UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP OF MARION COUNTY SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR A SERVICE-LEARNING TRIP TO HAITI

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Marion County (UUFMC) President, Margaret Wineman, has announced that UUFMC is opening its November 1-8 Haitian service-learning trip to other Unitarian Universalists in the Southern Region. Interested persons should contact Margaret by email at nmwineman50@gmail.com. Participants will work with members of the Papaye Peasant Movement (MPP) on such projects as building new homes, constructing food gardens using recycled tires, and contributing to other sustainability initiatives.

The trip is being organized by UUFMC in collaboration with the Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice (UUCSJ). The UUCSJ is a joint initiative between national Unitarian Universalist Association headquartered in Boston and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). The MPP is a UUSC partner.

UUFMC’s Minister, Rev. Janet Onnie, said, “This mission trip speaks directly to so many of our social justice issues. In Haiti we will be able to engage in studying the complexity of the systemic poverty, historical injustice and power dynamics issues, and get to know Haitian people first-hand in their own environment. This deeper understanding will inspire us to compassionate service AND reduce our fear of the Other. As we become less fearful of those unlike ourselves, we become more open to seeing our common humanity.”

Here’s what Leonard and Nancy Nowak, a UU couple who traveled to Haiti two years after the devastating earthquake, had to say about the experience:

*We lacked basic knowledge about Haiti—history, economy, all. Friends said, ”Haiti is Hopeless. Why go there?” So we went to learn, to work with the people on their priorities, and to search for Hope. With expert staff supporting us, we worked for a week with Haitians on the first of six villages being built with UU and Presbyterian funds, each with 10 homes and a community center.  UUSC always works with a local Partner (eye-to-eye): MPP is a large, long-standing, sustainable agricultural education and development organization located in the central plateau hills, three hours east of Port-au-Prince, near the new villages. People who escaped the earthquake and fled to the plateau are now settling in these villages.*

*In time a school and clinic will be built to serve these six neighboring villages. The Haitian people personified Hope!  Most had lost everyone they loved, everything they owned, their livelihoods. Yet with resilience, determination and spirit—and a dash of Hope everyday—they experience new joy, song, marriages, children, learning about farming (tire gardens!) and hard work to create, once again, fulfillment in their lives. Our connection with the Haitian people enriched our lives; they gave us Hope…and more.*

The UUCSJ requires a minimum of 10 participants for this journey, although up to 15-16 persons can be accommodated.  It costs $1,500 per person *plus* air travel.  The tuition covers food, lodging, interpreters, and all in-Haiti transportation. UUFMC’s goal is to have all participants identified by the end of July.  UUCSJ will make the final decisions about when the group full and who is accepted.