

# Alexandria Congregation Recognized for Environmental Programs

June 23, 2008

On Thursday, June 26, 2008, the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church (MVUC) of Alexandria, Virginia, will receive the 2008 Bennett Award for Congregational Action on Human Justice and Social Action, from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

The Bennett Award, instituted in 1999 by James Bennett to honor the congregation that has done exemplary work in social justice, is accompanied by a \$500 cash award. Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson, a member of the MVUC board of trustees, will accept the Bennett Award on behalf of the congregation at the Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

On Saturday, June 28, 2008, the congregation will also receive a certificate acknowledging their successful participation in the Green Sanctuary Program. An initiative of the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for the Earth, the Green Sanctuary Program recognizes those congregations that make a commitment to sustainable living.

The Mount Vernon Unitarian Church's social justice programming promotes not only environmental preservation, but also affordable housing, civil liberties, and women's reproductive rights. Approximately half of the congregation, including children and youth, participates in social action initiatives.

"In the day to day activities of a community like ours, it is easy to lose perspective and focus more on what does not work and try to fix it, than on what works and celebrate it. [The Bennett Award] gave us a chance to rejoice together and feel good about our work," said Georgeta Pourchot, social justice coordinator at the Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church. "It also gave us new impetus to continue and expand our activities. New volunteers are stepping forward, the larger community of churches smiles at our achievement, and increasing visitors come through our doors."

MVUC's thriving program carries on a proud tradition of social justice at the congregation, dating back to its participation in the civil rights movement and the movement against the Vietnam War. In 1962, MVUC and its then minister, Rev. Ernest Sommerfield, won the Unitarian Universalist Association's Holmes Weatherly Award, which recognizes a life-long commitment to faith-based social justice that is reflected in societal transformation.

In the upcoming church year, the MVUC plans to continue its programming on homelessness, affordable housing, and civil liberties. MVUC will also organize a Living Green month, to help members implement green measures in their homes, as well as at church.

Please visit the Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church's website for more information about their [social justice programming](#) and their [participation in the Green Sanctuary program](#).

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