

UULM

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CALIFORNIA



UU Congregations Invited to Join In *Amicus Curiae* Brief Supporting Marriage Equality

The UU Legislative Ministry of California is coordinating an effort by UUs to file an amicus curiae ("friend of the court") brief in litigation (Woo vs. Lockyer) now pending in San Francisco Superior Court. The suit contends that the denial of marriage licenses to same-sex couples is unconstitutional.

First UU Church of San Diego, where experienced attorneys and church members Susan Weaver and her husband Eric have offered to collaborate on the brief, is the first congregation to join the suit. Other congregations are invited to join. While the brief must be filed on or before Oct. 15, 2004, Ms. Weaver noted that an appeal is likely, during which time congregations could also add their names. This is an historic suit that is likely to end up before the California Supreme Court.

For more information, contact Rev. Silvio Nardoni at 818-550-1800 or by e-mail: silvionardoni@sbcglobal.net.

Reverend Bloggers Board the Bus!

See page three...



16 Ballot Propositions – Yikes! Join us in the "Virtual UU Meeting House"

www.uulmca.org

Opening in early October, the Virtual UU Meeting House provides an on-line community for California UUs to share insights on complex issues of legislation, ethics, and faith. The first "meeting" will feature information and opinion on the 16 Propositions on the November ballot. Thanks to Elissa Ellis-MacLeod, project manager, and to all who contributed readings, articles and commentary. Hope to meet you on-line! ◀

UULM CA Board Supports Props 66 and 72

The UULM CA Board recommends a YES vote on Propositions 66 and 72. Below are two op-ed pieces to spark your thinking. You can find more pros, cons, and offer your own opinions on-line at the Virtual UU Meeting House www.uulmca.org. ◀

"A Call from Billy"

by Heather MacLeod
[Editor's Note: Billy is not his real name]

I got a collect phone call from my young friend "Billy" yesterday. From jail. Not that I was surprised. He's been stealing since he was 13 - sometimes from me, other times from his family (Yes, even the food stamps, and yes, I'm still angry). Once I brought him to a Halloween party at my UU church. He stole money from the purses women left in the pews. This time he's in for armed robbery.

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"From Exodus To Promised Land"

By Rev. Silvio Nardoni

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger says, "Achieving improved health care access and affordability for all working Californians is a positive goal," but maintains that Proposition 72 is not the best way to do so. Whatever its shortcomings, Prop. 72 is better than nothing. Which is what 6.5 million working people and their families in California now have for health coverage: nothing.

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UULM- California

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The old bumpersticker tells us to “think globally and act locally”. It’s good advice. However, the slogan leaves one part out. If we really want to change the laws and structures that perpetuate poverty, pollute the landscape, and deny human dignity, we will need to think globally, act locally, and organize at a level that is somewhere in the middle. The UU Legislative Ministry, California is working to do just that.

So how do you organize the 13,000 UUs in California to bring our values more effectively into the public square? By fostering friendships, utilizing technology, and training leaders who expect and value collaboration. If we are to be a Legislative Ministry, we must also connect advocacy with faith, linking worship with the world. Spiritual grounding and time to reflect is critical in these precarious and emotionally charged times. Beyond this intense campaign season, there will be a great need for those who can nurture hope and cultivate forgiveness.

In this first year of organizing, we’ve found that many of our congregations share a common challenge: how to focus and prioritize local social justice ministries. It is hard to choose among all the pressing issues that clamor for our attention; yet, it is clearly not effective to be a mile wide and an inch deep.

In early December, the UULM Board of Trustees will be choosing areas of priority for our work during the 2005 2006 legislative session. If you have not yet filled out an issue survey, you can do so on-line at www.uulmca.org. To request a hard copy, please call our office at 916 841-0018. Our trustee’s decisions will be guided by UU principles and values, the results of the issue surveys, interviews with UU leaders from around the state, UUA General Assembly Resolutions, UUSC priorities, potential for linking with interfaith allies, and what is happening in the state legislature.

We look forward to working and worshipping with you up to and beyond this election, that we may continue to build a faith with a spiritual center and a civic circumference. ◀

Listening Campaign



Members of the San Diego UU cluster gathered in San Dieguito to offer input to the UULM.

Rev. Lindi Ramsden, Executive Director

News on Marriage Equality

UU CLERGY ON THE "EQUALITY EXPRESS"

On Oct. 4, the "National Marriage Equality Express" will leave California for a cross-country journey, arriving in Washington, D.C. on October 11th, National Coming Out Day. Stopping in 12 cities across the country they will witness against enshrining discrimination in the US Constitution, support immigration rights for same sex couples, and oppose federal anti-gay legislation.

Two Unitarian Universalist ministers: the Rev. Helen Carroll of the UU Fellowship of San Luis Obispo County,



and the Rev. John Millspaugh of the UU Church of South County in Mission Viejo will be on board. Revs. Carroll and Millspaugh will be treating the UULM community to a weblog - offering daily stories, photos, and reflections as they travel to Sacramento, Reno, Laramie, Cheyenne, Denver, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Columbus, Akron, Pittsburgh, and Washington DC. You can link to their weblog "Riding with the Reverend" at www.uulmca.org



"I am often asked why a straight clergyman would get involved in this work for marriage equality," said Millspaugh. "The loving families with same-sex partners have no legal protections once they leave California, and too little legal protection while they are here. I am morally obligated to act upon the truth I perceive: that diversity is part of our universe's plan, and that beneath all that human diversity, what unites us is more important than what divides us."

Carroll, also straight and a mother of four, said " My experience tells me laws which limit or exclude rights, privileges and responsibilities are not consistent with my read of our Constitution or my understanding of the inherent worth and dignity of every individual." For more info, see: www.marriageequalityca.org ◀

NEXT STEPS IN MARRIAGE EQUALITY

The best way to help Marriage Equality become a reality is to marry more same-sex couples. When the sky does not fall, and straight marriages don't collapse, the doomsday scenarios will look foolish. California is hoping to join Massachusetts in marrying same-sex couples by passing the Non-Discrimination in Marriage License Act in the 05-06 legislative session. The next two years are critical as Californians will undoubtedly, be facing a ballot proposition in 2006 to amend the state constitution to prohibit same sex marriage. What happens in California will have profound ramifications across the country. As a faith tradition that has been officiating at same sex unions for decades, we have a profound role to play in speaking to the "moveable middle" on this issue.

Training UUs 4 Marriage Equality Task Forces

UULM will be offering a training in northern CA as part of the PCD's Leadership Development Day on Nov. 6 in San Francisco, and in southern CA as part of a general UULM workshop on January 29th in Santa Barbara. Training will address the history of marriage, current legal/legislative status and strategy, media work, and congregational strategies for worship, education, reflection, and action. For more information, contact us at workshop@uulmca.org or at 408 295-7268. Come as an individual, or better yet, bring a team.

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FRESNO UU's STAND FOR LOVE

On a sunny Sunday afternoon in late August, Fresno Mayor Alan Autry and the city's conservative Cornerstone Church rented City Hall to hold a celebration of "traditional marriage." Across town, in an interfaith effort lead by the Rev.



Rev. Bryan Jessup

Bryan Jessup of the UU Church of Fresno, some 250 people gathered for quite a different sacred ceremony. The inclusive invitation that went out in the *Fresno Bee* and in congregational bulletin inserts emphasized that this was a celebration "for ALL the people of Fresno—young and old, gay and straight, of whatever race or class, representing all faith traditions centered in love to share in a renewal of vows of love and commitment to family."

Jessup called the inclusive Renewal of Vows ceremony "both sweet and poignant. It was a boost to all of us from various and affirming interfaith congregations to see one another and realize we are not alone." Later in the day, both events moved outside. The Mayor's rally drew 2000. Across the street were Jessup and 250 demonstrators who called for a more inclusive definition of love, marriage and commitment.



More than a million children in the U.S. are affected by discriminatory anti-marriage laws against gay parents. These Fresno kids were protesting the mayor's "Traditional Marriage" rally.

The following week, Autry invited Rev. Jessup to City Hall to say that the Mayor was worried about "polarization" doing damage to the community. Jessup said he would gladly be part of any effort that created a forum for people to really listen to one another. However, Jessup told Mayor Autry that as long as the Mayor hosted events like the one just held at the City Hall steps, "I and others will be there protesting." Jessup told UULM's editor, "We'll see where this goes..." ◀

From Exodus . . .

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The Governor asserts that the law will create an "exodus" of jobs from California, but the greatest impact of the bill will be on hotels, restaurants, and other businesses that are unlikely to move out of state. This ignores the larger political context for health care reform. If Prop. 72 succeeds, other states will look to create similar laws in order to relieve the budget strains caused by demands on public health systems by the working poor. If that happens, the "exodus" won't happen: we'll already be in the Promised Land.

The scare tactics employed by the opposition to Prop. 72 also claim that people fortunate enough to already have good health coverage will be forced into insurance plans run by "bureaucrats." Not only is this untrue, but it attempts to turn one of the innovative virtues of Prop. 72 into a vice. The law will offer employers the option of joining a statewide purchasing pool, but no one will be forced to participate.

Prop. 72 may not be perfect, but don't make the same mistake as Arnold, by making the imperfect the enemy. Until a more comprehensive health care policy comes along, 72 will relieve a lot of unnecessary suffering caused by the lack of health care coverage. ◀

Rev. Silvio Nardoni is an Affiliate Minister of the UU Community Church of Santa Monica, and a UULM board trustee.

Prop 72 is supported by a broad network of faith-based organizations. For more information, worship and study materials, please visit our website at www.uulmca.org

VOTE ON NOV 2nd!

Recent UULM and UUA inquiries to California's UU congregations about how their congregations are exercising their commitment to the "democratic process" in the upcoming elections offered up some traditional, and some very creative ideas. Most UU groups are collaborating with the League of Women Voters and/or other interfaith or get-out-the-vote organizations.

Targeting specific segments of the population is working for three congregations. In Laguna Beach, the Fellowship has been registering their homeless and poor neighbors to vote. The UU Church of Riverside has set up registration tables outside of WalMart, in an attempt to reach working class voters, while the UU Community of the Mountains sponsored a voting clinic for graduating high school seniors.

Some are focused on voter education, such as the UU Fellowship of San Dieguito which is co-hosting two local forums, one with candidates, one on ballot propositions, while two other congregations are traveling to where the need is greatest. Some members of the UU Society of Sacramento and the Redwood City Fellowship have traveled as far as Nevada to register voters.

First Unitarian of Oakland has received 168 congregant "voter pledge cards," with the goal being 100% (300) promising to vote. Nearly 50 people in the congregation signed up to do precinct work. ◀

A Call from Billy. . .

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Jail is not as horrible as I had thought it was, when it was an abstract concept and I was a liberal who didn't know any ghetto kids. Billy hates it, but when he's in jail, he attends the classes, which he hadn't done before for five years. When he's in jail, he attends anger management meetings, where he talks about the violence in his childhood and how that has affected him.

I've always voted against money for prisons. But I don't really want Billy to be out of jail. I've seen how people can commit crimes over and over without getting arrested. I'm taking all of these experiences and thoughts and feelings into consideration when I think about the Three-Strikes Law.

Despite all my frustration with Billy, I don't agree with any law that limits the possibilities for taking the specific circumstances and history of a situation into account. The Three-Strikes law doesn't leave room for considering other interventions, other possible ways of changing someone's behavior. It doesn't distinguish between violent and nonviolent felonies. It mandates a specific kind of intervention for all cases - the harshness of the penal system. There are times when someone's life will change because they had to face a severe penalty for what they did. And there are times when someone's life will change because they were given one more chance. We can't make a blanket rule that covers all cases.

Ultimately, I trust the judges, the caseworkers, the probation officers to do their best to decide how to deal with my friend Billy. I want them to be able to think flexibly about what he's done, what the pattern of his behavior is, and what might work to turn him around. I don't want to hamstring them by requiring that they deal with his case in a particular way, not when I still have hope that he may someday change. For that reason, I support Proposition 66, which will amend the three-strikes law, so that nonviolent felonies don't count as a third strike. ◀

Heather MacLeod is a graduate student in education at the University of California, Berkeley. Born and raised UU, she is a member of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland.

How Liberals and Conservatives Think

All language is metaphor. When conservatives talk about politics, they use words like character, virtue, discipline, toughness, self-reliance, authority, heritage, and hard work. Liberals use words like social responsibility, human rights, concern, care, help, health, dignity, and diversity.

George Lakoff is a linguist who has studied political discourse in America. He concludes that conservatives are often an enigma to liberals and liberal are an enigma to conservatives because they use different language and metaphors. They might as well be from different planets.



Rev. Doug Kraft

At the center of the conservative world view is a strict father model with the “father having primary responsibility for supporting and protecting the family as well as the authority to set ... policy and ... rules.” At the center of the liberal worldview is a nurturing parent model where “love, empathy and nurturance are primary and children become responsible, self-disciplined and self-reliant through being cared for, respected and caring for others.”

Over the past 25 years, the conservatives have put a lot of money into conservative think tanks that have developed the language being used in today’s political discourse. Lakoff argues that once the language framing an issue is set, the debate is over. Take the phrase “tax revolt.” The metaphor of revolt implies oppression. Our sympathies naturally go to the underdog. The debate is over. If the issue of taxation were framed as “paying our dues,” the outcome would be very different.

George Lakoff offers a great deal of insight as to how liberals can better understand and speak to the conservative mind set (and vice versa). Until we understand how someone thinks, we won’t be able to enter into a meaningful discourse.

The name of his book is *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2002). Ministers will find the core of a sermon in every chapter. ◀

-- Rev. Doug Kraft, Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento

MOVING UP!

The UU Legislative Ministry in Sacramento has moved—same building, but different floor with an airy office overlooking Cesar Chavez Park and next door to the Friends Committee on Legislation. Thanks so much to the JERICHO staff who helped us get started in their sublet. It is a blessing to have such great allies in the building. Our new address is 926 J St, suite #708, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Next Steps. . .
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Youth and Adults invited to Sacramento for Valentine’s Day

Join UULM and other allies in Sacramento on Sunday evening, February 13 and Monday, February 14 for a Marriage Equality training and lobby day. Be part of an historic effort to pass the Non-Discrimination in Marriage License Act. High school youth and college age young adults are particularly encouraged to attend. Miss a day of school, but arrange to receive credit for participating in a truly educational experience. For more info, please contact lramsdn@uulmca.org ◀

REFLECTIONS OF A SUMMER INTERN

By Christina Shu

"You must learn day by day, year by year, to broaden your horizon. The more things you love, the more you are interested in, the more you enjoy, the more you are indignant about, the more you have left when anything happens." Ethel Barrymore

There was so much to be learned this summer while I served as UULM's Regional Organizer for the San Diego area. Growing up as I did in the small Summit UU Fellowship of La Mesa, CA, gave me only scant preparation for my introduction into the larger Unitarian Universalist movement. There is so much out there!

By visiting all seven congregations in the San Diego cluster, I observed congregational life first-hand, this time as a young adult rather than a child. I was able to see how different congregations can be run, depending on size and location, the interactions between membership and minister, how to facilitate meetings, how conflicts can arise in congregations and be resolved. Best of all, representing UULM gave me a stronger sense of spiritual passion for the social justice work of churches and fellowships. Much as I've enjoyed my studies in Stanford's religious studies department, nothing compared to seeing real life people of faith take solid social action by combining advocacy, education and community organizing.



This internship has enabled me to take a closer look at those social issues I care about, and to really think critically about how to create some effective activity around them. The results are immensely satisfying. From the spiritual side, I found out that the UU Principles & Purposes are not some vaguely abstract concepts that are merely easy to accept, but radically progressive responsibilities that propel one towards a constant search for improvement. This realization has led me to reconsider my UU membership, cherishing my own faith as a religion worthy of belonging to, believing in and practicing.

For this summer's opportunity to learn and to serve, and "more things to love, to be interested in, to enjoy and to be indignant about," I say thank-you to UULM, and to all the many welcoming UU's I met in the course of my work. ◀

THANKS DONORS!

Thanks to all our recent donors and to those amazing and dedicated volunteers who helped organize events to raise funds for UULM. UU's in the Sacramento area hosted a beautiful brunch in August, building on a successful house party model started in Venice in June. In our San Francisco congregation, UUs 4 Marriage Equality put together a gala benefit showing of the film "Freedom to Marry" as a fundraiser for UULM and the film makers – a great evening all around!

We also want to thank our major institutional donors who have contributed since July: the Pacific Central District & Pacific Southwest District, William and Alice Hinckley Fund, UUA Freedom to Marry Fund, and the Society for Community Work.

If you would like to help organize or host a house party or other creative fundraiser for UULM, please contact us at (408) 295-7268. To contribute directly, send a check to UU Legislative Ministry, CA or go on-line to make a secure credit card donation at www.uulmca.org. We particularly appreciate those who can make a monthly pledge!! Your contribution helps us qualify for a matching grant from the Neighborhood UU Church in Pasadena. Thanks, and thanks again. ◀



David A. Jones, Assemblymember Mark Leno, Kathleen Quenneville at San Francisco UU's Marriage Equality fundraiser. (Photo by Merida Wilson)

In addition to raising funds, SF UUs also raised awareness with an interview carried on five radio stations. Hear recording at www.uusf.org

A Unitarian... A Universalist ... A California Hero

His ideals embraced interfaith tolerance. He was a leader in performing interfaith marriages, and reaching out to the Jewish community.

He urged equal rights for all people and became an advocate for the rights of African Americans and Chinese. He supported changing the name of Lake Bigler to Lake Tahoe, the Native American name, and supported retaining Native American names for Yosemite waterfalls. He preached for the rights of laborers and working men.



National Statuary Hall,
U.S. Capitol Rotunda

A self-educated, brilliant California man from a poor family, he strongly supported public education, and helped to found educational system. He served on the board of the forerunner of the University of California.



1824-1864

His persuasive oratory kept California in the Union during the Civil War. The money from the Gold Rush was critical in financing the Civil War. (Most in power in the state at the time were Southern sympathizers.)

At his death the Sacramento Capitol closed for 3 days of mourning in his honor. His commitment to California's highest ideals make him an inspirational hero relevant to today and our future

Designed by Karen Gunderson

He was an early religious advocate for what we now call "multiculturalism." He believed human beings were challenged spiritually to recognize the humanity of all people. His best friend, Randolph Ryer, was an African American.

His energetic embrace of high ideals throughout the state helped the '49ers begin to look beyond themselves, to the common good. He raised 1.25 million for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, the forerunner of the Red Cross.

Rev. Thomas Starr King

One cryptic sentence attributed to Starr King is: "The Universalists think God is too good to damn them forever; the Unitarians think they are too good to be damned forever."

Editor's Note: As the battle over putting former President Reagan's face on currency has proven divisive, U.S. Rep. Christopher Cox of Orange County has suggested in stead that California replace its U.S. Capitol rotunda statue of TSK with that of Reagan. "Just as Kansas recently replaced one of their statues with a favorite son Dwight Eisenhower, so might we replace the long-forgotten Mr. (sic) King with President Reagan," Cox suggested. Feel free to use these talking points to help educate Rep. Cox about the illustrious history of Rev. Thomas Starr King.

Compiled by Lee Lawrence in consultation with Thomas Starr King scholars Arliss Ungar and Glenna Matthews.



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