



JPD Newsletter

Connecting all Unitarian Universalists in the Joseph Priestley District:

Southern New Jersey, Delaware, Eastern and Central Pennsylvania, Maryland,

March-April, 2004

District of Columbia, Northern Virginia

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Two JPD UU Ministers Support Same-Sex Unions by Not Signing Civil Licenses

Rev. Liz McMaster, interim minister, UU Church of the Restoration, Philadelphia, PA and Rev. Melanie M. Sullivan, UU Church of Cherry Hill, N.J. have decided not to sign civil marriage licenses until same-sex unions become legal in their states.

"It just wasn't right to sign some (certificates) and not others, if all are committed couples," McMaster said.

"I saw a double standard, Sullivan added. "My conscience made me do it."

Rev. McMaster said she began her protest after a Massachusetts court ruled that the state's constitution did not bar gay couples from the right to marry.

McMaster added that originally she had refused to conduct any straight weddings, but since has modified her stand and will conduct straight and gay weddings, for seriously committed couples, but will not sign the marriage certificates. Another UU minister has agreed to do that part of the ceremony McMaster is unwilling to do.

Following a congregational meeting in January, McMaster and members of Restoration's Social Justice committee began exploring ways the church can support gay rights without impinging on the rights of others.

McMaster plans to deliver a sermon on the subject in March, and explore concerns of the church's gay and lesbian members.

"I am very excited about conversations at the church and the readiness of members to discuss the subject," McMaster said.

At Cherry Hill, the church's trustees unanimously supported Sullivan's decision. She spoke at a recent public forum, sponsored by the local chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

(Based in part on an article in The Philadelphia Inquirer.)

Paint Brush UU Damaged by Fire, JPD Churches Aid with Donations

Early in December, Paint Brush UU, Adelphi, MD, was damaged by a fire, its RE wing completely destroyed.

Along with this loss, offices for the RE director and co-minister were also damaged. All contents of the smoke-covered interior must be cleaned, stored or discarded and the church may lose some income from rentals.

UU churches may donate funds, marked Paint Brush Fund, to the JPD Office, full address on the next page.

Dates to Circle for Spring, Summer 2004

March 19-20: JPD Spring Conference, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Wilmington, DE. Speaker: Rev. William Sinkford, president, UUA, worship services, 30 workshops.

March 27-April 4: Visit Selma, Birmingham, AL, Money, MISS, other civil rights sites by motor coach; tours led by Rev. Dr. Gordon Gibson, Elkhart, IN UU Fellowship. Info e-mail: judygibson@juno.com or UUFE, P.O. Box 584, Elkhart, IN 46515

June 4-6: Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA will sponsor weekend tours of Manassas battlefield, railway festival, wildlife refuge, juried arts and crafts fair, sports activities. Guests will stay at UU-hosted B&B homes. Register before April 15, cost is \$175, single, \$295, couple. Later, \$190 single, \$315 couple. Reservations: Ed and Martha Walsh, (703) 330-5963 or Bob and Flora Conley, (703) 754-9049.

July 18-21: First UU of Niagara, N.Y. Conducts four-day tour; \$400 includes tours of the falls, three-day accommodations at UU homes, all meals, entrance fees, transportation, casino chips. E-mail: info@uunex.net or (716) 791-4453.

Civil Rights Tour Yields '60's Witness, Comparisons of Terrorism -- Then and Now

Barbara Cross, a witness to the 1963 bombing of the Birmingham Alabama church that killed four children, was speaker at two services at UU Mt. Vernon, Alexandria, VA, where Freedom Riders were trained in 1961.

Mt. Vernon members Deborah Matthews and Jackie Arnold, invited her to speak after they met her on a five-city tour of civil rights sites in Alabama for which Cross was guide.

Matthews and Arnold saw a kinship between the terrorism of the 1960's civil rights struggle -- Birmingham had 60 bombings within a year-- and the terrorism of 9/11 and the 2002 sniper shootings in the Washington area.

Cross, now a service representative for BellSouth, was in the church the day of the bombing and had given her wallet for safekeeping to one of the children killed in the explosion. It was returned a month later.

Matthews' daughter, Ali Shepard, and Arnold's daughter, Lindsay Adler, 8th graders who were on the civil rights tour, led the services at Mt. Vernon.

(Based in part on an article in *The Washington Post*.)

Metropolitan Growth Committee Maps Steps for UU Denominational Development

The Metropolitan Growth Planning Committee for the Wilmington-Philadelphia area, organized by the Joseph Priestley District, outlined four areas of activity for denominational growth to be undertaken by area churches.

They were: *Existing congregations:* Aid for achieving numerical and spiritual growth by strengthening on-going programs, encouraging cooperation among congregations.

New congregations: Launching one or more new congregations, emphasizing those initially promising large growth.

Publicity: Creating new awareness of Unitarian Universalism through a coordinated publicity program, tied to congregational readiness programs.

Social Justice: Promoting social justice by working together, consistent with UU values and principles, emphasizing "deeds, not creeds."

Task forces will develop these ideas, explore funding for initiatives.

Co-chairpersons are Rev. Dr. Stephen Papa, Main Line, Devon, PA and Marilyn Dyson,

member, Church of the Restoration, Philadelphia., PA.

What's Happening....March events: Installation of Rev. Paige Getty as settled minister at *Congregation of Columbia, MD* March 7 and dedication of new church, Sterling, VA March 21....*UU Congregation of Fairfax,, Oakton, VA* broke ground for a new building addition.... *Northern Chesapeake UU Society* marked a fifth year in its Fallston, Md. Church....

....**What We Care About....***All Souls, Washington, D.C.* and area UUs filled 840 bags with food for Thanksgiving meals and collected \$13,000....A piano concert at *River Road Unitarian, Bethesda, MD* raised \$5,120 in scholarship funds for nine minority DC college students. With Montgomery County (MD) Health Care, it also cooperates with UU Social Justice to support pending legislation on universal health care for state citizens.... *Main Line UU, Devon, PA* has created Helping Hands, an ad hoc Social Justice Committee helping marginalized populations. A first event provided holiday gifts for homeless children and families at a Philadelphia shelter.... *UU Fellowship of Harford County, Churchville, MD* raised funds for SERV International, that markets crafts, other items made by low-income people from around the world....*Buxmont UU Fellowship, Warrington, PA* collected clothing, toys, school supplies for Kosovo children....*First Church of Baltimore and Towson UU* recruited children's reading tutors for an East Baltimore MD community project.

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