

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry Of New Jersey

18 Nov, 2006

New Jersey IS Our Backyard!

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry – New Jersey (UULM-NJ) is an initiative by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton to create a statewide justice ministry that gives voice to UU Principles and values in the public arena.

The Legislative Ministry in New Jersey, is intended to be a collaborative undertaking that we expect will be supported by every UU congregation in New Jersey. When fully developed, there will be two statewide organizations: The UULM-NJ [501(c) 3] will offer members and the public opportunities for social justice training, education, and research about legislative issues and policy that are current or emerging as concerns to New Jersey citizens. The UULM-Action Network [501 (c) 4] will support the advocacy, representation and mobilization activities that are intended to advance our collective views. The work of these organizations will be guided by separate boards composed of members of UU congregations in New Jersey. In turn, the respective boards will direct the work of a director and staff, who will lead the implementation of the agendas set by the boards and the advice of individual and organizational supporters. Funding to support this work will be sought from congregations, individuals, and grants.

Possible Next Steps:

1. Reach out to UU congregations in New Jersey and interested individuals for their counsel, endorsement, and participation in shaping the Legislative Ministry initiative, once a general outline and strategy has been reasonably established.
2. Create a provisional organizational structure that encourages the participation of other congregations, facilitates communication through an electronic network, enables the development of Bylaws and Board formation, creates the legal establishment of the two organizational entities, provides a proper avenue for receiving financial support, and justifies the hiring of staff.
3. Undertake a process for reaching consensus about policy priorities among participating congregations that will shape the Legislative Ministry agenda. What is sought is an agenda that is composed of three categories: 1) Religious Leadership – An issue that might be considered distinctly Unitarian Universalist, such as marriage equality; 2) Statewide Partnership – An issue that can best engage other community and interfaith organizations, such as alleviating poverty, racism, and fair employment; and 3) Horizon Leadership – An issue that has yet to come to full public notice, such as Earth-warming in New Jersey, energy conservation, supporting alternative energy sources, or responsible water management.

Strategy and Schedule:

4. Our initial strategy is to implement the successful design created by the Legislative Ministry in California (See <http://www.uulmca.org/>) but with New Jersey characteristics. The statewide congregational effort in California is nothing short of comprehensive and inspirational.
5. Shaping the initiative and finding a consensual direction requires earnest and extended conversation within and among UU congregations in New Jersey. Financial support for the Ministry and organizing the participation of interested parties requires the investment of time. It is hoped that an office with a mission, an agenda of priorities, and financial support will be functioning in two to three years.

Questions: Contact Doug Rhodes. DougRhodes2@Comcast.net