

Notes Social Justice Shared Ministry Team Meeting 1/28/24

Attending: Brianna Berg-Board, Aleta Borrud-Board, Alex Higano-Member at Large, Sara Felts-Member at Large, Shelly Rohe-Social Justice Coordinator-Staff, Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer-Minister/ex-officio

Guests: Kim Reid-Board President, John Helmers-Board Treasurer

Revisions of Social Justice Shared Ministry Program Team Policy document

The draft Policy document was shared by the Social Justice Coordinator with the note that changes were made to the document. This draft document incorporates recommendations from the Board based on the completed Financial Stewardship Team Policy document “Governance Teams C-6” and was approved by the Shared Ministry Team. The updated document incorporates new language that:

1. Moves language that is currently in the church Bylaws that are more appropriately placed into the Social Justice Shared Ministry Program Policy document. This new language is consistent across all Shared Ministry Program Teams.
2. Creates new language in Duties, Organization, Meetings and Reports that is based on new Shared Ministry Governance Model documents.
3. Review of program area subgroups, in item 2. under Duties was discussed. These subgroups are reflected in the Shared Ministry Governance Model tree as “leaves” and was discussed, as below. The suggested categories of SJ work within the congregation are as follows (with further discussion of areas under the categories, below): Wide Welcoming Team, Community Outreach and Service, Liberation, Environmental Justice, Democracy and Electoral Justice.

Representing areas of Social Justice work within the congregation

A question was raised regarding the evolution of categories represented by the “leaves”. Was such division of work based on administrative, logistical needs? Should they be based on the current capacity and actual ongoing service and action, or should they also reflect a vision for potential for work aligned with our core values and dreams for future efforts?

Recognizing the tensions above between capacity and vision, there was also a desire to streamline categories as well as leave room for fluidity to act on urgent needs. There was also discussion, led by the Welcoming Team, to recognize the intersectionality of issues. This team decided to encompass not only disability justice, but also racial and gender justice in efforts to create a welcoming environment for congregants. A parallel to this vision is the new category of “Liberation” to hold Racial, Gender, and Immigration Justice work in the larger community outside the church.

The Social Justice Coordinator assigned our current justice work into these categories:

Wide Welcoming Team

1. Welcoming Congregation program
 - a. Rochester Pride
2. Disability Inclusion
3. Racial Justice
4. Class awareness

Community Outreach and Service

1. Programs led by UU congregants
 - a. VITA (volunteer tax preparation)
 - b. Hawthorne Helps
 - c. Family Promise
 - d. Holiday Giving Tree
 - e. Monthly Justice Partner
2. Other Volunteer Opportunities
 - a. Riverside Reading Program
 - b. Community Food Response
 - c. Saturday Noon Meals

Liberation Advocacy

1. Immigration and Sanctuary
 - a. Immigration Justice Fund
 - b. SMILD (Southern MN Interfaith Immigrant Legal Defense)
 - c. Refugee Resettlement Program
 - d. First UU Housing Aid, LLC
2. Racial Justice
 - a. Side with Love's Decriminalization work
3. Gender Justice
 - a. Side with Love's LGBTQIA+ & Gender Justice (Includes reproductive justice)
 - b. Rochester Pride

Environmental Justice

1. Building our Future Team's vision of creating Green Sanctuary & work with MNIPL
2. Environmental Democracy through a future solar garden

Democracy and Electoral Justice

1. Side with Love's Action Center
2. MN UU Social Justice Alliance
3. ISAIAH
4. Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ)

Board Request to support formation of an LLC for Immigration Housing Aid

John Helmers, Board Treasurer and Kim Reid, Board President, joined the meeting to discuss the decision by the Board to form a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) to assume responsibility for the current rental agreement signed by the church. This rental lease was signed on behalf of the Immigrant Justice Fund committee to provide an urgent housing need for a family seeking asylum in the US. An LLC would provide protection of the church assets should an unexpected event occur with damages. While there is an urgent need for this LLC to cover the current rental agreement, it has the potential to support a broader scope of immigrant justice work and also involve additional community or faith institutions in its Board of Directors and operation.

Minnesota allows nonprofit entities to form LLCs and the cost of application to the Secretary of State is \$150. Discussion of the details of such a nonprofit LLC agreement indicated it should cover the following issues:

1. *Statement of purpose of the LLC.* While it should cover the specific issue of the rental agreement, it could also aim for a broader scope of immigration justice issues.
2. *Operating Structure.* This should specify a Board with officers and clarify who would be making decisions on behalf of the LLC, under what circumstances the decision-maker can operate, and what might lead to dissolution of the LLC.
3. *Identifying the fiscal agent or sponsor.* There is a desire for the LLC to have its own checking account and perhaps as well not be a line item within the church budget (although donations from within the congregation could be received and held within a line item to be disbursed to the LLC).

As a coordinating and visioning body, the Social Justice Shared Ministry Team felt that another entity engaged in the immigrant justice work should undertake the writing of the LLC and formation of the Board to administer it. However, it was agreed that it would be appropriate for a Shared Ministry Team or staff member to oversee this Board and LLC. Furthermore, it was felt that a committee should be formed to guide future work to include clarity regarding future financial commitments this church may make in support of newcomers to the community seeking aid.

Given Phil Wheeler's long history of immigration justice work and knowledge, the Team felt it appropriate to ask his assistance in forming a committee to pursue creating the LLC. Aleta Borrud agreed to make this request.