

## Social Justice Meeting 10/18/22

### Social Justice Team

- Meeting time. Tuesday ok?
- Shared plate:
  - November: Village
  - December: Family Promise; Crisis Nursery and Human Needs on Christmas Eve
  - January: Hawthorne Helps
- Discussion of calendar; way to reach out to others even beyond 1st UU? Could there be a listserv?

### Full Meeting:

Facilitator: Bree

Note taker: Molly

- Welcome (Bree)
- Chalice Lighting (Sara)
- Review of justice collection practice and upcoming months
  - *Previous Totals:* <https://uurochmn.org/monthly-justice-partner-donation-totals/>
  - *Current/Upcoming months:* Oct/Auction: Immigration Justice Fund, Nov: Village Cooperative, Dec: Family Promise, Xmas Eve: Crisis Nursery/Human Needs, January: TBD, February: TBD, March: Hawthorne Helps, for their anniversary
- Update about Asylum work (Phil or others...?)
  - UU is officially helping to support Pedro. Had biometrics in St. Paul in preparation for work authorization, which could happen as early as November. Freddy and Darling – work authorization will not happen before March/April because they delayed applying for asylum despite our recommendations. The other parts of the family are twin sisters who are 19. We are paying rent for two apartments, and utilities. Twin sisters have decided to apply for juvenile immigrant status, could get work status at earliest at 11.5 months, but this is way cheaper than applying for asylum. Neither speak English. The wait provides time to learn English and go through training programs at Hawthorne.
  - Family has a “political niece.” Daughter of a man whose partner is Darling’s niece. This is a legitimate family relationship. This person is an unaccompanied minor who is now in HHS custody and family wants to get her up here. Someone there in Texas is trying to put together a case to bring her up here. She is 16.
  - The family needs stuff. They need blankets. This past weekend accumulated two beds, flat screen tv, Tv with VHS player, floor lamps, tables, chairs, iron, etc.
  - Bidding items for Podulke Auction. Immigrant justice is one of the beneficiaries of the auction. Items to buy: Bus passes. Household items. Donation for grocery store gift cards. Donations for hygiene items.
- Fall Social Justice Fair - *November 20th, tables in the Commons, etc.?*

- Have people staff a table in the commons after each service. Some people stay a little after the second service, as well.
- Good opportunity to both provide information about what church members are up to, but also convey the kinds of social justice work they are engaged in that might not be through the church. Also, what kinds of social justice work would people like to get involved in? We could put newsprint up and have sticky notes to create areas where people want to do social justice work.
- Can we create a schedule of social justice events around Rochester? Could there be a social justice calendar of events around the community? How could we populate the calendar? Still need to work out the mechanics of how to do this.
- Also regional events are happening. TC but also Winona.
- Communications/brochure update (inviting folks to send updated info. to office)
  - People could send updated information to Luke or Erica to update our “Get involved” brochure. If you are a leader of a social justice group you can send that information for inclusion. Erica can update content on the website. Try to reach out to people on justice lists or who might be leaders to see what changes need to be made.
  - A website’s main purpose is for newcomers. For the website, keep the information concise. Concise also doesn’t get out of date quite so fast, hopefully.
  - For existing members most information should be shared in Realm or through committee, meetings, etc.
- Updates from subgroups and teams
  - Wide Welcoming Team.
    - Pridefest scheduled for Saturday May 20, 2023, from noon-5 at Soldier’s Field.
    - Want to get Pride more noticed at church. Would like to get a couple of pride flags, one for outside of the building. We could put it on a sign. Could put it on the inside of the post so it wouldn’t interfere with people walking. Would like to have one for inside the church. Could be placed somewhere we all meet during a service for LGBTQ. Does not have to be in there all the time, but more pride color. Would like to paint a sign like “All Are Welcome Here” going into the second entrance door (after the coat room).
    - They are looking into bathroom issues. Have started the renewal process for Welcoming Renewal through UUA. What can we do to gender neutralize the bathrooms. Looking to get a folding changing table, to see if it would fit in either of the bathrooms on the landing.
  - Julie sent a family promise update via email:  
 Sorry I am not able to attend tonight's meeting as I am timing at tonight's LWV candidate forums so here is my report.

**Family Promise**- I have been working on an update for the church website. What we have there currently is way outdated. It is still a work in progress but I will try to get something to Erika soon.

Brie Bednar stepped down as Director due to health reasons last March. Erin Sinwell, a long time passionate volunteer and board president is serving as the Interim Director. They have a volunteer coordinator and program director, Kai Miller and Nicollette Keller continues as the social worker. case manager. Kristian Kennedy from our church was wanting to get involved again in Family Promise and since they weren't using overnight or evening hosts, she has become a board member. 😊

Kay Eberman has stepped up to assist me in the coordinator position, but she is very busy too. Lynne Kirklin stepped away late spring due to health issues. Most of my time & energy have been directed to working with the Ghiyasi family. Together we have contacted ( or tried to) our volunteers. Our numbers have shrunk about 50%.so it would be good to recruit more at a volunteer fair.

The Family Promise model has shifted with the purchase of the North Star House at 913 1st St NW. where the families are now being housed. They really want to have volunteers interacting with the families but it is taking awhile to get things going again. They have decided not to have overnight hosts for now but do really want meals provided at least M-W-F and Saturday morning. They are struggling to get people to sign up.

They are talking about having the various churches ( I am not sure how many churches are currently really engaged) to sign up for 3 or 4 weeks to provide the meals that week as well as host an activity night on a Friday or Saturday at their church during those weeks - movie night, game night, arts & craft night etc. It has been suggested that we perhaps form some teams to be incharge of covering a specific week. Kay & I are hoping to come up with some possible weeks to try this out. Family Promise staff have not gotten this going yet.

They also need volunteers to help with activities for the children during the twice a month Life Skills classes. They also need help with various fundraisers : Promise Fest (Aug.)- we did host a game for it; Trunk or Treat (Oct.28); Choral concert & silent auction (Nov.12) at Bethel in the afternoon. And of course there is providing Christmas gifts for many of the families- past & present. These things I have not been pushing or sharing about as we have our own church activities.

I do hope we can continue to have a "shared plate" to provide financial support. Luke, do you have an update on the house they hoped to rent for a transitional house? Has that gone forward? Have we or are we planning to donate to that by paying the rent for a month or two?

**Ghiyasi family** (from Afghanistan)

Our official contract/obligation ended at the end of June, however we know that it takes more than 6 months to learn to navigate life here in Rochester, especially when you don't have much English. So there is still a small group that are assisting them: Ann Lien, Ann Sigford, Paula Horner and I have been the team helping Safia learn English. It is proving to be a slow process. Linda & Bill Thompson have been assisting me with dental appointments ( great need here, as they have not had dental care so lots of extractions & fillings with limited dentists seeing folks on MA . We need to be lobbying the legislature to increase reimbursement!). They have also been helping with 401 K and other benefit related tasks. Qjam took a new job as a welder at Crenlo

2nd shift- I was the one guiding him through that and all its ramifications (yikes!). My other assignment has been accompanying Safia through her pregnancy. The baby is due October 30. Tammy Watson-Schram, as you know, has organized a diaper drive to assist the family with that major expense. She has continued to help the family in various ways. Sue & Phil wheeler are also helping out from the sidelines. This family is delightful to work with and most grateful for our help. I don't know that there will be any need for further financial assistance for this family as long as they do keep their health care.

On another note, I noticed that in the presentation about the decision ahead of us about whether we stay or go, the social justice vision only seemed to encompass environmental justice. That is an important piece but I think very narrow and seems mostly focused on us - our congregation building a "good" building, whereas I hope we don't lose sight of our social justice work in the community- using our building to help others, making it in a spot that shows we care about folks who might not have Prius cars to get them to our church. I am out of time now so I can't continue to talk about this.

Thanks,  
Julie

PS ANyone thinking about another Mitten Peace/Sharing Tree???

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- Sandy sent a Hawthorne Helps update
  - THINK Bank donating bags. These bags are pretty expensive. If anyone has a good in with a rich bank that would be appreciated. Will be reaching out to previous donors.
  - How involved are other partners? THINK gives pens, bags, Midwest did the same. They are looking into the bags. Church partners. Collection of specific items. Peace UCC is most supportive church. St. Lukes is low on cash and no rummage sale. They have a permanent barrel on site. Bethel has long been a supporter. They do collections, Sandy spoke at their summer Bible school. Ongoing do a lot of things. First Presbyterian women have been involved in a long time. Did hats and scarves. All donate winter items, and winter distribution is happening on the 25th. Distribution on site has always been UU volunteers. Will also ask Charter House; they have supported us in the past. Sandy is also looking at some other grants.
- SMILD
  - Third year of offering legal defense primarily to people who are in detention. This year attempted to represent people who are not in detention but that costs a lot of money so it had to be curtailed. About half of the money comes from faith communities: B'nai Israel Synagogue, Christ United Methodist Church, St. Luke's Episcopal church, UU, Peace UCC, Holy Ground Catholic Community and Rochester Friends. Covid has hit churches hard this year. Spend about \$10,000 per quarter on legal

fees defending people. The other half of the funding comes from individuals. Winona Diocese also gives money.

- Not current data: 14 cases, won 13 of them. Would have won the last case if someone had appealed. But people sometimes choose to self-deport rather than stay in detention.
- Should put on a Black Lives Matter sign up somewhere.
  - Could this be done in conjunction with Pride flag?
- MUUSJA
  - Working with UU the vote. Lots of letters, postcards, text messages have been sent out in MN and WI. Lynn hopefully joining the MUUSJA board in January.
- Question: Riverside Read – is this still going?
  - This is still going and you can volunteer but it isn't organized through the church right now.
  - Saturday Noon meals? Some members are volunteering for Noon Meals but unclear if it's being organized through the church.
  - Many people who used to do racial justice through the church are now doing it through the NAACP. Wale Elegbede is the chair of the local chapter.
- Closing Reading/Chalice Extinguishing (Gail)