



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Protecting Gender and Sexual Identities

By Ann Majure, Social Justice Team Leader

At the November 13 service, led by the Social Justice Team, the congregation formed small groups to discuss three current social justice issues: confronting climate change; protecting gender and sexual identities; and women's health, including reproductive health. The intent was to provide a safe forum to begin thinking about the issues, their impact on lives and specific action steps we can take individually and as a part of the congregation to address the issues. These issues are complex and multi-faceted. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and hopeless. Those of us on the Social Justice Team hoped that by beginning to look at the issues, we can focus on any ways, large or small, we can take action. The following are some of the responses from the team discussion on protecting gender and sexual identities.

A number of people expressed how their family members have been directly impacted by negative attitudes toward people in their families who identify as LGBTQ+. One mother reported that her transgender daughter is now home schooled because of the bullying she experienced in regular school. Another said that her 28-year-old transgender son was considering moving to Canada because he does not feel safe in this country. Several people noted threatening and bullying behavior from family members in addition to school and the larger society. One person shared that their cousin could/would not accept his gay son. On a slightly more positive note, some felt that younger people now are

more accepting of differences and expressed some hope for the future.

The discussion group made a number of recommendations. They suggested we reach out to the Shenandoah LGBTQ Center to explore ways we can support their efforts. We could consider offering to sponsor a support group at the Fellowship. We could learn about companies that are active supporters of LGBTQ+ rights and inform the Fellowship in the newsletter. We can act politically and actively promote and vote for candidates who support LGBTQ+ rights.

In December, the Fellowship took up a special collection for the [Shenandoah LGBTQ Center](#). Jennifer Jones, Assistant Director for Programs & Client Services, spoke to the congregation about all the programs this relatively new organization has been able to put in place. They have support groups for young people held at the center in Staunton. They also have a community health program to help LGBTQ+ people navigate the health care system, including referrals to LGBTQ+ affirming providers. They have opened a new center in Harrisonburg, [Friendly City Safe Space](#). For anyone who needs support or has family or friends who need help, please use the links to contact one of these centers.

Our UUFW Social Justice team will pursue our relationship with the Shenandoah LGBTQ Center to learn more about how we can support each other and LGBTQ+ people in our area.

At the Line

2023, so reads the sign
Where Old-Man-Last-Year hobbles to the line
And Baby-New-Year sets off with a flourish -
Another year to love and heal and nourish.

Joe Good