***Organization of Unitarian Universalist People of Color in the Joseph Priestley District.***

 The initial drafting of by-laws for the Organization of Unitarian Universalist People of Color in the current Joseph Priestley District was held on July 29th 2014. The meeting took place at the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church in Bethesda, Maryland. Start-up steering committee members in attendance were Paula Cole Jones, Archene Turner, Carol Carter Walker and Donald Davis Jr. Committee members Cynthia Bradley and Albert Reed were unable to attend. Members were invited at an August 2013 meeting held in Washington D.C. and volunteered to be on the steering committee. Tele-conferences were used before this first of many planned face to face meetings.

We look forward to having people of color join us as announcements of the formation of UUPOC are planned for this month’s JPD Jubilee event on August 22nd - 24th at the UU Cedar Lane Church, September 26th and 27th at the People of Color Gathering and the White Allies working for Racial Justice conference at the UU Church of the Restoration in Philadelphia, and at the 10th Anniversary gathering for the JPD Racial Justice Conference November 7th – 9th at the church of the UU Congregation of Sterling in Virginia. Announcements are planned at other UU events throughout the year.

***Our Mission statement:***

As People of Color\* mobilized in an anti-racist collective, we unite to:

Work for self-determination, justice and equal opportunity,
Empower our various ministries,
Celebrate our diverse heritages,
Overcome racism through resistance,
Transform and enrich Unitarian Universalism through our multicultural experiences.

\* The United States is a race based society made up of a dominant White group and several other racially defined groups which have been and continue to be oppressed in specific ways. While race is a social construct created by the dominant White group to oppress and exclude the other groups from the power and resources of the society, race has also been used by oppressed peoples to build group solidarity and a culture of survival and resistance. Racism has also created barriers which separate oppressed groups from one another. While each oppressed group is affected by racism differently and each group maintains its own unique identity and culture, there is also the recognition that racism has the potential to unite oppressed people in a collective of resistance. For this reason, many individuals who identify as members of racially oppressed groups, also claim the political identity of being People of Color. This in no way diminishes their specific cultural or racial identity, rather it is an affirmation of the multiple layers of identity of every individual.

The purpose of this organization is to:

* Provide a welcoming and supportive venue for UU POC in the JPD
* Advocate at the local, district, regional and national levels for programs and initiatives to advance the interests and wellbeing of POC in our movement.
* Provide information about Unitarian Universalism to other POC who may be attracted to our denomination.
* Develop and encourage leaders for positions within congregations and at the local, district and national levels of our denomination.

The committee plans to have a final draft of by-laws ready before our first annual business meeting. This meeting is planned to be held during the JPD Annual Assembly April 10th – 11th, 2015. If you are a person of color who worships at a UU congregation in the present Joseph Priestley District, please consider joining today. Members who join will have the opportunity to ratify the by-laws at that time. Copies of the by-laws will be made available to members well before voting is held.