



JPD Newsletter

Connecting all Unitarian Universalists in the Joseph Priestley District:

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

May-June, 2004

District of Columbia, Northern Virginia

Vol. 9 No. 5

Midwest Group Pickets Harrisburg Church, in Protest of UU Support of Gay Rights

About half a dozen protestors, led by Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas, picketed the Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA between its two Sunday services, March 21, as well as five other local churches, and a high school for their support of gay rights.

The congregation had record attendance at both services, where funds were also raised for Common Roads, a center for gay youth.

Rev. Howard Dana also spoke at an evening service at the local Metropolitan Community Church, which opened its evening service to the Harrisburg community. Local media gave widespread coverage to the picketing of the churches.

The church followed up the picketing with a Sunday service a week later that explored practical measures for support of the gay community and the UUA stance on civil marriage.

"We didn't want this (response to the picketing) to be just a defensive event," Rev. Dana explained.

Phelps, who is described as homophobic, and his supporters last September picketed the showing of a movie, "Jim in Bold," about Jim Wheeler, a gay youth from Lebanon, PA who committed suicide. The film was shown to raise funds for Common Roads. UU of Harrisburg and other churches supported showing of the film.

UUs Join Thousands for DC March for Women's Freedom of Choice

Hundreds of UUs from JPD churches boarded buses and joined hundreds of thousands of Americans taking part in the pro-choice March for Women's Lives, April 25 in Washington, DC.

All Souls, Unitarian, Washington, DC hosted a dinner and program the previous night, with Carol Moseley Braun, recent contender for

the Democratic presidential nomination, and UUA President Rev. William Sinkford among the speakers. Rev. Linda Olson Peebles, UUA board trustee, was presenter.

UUs attended Sunday services at area churches before the march, starting at the Lincoln Memorial and ending at a rally on the Mall. Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker was speaker at the All Souls morning service.

According to monthly newsletters, 20 JPD churches and fellowships organized buses for the march, sold T-shirts, provided publicity, encouraged participation, and donated funds to Planned Parenthood. Some ministers also delivered sermons on this issue.

UUs Rally to Aid Paint Branch Church

To assist Paint Branch UU, Adelphi, MD, which suffered a serious fire last year, several churches made special contributions to help Paint Branch offset costs of repairs.

Among these was Sugarloaf Congregation of UUs, Germantown, MD, which, with limited resources, having last year bought land and acquired a first mortgage, nevertheless, donated two percent of earnings from its third annual fund-raising concert to Paint Branch.

The Board of Main Line Unitarian, Devon, PA also approved a gift of \$5,000 and UU Congregation of York, PA sent a check for \$100 and a card signed by concerned members.

High Attendance, Involvement, Marked JPD Spring Conference

Representing 52 congregations from the Joseph Priestley District, 210 UUs met for the JPD Spring Conference in Wilmington, DE.

All Souls Church, Unitarian, Washington, DC received the O. Eugene Pickett Award and Henry Ledbetter, of UU Church of Annapolis, MD received the Unsung UU Award.

UUA President Rev. William Sinkford spoke on the commitment of UUs to the value,

"Marriage is a Civil Right," by bearing witness and bringing a liberal religious voice to this issue.

Social Justice Moves Front and Center for Spring Forums and Workshops

Eighty persons attended the Patriot Act Forum, sponsored by UU Church of the Restoration, Philadelphia, PA in March. The four-member panel dealt with civil liberties concerns and questions about this legislation, passed following 9/11.

UU Fellowship of Pottstown, PA also sponsored a Civil Liberties Forum dealing with Patriot Acts I and II, the status of enemy combatants and civil liberties cases before the Supreme Court. Social Justice Committees of both churches organized the forums.

All Souls Church, Unitarian, Washington, DC held an April Social Justice Celebration. It focused on the work of Beacon House, serving area children and youth, the Affordable Housing Corporation, and UU Social Justice Committee, coordinating social action activities.

UUs for Social Justice will host a workshop, Feeding the Flame of Justice II, for social justice leaders, May 18 at UU Congregation of Columbia, MD.

Light Bulbs On! UUs Abound in Bright Ideas

Nearly a year ago, UUs of Cumberland Valley, Boiling Springs, PA emptied their pockets of small change for the worship service offering to support a local, special Olympic program. Now dubbed "Change for the World," Cumberland's small change offerings have aided these area good causes: a summer art camp for children; an animal shelter; an agency aiding domestic violence victims; a center supporting gay youth; and a shelter for homeless men, women, and families.

To raise funds for various needs, First U Church of Philadelphia, PA tapped into local corporate gift-grant programs for community outreach. Two First U members, employees of a corporate outreach program and a realtor, asked for a grant for the church. Over two years, the church received \$15,000 for improvements and community projects. All you have to do is ask.

For fun, (much needed) UU Fellowship of Southern MD, Leonardtown, MD launched a Red Hat Society for women 50 and over, who attend meetings wearing red hats and purple

outfits. Inspiration is Jenny Joseph's poem, "Warning:" "When I am old, I shall wear purple and a red hat that doesn't go..."

Here's a Switch, Literally, for an Auction

Is there anything new under the sun at our imaginative and ubiquitous auctions? Maybe.

Kate Ramos, DRE of UU Church of Delaware County, Media, PA offered highest bidder the chance to cut off her 15-inch cascade of dark hair. The deed was done during worship service the next day. The church earned \$70. The luscious switch was given to Locks of Love, that provides hair pieces for children undergoing chemotherapy.

Unirondack Summer Youth Camp Dates

July 4-10: Emerson (elementary age), History of famous UUs; July 11-17, Emerson II (elementary), Saving Our Planet; August 1-7, Parker (7-12 grades), traditional and off-camp adventures; August 8-14, (senior high) Ballou, Dreaming it's not all in our heads; August 15-21, Ballou II (senior high), immigration and social justice; August 22-28, Family Camp: workshops, youth programs, nature writing II. Nat Shed, director, Camp Unirondack, Lowville, NY; Phone/fax 413-256-5402

JUNE 4-6 Battleground tours, crafts fair, railway festival at Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA.

Hanging-Our-Head Department: Apologies to Paint Branch UU, Adelphi, MD, incorrectly identified in the last issue as "Paint Brush." Also, the fire "badly damaged," rather than "completely destroyed," the RE rooms.

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