

For Ministers, Religious Educators and Leaders



February, 2010 – A Valentine Action for Equal Marriage A Story for All Ages

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations work for equal marriage laws. This story from Faithful Journeys, a Tapestry of Faith program for grades 2/3, tells how UUs across California and the state's [Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry](#) sent a message for marriage equality to California's governor in 2005.

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Valentines for the Governor

By Joanna Solins.

Have you ever stopped to think about all the different people you love, and all the different people who love you? There are many kinds of love, and many ways to show you love someone.

Valentine's Day is a holiday that celebrates love. People often give each other cards on Valentine's Day to show they care. Receiving a valentine can make someone feel special and appreciated, especially when it's a homemade valentine. Think about the people you would give a valentine to. Would you make one for your parents or grandparents? What about your cousins, your friends, or your neighbors? What about ... your state governor?

On Valentine's Day in 2005, thousands of Unitarian Universalists in California sent valentines to their governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Do you think they sent him valentines because they loved him? No. They sent him valentines because they wanted to teach him something about love.

You see, California had a law about who was allowed to get married, and who was not. The law said if a man and a woman loved each other, they were allowed to show their love and become a family by getting married. But if two men loved each other, or two women loved each other, the law said they could not get married.

We are Unitarian Universalists. We value *all* love. When a law says some people's love is better, or more important, than other people's love, we believe that is hurtful and unfair. Telling two women, or two men, who love each other, they cannot get married also means the laws won't protect them as a

family. The law says their community does not have to help them share their life plans, their money, or even their children the same way other couples can.

That's why UU congregations in California decided to get involved and speak out about the law. They wanted to tell the governor how important marriage equality was to them. If he understood that, they thought he would support marriage equality, too.

The California congregations could have made lots of phone calls to the governor's office or written emails to the governor. But that was not enough. They wanted to do something big, something colorful — something that would grab the governor's attention.

In the days leading up to Valentine's Day, people in almost every UU congregation in California made valentines for Governor Schwarzenegger. Children and adults alike cut out paper hearts in red, pink, and all colors of the rainbow. They glued on ribbons and lace, sequins and feathers. They wrote messages of love, acceptance, and justice, because that's what marriage equality is all about.

"Dear Governor," wrote one woman from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, "Roses are red, violets are blue; all people deserve the same rights as you!"

Reverend Nada Velimirovic, from Oakland, California, made a giant valentine the governor could not miss — it was almost as tall as a second grader! "Please stand on the side of love!" it said, in capital letters inside a huge pink heart.

At the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara, people set up tables to make valentines during coffee hour. Members of all ages showed each other how to cut hearts out of folded paper. They made each other's cards fancy with curly ribbons and other decorations. The young people and older people working together felt joyful and hopeful as they decorated their valentines. They talked about different kinds of love and how important it is for communities to support all kinds of families, to help love hold them together. They hoped their valentine message would convince the governor.

The Santa Barbara congregation mailed their valentines to the UU Legislative Ministry in Sacramento, the capital of California. So did dozens of other congregations — 3,800 valentines in all! The valentines were collected in huge, bags made of see-through gauze — the same material that is used to make a bride's wedding veil. Everyone could see all the special cards Governor Schwarzenegger was getting. The bags stuffed with valentines were brought directly to the governor's office. Imagine thousands of valentines, all going through the metal detector at the State Capitol Building! It was a bold, beautiful statement for love.

Later that year, when Governor Schwarzenegger had the chance to support marriage equality, he did not. But don't let that make you think the valentines weren't important. Sometimes it takes a while to change someone's mind. The governor did not forget the valentines. A couple of years later, he decided he agreed with many Californians that the marriage laws were not fair. Maybe next time, he will be ready stand on the side of love.

The Valentine's Day action also helped Unitarian Universalists become leaders in the campaign for marriage equality in California. The children and adults who made valentines for the governor showed everyone how our congregations work together for justice. Even though UUs' numbers are small in

California, compared to other religions, some of us were invited to a meeting where the governor explained his point of view about equal marriage. Then, we led a group of people from different religions to take the marriage equality campaign into California's courts.

It was all because of our valentines. After that, Governor Schwarzenegger, his advisors and everyone working for marriage equality in California knew how Unitarian Universalists can unite in faithful action and use the democratic process to push for fairness.

Unitarian Universalists have not given up the fight for marriage equality. The journey may be long and difficult, but we must keep acting for love and justice. We hope we can persuade leaders like Governor Schwarzenegger to make our laws more fair. We know we have to keep trying.