

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF WOODSTOCK
(Formerly the Congregational Unitarian Church)

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WOODSTOCK CONGREGATION CHANGES ITS NAME

WOODSTOCK, IL—On July 12 the Congregational Unitarian Church officially became the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Woodstock. The congregation voted for the change at its May meeting to become effective when all of the legal documents and details were amended.

According to the Rev. Dan Larsen, minister of the church since 1990, “The new name reflects who we are now while reclaiming a lost part of our identity and honoring our roots.”

It is the fourth name for the church since being founded by returning Civil War veterans in 1866 as the First Congregational Church of Woodstock. After seeking dual affiliation with the Universalist Church in America in 1937, it became the Congregational Universalist Church.

In 1984 members of the congregation, following the consolidation Universalists with the American Unitarian Association in 1961 creating the Unitarian Universalist Association, voted to change the name of the church to the Congregational Unitarian Church. At the time members felt that the public better recognized and understood the name Unitarian than Universalist.

Since the congregation ended its official affiliation with the United Church of Christ (the Congregationalists) in 2000 and became an exclusively Unitarian Universalist congregation, there has been talk of changing the name to reflect the new reality.

“We really are happy to reclaim our lost Universalist identity,” Rev. Larsen said. “We say that ‘love is the doctrine of this church’ and Universalism calls us to put love into action.” By changing from Church to Congregation, “the new name also reflects that we are a religious community, and not just a brick and mortar building while honoring our roots as Congregationalists.”

“As the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Woodstock, we will continue our tradition of service to the community, which includes hosting PADS homeless shelter and the Woodstock Community Ministry’s Direct Assistance Program, outreach to the Latino community, and the advocacy for peace, justice, and a sustainable world which has been our hallmark,” Rev. Larsen said. “And we hope to grow spiritually as a religious community living out the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism.”

