

Social Justice

Present: Phil and Sue Wheeler, Rhonda, Julie, Gail, Gus Braga, Sarah Felts, Brianna Berg, Aleta? Anne Black-Sinak

- Welcome & Chalice Lighting
Brianna Berg

- Justice Partner collections and practice
Review of practice (<https://uurochmn.org/monthly-justice-partner-donation-totals/>)
Upcoming monthly partners (Feb: Hawthorne; March: TBD, April: TBD, May: PFund)
(possibilities for March (vulnerability) April (resistance)...?)

November: Village cooperative; October \$8,342 for immigration justice fund; Fund currently sitting at \$19,000 or so. Paying around \$2,000 a month or so to support the families. September was UU the vote, just over \$1500. Financially health wise, we have been sitting good.

Thoughts about possibilities for upcoming monthly partners. One suggestion CHAMPS in Haiti. Kay Anderson, who is at Mayo, has brought people to Haiti to help people coming to the hospital. Has not been back since COVID and also because of violence there. Kay still has connections there.

Group working against human/sex trafficking. Perhaps for vulnerability.

(B)older Options? George Thompson's son is involved with this program.

Sports Mentorship Academy, through Gage?

- Ideas for creating and sustaining a "Justice Calendar"
Knowing the amount of information about activities happening, knowing people are trying to re-engage in person but also still doing a lot of hybrid meetings, what is the best way to keep people in-touch with what is going on? Could be a regular link in the e-news. Could have updates about justice happenings, could there be an email listserv that could be a source of information.

Based on social justice Sunday – did anything come out of that about where people would like to find more information?

Can we tell little stories about different events, or different happenings? Like violent protesters? Our legislators are scared.

Communications and community building. Sometimes you need to start a simple forum to raise awareness. Then, also, make an invitation to organize some event. Can always set a table up on any Sunday to raise awareness, to solicit more involvement.

We are going to start the Social Justice calendar.

Social Justice fair – 90 people signed a petition in favor of state ID's for all. Maybe have a regular legislative action table.

- Article II of UU bylaws

For the last few years the UUA has been engaging in a revision process of our 7 Principles. In the last couple weeks the revision group has presented a proposal for discussion, with the potential it could be voted on in 2024. There are some significant changes. Principles have changed a few times, but it's been a long time since it's changed. This is a larger change to reflect cultural and theological changes.

Feb 18th – there is a MUUSJA event to discuss this, workshop, there is a fee to attend.

Luke will also be leading an in-house forum on Feb 1. Start the conversation, and then there will be a couple other discussions this spring and into the summer. We will have conversations over the next year.

- Updates from small groups

Julie – Hawthorne Helps and Women's Shelter: Thank you for the mitten tree. Thanks for those who helped deliver the gifts. Afghan family – official commitment is over, but we continue to provide support. There are still about 10 people who continue to help in a variety of ways; transport, English, etc. Thank you for the diaper drive. The family is very grateful. Family promise – They lost their volunteer coordinator so they are struggling in many ways. They are not going to go back to the church model. Still hoping to get meals donated. People can do that without training. Hopeful that this church will continue to support them as we have in the past. They really appreciated the shared plate, and they are in financial need. They want volunteers to interact with families. They are having Family Fun nights on the first and third Fridays. Encourages the church to continue supporting them as we have.

Phil – Some of you received update on status of asylum-seeking family. The members do not yet have work authorization. We are spending about \$2450 a month on living expenses for them. We should be fine for a while. Unknown legal expenses coming up. Unclear if existing agencies will be able to help with legal work for the family members. Humanitarian parole – they want to bring additional members, but Phil has told them that our fund cannot support additional people. Perhaps we could talk to other churches about taking on a family or two of Nicaraguans. [Luke: there is interest among colleagues in town, but no firm commitments. If there is a specific need there might be more immediate response.] Need for sponsoring two brothers. [Luke: could reach out to Christ UCC and the Congregational Church]. SMILD is doing fine. Focused on supporting people in detention. Number of people in detention under this administration is lower, for people who do not have additional major legal issues (like murder or etc.). Much fewer cases where people are in detention for things like parking tickets. Riverside Central – Sue goes weekly. Sue is also involved with volunteer tax program.

Sandy – [Sent an update but I was not able to open the file on my computer].

Welcoming team update: renewal forms are updated and turned in. Application for Pride has been turned in. Pride Sunday service will be the 21st. Regrouping as team in February.

Gail Bishop: Disability awareness group is re-organizing. Meeting will be in Feb. Re-jump starting that work.

Rhonda Lorenz: Interested in Minnesota State ERA Bill, 2021. It's a bill about legal rights for all. Disallows discrimination across a wide range of traits by local governments within MN (county or city). Based on successful amendment to Nevada's state constitution. Eramn.org This might be something the congregation would support and be interested in. Could we have a forum or a table to make people aware of this? Would our congregation want to be an ally to this legislation? The co-sponsor is looking for allies to sign on. Gail will also bring this up to MUUSJA. Perhaps we have a congregational resolution that already supports this; the board could act on this without an additional resolution. How can we as a congregation be helpful to them? How can we be most effective – question for people already working on this issue.

Luke: Any hopes and dreams around budget for the next year? Social Justice budget is not huge and we do not really spend out of it. Most of the money is raised through the plate. Our social justice budget can support honoraria or other items like that. Are there things people would like to do if we had funds? We have \$2000 for the year and none has been spent.

-Mileage to go to the legislature? Makes it easier for people to go.

-Recruitment of assistant pastor to help with social justice work. [Luke: we are at an awkward stage in the size of our congregation – right in between the size of church that would have one versus two ministers. Geographically, there are not really a lot of UU ministers around, to have a part time minister].

Closing reading – Molly Dingel