

Spiritual Institute Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2010

NEXT MEETING: JUNE 1, 2010, UCC, 474 BROAD STREET, MERIDEN
(parking is behind the building on East Main Street)

1. The meeting began with introductions:
 - a. Present were: Sharon Cutts; Claudia Eflerdink (Shoreline Unitarian Universalist); John Istvan (DMHAS); Robin McHaelen (True Colors); Aaron Miller (MCC, New Haven); Alice O'Donovan (UCC, Danielson); Sue Pritchard (UCC, Coventry) Derrick (UU, Storrs)
 - b. Participants were asked to share One CORE VALUE that informs our work and lives. The answers included: Respect; Jesus wants ALL his children; belief in the inherent work and value of each human being; allowing spiritual seeking; the recognition that we are ALL children of God; transparency, flexibility and authenticity; compassion and empathy for those with whom we agree – and especially with those with whom we do not agree.
2. WHO IS MISSING FROM TODAY'S TABLE? We began this discussion and discovered that we were not ready to identify who was missing until we knew exactly what it was that we were trying to accomplish and what our overall mission was as a group.
3. Spiritual Institute Objectives: the Group reviewed the objectives below (a) and began to brainstorm some of what we might be or do (b). Ultimately, we decided that we have one primary mission (c) with two objectives.
 - a. The original set of objectives as we came into the meeting: Grow the number of explicitly inclusive spiritual spaces for LGBT youth and families; Create opportunities for spiritually wounded LGBT youth to heal, learn and grow; Create opportunities for LGBT adults to spiritually nurture LGBT youth and Education of various spiritual communities on LGBT issues and concerns.
 - b. Brainstormed ideas included: Be a resource to various communities seeking to become open and affirming/welcoming or to provide activities; develop a 'road show' that we could take around to various communities; integrate Spirituality as a component of other forms of diversity (race, ethnicity); produce a second 'revival' like the one at the Church on the Green last October; incorporate a secular version of "Our Whole Lives" into workshops or the conference; act as advocates for youth; develop interfaith GSAs made up of the youth groups from

various traditions; use social media as an outreach tool; call and meet with welcoming community leaders around the state

- c. After discussion, the primary mission became to “create safe opportunities for LGBT youth to do their spiritual work”. The two primary objectives of this mission are to:
 - i. Create a set of workshops that can be incorporated in some way into the annual true colors conference without violating the church/state separation
 - ii. Identify, prioritize and produce some number of activities during the year in support of the mission. What those activities should/could look like will be the focus of the next meeting
4. Next Steps: Turning Objectives into action: This is the primary focus of the next meeting, which will be on June 1, 2010 at 5:30 at the Church of Christ, Congregational, 474 Broad Street, Meriden. Participants agreed to forward the minutes to and invite other interested participants to that meeting.
5. Meeting Evaluation: What worked, what didn't, what's next? New folks noted that it would be helpful to have a history or something that brings new people “up to speed” on the conversation to date. A draft of that ‘history’ is attached for your review.
6. Close

Current members of the coalition:

- Reverend Josh Pawelek (Unitarian Universalist Society, East, Manchester);
- Reverend Derrick Jackson (Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Storrs)
- Reverend James Olsen (UCC, Meriden);
- Reverends George Chien and Julio Flores, (Metropolitan Community Church, Hartford);
- Reverend Barbara Jamestone (Unitarian Society of Hartford);
- Pastor Shirley Gadson (Open Door Ministries, Bridgeport);
- Reverend Alice O'Donovan (Westfield Congregational Church);
- Reverends Marilyn Bowens and Aaron Miller (Metropolitan Community Church New Haven);
- Bishop John Selders (Amistad United Church of Christ, Hartford);
- Reverend Charla Kouadio, Recovering Promise Ministry, Springfield, MA;
- John Hinkston (Integrity, Trinity Church, Hartford);
- Reverend Laura Westby (First Church of Christ, Danbury)