

## AGENDA FULL SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING Sept. 5, 2019

A meeting of the full Social Justice Committee was held on Sept. 5, 2019 at the church. Present were: Debbie Baumgarten, Sonia D'Alarcao, Joanna Elsmore, Betty Gilson, Rev. Paul Sprecher and Rev. Rachel Tedesco.

The bank balance is \$3,223.32 of which \$416.91 is for *Read to Me, Father* and \$131.00 is for RE Scholarship Fund.

The following committee reports were presented.

Green Sanctuary: Debbie gave an update on the Little Free Library to be erected at the church. She has been in touch with Zach, the potential Eagle Scout, for news on the progress. It will be ADA compliant. Some folks mentioned how excellent the GS Summer Service was.

Peace Committee: Betty reported on the plans for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual United Nations International Day of Peace Service which will be on Sept. 22. The theme will be *Women in Peace*. Debbie suggested that the *Dresses for Girls* project with which some church members are associated could possibly make dresses for Ben Carson's next trip to Cambodia. Debbie will contact him about this. The summer program on Cambodia by Lisa Troy and Ben Carson was also praised.

Welcoming Congregation Renewal: No one was present who had attended the Aug. 15 meeting of the WCR, but Rev. Paul printed out minutes of the meeting for all of us. The committee will be doing the morning worship service on Oct. 13. McKayla has suggested there be a Queer Corner in the monthly *Bridging* similar to the Green Sanctuary column each month.

Social Justice Committee: Betty has contacted Lee Forest at the BSU LGBTQA Pride Office about our fall event. Lee requested that we send them possible dates for early November. Betty will do this after the Sept. 10 Committee Council meeting when she knows what dates are clear. It will probably be a morning event. Betty brought up the question of whether these events should be under the auspices of the WCR. We agreed that for now it will continue as part of the SJC program, since the WCR is still in formation.

AutumnFest: Laurie Lessner has reserved a table for this event on Sept. 28. This will be half general church handouts and half First Parish Players info. We should have flyers for the upcoming (October) *Black Lives Matter* film as well as SJC brochures and general info. Rachel will work on getting these ready. She and David may staff the table with help from Joanna. We may need other volunteers.

Church Fair: We will have a table at the Holly Day Faire on Dec. 6 & 7. We will sell Equal Exchange items, MainSpring House Lunch Gift Cards, and perhaps other items such as bottles of cocoa mix. We will also have flyers for the Dec. BLM film, the SJC brochures and the Bridgewater Area Social Services brochures to pass out.

Rachel will work on all upcoming BLM film flyers and Sonia will share them on various Facebook groups. Rachel, Betty and Joanna will post them in area towns.

Report from Rev. Rachel:

1. Attended Building Bridges retreat at Star Island, July 13-16 with our church group. Agree with our Parish Committee that this presents a great opportunity at collaboration. Including around areas of social justice, yet TBD. Would be willing to reach out to the Middleboro, Taunton and other UU churches to explore common areas of interest. More on that later under discussion of suggestions from the Parish Committee.
2. Have joined BCCR and have attended most monthly meetings and standouts. One this last Saturday in Bridgewater center promoting kindness, conversation over confrontation (for example) with big signs.
3. Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ) –a) Attended the CSJ Lobby Day on June 12 at the State House. I lobbied with other members for the Section 100 of the Senate 2020 budget. This would establish a commission to study funding to the Dept. of Correction and the county sheriff depts. Goal: To decrease money spent on prisons and increase spending on rehab programs to keep people out of prisons and re-integrate them into society. b) I attended June 18 Activist Meeting in Brockton (at the W. Branch Library). Focus was on the 2019 Campaign for Working Families, past victories and proposed state legislation. Major focus is on immigrant rights, including the Safe Communities Act and the Work & Family Mobility Act. This would give people without the proper documentation (including undocumented immigrants) the right to get a Mass. driver's license. (The Work and Family Mobility Act, which is state legislation to enable all qualified Massachusetts drivers, regardless of immigration status, to apply for a standard license, which could only be used for driving and identification, not for benefits, boarding a plane, or voting. Tested and insured drivers make roads safer for everyone and in other states we've seen this legislation increase public safety.) This would allow people to get to work, school and medical appointments, etc. without fear of being stopped and arrested by police. Also CSJ is working for Criminal Justice Reform (like Section 100 described above). c) I volunteered to phonebank from the Brockton office on Work & Family Mobility Act and the Safe Communities Act. We're urging supporters to call their state legislators to vote for these acts.
4. Mass Bail Fund. Bailed out 3 incarcerated over the past couple of months: Two in June and July in at Brockton Superior Courthouse (6/25 & 7/3) and one in August (8/12) at Attleboro courthouse.
5. The Five Points Cluster Community Closet. Has 3 volunteers from our church – Bobbe Anderson organizing the team and will train them. We have 3 volunteers already but need to get 2 more volunteers from our church to staff it for 2 Saturdays over the next year. I put that in a weekly email and in the Sept. Bridging. No success yet, but hopeful. It's a very successful project.
6. UU Mass Action Report: on Tuesday, I received a draft copy of the UU Mass Action Annual Report from Executive Director Laura Wagner. I was struck by several facts: UUMA's broad mission, its incredible staff, with expertise covering several areas, and its commitment to reaching out to UU churches and its collaboration with several other

local and state organizations. They focus on 4 areas which complement our own, including: Immigrant Justice; Climate Justice and Climate Action; Black Lives Matter and LGBTQ Rights. In addition, there are 6 other focus areas, but this would expand us beyond are current areas and agendas.

I just learned today about the Climate Strike being planned by youth and their adult supporters on Friday, Sept. 20. "On September 20, three days before the UN Climate Summit in NYC, young people and adults will strike all across the US and world to demand transformative action be taken to address the climate crisis. Millions of us will take to the streets to demand a right to a future, and we're inviting you to join us." One of these will be in downtown Boston, beginning at 9:00 a.m., probably with breakfast at a downtown church.

I joined the webinar today at 4:00 p.m. to learn more. I was very inspired by the young UUs who spoke. And I learned that Laura Wagner, Director of UU Mass Action, is also the President of the Coalition of UU State Action Networks. And there will be many resources on-line for planning events. I think it would be a great opportunity for some of our young people to be involved... along with adults in our congregation. And maybe we could coordinate this with UU churches in the area, like Middleboro and Taunton, as part of Building Bridges. I think LREDA is also doing outreach to UU churches across the country for this particular event and on the climate issue.

In general, UU Mass Action can offer us lots of talent (i.e. organizing staff) and resources to further our commitments to social and environmental justice. And I propose that as a church we collaborate more closely with UU Mass Action in one or two particular area in the coming year. We could start with the Climate Strike on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> in Boston. If we did, we would need to register on-line telling them we're coming... and with how many... so they could prepare food and other accommodations for this event.

Rev. Paul will send DRE Sara Williams information about Climate Strike to see whether some young people will be interested in working on this.

Suggestions from Parish Committee Retreat:

Committees at First Parish should try to work with similar groups at other area churches: hold event, rallies, rent buses together. Could contact other area churches about going to Climate Strike together. Suggest we wear our Standing on the Side of Love or Side with Love T shirts if we have them and carry our banner.

Possible reformation of Cranberry Cluster of churches in Bridgewater, Kingston, Middleboro, Plymouth, Taunton. These churches could hold seasonal meetings rotating around the congregations. Topics could be varied including social justice issues, personal concerns, and fun activities.

Possibly do bulk purchases of UU value products as we do with Equal Exchange products; also cleaning materials, paper goods, etc. Possibility of setting up co-op purchases with other Cranberry Cluster churches.

The date of the Green Sanctuary service was discussed. Will ask if the committee prefers April 5 or 19.

The SJC agreed to do a Mothers' Day service May 10 on the history of the original Mothers' Day established by Julia Ward Howe. This is also the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Women's suffrage, so that can be included as well.

Next meeting: SJC on Thurs., Oct. 3 at 7:00 pm at the church.