

Open Letter to Governor Ron DeSantis from Florida Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

May 1, 2023

Dear Governor DeSantis,

Our Unitarian Universalist faith has a long history of justice seeking in this country. Its influence can be found in our nation's founding documents, in President Lincoln's speeches, and in every civil rights movement in this nation. We as a people of faith are proud of this country's aspiration to be that beacon city on a hill. It is what makes this country different from many other countries where freedom to be who we are is criminalized. It is the diversity of its people that makes the potential of this nation great.

At the same time, our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to heed "Words and Deeds of prophetic people which challenges us to confront powers and structure of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love." Therefore, we teach our members the history of injustice within Western Civilization from the Doctrine of Discovery to the "school-to-prison pipeline". Our faith calls us to dismantle white supremacy culture in all its forms so we can do better in living this nation's aspiration of justice for all.

We teach our members that every person has inherent worth and dignity. Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, President of our Association recently said, "As Unitarian Universalists, we deeply believe that diversity of sexuality and gender is a gift. We unequivocally uplift and support all the trans and non-binary people in our lives, our congregations, and communities." This support includes providing the medical care that medical science has deemed necessary for our transgender and non-binary children.

Unitarian Universalism recognizes that every body is sacred, and we have all been endowed with the twin gifts of agency and conscience, which means each of us is blessed with the ability to know what is best for our own bodies. We see humanity in all its expressions and experiences as the divine speaking to us to respond with love, justice, and humility in our journeys.

It is deeply disturbing to us, based on our values, to be experiencing the directions the current laws are taking us. They infringe on the civil rights of LGBTQ+ folks as well as People of Color. The undersigned clergy see the current laws and mandates as a form of persecution of our trans and nonbinary beloveds and a direct infringement on our ability to practice our religion's core values and principles.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned UU Clergy:

Rev. Fred L Hammond; Manatee Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Rev. Tom Capo, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Miami

Rev. Margalie Belizaire, First Unitarian Church of Orlando

Rev. Ben Atherton-Zeman, Unitarian Universalist Church of St. Petersburg

Rev. Cynthia A. Snavely, Tri-County Unitarian Universalists and Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lake County

Rev. Ed Proulx, First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Palm Beaches

Rev. Dee Graham, Native Floridian & Affiliated Community Minister Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota

Rev. Dr. Marni Harmony, Minister Emerita, First Unitarian Church of Orlando

Rev. Kathy Schmitz, Retired Unitarian Universalist Minister, Orlando

Rev. Jay Wolin, Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota

Rev. Amy Kindred, Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater

Samara Powers, Seminarian and Candidate for UU Ministry

Mx. Jess Hunt, MLIS, DMin Candidate, Aspirant for UU Ministry, CLF Community Engagement Fellow, UUA Conflict Engagement Coach

Rev. Susan M. Smith, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Lauderdale

Rev. Kristina Spaude, Unitarian Universalist Church of Tarpon Springs

Rev. Kierstin Homblette Allen, Affiliated Community Minister, First Unitarian Church of Orlando

Rev. Amy Carol Webb, River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Davie, FL

Rev. Suzanne Fast, Affiliated Community Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greater Naples

Rev. Tracie Barrett, University Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Orlando