

January 3, 2010

Dear Members and Friends of Eden United Church of Christ,

I hope that you have had a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Athena Guy Malloy, the current moderator for Eden United Church of Christ. You may be aware that our dynamic Pastor Arlene has been invited to take part in Castro Valley High School's (CVHS) Days of Diversity program in March for the fourth year in a row. Unlike her previous presentations, the one she gave in 2009 became controversial due to misinformation on the part of some in the community. Hoping to avoid a similar situation in 2010, Eden UCC has opted to hold a press event in early March prior to Arlene's talk at CVHS that will allow the mainstream media to preview her presentation and recognize the importance of anti-bullying/safe schools/diversity education programs. Following this letter is a document summarizing the plan in more detail.

What is your role? We hope to provide a backdrop of black and white photo collages which showcase the diverse families of Eden UCC members and friends. If you are interested in participating and providing a photo of your family (perhaps the picture that you just sent out with your annual holiday letter!), please forward me a jpg file labeled with your last name.

If you haven't already signed a publicity release form allowing the church to use your photo, I have also included it in the document. You may drop off a signed copy of the form addressed to me at the church office, or if you have scanning capability, scan the signed copy and attach it as a jpg or pdf file to me on an email.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions. Thanks for your consideration, and hope you have a wonderful year!

Athena Guy Malloy
Moderator, Eden UCC

**Eden United Church of Christ's Proactive Communications Plan
Re CV's 2010 Days of Diversity Program and the
Importance of anti-bullying, safe schools, & diversity education in our public schools**

Background

Our pastor, the Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring, has been invited to participate in the Castro Valley High School (CVHS) Days of Diversity (DOD) program for the past three years. On November 16, 2009, she was invited to return to the program and speak on March 11 and 12, 2010. She has accepted the invitation with the full support of the Eden Church Cabinet.

Each year, Arlene has spoken on the topic, "Out for Good," in which she has provided a brief synopsis of her personal journey as an out lesbian pastor, some recent events related to LGBT culture, and a glossary of social science terms related to her presentation. She also included time to respond to students' direct and anonymous questions about the presentation, and she has asked the youth to confidentially rank their sense of LGBT's acceptance on the CVHS campus.

Last year, the media demonstrated tremendous interest in Arlene's presentation at the high school following the distribution of an anonymous hate email to hundreds of CV residents, and after a small but vocal group of CV residents challenged the school—and ultimately Eden Church—about the program and Arlene's participation in it.

The law suit and the false and negative messages in the press and court systems launched by persons opposing the inclusion of LGBT participation in CVHS' Days of Diversity program and elsewhere necessitated that Eden Church leaders mount a formidable response to help correct misunderstandings and articulate positive messages in our communities about the inclusion of LGBT persons and families' experience in diversity education programs, and about the value of cultural diversity in our communities.

In the past year we have clarified and documented our church and denomination's support for anti-bullying, safe schools, and diversity education in our public schools, which includes the leadership and experience of LGBT persons. And we have reaffirmed that our faith-based support for these programs is in keeping with California Educational Code.

Going forward, we hope to minimize the amount of false and negative messages that may be unfurled in our community by making proactive, positive statements about diversity education in our public schools, about Arlene's inclusion in the CVHS program, and about the value of cultural diversity in our communities.

Cabinet believes that media interest in Eden Church and our pastor's involvement in DOD 2010 program is likely to resurface this spring. In an effort to enter the conversation earlier in 2010

with positive messages about the value of diversity education that includes LGBT leadership and experience and to minimize the negative public discourse that we experienced this past year we propose to offer a preview of Arlene's presentation to an invited group of mainstream press before March 11, 2010. By so doing, the press will be aware of Arlene's presentation and its content from the start. What follows is Cabinet's plan for achieving these goals.

Event Plan

Eden Church will invite preselected members of the mainstream press to Oliver Hall for a preview of "Out for Good 2010," on Friday, March 5, 2010 with Eden leaders. This press conference will double as the opening for a public photo exhibit sponsored by Eden Church, which is modeled after traveling exhibits sponsored by the Family Diversity Project. The public will be invited.

- For more info about The Family Diversity Project see: <http://www.familydiv.org/>)

Members of the congregation are invited to add their photos to the show. Members of the wider community will be invited to add their photos to the show through a direct mail campaign to an *ad hoc* group that may include other participants in Days of Diversity, and a cross section of faith groups and racial ethnic groups in the Eden area. The public will also be invited to participate through the press conference. (To minimize logistical challenges, all photos must be either emailed to the church, or delivered to and picked up at the church after the show closes or be considered "donated property" to the church if not recovered by the contributor.)

A summary of research conducted by GLESEN which documents the importance of anti-bullying, safe schools, and diversity education programs that include LGBT leaders and experience will be provided to the press.

- See: <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2340.html?state=research&type=research>)

The congregation will be briefed on the event in advance through written notices and Sunday announcements, and invited to be present and photographed with Arlene & Stephanie in an "All the People"-type pose at the press conference.

- See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXn1HnqpxpE>)

If you would like to discuss this project and/or be part of hanging or hosting the exhibit, please contact Eden's Moderator, Athena Guy Malloy: athena.malloy@yahoo.com, Vice Moderator, Herb Graw: herbgraw@yahoo.com, or our pastor, The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring: arlene@edenucc.com.

Publicity Release Form*

On occasion Eden Church takes photographs or makes audio or videotape recording of children and/or adults involved in church activities. Such photographs, audio, or video records may be used by staff and participants to remember the activities and the participants. In addition, such photographs and audio/visual recordings may be used in Eden's newsletter, *Chimes*, external publications or advertising materials to let others know about our ministry.

_____ I consent

_____ I do not consent

to the use of any such audio or visual record of the child name below, to be used, distributed, or displayed as agents of the church see fit. This consent includes but is not limited to: photographs, videotape, and audio recordings.

Publicity Authorization will be in effect (date) _____, **to (date)** _____

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____ Zip Code _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Name Printed _____ Date _____

*Disclaimer: News organizations may hear of our activities or events, and our church may invite or allow them to photograph or record our events for news reporting on special interest features. Eden church is not responsible for the content of these publications.