

History of the Welcoming Congregation at First Parish Duxbury

First Parish Church Unitarian Universalist in Duxbury, Massachusetts became a Welcoming Congregation in 1998 following a lengthy period of education and discussion. The decision to become a Welcoming Congregation came at an annual meeting and required a congregational vote. The person whose name comes up when members talk about this topic is Margaret Saunders. Many attribute our status as a Welcoming Congregation to Margaret's vision and drive.

Here's a timeline of some Welcoming Congregation and related activities at First Parish:

- Sometime in the 1970s - The standard AYS (About Your Sexuality) curriculum taught at First Parish includes a discussion of same-sex relationships along with heterosexual relationships (Note: AYS has been replaced by OWL - Our Whole Lives.)
- Around 1986 - This is the first time that First Parish members recall gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues being brought up at a worship service.
- 1989 - The Unitarian Universalist Association initiates the Welcoming Congregation program at General Assembly.
- December 1996 - The original committee to work on becoming a Welcoming Congregation was created as a subcommittee of the Social Responsibility Committee in December of 1996.
- January 1998 - First Parish votes to become a Welcoming Congregation. The vote took place at the Parish Annual Meeting on January 30, 1998. It was a secret ballot, and the vote was 52 to 4 to approve.
- May 1998 - The first same-sex ceremony of union is performed at First Parish
- Late 1990s - Showed the film "It's Elementary" at First Parish
- Fall of 2000 - First Parish helps sponsor the "Love Makes a Family" photography exhibit at the Duxbury library.
- 2005 - Sponsored a Voices Rising concert at First Parish
- November 2006 - Showed support for same-sex civil marriage at a demonstration at the State House in Boston
- 2007 - A formal Welcoming Congregation committee is created as part of the church's new bylaws.
- January 2008 - At the invitation of First Parish Cohasset we participated in a Welcoming Congregation worship service as they begin the process of becoming a Welcoming Congregation

- Between 1998 and January 2008, a total of four ceremonies of union/commitment or same-sex marriages have been performed by ministers of First Parish. (There were about 90 marriages performed during that time period.) First Parish Church is the only religious institution in Duxbury willing to perform same-gender marriages.

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