

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT for the year July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016

The Social Justice Committee of UCN is responsible for (1) educating first itself and then the congregation regarding pertinent issues of social justice, (2) acting as a committee in efforts to redress these issues, and (3) involving the congregation in these efforts as much as possible. The Social Justice Committee adheres to the UUA Seven Principles and the UCN Bylaws. The members of the committee throughout the year have included: Judy Welp, Elisa Dickon, Adele Andrews, Claire Beasley, Nancy Gillette, Phil Gillette, Ron Kledzik, Sandy Ogletree, Vicki Caminer, Marcia Slosser, Jim Early, Bob Williams, Sara Wood, Jannie Marvel, Cheryl Brown, Jenny Foss, Doug Throp, Michael Geller, Gia Orgia Labidi, Ron Lovell, Celia Forno, Rev Charlie, Matthew Morales, Sheri Bailey, Jeannie Harkleroad, Stephanie Sterner and Anne Odell.

In October 2013 the Social Justice Committee (SJC) surveyed the congregation to identify members' highest priorities on issues of social concern. Based on the results, committees were formed to address the top three: Poverty/Homelessness-Judy Welp Chair; Environment-Claire Beasley and Doug Throp Co-Chairs; and Access to Health Care, Vickie Caminer Chair. With the implementation of The Affordable Health Care Act, the Access to Health Care priority receded. Cultural diversity and racial justice became more important with events occurring throughout this year. Four separate national UU priority areas were the focus of special offerings.

The special offering on the second Sunday of each month was focused on political advocacy, the priorities identified by the congregation and events in the nation and world. Offerings were dedicated to UUA James Reeb Fund for Multicultural Ministries, Women's Shelters (HER, YWCA and Samaritan House), Virginia Organizing, Sandwich Makers for the Homeless, St Columba and Catholic Worker, Ghent Area Ministry for marginalized residents, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, UUSC Guest at Your Table, UU Ministry for Earth, UUSC Refugees, Backpack Program for At-Risk Youth at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, and ponchos and water for the homeless. The congregation donated \$13,586 through these special offerings. The NEST Benefit Concert organized by Tracie Whitelaw raised \$2,289.

Social Justice Awareness and Action

1. 3 ½ Minutes film on September 2 at the NARO—Movie and Discussion at Naro Theater. Social Justice provided the funds to rent the film that a UCN member arranged to show at the Naro. 3 ½ Minutes dissects the shooting death of 17-year-old Jordan Davis by Michael Dunn in Jacksonville, Florida on Black Friday, 2012 and examines the aftermath of this systemic tragedy,
2. Social Justice supported the October 17-Pete Seeger Remembrance Concert financially, provided set up and refreshments, and marketed. Songs celebrated the earth, justice and peace.
3. Social Justice financially supported the October 18-Gaia Mother Earth—the Oneness of Everything church service presented by Jim Scott.
4. Social Justice supported and provided refreshments for the film "Fruitvale Station", on January 15. From a New York Times article: "In the early hours of Jan. 1, 2009, Oscar Grant III, unarmed and lying face down on a subway platform in Oakland, Calif., was shot in the back by a white Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer. The film was a lead in for talking about police violence.
5. In June SJC joined with other UU churches in the area to host a Unitarian Universalist welcoming tent at the Pride Festival in Town Point Park.

The Environmental Priority

1. Brock Center—In July the Environmental Committee arranged a tour of the Brock Center, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, to learn about the environmentally sustaining building and the programs located there.
2. Living Waters—Wading In, An Interfaith Summit –Several SJ members attended. A copy of the hand book distributed at the conference is kept at Fair Trade for reference.
3. Social Justice supported Lizzy Moss, 8th grader at Kemps Landing Old Donation School with her capstone project. Her project included: collecting donated sheets and t-shirts and from them creating reusable bags to reduce the amount of plastic bags littered over a period of time. These bags were sold at UCN, and all money gained from the sales went to the Lynnhaven River Foundation,
4. Members of the Environmental Priority organized films and a discussion course on environmental issues for the UCN congregation throughout the year. Some of these included:
 - “This Changes Everything” film-March 18 with a discussion afterwards.
 - “Powering a Bright Future”, three session course on April 20, May 4, May 18
 - “Gasland” documentary on May 27 on fracking with discussion afterwards
 - “Cowspiracy” documentary film on animal agriculture on June 24 and discussion
5. Adult Discussion on environmental activities arranged by the committee included:
 - “This Changes Everything; Capitalism vs the Climate” (book by Naomi Klein) March 20
 - “The Challenge of Solar Energy” on May 15
 - “The Challenge of Fracking” on June 5
 - “The Challenge of Global Warming” on June 26

The Poverty and Homelessness Priority

1. *Sandwich Makers* –On Mondays UCN members, led by SJC member Adele Andrews, made sandwiches and hardboiled eggs for distribution to the homeless at 7 am Tuesday morning at the Hospitality Line. Several SJC and UCN members worked with Catholic Worker on Tuesday morning to distribute breakfast and lunch. During the summer UCN also provides frozen bottled water at the line.
2. *Backpack program*—UCN joined the Backpack Program for At-Risk Youth at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church to provide weekend food for 25 students for 10 months of the school year.
3. *Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore*--Throughout the year food bank items and cash were collected in the Social Hall and given to the Food Bank for their distribution to those in need.
4. *We Feed Norfolk*-Towards the end of the year Social Justice joined with the Food Bank and the City of Norfolk in the new We Feed Norfolk program. On a dedicated Sunday congregants brought bags with food or donated funds for the FoodBank.
5. *Holiday Meal Baskets (Thanksgiving)*--At Thanksgiving SJC/UCN partnered with Ghent Area Ministry to provide Thanksgiving dinner items for 10 baskets for those in need for the Holiday. Excess food and collected funds (\$158)were given to GAM for additional baskets and to stock the GAM pantry.
6. *Keeping Warm in Winter*--During winter, the congregation donated warm clothing for distribution at the Hospitality Line where sandwiches are also distributed.
7. *Angel Tree for the Holidays* --In December Social Justice coordinated with St. Columba Ministries on an Angel Tree. The congregation members selected and donated clothes and toys for the 15 families provided by St. Columba.

8. *Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team (NEST)* --During the winter months a consortium of churches/synagogues provides overnight shelter for the homeless to protect them from the weather and offer dinner and breakfast. Social Justice members and UCN volunteers were essential in implementing the UCN week for NEST, January 27 to February 3. Social Justice "sold" gloves to congregation members who then donated the gloves to NEST (about \$400).
9. *Art Exhibition*--In June/July over two Sundays, an art show exhibiting the works of a NEST guest was held in the Social Hall. Over \$300 was raised for the artist.
10. *Laundry Love*--Members of SJC attended and joined two other churches in offering Laundry Love program to those who need help with their laundry. One day of the month the churches provide detergent, dryer sheets and free laundry services.

Advocacy-- Making connections with the Virginia Legislators

1. Announcement to congregants about how to contact the coordinators for their legislators and arrange a meeting were in the 12-11-15 Gazette and on the SJ Bulletin board
2. Social Justice member visited with Del. Jacen Miyares in a group with Teresa Stanley and others to discuss Medicaid Gap, Redistricting, Environmental VA Coastal Protection Act and Predatory Lending. Materials made available to UCN.
3. Social Justice member visited with Del Steve Herritick who is interested in legal and medical issues. Report made to Social Justice.

Other Activities

1. The Fair Trade Booth is managed by SJC and sells coffee, tea, chocolate, and other items every Sunday after the Service. Fair Trade products guarantee farmers around the world a fair price for their products
2. SJC worked with the Membership Chair to identify a UCN member who would represent UCN at the ODU Feminist Activist Fair in March
3. In February the SJC heard a presentation from the Facility Design Committee for the new UCN facility and offered input. Members of SJC are working on green options for the new facility.
4. SJC items in the UCN Announcements included topics such as:
 - A UCN contact to help individuals review their health care coverage and sign up for The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)
 - Dine out evening to benefit Access Aids Care
 - Request for clothing for GAM's clothes closet for the less advantaged
 - Announcement of Naro films: Dear President Obama on gas and oil drilling; How to Let Go of the World and Love All the Things Climate Change Can't Change; and Time to Choose (climate change).
 - Special activities during Pride month (June)

Administration

1. As part of the review and update of the UCN Policies and Procedures, SJC recommended SJC-related changes to the UCN Board. These included: voting qualifications for Social Justice members, representation on issues by SJ members to the press and at events, SJC annual meeting schedule, communication practices, procedures for selecting the recipients of the special offerings, and guidelines for the SJ budgeting process.
2. SJC formally developed and adopted the Budget for FY 2016-2017