

**NORTHWEST
LABOR
PRESS**

(International Standard Serial Number 0894-444X)

Established in 1900 in Portland, Oregon as a voice of the labor movement. Published on a semi-monthly basis on the first and third Fridays of each month by the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. Inc., a non-profit mutual benefit corporation owned by 20 unions and councils including the Oregon AFL-CIO. Serving more than 120 union organizations in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Office location:
4275 NE Halsey St., Portland, Oregon

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213
Phone: (503) 288-3311

Web address:
<http://nwlaborpress.org>

Editor: Michael Gutwig
Associate editor: Don McIntosh
Office manager: Cheri Rice

Printed on recycled paper, using soy-based inks, by members of Teamsters Local 747-M.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Individual subscriptions are \$13.75 per year for union members, \$20 a year for all others. Send a check for that amount, indicating mailing address and union affiliation, to P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213. **For 25 or more subscriptions, group rates of \$9.60 a year per person are available to trade union organizations.** Call 503-288-3311 for details.

CORRECTIONS: See an error? Please let us know at editor@nwlaborpress.org or by phone at 503-288-3311.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID
AT PORTLAND, OREGON.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS NOTICE: Three weeks are required for a change of address. When ordering a change, please give your old and new addresses and the name and number of your local union.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS
P.O. BOX 13150
PORTLAND, OR 97213-0150



... Unitarian Union

From Page 1

the Catholic Archdiocese of Portland and at Oregon Catholic Press have been unionized for decades.

And Hight says even the federal rules may be changing. A December court decision more tightly defined the religious exemption: Purely religious workers like ministers wouldn't have the right to unionize, but other workers, like groundskeepers or clerical staff, might.

At First Unitarian Church of Portland, 17 of 19 employees were in favor of the union: five administrative staff and 12 sextons (church workers who clean and maintain building and grounds and operate audiovisual systems). Despite the initial rejection, the union supporters kept on pressing their right to unionize.

"We're doing this because we care that the church walks its talk," said Sunday School administrator Nicole Bowmer, one of the leaders of the union effort. "If we didn't care deeply about our jobs, we would choose an easier road of quitting and leaving."

Bowmer spoke with the Labor Press in November, but said then that she and her co-workers weren't yet prepared to go public, because of concern that church

leaders' refusal to recognize the union would lead some members to leave the church. Two weeks after approaching the church executive team, the workers made the first of several appeals to the church board. When that too went nowhere, in early February they began to contact members of the congregation they believed would be sympathetic, such as David

"After 81 days of being told no, it was the congregants that made this happen."

— Nicole Bowmer

Delk, a member of the church's Economic Justice Action Group, and a retiree of AFSCME Local 3135.

"It's outrageous for a church that values love and human rights to say 'no' to employees' efforts to freely associate by forming a union," Delk told the Labor Press.

With word getting out, Sinkford outlined his stance in a Thursday, Feb. 5, post on his blog: "We do not believe it is in the best interest of our church to have employees cut off from direct communication

with management," he wrote. "We believe that such an action would dramatically change the way we function at the church, taking us from a covenantal and relational basis to a contractual relationship and making the relationships between management and staff more and more adversarial."

That afternoon the Labor Press left a message for Sinkford. Two days later, Sinkford reversed course, emailing employees on Saturday to announce that the church will recognize the union.

"The executive team has weighed the social justice issues and our faith's long-held support of people's right to organize, with how it would affect our ability to serve our congregation and its mission," he wrote in the email, which the workers shared with the Labor Press. "While we continue to question whether unionization is the best way to achieve the goals we share, we also recognize that a continued conflict will drive us further apart and begin to change the nature of members' relationship with their church. Congregants come to First Unitarian to be nourished spiritually and to live out their values in the world, not to be forced to take sides in a conflict."

Sinkford didn't talk about labor in Sunday services the next day, but Bowmer says workers got hugs and thumbs-ups from members of the congregation who had

heard.

"After 81 days of being told no, and then four days of emails from congregants, we know it was the congregants that made this happen," Bowmer said. "They took a stand on the right side of history on workers' rights, and we're grateful to them for taking that stand."

Returning a second call from the Labor Press, Sinkford explained the about face. "The issue was becoming extremely divisive in our community, with people lining up pro and con," Sinkford said. "It just felt like there was more damage potentially being done than we were willing to maintain."

Sinkford said there's no disagreement about the need for raises for the lowest paid employees. For their part, workers say they want better wages for the least-paid, more affordable health care for all, written job descriptions, and the security of having conditions spelled out in a binding agreement instead of subject to change at any time.

"This is new territory for me and for the church and I think for our employees too," Sinkford said. "So we're looking forward to sitting down and getting started."

ONLINE EXTRA

To see the blog post explaining why the church wouldn't unionize, and the email three days later explaining why it would, go to: ow.ly/J1r9j

Broadway Floral

for the BEST flowers call
503-288-5537

1638 NE Broadway, Portland

IRS PROBLEMS?

- Haven't filed for ... years?
- Lost records?
- Liens - Levies - Garnishments?
- Negotiate settlements.
- Prepare offer in Compromise.

Call **Nancy D. Anderson**
Enrolled Agent
NPTI Fellow/America's Tax Expert
LTC-1807
www.nancydanderson.com
503-244-2577

Your Oregon & Washington
Union Mail House.

MORE LINK
Print anything, mail anywhere.
Formerly Witham and Dickey

Proud Mailers of the
Northwest Labor Press

www.morelink.biz | 503-736-0111 ext. 140

Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family

With spring approaching is it time to finish those long overdue projects?

Home Equity Line of Credit Promotion Coming Soon!



Low Rates

Flexible Terms

Easy to Use

**Check out our website
for details!**



9955 SE Washington St
Portland, OR 97216

(503) 253-8193 * (800) 356-6507
www.ibewuwfcu.com

Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family