



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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Main Line Church Votes to Support a Large, New, Area Church

The congregation of Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA voted in November to support a new large church to be located near Malvern, Exton or Phoenixville.

In the initial years, Main Line Unitarian Church plans to mentor the new church. It also expects a certain percentage of current members to join the new church. This will allow for continued new-member growth at MLUC.

Towson UU Chooses Homeless Center for Its Top Priority Social Responsibility Project

As its primary focus for social action, Towson UU Church, Lutherville, MD chose Sarah's Hope, a new, day center for the homeless, sponsored by Abraham's Tent, a coalition of churches and organizations.

Towson will give the center priority in volunteer recruitment and fundraising, led by a Task Force drawn from its Social Responsibility Committee.

The center provides basic shelter to homeless men, women, and children during the day. A range of personal services--laundry, showers, haircuts--are provided, along with a variety of professional services and agency referrals. It also helps children with reading and math skills, literacy and craft activities for adults.

A year ago, the Towson church became involved in this coalition and contributed \$1,050 toward construction of the center.

Sinkford Addresses Post-Election Meeting

Along with local political leaders, UUA president Rev. William G. Sinkford was speaker and moderator of a post-election reflection, at River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD.

In a post-election statement, he said this:

"The democratic process is an act of faith, not faith that any one point of view will prevail, but faith that the will of the people will point us toward the Beloved Community. And in this national election, 'we, the people' have spoken, millions more than ever before. Unitarian Universalists lived out our faith by registering tens of thousands of new voters. We can rightly be proud of our commitment to this democracy. We stood clearly and proudly on the side of love."

Maryland UUs Support Amicus Curiae Brief for Same-Sex Marriage

Eight Maryland UU churches are supporting an Amicus Curiae Brief to recognize same-sex marriage.

A group of same-sex couples recently filed a lawsuit seeking legal status for same-sex marriages in Maryland. Helping this effort are the American Civil Liberties Union and Equality Maryland, a civil rights organization for the LGBT community.

Equality Maryland invited UU churches to file an Amicus Curiae brief supporting this lawsuit. The UUSJ organized a fall meeting to address this issue. Towson UU Church, Lutherville and UU Congregation of Columbia, MD have reported their support of the brief.

The brief will be important to support one aspect of the lawsuit: Religious faiths vary in their embrace/opposition to same-sex marriage and should not intrude on the civil marriage concept.

The lawsuit also maintains that civil marriage is a legal relationship, separated from the religious rite of marriage. It confers legal rights, protection and obligations; religious communities create spiritual and sacred unions. UUs are no strangers to Amicus Curiae, meaning "friend of the court," briefs. A total of 342 have been filed for various causes.

Paint Branch Hosts Meeting on Resolution on Provisions of U.S. Patriot Act

UUs and other citizens met at Paint Branch UU Church, Adelphi, MD to review a draft of a Maryland resolution, opposing some provisions of the U.S. Patriot Act and actions by the Bush Administration seen as a threat to civil liberties.

The Maryland Bill of Rights Coalition organized the meeting in the fall in order to submit the resolution for the 2005 legislative session. Some aspects of the Patriot Act will no longer be in effect at the end of 2005, unless they are renewed by Congress.

Cumberland Valley, Once Recipient, Achieves Chalice Lighter Record

UUs of the Cumberland Valley, Boiling Springs, PA became the congregation with the highest percentage of Chalice Lighters in the JPD when it recently signed up 32 new Lighters, bringing its total to 101.

During its first four years, Cumberland received four grants for consulting work, help in gathering a core group, supporting a part-time Religious Education organizer, adding to a UUA grant for the cost of ministry, and a down payment on the purchase of a church building.

Earlier this year, UUs of Southern Delaware, Lewes, DE, which has had the support of the First Church Unitarian Church of Wilmington, DE, received a \$20,000 Chalice Lighter Grant for Growth.

Through the program, 32 congregations have received a total of 44 grants. Other churches benefiting are Easton, Frederick, Salisbury, Sterling, Sugarloaf, and South Jersey.

JPD Churches Light 50 and 40 Candles for Anniversaries

Paint Branch UU, Adelphi, MD marked its 50th anniversary celebration with a gala dinner recently. UU Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton, VA also begins celebration of its 50th anniversary in January. Actual date is April 17.

Lighting 40 candles on its anniversary cake in the fall was UU Congregation of Columbia, MD.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." ---Margaret Mead

Youth Learn About Social Justice Through Walks, Service Activities

Youth from the UU Church of the Restoration, Philadelphia, PA, walked the 8.4-mile course for AIDS Walk Philly, while children in K-8th grade classes from Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA took part in a Walk for the Homeless.

At the UU Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton, VA 100 RE readers earned nearly \$11,000 for Heifer International. An anonymous corporate sponsor will match this amount that benefits La Union, a village in Peru.

Children in RE classes of BuxMont UU Fellowship, Warrington, PA collected supplies for a school in Haiti, while 3rd-6th-graders at UU of Delaware County, Media, PA collected donations from local supermarkets and prepared breakfast for 50 residents of a homeless center.

First-graders at Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD also collected toiletries for the homeless in a project to learn about different homes, or no homes.

Seventh and eighth-graders at Accotink UU Church, Burke, VA designed logos for T-shirts and tote bags for sale at a festival to raise money for a 2006 Boston trip. Items with the logo of BuxMont UU Fellowship were sold by youth to buy gifts for teenagers in need. At Halloween, children at UU of Silver Spring, MD raised \$213 for UNICEF. Before Christmas, children of UU Fellowship, Easton, MD made Christmas tree ornaments for a tree they donated to the Alzheimer's Unit of a local nursing home.

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