

Unitarian Universalism welcomes you.

The wide welcome Unitarian Universalism has for you includes your gender identity, gender expression, sexual identity, romantic (and not) or sexual orientation, and your family or relationship structure. You are welcome as yourself, to connect with others who appreciate your presence and want to create experiences of belonging for the community.

Are you looking for a spiritual or ethical community that invites your full participation? Of course, while your gender identity, gender expression, sexual identity (and not) or sexual orientation, and your family or relationship structure are all welcome, so are the other parts of you that make up your wholeness, including your racial/cultural identity or background, mental/physical health and ability, age, language, citizenship status, religious background, economic status, and national origin. All of you is welcome. All of you matters.

Are you interested in connecting with others to learn and grow, ethically and spiritually, especially with a group of folks that doesn't require adherence to any one religious belief or creed, a community that agrees that collaborating with differences can make us stronger?

If so, Unitarian Universalism has a lot to offer you. In fact, Unitarian Universalist congregations are so serious about including you, it is a part of the bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) (as amended July 1, 2014):

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons

On June 22, 2024, the General Assembly passed a business resolution by a majority vote affirming that “embracing Transgender, Nonbinary, Intersex and Gender Diverse People is a Fundamental Expression of UU Religious Values.”

What's notable about that is the recognition throughout Unitarian Universalist community that participating with transgender, nonbinary, intersex, and gender diverse people is an essential part of practicing Unitarian Universalism. Despite the changing political climate, Unitarian Universalists remain committed to the strong and clear understanding that trans bodies are a blessing and belong in our communities.

Connecting in Community

Inclusion is a spiritual practice. By replacing barriers to inclusion with actions of solidarity and respect, Unitarian Universalists invite you to share in the leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of congregational life.

Many people who visit Unitarian Universalist congregations are seekers, perhaps looking for a community where they can explore important questions about the meaning and purpose of life.

Maybe they want a place where they, their partner, and their children can participate in religious education that will enhance family life. Maybe it's a place where they can connect with others who are committed to changing the world with love. Whatever their reasons, they are welcome in Unitarian Universalism.

Just as YOU are.

- If you are a divorced lesbian who would like your two trans-racially adopted children to receive LGBTQ-inclusive religious and sexuality education, you are welcome in Unitarian Universalism.
- If you are a transgender woman who is struggling with rejection from family and friends for who you are, you are welcome in Unitarian Universalism.
- If you are a pansexual nineteen-year-old who is looking for other queer young adults to connect with on a deeper level, you are welcome in Unitarian Universalism.
- If you are a sixty-year-old bisexual man who lost your partner to complications from HIV/AIDS, you are welcome in Unitarian Universalism.
- If you are a person worried about your same-sex partner who is trapped in an immigration battle to stay in the United States or Canada, you are welcome in Unitarian Universalism.

Unitarian Universalist congregations strive to be there for you and your family—however you define it—in the celebratory moments, such as weddings, births, and adoptions, and through the challenging times, when illness, break-ups, aging, and death touch your family's life. Each congregation is unique, yet all share a common vision of creating a circle of love and learning to surround people, strengthen families, and bring justice, equity, and compassion to the wider world.

Leading the Way

Unitarian Universalism has a proud history of supporting full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and their families. Most congregations have completed a Welcoming Congregation program to increase understanding and inclusiveness of LGBTQ people and have processes for supporting one another to correct mistakes if they should happen and make amends.

Unitarian Universalist congregations have ordained and called openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer ministers to their pulpits for many years. The first openly

gay minister began serving a congregation in 1979. Today, many congregations across the country have openly lesbian and gay ministers who are fully integrated and accepted into the life of the diverse congregations they serve. You will also find openly transgender and bisexual ministers and religious professionals, such as educators, musicians, and administrators serving UU congregations.

Unitarian Universalists have been at the forefront of the marriage equality movement, not only in Massachusetts, but in every state across the country. In 2004, Rev. William G. Sinkford, then president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, officiated at a wedding at UUA headquarters in Boston. The two women who were married that day were the lead plaintiffs in the case that resulted in Massachusetts becoming the first state to legalize same-sex marriage.

Side with Love, a faith-based public advocacy campaign sponsored by the UUA, works to counter exclusion, oppression, and violence based on identity—including sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, race, and religion.

Many UU congregations celebrate and recognize important days in the LGBTQ calendar, planning services and joining community events in support of Pride, Transgender Day of Remembrance, National Coming Out Day, and World AIDS Day, among other LGBTQ-related days of significance. If marching in the Pride parade with your spiritual community matters to you, it is possible!

Changing Laws and Attitudes

The infinite variation of gender identities and sexual orientations reminds us that learning how to be truly welcoming to each and every person is a continual process of education and discovery.

We affirm, for example, the choice that many people make to claim the word *queer* as a unique identity, and we are mindful of the fact that some people have painful associations with that same word. Even the acronym LGBTQ can be both over-inclusive and not nearly inclusive enough. It's only through listening to each other and getting to know people as individuals that we can embrace each person for who they are.

Although significant legislative and social gains have been made, discrimination in the United States and around the world continues to be widespread. Unitarian Universalists are committed to continuing their work until the inherent worth and dignity of every person are respected.

Resources

Susan A. Gore and Keith Kron, eds. *Coming Out in Faith: Voices of LGBTQ Unitarian Universalists*. Skinner House Books, 2011. Available at uua.org/bookstore.

If you would like information about Unitarian Universalism and its commitment to full inclusion of LGBTQ people, visit uua.org and uua.org/lgbtq. We also invite your questions. Contact us at lgbtq@uua.org.

Packs of this pamphlet (25 copies) are available at the inSpirit UU Book and Gift Shop at uua.org/bookstore.

Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto (formerly Theresa) is a Unitarian Universalist minister and activist. They have worked in parish ministry, interim ministry, and hospital chaplaincy with veterans.

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