

**Building Community Meeting of the Joseph Priestley District (JPD)**

**Breakout Session: “Welcoming”**

**Sat., 22 Sep 2018**

**Rev Michael Crumpler, the UUA’s LGBTQ and Intercultural Programs Manager**

Rev Crumpler, a gay and black UCC minister, showed a slideshow, “The 5 Pillars of Welcome Renewal” which we can obtain. His presentation was directed to LGBTQ Welcoming congregations, and he told us that the UUA now requires a much quicker renewal of the original signup. The slideshow would be valuable for congregations that haven’t signed up, but even for those who have, like us, it will be a wake-up for activists and an attention-getter for others in the congregation. The slides covered “Why do congregations officially welcome LGBTQ people?”, “What are some ways for congregations to do LGBTQ welcoming beyond a smile and a handshake?” and “What are the latest UUA requirements for Welcoming congregations?”

Originally each Welcoming Congregation signup was expected to renew after 5 years. The program remains voluntary, but the UUA now wants to stress its importance and is changing the renewal requirement to every year. Our UU program began in 1990, a few years after the United Church of Christ (UCC) began, and rose to its pinnacle of participation when 800 out of 1100 UU U.S. congregations joined—higher than the UCC member percent has ever been. Then our sine curve turned down since many congregations have forgotten to renew. Rev Crumpler pointed out that there is now urgency for renewal because of backlash against the Obama legislation, and because several serious problems affect both LGBTQs and people of color who, together, have the highest incidence of HIV in the US. LGBTQ people with HIV need more than to feel welcome. They need sympathetic counseling and a place to meet, discuss issues among themselves, perhaps receive medical and spiritual counseling and be fed and helped with housing. The slides show a successful Salt Lake City, Utah UU church program for young LGTBQ people, called by a clever punning name, “OUTreach”.

The last part was devoted to the new requirements, which include all the “5 Pillars” in congregations that have not yet participated. However, only the last 4 are necessary for congregations like UUCR that need to renew. The 5 Pillars of Welcome are:

1. Apply to the UUA and go through the somewhat intricate steps of becoming a Welcoming congregation (for UUCR, this is unnecessary because we’ve done it)
2. During the church year, preach at least 2 Sunday sermons on LGBTQ issues with themed music and readings.
3. On other Sundays, on or near dates to be furnished by the UUA, mention LGBTQ special memorial days, current pride or protest marches and other events. Rev Crumpler told us that the next day, Sep 23, was to be a celebration of Bisexuals, who have a history of being overlooked or insulted by both straights and other LGBTQs. Rev Sims mentioned them in the last sermon before this JPD meeting.
4. Use congregational meetings to discuss LGBTQ issues.
5. Support one or more local efforts, even those outside the church—such as a homeless shelter specific to LGBTQs.

All of these will have more details in written materials the UUA has started to send, and by watching the slideshow. There is a “5 Pillars” website under the UUA, to share relevant sermons, music, poems, etc. and encourage networking and joint efforts. There will also be a 1-hour webinar every year.

Rev. Crumpler said that the UUA will also be focusing on the needs of others to be welcomed in much the same way. He mentioned those of any sexual orientation who are ill with AIDS, people of color, the disabled, immigrants, sanctuary seekers, and OWL education for elder adults.

This was a very fine session. Afterward I thanked Rev. Crumpler and also spoke with Ms. Jess Michael, a Board member from Main Line church, who has information on OWL for elders. She can be reached at 703-629-6186.

Submitted by Sandy Fulton