

A Spiritual Home for LGBTQ People

Unitarian Universalism welcomes you.

*Whatever your gender identity, gender expression,
sex, affectional or sexual orientation, family or relationship structure,
you can be at home here.*

Are you seeking a faith community that affirms each person as an individual?

Do you long for a spiritual home that invites your full participation, one that honors your affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex, and family or relationship structure, as well as your racial/cultural identity or background, mental/physical health and ability, age, language, citizenship status, religious background, economic status, and national origin?

Are you looking for a community of seekers that doesn't require adherence to any one religious belief or creed, a community that agrees that we need not think alike to love alike?

If so, you have found it in Unitarian Universalism.

In fact, Unitarian Universalist congregations are so serious about including you, it is now 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 and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

As this statement indicates, inclusion is not just a business practice, it's a spiritual practice. By replacing barriers to inclusion with circles of solidarity and respect, Unitarian Universalists invite you to share in the leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of congregational life.

Creating a Spiritual Home for You and Your Family

Many people who visit Unitarian Universalist congregations are seekers. Maybe they're seeking a community where they can explore the 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 for coming, 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 of color who is struggling with rejection by family and friends for who you

are, you are welcome in Unitarian Universalism.

- If you are a 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 fifty-year-old bisexual man who recently 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 this country, 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, and yet all share a common vision of creating a circle of love and learning to surround individuals, 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 extend this work beyond the congregational walls.

Unitarian Universalist congregations have called and ordained 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 serving UU congregations. While these settlements still have room to grow, Unitarian Universalists are committed to removing any remaining barriers to full acceptance.

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.

Standing on the Side of 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.

Changing Laws and Attitudes

The spectrum 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 truly embrace each person for who they are.

And although significant legislative and attitudinal gains have been made, discrimination in the United States

and around the world continues to be widespread. Unitarian Universalists are faithfully committed to continuing their work until the inherent worth and dignity of every person is recognized and respected.

ANNETTE MARQUIS serves as LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs Director for the Unitarian Universalist Association. She currently lives in Richmond, Virginia, with her (legally wed) wife, Wendy.

For Further Reading

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

Interweave Continental: Unitarian Universalists for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns, interweavecontinental.ning.com

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