

# Unitarian Universalist Church of the Verdugo Hills

## We Are a Welcoming Congregation

Our liberal faith has long been an advocate for justice and the equality of all persons. Feeling the need to take a more positive step and provide education to its congregations about the concerns of members of the gay and Lesbian community, the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association voted to establish the Welcoming Congregation program in 1989.

## What is a Welcoming Congregation?

A Unitarian Universalist Congregation that has completed the Welcoming Congregation program and voted to identify itself as a Welcoming Congregation has committed to being inclusive and expressive of the concerns of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons at every level of congregational life-in worship, in programs, and in social occasions -- welcoming not only their presence, but also the unique gifts and particularities of their lives as well.

## How did UUCVH become a Welcoming Congregation?

In 2013 our church began the formal process of becoming a Welcoming Congregation. Although our congregation has long been supportive of the gay and lesbian community, and has had active members who identify as LGBTQ, the educational process and focus helped us to understand more fully the needs of the LGBTQ community. Through a series of workshops and discussions we learned that to be a Welcoming Congregation requires more than just non-discrimination. Specific and intentional commitments were required on our part in order to join the program:

- ⊕ As a Welcoming Congregation we do not assume anyone's affectional/sexual orientation and/or gender identity. We are sensitive to such things as vocabulary of worship and inclusivity of language and content in our services
- ⊕ We incorporate an understanding of the experience of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender persons throughout our programs, including religious education.

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- ⊕ Our bylaws includes affirmation and nondiscrimination clauses affecting all dimensions of congregational life, including membership, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals.
- ⊕ We seek to engage in outreach into the bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender communities through our advertising and by actively supporting other bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender affirmative groups.
- ⊕ We offer congregational and ministerial support for all persons, including the celebrations of Marriage under the laws of the State of California for same gender couples.
- ⊕ We celebrate the lives of all people and welcome same-gender couples, recognizing their committed relationships, and equally affirm displays of caring and affection without regard for sexual orientation.
- ⊕ We seek to nurture ongoing dialogue between people of different affectional/sexual orientations and gender identifications, and to create deeper trust and sharing.
- ⊕ We are open to the establishment of an Interweave chapter (the Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender concerns), although we have not found significant interest within our congregation to establish a chapter at this time.
- ⊕ We affirm and celebrate bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender issues and history during the church year.
- ⊕ As an advocate for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people, we work to promote justice, freedom, and equality in the larger society. We speak out when the rights and dignity of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender people are at stake. We were active in supporting the campaign for marriage equality in the State of California, and advocate for making that right universal.
- ⊕ We celebrate the lives of all people and their ways of expressing their love for each other.