

December 18, 2013

Dear Pat (and Gail and Eunice) and the rest of the UUCO family,

Congratulations!

I couldn't be more delighted to inform you that the UU Congregation of Oxford's application to become recognized as a Welcoming Congregation has been approved! Sincere congratulations on taking this powerful step, doing collective work to educate yourselves on LGBTQ issues, and committing yourselves to vital ongoing ministry in this area.

It was such a pleasure to be able to read about what you have accomplished and the powerful steps you've taken. I have to admit that your application felt special to me beyond my personal love for all things Mississippi and UUCO—it is rare for congregational actions to dovetail with each other so completely: Pat, you did an admirable job in attempting to categorize the actions taken into education, congregational life, and community outreach, but so much of what UUCO did accomplished all three at once, which is fantastic!

UUCO has quite obviously been a profound, positive force for welcome and inclusion in your larger community and state, and the partnerships you've built and deepened are wonderful. I was also impressed with the variety of educational opportunities and methods you utilized—including a phenomenal lineup of guest speakers at worship services and events. And your plans for ongoing work sound absolutely perfect! It's quite clear that UUCO understands that becoming recognized as a Welcoming Congregation is a commitment to continuing the journey toward welcoming ALL. Keep up the wonderful work!

An idea for you: I love the Mississippi UU cluster's new website, and I'd like to suggest that you add a page that specifically talks about being/becoming Welcoming Congregations. Right now there's that great header with beautiful pictures and icons, but you don't actually discuss your collective commitment to welcoming people of all sexual orientations and gender identities anywhere in text. It would be a marvelous place to tell more of the story!

Congratulations again. I know I can count on you to keep in touch and keep the great stories coming, as well as seeing me and your other friends here in Multicultural Growth & Witnesses as your allies and partners in the work. You can expect to receive two Welcoming Congregation posters in the mail shortly, and UUCO will be recognized on the UUA's website within the next few days. Thanks again for your congregation's life-giving, essential work!

Much love,

Alex

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