



STANDING ON THE SIDE OF

LOVE

Congregational Toolkit

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INTRODUCTION

Confronting Exclusion, Oppression, and Violence Based on Identity

Standing on the Side of Love is a public advocacy campaign, initiated by the Unitarian Universalist Association, that is harnessing love's power to stop oppression. We stand with all who believe that no person should be dehumanized through acts of exclusion, oppression, or violence.

Our religious imperative is to love above all else. We believe that brokenness can be overcome by the redeeming power of love. In order to heal the divisions that rend our communities, our diverse faith traditions guide us to stand together and act in love.

Standing on the Side of Love confronts exclusion, oppression, and violence based on identity head-on. Grounded in the belief that all people deserve love and respect, the campaign pursues social change through advocacy, public witness, and speaking out in solidarity with those whose lives are publicly demeaned.

Now is the Time and We are the Ones

At the beginning of the 21st century, people across the United States still face exclusion, oppression, and/or violence because of such identities as: immigrant status, sexual or gender orientation, religion, race, or political view.

Now is the time for people of faith to ground our action, our social justice work, our very lives, in a theological message of love for all people. In doing so, we stand together in the long tradition of prophetic people who have worked for justice in the name of faith.

Dehumanization can only be met with an outpouring of love. We believe in the power of love to heal divisions and build community. In this time of great hope and possibility, all those who are committed to the worth and dignity of all people are called to take a public stand on the side of love.

How To Use This Toolkit

The Standing on the Side of Love Congregational Toolkit gives lay and clergy leaders of all denominations the resources needed to bring Standing on the Side of Love to your congregation and community. We invite you to spread these resources widely—make copies and share with your interfaith and community partners.

Use the sections and suggestions that are most relevant to your circumstances and needs. Keep in mind the capacity and size of your congregation and think creatively!

Section One focuses on **Organizing Your Congregation**: motivating leaders and incorporating Standing on the Side of Love themes into congregational life.

Section Two helps your congregation stand on the side of love with your community by **Building Community Partnerships**.

Section Three outlines the components of **Taking a Public Stand** on the Side of Love. Effective public action and media outreach are the mainstays of building this movement.

*Find the online version of this toolkit, resources, organizing tools, and more at:
www.standingonthesideoflove.org.*

1. ORGANIZING YOUR CONGREGATION

Motivate Leaders to Stand on the Side of Love

- **Ordained Leaders:** Incorporate Standing on the Side of Love themes into worship and sermons. Discuss the campaign with your board president and key congregational leaders and ask for their support.
- **Religious Educators:** Ask children and youth what Standing on the Side of Love means to them. Share their creative reflections with the congregation.
- **Congregational Leaders:** Work with existing task forces, groups, and congregational staff to build enthusiasm.
- Familiarize yourselves with key messages (App. A)

Hold an Introductory Meeting

- Share key messages and information about the campaign and invite participants to share their experiences/reflections.
- Brainstorm how Standing on the Side of Love themes can be integrated into areas of congregational life.
- Collect names and contact information to follow up.

Bring Standing on the Side of Love to Your Congregation

- Order visibility materials: banner, t-shirts, pins, etc. at www.standingonthesideoflove.org. Hold a banner hanging and dedication in organizing and actions.
- Invite children and youth to participate.
- Set up a table or host discussion sessions for action and reflection. Reflect on your faith tradition's theological foundations for Standing on the Side of Love.
- Photograph or video members engaging in creative activities and post on photo sharing sites like Flickr and YouTube.
- Incorporate Standing on the Side of Love into worship. Find worship resources and examples on the Unitarian Universalist Association's "Worship Web" at www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/collections.

Stay Informed and Involved at www.standingonthesideoflove.org



2. BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Reach Out to Affected Communities

- Support communities by responding to expressed needs as you are able.
- Listen to, invite direction from, and remain accountable to those directly impacted. Remember that being a good ally often means stepping back.
- Take care to quickly address symptoms of trauma and provide resources.

Commit to a Community-Building Organizing Approach

- Be aware of your own “social location” regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, class, citizenship status, and other identities.
- Build multi-cultural coalitions by listening to and partnering with groups that had worked hard to guarantee and protect their rights.
- Share leadership. Honor religious and cultural differences and practice interfaith etiquette by “taking turns” to provide worship elements during joint events.

Build Long-Lasting Partnerships

- Build on existing connections with members of your congregation and your community to identify allies.
- Be creative in planning a variety of types of actions including fun, family-friendly gatherings. Consider the comfort and safety of individuals and communities currently facing exclusion, oppression, and/or violence.
- Host conversations (“one-on-ones”) with community members and partners.

Reflect, Act, and Celebrate

- Reflect on the implications of potential campaigns in your community before acting, but resist being paralyzed by reflection.
- After action, assess lessons learned and relationships built.
- Celebrate achievements with worship services and public events.

Organize for the Long Haul

- Ground your efforts in solid spiritual practice and theological reflection.
- Remain accountable to and respectful of community partners and follow through on all promised actions.
- Prioritize leadership development by involving and supporting new leaders.



3. TAKING A PUBLIC STAND

Identify Your Congregation as Standing on the Side of Love

- Hang a banner on your house of worship or in your congregation's yard. Order t-shirts, buttons, and other visibility materials.
- Add links, electronic buttons, and banners to your website
- Notify the press about your commitment, banner hanging, and action plans.

Engage in Actions and Public Events

- When an incident demands a community response, reach out immediately to those most directly affected.
- Co-host a community forum, interfaith public witness event, press conference, or vigil in the immediate aftermath of an incident.
- Publicize your event and invite participants on the Calendar at www.standingonthesideoflove.org.

Publicize Efforts Through Local and “New” Media

- Be able to articulate Standing on the Side of Love key messages.
- Use the media resources in the Appendix section of this toolkit to hone your skills.
- Contact Campaign Manager Adam Gerhardstein (love@uaa.org) for information and assistance.

Model Standing on the Side of Love Community Interactions

- Invite participation in a healing and community-building manner that prioritizes love and support.
- Treat demonstrators respectfully and non-confrontationally.
- Seek positive interactions with police. Always thank those who provide security for your events. Invite police department representatives to community forums.

Advocate Effectively

- Look strategically for the place of greatest impact in your community.
- Engage the maximum number of allies in your efforts.
- Invite policy makers and key community leaders to your public events.

Share Your Story and Join the Network at www.standingonthesideoflove.org

- Share stories before, during, and after events.
- Stand on the Side of Love on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.
- Sign up for Standing on the Side of Love action alerts.

APPENDICES

- A. Talking Points
- B. Introduction to Media Resources
- C. Letter to the Editor Guidelines and Tips
- D. Sample Letter to the Editor
- E. Media Advisory Guidelines and Tips
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- H. Sample Press Release
- I. Contact Information

A. TALKING POINTS

- Every major religion has compassion and love at its center. Staying true to our religious values means standing on the side of love.
- Too much of our public discourse is driven not by love, but by fear, which often scapegoats particular people and deems them somehow less than human. This is a violation of all faiths which are centered in love.
- This campaign seeks to harness the power of love to stop oppression, exclusion, and violence. Sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association, it is an invitation to all people to stand on the side of love.

List talking points relevant to your community:

B. INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA RESOURCES

Use the Guidelines, Tips, and Samples below to bring Standing on the Side of Love to your community via local media.

Always articulate your message in no more than three concise talking points.

Contact Campaign Manager, Adam Gerhardstein, for suggestions and assistance with local media efforts. agerhardstein@uua.org or (202) 393-2255 x21

Connect

- Identify one or two spokespeople in your congregation or organization to speak with the media.
- Issue media advisories before major events and press releases after events and for ongoing efforts.
- Submit letters to the editor and op-eds in the immediate aftermath of a local incident of exclusion, oppression, or violence.

Foster Relationships with the Media

- Reach out to reporters you already know.
- Build a contact list of reporters and editors who cover religion and/or social justice efforts in your community.
- Follow up with reporters and inform them of future events.



C. LETTER-TO-THE-EDITOR GUIDELINES & TIPS

WHAT IS A LETTER-TO-THE-EDITOR?

A letter-to-the-editor (LtE) is typically a brief response to an article that has been recently published in a print periodical such as a daily or weekly newspaper. Although guidelines vary per outlet, LtEs are typically less than 150 words and usually must be received by the outlet within seven days of the publish date of the article that is being responded to in order to be considered.

GETTING STARTED

In order to write a LtE, you must first find an article to which you'd like to respond. We'd encourage you to monitor your local newspapers (including weeklies, community papers, and specialty interest publications) and find articles that address a topic of interest to you that is related to *Standing on the Side of Love*. Even when you know there is an issue that is being generally covered in the news media, you should still find a specific article that you can "piggyback" on to and offer a response. It is best to submit a LtE as soon as possible after an article is published.

CONFIRMING SPECIFICS

Before preparing a draft, go online and reference the outlet's LtE submission policy. This can often be found under the opinion tab or under "contact us." If you do not find the guidelines online, call the newspaper. There are three topics to which you should pay particularly close attention:

- Word count guidelines and/or limits
- Due date
- Submission address information

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

- Brief restatement of author's position
- Reference past article
- State your position
- Present evidence and facts
- Short restatement of argument and/or pithy comment

TIPS:

- Lead with your most important point.
- Stick to a single topic—only one issue per letter.
- Don't be condescending or combative—address the article writers and other actors fairly.
- Type and proofread your letter carefully.
- Include your name, address, day-time phone number and signature.
- Direct your letter to "To the Opinion Page Editor" or something similar.
- You are encouraged to submit your LtE to more than one outlet—but modify your language slightly and the article to which you're responding in order to keep each draft unique.

REMEMBER: Your letter doesn't need to be perfect, just as well-articulated as you can make it. And don't be discouraged if your letter doesn't get printed—the more LtEs you submit, the more likely you are to be published!

D. SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

More must be done to promote equality

<http://www.lohud.com/article/20090621/OPINION/906210315/1016/OPINION02>

June 21, 2009

By Michael Tino

As a local religious leader, I was glad to see the news that President Barack Obama plans to extend many benefits to same-sex partners of federal employees. It is a notable change in policy that represents one small step towards real equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. I call upon the president, the Congress and the leadership of New York state to do more.

Our federal government needs to act soon to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, repeal the Defense of Marriage Act, eliminate the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, and pass hate-crimes legislation that protects GLBT people from those who would incite violence against them. Our state government needs to enact marriage equality and pass the Gender Non-Discrimination Act in this legislative session - the people of New York have waited too long for these things.

My Unitarian Universalist faith teaches me that all people have inherent worth and dignity. I am called to stand up against exclusion and violence. I am called to stand on the side of love. I invite our elected leaders to join me.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Tino
Mount Kisco

The writer is minister at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester.

This letter is to be used as a sample only. Not to be distributed or reproduced.

E. MEDIA ADVISORY GUIDELINES & TIPS

WHAT IS A MEDIA ADVISORY?

A media advisory is a document, usually delivered via email, that is designed to notify media outlets of a specific event that will be taking place.

GETTING STARTED

Media advisories have the following basic elements:

1. A masthead for the sponsoring organizations (likely your organization and *Standing on the Side of Love*)
2. The phrase "For Planning Purposes Only"
3. A headline describing the event
4. A brief description of the event and its context
5. Event logistical information (this is usually done through a "who, what, when, where, why" box like the one below)
6. A boilerplate paragraph located at the end providing a description of the sponsoring organizations (in most cases this would be your organization and *Standing on the Side of Love*)
7. Relevant contact information for further questions

CONFIRMING SPECIFICS

Media advisories typically have the following "Ws" Box:

WHO:

WHAT:

WHERE:

WHEN:

CONTACT:

DISTRIBUTION

Once you have a media advisory draft, you'll need to craft a list of reporters, including their contact information, who you think might come to the event and to whom you'd like to send the advisory. You should include local print, television, and radio reporters, as well as bloggers and internet outlet reporters. Be sure to include the general news inbox email address for these outlets as well as specific reporters you think might be interested.

It is customary to distribute an advisory five business days before the event, two business days before the event, one business day before the event, and again on the day of the event.

Please see <http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/resources/media-101> for a sample advisory.

TIPS

- ➔ You should try to provide advisories to as many relevant media contacts as possible; however, an advisory should never be simply "blasted" to non-related outlets or contacts or sent too many times.
- ➔ Keep your advisory, short, pithy, concise, and a page or less.
- ➔ If you have friends who are reporters, call them! Ask them to refer someone from their outlet if they don't want to cover your event.
- ➔ For major events, call through large outlets the day before the event to confirm that they have the advisory and answer any questions that they may have.
- ➔ Monitor coverage the day of and up to about a week after your event to ensure accuracy.

F. SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

**MEDIA ADVISORY -
FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY**
October 8, 2009

CONTACT:
Michael Onyiego
202.879.5593 (office)
202.631.3299 (cell)
monyiego@deweysquare.com

****EVENT ADVISORY – THIS SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11TH, 12:00 – 4:00 PM****

CITIZENS HOLD EVENT TO COME OUT ON THE SIDE OF LOVE

**PEOPLE FROM ACROSS SMALLTOWN RALLYING TO SUPPORT FULL EQUALITY FOR GAY,
LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE**

SMALLTOWN, USA – On **Sunday, October 11th** people from all over Smalltown, USA will come together in support of equal treatment of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) people in conjunction with National Coming Out Day and Equality Across America’s National Equality March. The rally, which will take place at **12:00 pm in Smalltown Park**, has been organized by Smalltown United and ***Standing on the Side of Love***, a nationwide campaign which promotes equality for marginalized communities within the United States.

“We are holding this event because we want to harness the power of love to stop oppression,” said rally organizer John Doe.

The rally is being held, along with others across America, to support equality in all matters of law for GLBT individuals, including marriage equality, the adoption of children and military service.

WHO: Smalltown United & Standing on the Side of Love
WHAT: Rally to Support Equality for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered People
WHERE: Smalltown Park, Smalltown, USA
(Across Main Street from the Smalltown Mall)
WHEN: **Sunday, October 11th, 2009**
12:00 – 4:00 pm
CONTACT: **OPEN PRESS – RSVP to Michael Onyiego at 202.879.5593 or**
monyiego@deweysquare.com.

Standing on the Side of Love is a campaign sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association and promotes respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We believe that no person of any immigrant status, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation, ability level, or political view should be dehumanized through acts of exclusion, oppression, or violence.

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G. PRESS RELEASE GUIDELINES & TIPS

WHAT IS A PRESS RELEASE?

A press release is a document, usually delivered via email, which is designed to notify media outlets of a newsworthy event (this could be a rally, announcement, petition delivery, statement, or other instance of note) after that event has taken place. It is often preceded by a media advisory, especially when promoting events.

GETTING STARTED

Press releases have the following basic elements:

8. A masthead for the sponsoring organization(s) (likely your organization and *Standing on the Side of Love*)
9. The phrase “For Immediate Release” along with the date
10. A headline describing the event, announcement, development, proclamation, or other news
11. A byline with the location of the event or from where the announcement is emanating
12. A brief description of the event
13. Details which provide context and “color” (this will include quotes and facts where possible)
14. A quote or two from a leading figure(s) associated with the project that is succinct and “sound bite-like”
15. A boilerplate paragraph located at the end providing a description of the sponsoring organization(s) (in most cases this would be your organization and *Standing on the Side of Love*)
16. Relevant contact information (usually name, phone, and email) for further questions

SUBJECT

It is important to remember that a reporter’s first priority is engaging his or her audience. Any release must make a case for the subject’s topicality and importance. If it’s not newsworthy, don’t release it. See www.standingonthesideoflove.org/resources/media-101 for a sample press release.

DISTRIBUTION

Once you have a press release draft, you’ll need to craft a list of reporters, including their contact information, who you think might cover the story you are trying to promote. You should include traditional media such as local print, television, and radio reporters, as well as internet outlet reporters and bloggers. Be sure to include the general news inbox email address for traditional outlets as well as specific reporters you think might be interested. Send via email and BCC email addresses.

A release should be given to reporters when it is most newsworthy: if you are announcing an event, submit it as soon as possible after the completion of the event and without question on the day of the event.

TIPS

- ➔ You should try to provide releases to as many relevant media contacts as possible; however, a release should never be simply “blasted” to non-related outlets or contacts or sent too many times.
- ➔ Keep your release short, pithy, concise, and a page or less where at all possible.
- ➔ Be only slightly more opinionated in your press release than a reporter would be covering the story. Your release language should for the most part sound like a strongly-worded newspaper article.



H. SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 11, 2009

CONTACT:

Michael Onyiego
202.879.5593 (office)
202.631.3299 (cell)

monyiego@deweysquare.com

OVER 1,000 ATTEND RALLY TO COME OUT ON THE SIDE OF LOVE

PEOPLE FROM ACROSS SMALLTOWN SUPPORT FULL EQUALITY FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

SMALLTOWN, USA – Today, **Sunday, October 11th** people from all over Smalltown, USA rallied in support of equal treatment of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) people. Despite temperatures near freezing, over 1000 residents of Smalltown and surrounding communities attended the rally, which was held in conjunction with National Coming Out Day and Equality Across America's National Equality March. Speakers at the event included Smalltown mayor **Joe Quimby** and **Reverend Lovejoy** of the Smalltown Unitarian Universalist Church.

"We're here today to show love and support for our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender friends and family in Smalltown and across the US. No person should face discrimination or be denied equality because of their identity, so we've come to make our voices heard."

The rally, which took place this afternoon in **Smalltown Park**, has been organized by Smalltown United and ***Standing on the Side of Love***, a nationwide campaign which promotes equality for marginalized communities within the United States and "harnesses love's power to stop oppression." According to event organizer, **John Doe**, the rally was held to support equality in all matters of law for GLBT individuals, including marriage equality, the adoption of children and military service. It was one of over 50 which took place across the country today.

Standing on the Side of Love is a campaign sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association and promotes respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We believe that no person of any immigrant status, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation, ability level, or political view should be dehumanized through acts of exclusion, oppression, or violence.

###

I. CONTACT INFORMATION

Standing on the Side of Love

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Janine (Jay) Carmona

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NOTES