Fellowship 1600 Isabella Mt. Vernon, IL 62864
2. By Phone: (618) 241-9644. Please leave a voice mail message.
3. By visiting our website: www.mtvernonuuf.org
4. By emailing our fellowship: information@mtvernonuuf.org

“The world is not divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning sexual behavior the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex.”

- Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 1948