

June 17, 2016

Dear Beloved 1U Community,

The shooting at Pulse has broken our hearts individually and collectively. I write at this time to update you on how our congregation has been responding and what we know about the future. At each turn our intentions have been to be grounded in love and openness and to ensure that we do our part so that what comes out of this tragedy is a world with more compassion and justice.

As we entered worship last Sunday, we were just learning the magnitude of what was unfolding. We made some quick adjustments to the service to acknowledge our pain even while we waited for more news.

Before worship was over, we were contacted by The GLBT Community Center of Central Florida about overflow space for grief counseling. Volunteers moved into action immediately after worship and by 1:00 pm the Assembly Room and six classrooms were ready to welcome the community. The Center has continued to coordinate this effort all week. Members of the congregation with counseling backgrounds have been among those offering support.

On Sunday evening, members organized a small but meaningful vigil in the courtyard,

We were then contacted by several groups including the Brady Campaign and Equality Florida and made the library and Gore Hall available for community organizing. For several days we were abuzz with activity. Much of the planning for the Monday evening vigil at the Doctor Phillips Center happened in this space.

About 20 volunteers from the congregation, many in yellow "Standing on the Side of Love" shirts helped to set up for the vigil at Dr. Phillips on Sunday. Organizers very much appreciated their hard work, especially in the heat .

Because we were broadly listed as a counseling site, many media outlets quickly found us. Many people stopped by or called to offer help and drop off donations. We are overflowing with food and water. That which we haven't been able to use, we've donated to The Coalition for the Homeless. We have all been well fed by generous local restaurants.

As a result of all of the above, your staff has had a very busy week. Amy and Gaby answered the phones, managed media, sorted out space use, and dealt with every odd request. They put in extra hours to do so. Regina helped with communications. Rev. Marni was on hand to help as was Rachel Christensen. I have asked Rachel to stay on with us for a bit to help out as needed and she has agreed to do so.

Meanwhile, I have had the honor of representing our liberal voice in the community in many different ways. I led the candle lighting and tolling of the bells at the vigil Monday night. I have been on a live edition of the Friends Talking Faith (link will be available soon) and taped another. I was on an edition of Intersection (also on our local NPR station, 90.7 WMFE. I have done some phone interviews (including NPR, BBC, and a station in Australia) and some on-camera interviews. I will be speaking at several vigils in the days ahead .

I have been regularly in touch with the larger Unitarian Universalist community. We have had much outreach to us and much support (UU Trauma Ministry, regional staff, UUA Communication Department, emails from around country and world.) An article appeared in the [UU World magazine](#) about our response.

We have had many inquiries about monetary donations. Here is what we are sharing:

Sometimes, when we are concerned that marginalized communities will get ignored in a crisis, we UUs do our own fund raising and organizing, In this case, I believe attention is where it needs to be and there is no need to duplicate efforts at this time.

I think the best thing to do is send people to the two Go Fund Me sites being overseen [The Center](#) and by [Equality Florida](#). Both of these are quality organizations doing incredible work to support the community at this time.

#### The Center's Mission & Values

- *To promote and empower the GLBT Community and its allies through information, education, advocacy and support.*
- *We look to transform our community by inspiring and connecting people and organizations, promoting acceptance and inclusion, empowering them to achieve their potential*

#### Equality Florida is

*the largest civil rights organization dedicated to securing full equality for Florida's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Through education, grassroots organizing, coalition building, and lobbying, we are changing Florida so that no one suffers harassment or discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.*

Alternatively, people could be encouraged to reach out to and support their local LGBT resources, which are undoubtedly under pressure at this time. They could say they are doing in honor of Orlando.

Six paragraphs have been deleted as they are about the upcoming Sunday service. Letter sent by Rev. Kathy Schmitz of the First Unitarian Church of Orlando to congregational members.