

Policies and Procedures for UUAA Social Justice Council First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor

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I. Social Justice Council (SJC) Mission Statement and Objectives

A. The Social Justice Council's Mission is:

To coordinate support and inspire the congregation's efforts to advocate, educate, organize, serve and witness for social action; to establish the UUAA as a leader for social justice.

The Social Justice Council's work is inspired by the following Ends Statement from the UUAA Governing Policies:

1.2. Social Justice and Environmental Action

We live our beliefs by creating, sustaining, and enhancing programs that actively engage congregants of all ages in projects that promote peace, justice, and positive environmental action locally and beyond.

1.2.1. This congregation acts in concrete and substantial ways to promote social and economic justice in the larger community.

1.2.2. This congregation acts in concrete and substantial ways to protect the natural environment.

1.2.3. This congregation participates in programs that promote peace and understanding in the world.

B. Social Justice Council Objectives are:

1. Strengthen the involvement of the congregation in social justice ministries through:

- a. volunteer recruitment and retention
- b. leadership recruitment
- c. development of internal communication strategy
- d. development of strategies for greater congregation involvement

2. Nurture and support the social justice work of our congregation by:

- a. offering training opportunities
- b. providing mentorship/assist with networking
- c. providing opportunities for collaboration(including communication tools)
- d. providing opportunities for reflection and sharing
- e. providing funding as available.

3. Develop and maintain policies and procedures for review, approval and oversight of initiatives and actions of social justice programs that are conducted in the name of our congregation.

II. Defining Effective Social Justice Ministry

A. Social Justice is at the core of this Congregation's identity. We are called to put our faith into action to build a world that is just, peaceful and sustainable.

B. Creating a Balanced Social Justice Program: Five Main Approaches to Taking Action. (Taken, with minor revisions, from: *The Unitarian Universalist Association's Social Justice Empowerment Program Handbook*, October 2011, pp. 13-14.)

Offering members of the congregation a variety of ways to be involved in social justice is key to maintaining a successful social justice program. All approaches to social justice should include an orientation of healing divisions, dismantling social oppression, and acting with accountability. These five approaches to doing social justice do not exist in isolation from one another; rather, they are complementary. Some of our programs may include all five approaches, others one or some.

The five types of social justice action are:

1. **SERVICE AND GIVING:** The purpose of social service is to meet the needs of persons in distress.

Examples: Sheltering the homeless, collecting money, donating food or clothing.

Strengths: It is doing something in the present—i.e., hungry people are fed, homeless people are housed. Often social justice service is done in partnership with those being served and/or supporting or partnering with other organizations.

Challenges: Relieving a symptom does not always solve the problem over time and often has little impact on public policy. Providing information on relevant legislation and opportunities for activism in combination with service can bridge this gap.

2. **EDUCATION:** The purpose of social education is to educate people about the importance of a social issue. The goal is to inform people about the aspects of the issue and also interpret the issue within the context of liberal religious values.

Examples: Reading groups, speakers, discussion groups, worship services and sermons.

Strengths: People become more aware and informed. When done accountably, those impacted by the issue have a voice.

Challenges: Talking about a problem may become a substitute for doing something about it. Providing advocacy action steps as part of education, and having written information available at an event, can help to overcome this.

3. **WITNESS:** The purpose of social witness is to make public by word or deed the convictions of an individual or organization regarding a particular issue.

Examples: Participating in demonstrations, vigils, and marches, writing letters, passing resolutions.

Strengths: People in the community know where the congregation, or a subset of the congregation, stands on a given issue. At its best, witnessing involves partnerships with others in the community, especially those most affected by an issue.

Challenges: It may be tempting to believe that speaking out, in and of itself, will solve a problem. Gaining public attention to emphasize solutions as well as to highlight an issue can create momentum.

4. **ADVOCACY:** The purpose of advocacy is to work through the legislative process in order to impact public policy, as well as to contact officials in a variety of other social

institutions that deal with the public in order to alter their policies affecting their public dealings. Such institutions may include: banks, colleges, courts, hospitals, housing agencies, police, prisons, religious institutions, schools, social service agencies, stores, transportation services, universities, etc.

Examples: Visiting elected officials in a delegation, writing letters to elected officials, giving testimony at public hearings, contacting institutional officials by writing them letters, appearing at their Board meetings, conducting marches or demonstrations outside their offices.

Strengths: Public or institutional policy, to some extent, can be affected. Policy makers can be particularly moved by direct participation from people experiencing hardship, discrimination or oppression from current policies.

Challenges: Taking a stand on controversial issues can splinter a congregation. A careful, mindful and respectful process should be used.

5. **COMMUNITY ORGANIZING:** The purpose of community organizing is to participate in the process by which decisions are made in places of power. The focus is on the power of institutional structures and how that power is used. This approach is based on the recognition that individuals have a greater opportunity to change their situations through working with groups who know how to organize and influence power.

Examples: Developing a strong organization, influencing policy and decision makers and holding them accountable, empowering people so that they can achieve self-determination.

Strengths: Oppressive systems can be transformed, and accountability can be established. Partnerships can be formed across lines of race, class, gender identity, and faith, and new relationships can be transforming for members of the congregation.

Challenges: Working in coalitions can be difficult, complex and time-consuming. Unitarian Universalists can find it challenging to accept and empathize with other religious beliefs. This approach may involve more political activity than many congregants feel comfortable with.

III. Definition of Social Justice Council Program Structures within UUAA

A. Identify and name structures, define role/purpose of each structure.

1. Social Justice Council

- a. The Social Justice Council will consist of at least 6 active members of the congregation and a maximum of 9. Recruitment will be done yearly to engage and assure new membership to the Council.
- b. Officers of the Council will include a Social Action Chair or Co-chairs, Secretary (rotating for the minutes), Treasurer, and Communications Liaison. Officers and other members will participate in coordinating with Action Groups/Projects of the Congregation.
- c. Council Chair or Co-Chairs and other officers of Council will serve for 1 or 2, two-year terms with the consensus of the Council. At the end of their term they can remain members of the Council as well as serve other officer roles.

- d. Members serve on the Council for indefinite terms as long they remain active and participate in the duties and responsibilities of the Council. Nominations will be sought through such avenues as announcements in the church bulletin, and by consulting with members of the action groups, the Leadership Development program, and the Welcome Ministry program. From these nominations, new members are selected by consensus of the current Council.

B. Social Justice Action groups

1. The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor formally recognizes two types of Social Justice Groups:

- a. ***A Social Justice Action Group***, with an on ongoing purpose for action, service and/or other goals.
- b. ***A shorter term Social Justice Project Group***, with an expected end date corresponding to the completion of its social justice project.

2. **An ongoing Social Justice Action Group** has the following characteristics:

- a. An ongoing specifically-defined purpose for social action, service, and/or other goals.

Examples of a Social Justice Action Group are: Interweave; Ann Arbor UUs for Justice in the Middle East.

- b. At least 5 members, to include a chair or co-chairs.
- c. A member designated to serve as liaison to the Social Justice Council (may or may not be the Group's chair).
- d. Submission to the Social Justice Council of an annual report form. This form includes the names of the group's active members; a summary of the group's activities for the past year; the group's goals for the upcoming year; and the anticipated needs for congregational support for the upcoming year. Submission of this annual report assures that the group continues to be formally recognized as a UUAA Social Justice Action Group.

See Appendix A for a copy of the specific Annual Report and Budgetary Request form for SJ action groups.

3. **A short-term Social Justice Project Group** has the following characteristics:

- a. A specifically-defined social justice project.
Examples: an initiative to provide hurricane relief, a renewable energy project, an immigration rights study program.

- b. At least 5 members.
- c. A member designated to serve as a liaison to the Social Justice Council.
- d. Upon completion of the social justice project, submission to the Social Justice Council of a report form. This form includes the names of the group's members; and a description of the group's activities, accomplishments, successes and/or challenges.

See Appendix B for a copy of the project report form for SJ Project groups.

4. Group Application Process

- a. For a new group to be formally recognized and supported by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, a proposed Social Justice Action Group or Social Justice Project Group submits an application to the Social Justice Council.
- b. The application form includes the names of at least 5 active members; a designated liaison to the Social Justice Council; a description of how the group relates to social justice; an explanation of how the group's action, service, purpose or project relates to one or more of the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism; a list of goals; and the anticipated needs for congregational support.
- c. When the Social Justice Council approves an application the group will be added to the list of recognized groups.

See Appendix C for a copy of the Application form for a new SJ group, either action or project.

C. Position Descriptions and Responsibilities for all Positions within These Structures:

1. Social Justice Council Chair (or Co-Chair) Position.

a. Qualifications.

The Social Justice Chair or Co-Chairs must be Members of the First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor (as defined by the bylaws), and are committed to the principles and core values of the congregation. .

Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work.

Ability to facilitate decision making.

b. Responsibilities:

The Chair(s) conduct regular meetings of the Social Justice Council.

The Chair(s) will facilitate ongoing communication with Action/Project Group leaders through the assignment of liaisons from the Council.

The Chair(s) assure that:

-- the agenda is prepared and sent to the council members prior to the meeting.

-- ongoing communication is maintained with Council members.

c. The Chair(s) of the Social Justice Council will meet periodically with the designated Minister.

2. Social Justice Council Secretary.

a. Qualifications:

Social Justice Council Secretary must be a Member of the congregation (as defined by the bylaws) and committed to the principles and core values of the First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor.

Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work.

b. Responsibilities:

The Secretary will attend regular meetings and assure that minutes are taken and distributed monthly.

The secretary will assure that annual reports and budget requests from social action groups are received in a timely manner for a) inclusion in the congregation's annual report; or b) annual allocation of General Fund money by the Council.

3. Social Justice Council Member Position.

a. Qualifications:

Social Justice Council members must be Members of the congregation (as defined by the bylaws, including YURR) and committed to the principles and core values of the First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor.

Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work.

b. Responsibilities:

Members will attend regular meetings of the Social Justice Council and participate in the facilitation of policy and procedural decisions related to social justice.

Members will serve as liaison with Social Action Groups/Projects to provide guidance and support to groups as needed.

Members may attend Social Action Groups/Project meetings and report to the Council on any programmatic issues that need the support or attention of the Social Action Council.

IV. Activities and Functions of the Social Justice Council

A. Main Activities of the Social Justice Council.

1. The overall function of the Social Justice Council is to assist the action and project groups that fall under the Social Justice umbrella in achieving the goals they have set for themselves.
2. The Council generally meets monthly, with meetings open to visitors.
3. Periodically, each action group will be invited to send its liaison/s to meet with the Council to discuss the group's recent achievements and concerns, and to exchange with the Council possible ideas for addressing any concerns.
4. The Social Justice Council will annually create a budget. This budget will include allocating money for social justice groups from the General Fund, using the following process.
 - a. Beginning in FY 2012-2013, each social justice action group will be asked to fill out its annual report, which is due prior to the annual congregational budget planning process.

Appendix A shows the Annual Report form and budgetary request for SJ Action groups.

This report is essential if the group is to remain a recognized action group of the UUAA. The report is also necessary if the group wishes to remain eligible to apply for money from the Social Justice segment of the General Fund.

- b. The Council will compile a composite request to the General Fund planners for a Social Justice allocation from the General Fund, taking into account each group's access to alternative sources,
 - c. After the Social Justice Council has received its General Fund allocation, the Council will decide on an allocation to each social justice group, and will notify each of the groups.
 - d. The Council's budget will also include expenditures for needs of the Council.
5. Determining what groups will be asked to fill out the above annual report and budget request.

APPENDIX D lists recognized action groups and programs that fit wholly or partially under Social Justice and Environmental Action.

B. Advisory Activities of the Social Justice Council.

- 1. Periodically the Council may invite representatives from each action group to a Social Justice Gathering, at which they have a chance to share their achievements, their challenges, useful modes of communication, and their ideas for new or expanded social justice activities for their own group or for UUAA.
- 2. The Council will consult with the Ministers to find ways of integrating the work of action groups within the Sunday Services and the other ministries of the congregation.

V. Disagreement and Conflict arising within or among Action Groups or Programs

The Social Justice Chair or Co-Chairs may arrange meetings among people representing each viewpoint in the conflict, and a process person skilled in listening and mediating. Discussions will continue until a mutually acceptable resolution has been achieved.

VI. Acting or Speaking in the Name of a Social Justice Action Group or of the UUAA Regarding Social Justice Issues

- 1. On a Social Justice issue, in consultation with the Social Justice Council, the Board of Trustees may issue a statement "on behalf of the UUAA congregation."
- 2. On a social justice issue where it cannot be assumed that congregants are of like mind, a statement in the name of the UUAA congregation would require approval by a vote in an authorized meeting of the congregation.
- 3. On either type of issue, recognized officials of UUAA – (Ministers, Board of Trustees, heads of SGD ministries, Chairs of recognized Action Groups) – may issue a statement speaking for that person or group only and not for the congregation, accompanied by the person's position within UUAA.
- 4. The statement may not endorse a candidate for public office.

5. Social Justice Action Petition Policy*

Petitions may be circulated by already existing, approved groups within the UUAA on UUAA grounds during any official activity as long as they do not conflict with official policies. Groups must understand that they are not speaking/acting for the UUAA. The congregation is not permitted to engage in partisan politics

www.uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/real_rules.doc .

If an individual member wishes to gather signatures, they must find or create a sponsoring group that is recognized within the UUAA.

The Social Justice Council (SJC) chair/s must be notified of the petition and group sponsorship by email ten days prior to circulating. If something urgent arises, contact the SJC as soon as possible so that the Council can read it and have a copy on file.

[*Policy was approved at a Social Justice Council meeting 12/19/13]

VII. Planning for the Future of the Social Justice Ministries of UUAA

During the spring and summer of 2011, the congregation undertook a comprehensive Strategic Planning process to map out a five-year future for the UUAA. Results appear in a 115-page report, "UUAAA Strategic Plan, 2011-2016." This can be found on the church's website under About Us/ Planning for Our Future/ Faith in Our Future, with update adopted in March of 2012. <http://www.uuaa.org/about-us/our-congregation/planning-our-future>

The following goals over the next five years have been highlighted from that report:

Goal A: Integrating social justice programs with Spiritual Growth and Development.

Goal B: Increasing awareness of social justice concerns with Social Justice "moments" during services and with congregation-wide Days of Action.

Goal C: Moving toward periodic Social Justice Conferences.

Goal D: Hiring a Social Justice Coordinator by 2016.

VIII. List of recognized action groups and programs that fall wholly or partially under Justice and Environmental Action.

AA UUs for Justice in the Middle East (AAUUJME)

Challenging Racism program

CROP/Hunger Walk (annual)

Food Buckets

Habitat for Humanity

IHN/Alpha House (Interfaith Housing Network)

Interweave

Jackson Social Welfare Fund

Khasi Hills Sponsor-a-Student program

Mindful Eating Coalition, including

Food Gatherers Farm Project

Good Food Garden

Partner Church program

Prison Ministries, including

Prison Book donations
Prison Parents recording program (Staying In Closer Touch)
Washtenaw Prisoner Reentry program (WPR)
Sharing the Collection Plate
Interfaith Coalitions, including
Equality Michigan
ICPJ (Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice)
RAAH (Religious Action for Affordable Housing)

IX. APPENDICES (see separate documents)

Appendix A. Copy of the Annual Report form and budgetary request for SJ Action groups.

Appendix B. Copy of the Project Report form for SJ Project groups.

Appendix C. Copy of the Application form for a new SJ group, either action or project.