

Social Justice Council Handbook

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I. Social Justice at UUAA

- A. The work of the Social Justice Council (SJC) of the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor (UUAA) is inspired by the following Ends Statement from the UUAA Governing Policies (2-16-2016):

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.

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

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

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

- B. The work of the SJC also is supported by this goal from the UUAA Strategic Plan (5/22/2016):

Goal #8- Keep our Social Justice programs strong.

Our Social Justice programs are lifeblood to our very justice conscious congregation. Part of our work as a congregation is to empower people to find fulfillment for themselves through helping repair the world with UU value driven projects. We are unlikely to have a Social Justice Minister in our near future, so our volunteer led Social Justice Council has been a wonderful addition, allowing the many Social Justice groups a forum to communicate and coordinate. We need to make sure the Social Justice Council structure is sound and has the resources to nurture and support our programs. And we need to show them gratitude for the work they make possible.

Specific Actions

1. Support Social Justice Council Strategic Planning: This is a new effort for the SJC and should be encouraged and integrated into the Boards strategic planning processes.
2. Provide financial support for Social Justice projects: As budget allows, we have been increasing financial support for social justice projects. Continued increased financial support should be a priority.
3. Recognition/ Appreciation/ Communication: Further develop the Social Justice Moments [renamed Social Justice Connections] that have just started as a

part of Sunday services. These presentations spotlight our outreach projects and let the whole congregation, even those who are not a part of the project, feel proud of our UUAA accomplishments. We need to find other ways to spotlight and appreciate our social justice commitments.

II. Social Justice Council 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; and to establish the UUAA as a leader for social justice.
- B. Social Justice Council Objectives are to:
 - 1. Strengthen the involvement of the congregation in social justice ministries through:
 - a) volunteer recruitment, retention, and support
 - b) leadership recruitment and development
 - c) development of an 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 opportunities for training and learning that will enhance the social justice work of the congregation
 - b) providing mentorship and assistance 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.

III. 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. We draw upon: *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*)

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 justice service is to meet the needs of persons in distress.

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

Strengths: It is doing something in the present—e.g., hungry people are fed, homeless people are housed. Often social justice service is done in partnership with those being served and/or who are 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 justice 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 justice 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 social justice advocacy is to work through the legislative process to impact public policy, as well as to contact officials in a variety of other institutions that deal with the public 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 and institutional officials, giving testimony at public hearings, appearing at organizational board meetings, conducting marches or demonstrations outside 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.

IV. Organization of the Social Justice Council

A. Social Justice Council Structure

1. The Social Justice Council will consist of at least 6 active members of the congregation and a maximum of 9. Recruitment will be done as needed to engage and assure new membership to the Council.

2. The Social Justice Council will include three members with liaison roles: (1) a staff liaison who is ex-officio and non-voting; (2) a liaison with the Board of Trustees who, if not a member of the SJC, is ex-officio and non-voting; and (3) a communications liaison who, if not a member of the SJC, is non-voting.
3. Officers of the Council will include Chair or Co-chairs, Secretary, and Treasurer. Officers and other members will participate in coordinating with the justice groups and projects of the congregation that have been formally-recognized by the Council.
4. Council Chair or Co-Chairs and other officers of the Council will serve for 1 or 2 two-year terms with the consensus of the Council. At the end of their terms they can remain members of the Council as well as serve other officer roles.
5. Members serve on the Council for indefinite terms as long they remain active and participate effectively in the duties and responsibilities of the Council. Member nominations will be sought through such avenues as announcements in the church bulletin, and by consulting with members of the justice groups, the Leadership Development Team, and the Welcome Ministry program. From these nominations, new members are selected by consensus of the current Council.

B. Position Descriptions and Responsibilities for all Positions within the Social Justice Council

1. Member Position

a. Qualifications

- Member of UUAA (as defined by the bylaws)
- Committed to the principles and core values of the congregation
- Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work

b. Responsibilities

- Attend regular meetings of the Social Justice Council and participate in the facilitation of policy and procedural decisions related to social justice.
- Serve as liaison with social justice groups (and projects, as needed) to facilitate communication between the SJC and group or project members; provide guidance and support as needed to the groups; and keep the Council apprised of programmatic issues, events, speakers, etc. of the groups.
- May attend social justice group and project meetings to maintain the above responsibilities.

2. Chair (or Co-Chair) Position

a. Qualifications

- Member of UUAA (as defined by the bylaws)
- Committed to the principles and core values of the congregation
- Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work
- Able to facilitate productive meetings and decision making

- b. Responsibilities
 - Conduct regular meetings of the Social Justice Council.
 - Facilitate ongoing communication with Group and Project leaders through the assignment of liaisons from the Council.
 - Assure that:
 - the agenda is prepared and sent to the council members prior to each meeting;
 - ongoing communication is maintained with Council members
 - Prepare the SJC Annual Report for the UUAA Annual Meeting.
 - Periodically and as required, meet with the designated minister, the Worship Team, staff, and others in the congregation
 - Lead discussions on issues and facilitate problem solving with Council members
 - Other similar responsibilities as they arise or are needed
- 3. Secretary
 - a. Qualifications
 - Member of UUAA (as defined by the bylaws)
 - Committed to the principles and core values of the congregation
 - Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work
 - b. Responsibilities
 - Attend Council meetings and assure that minutes are taken and distributed monthly to the SJC.
- 4. Treasurer
 - a. Qualifications
 - Member of UUAA (as defined by the bylaws)
 - Committed to the principles and core values of the congregation
 - Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work
 - b. Responsibilities
 - Attend regular meetings and assure that reports of funds spent are kept current and presented at monthly meetings.
 - Track funds spent by social justice groups.
 - Distribute the Annual Summary of Activities and Budget Request form to social justice groups requesting the names of current members and chair(s), a report of activity, goals, and anticipated financial support for the upcoming year.
 - Present a budget to the Council for allocation of funds and communicate with social justice groups about approved funding.

5. Communications Liaison

a. Qualifications

- Member of UUAA (as defined by the bylaws)
- Committed to the principles and core values of the congregation
- Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work
- Experience and skill using social media

b. Responsibilities

- Attend meetings to update the SJC on communication strategies and challenges. (If the incumbent in this position is not a member of the SJC, meeting attendance can occur on an as-needed basis.)
- Work with the UUAA Internet Technologies Group to ensure that social justice events and issues are communicated with the congregation via uuaa.org.
- Work with the chair or co-chairs or other members of the Council on communications in the UUAA Bulletin, UUAA newsletter, social media (e.g., the SJC's Facebook page), and other social and print media.

6. Staff Liaison

a. Qualifications

- Member of the UUAA staff
- Experience and/or strong interest in social justice work

b. Responsibilities

- Attend meetings regularly.
- Provide communication between the SJC and UUAA staff as needed to ensure that the work of the SJC is supported.
- Provide advice and support to the SJC.

7. Board of Trustees Liaison

a. Qualifications

- Be a member of the UUAA Board of Trustees
- Have experience and/or strong interest in social justice work

b. Responsibilities

- Attend meetings regularly.
- Provide communication and updates between SJC and the Board of Trustees as needed to ensure that the work of the SJC is supported by the Board.

V. Social Justice Groups and Projects

- A. The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor formally recognizes two types of Social Justice groups:
1. A *Social Justice Group*, with an on ongoing purpose for action, service and/or other goals.
 2. A shorter term *Social Justice Project* with an expected end date corresponding to the completion of its social justice project.
- B. An ongoing Social Justice Group has the following characteristics:
1. An ongoing specifically-defined purpose for social action, service, and/or other goals
 - Examples of a Social Justice Group: Immigration Action Coalition, Mindful Eating Team, Restorative Justice
 2. At least five members who are members of UUAA, including a chair or co-chairs
 3. 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 Group.

See Appendix A for a copy of the Annual Report and Budgetary Request form for Social Justice Groups

- C. A short-term Social Justice Project has the following characteristics:
1. A specifically-defined social justice project.
 - Examples: an initiative to provide hurricane relief, a renewable energy project.
 2. At least five members who are members of UUAA
 3. A chair or co-chairs
 4. A member designated to serve as a liaison to the Social Justice Council
 - When the project has been completed, the group will submit to the Social Justice Council a Social Justice Group Project Report.

See Appendix B for a copy of the Project Report form

D. Group and Project Application Process

1. For a new Group or Project to be formally recognized and supported by UUAA, a proposed Social Justice Group or Social Justice Project must submit an application to the Social Justice Council.

2. The application form includes the names of at least five active members of UUAA; a description of how the Group or Project relates to social justice; an explanation of how the Group or Project's action, service, or purpose relates to one or more of the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism; a list of goals; and the anticipated needs for congregational support.
3. When the Social Justice Council approves a new Group, the Council will notify the Group that it has been approved, send a copy of the approved application to the Welcome Ministries Coordinator, and add the Group to the "Social Justice Involvement Opportunities" brochure.

See Appendix C for a copy of the Application form for a new Social Justice Group or Project.

VI. Activities and Functions of the Social Justice Council

- A. The overall function of the Social Justice Council is to assist the Justice Groups and Projects that fall under the Social Justice umbrella in achieving the goals they have set for themselves.
- B. The Council generally meets monthly with meetings open to visitors who make a request to attend to the chair/co-chair. Periodically the Council may invite representatives from social justice groups or projects to a Social Justice Council meeting, at which time the representatives will have an opportunity to share their group's achievements, challenges, useful modes of communication, and ideas for new or expanded social justice activities for their own group or for UUAA.
- C. The Social Justice Council will create an annual budget. This budget will include allocating money for Social Justice Groups and Projects from the General Fund, using the following process.
 1. Annually in the fall, each social justice group will be asked to fill out its annual report, which is due prior to the annual congregational budget planning process. This report is essential if the group is to remain formally recognized by 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.

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

2. The Council will compile a composite request to the UUAA General Fund planners for a Social Justice allocation from the General Fund, taking into account each group's access to alternative sources. If funds are requested to pay honorariums to individuals, they must be in keeping with the UUAA Social Justice Council Policy for Handling Requests for Honoraria. This policy was adopted in December 2020 and is shown as Appendix D.

3. After the Social Justice Council has received its annual General Fund allocation, the Council will decide on an allocation to each social justice group and will notify each of the groups.
 4. For the reimbursement of expenses, follow the instructions on the “Getting Things Done at UUAA” web page and place the completed form in the Social Justice mailbox. If approved, the SJC’s Chair, Co-Chair, or Treasurer will sign the form on the Staff Approval line, place the form in the “Invoices & Expense Reimbursement” basket in the office, and make a copy for the Council’s records.
 5. The Council’s budget will also include expenditures for needs of the Council.
- D. The Council will consult with the Minister(s) and/or Worship Team to find ways of integrating the work of social justice groups and projects within the Sunday Services and the other ministries of the congregation.

VII. Disagreement and Conflict Arising within or among Action Groups or Projects

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

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

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. Recognized officials of UUAA—e.g., Ministers, Board of Trustees, heads of SGD ministries, Chairs of recognized social justice groups—may issue a statement speaking for that person or group only, and not for the congregation as a whole. This statement must be accompanied by the person’s position within UUAA.
- D. Statements must be non-partisan and may not endorse a candidate for public office.
- E. Social Justice Petition Policy
 1. Petitions may be circulated by already existing, approved Groups or Projects within the UUAA on UUAA grounds during any official activity, as long as they do not conflict with official policies.
 2. If an individual member wishes to gather signatures, they must find or create a sponsoring group that is recognized within the UUAA.

3. The Social Justice Council chair or co-chairs must be notified of the petition and the Group or Project sponsorship by email ten days prior to circulating. If something urgent arises, the SJC chair/co-chairs must be contacted as soon as possible so that the Council can read it and have a copy on file.
4. A sponsoring Group or Project must understand that they are not speaking/acting for or representing the UUAA.
5. A representative of the Group sponsoring the petition must be present when signatures are being gathered and the petitions must be kept at a table. Those gathering signatures may not approach people and must remain behind their table.
6. The congregation is not permitted to engage in partisan politics. See: <https://www.uua.org/justice-programs/realrules>

IX. Appendices (see separate documents)

Appendix A: Annual Report and Budgetary Request form for Social Justice Groups

Appendix B: Social Justice Project Report

Appendix C: Application form for a new Social Justice Group, either long-term or project

Appendix D: Policy for Handling Requests for Honoraria

UUAA Social Justice Group

ANNUAL SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES CURRENT YEAR

AND

BUDGET REQUEST FOR NEXT YEAR

Please use this form to submit your summary of activities for the current year and your budget request for next year to the Social Justice Council. Add additional pages, as needed.

Submit this form to the Social Justice Council treasurer at sjcouncil@uuaa.org

no later than November 15

TODAY'S DATE: _____

NAME OF YOUR GROUP: _____

THIS FORM IS BEING SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP BY:

Name _____

Phone number _____

E-mail address _____

PLEASE LIST THE NAMES OF YOUR ACTIVE MEMBERS. CIRCLE THE NAMES OF THE MEMBER(S) WHO SERVE AS YOUR GROUP'S CHAIR OR CO-CHAIRS:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1) _____ | 6) _____ |
| 2) _____ | 7) _____ |
| 3) _____ | 8) _____ |
| 4) _____ | 9) _____ |
| 5) _____ | 10) _____ |

UUA Social Justice Project

PROJECT REPORT

After your Group has completed its project, please use this form to report your activities and submit it to the Social Justice Council (sjcouncil@uuaa.org). Add additional pages, as needed.

NAME OF YOUR GROUP: _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____

YOUR PROJECT BEGAN ON (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

AND ENDED ON (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

THIS REPORT IS BEING SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP BY:

Name _____

Phone number _____

E-mail address _____

1. PLEASE LIST THE NAMES OF THE PROJECT GROUP'S MEMBERS:

6) _____ 6) _____

7) _____ 7) _____

8) _____ 8) _____

9) _____ 9) _____

10) _____ 10) _____

2. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES AND/OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF YOUR GROUP. WHAT WERE YOUR SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES?

3. WHAT DID YOU LEARN THAT MAY BE HELPFUL TO SHARE WITH OTHER SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUPS?

UUAA Social Justice Group or Project
Connecting...Sharing...Inspiring

APPLICATION

So that your Social Justice Group can be formally recognized and supported by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, please fill out this Application Form and submit it to the Social Justice Council for the Council’s feedback. Add additional pages, as needed.

TODAY’S DATE: _____

NAME OF YOUR GROUP OR PROJECT:

Check one:

- Social Justice Action Group** (ongoing group, no specific end date)
- Social Justice Project Group** (for a shorter-term/finite project)

1. Group or Project Members

- List the people who have agreed to actively participate as members of the Group or Project, at least 5 of whom must be members in good standing at the UUAA. If you have more than 10 members, please add a sheet with signatures.
- Circle the names of the Group or Project members who will serve as the chair or co-chairs. The Chair or co-chairs must be members of UUAA.

1) _____ 6) _____

2) _____ 7) _____

3) _____ 8) _____

4) _____ 9) _____

5) _____ 10) _____

2. A designated liaison to the Social Justice Council is needed for each Social Justice Group. (Note that this person can be, but is not required to be, your group’s chair.)

Please provide contact information of your liaison:

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

E-mail address: _____

3. Describe your group or project and how it relates to social justice.

4. Briefly explain how your group's action, service, purpose or project relates to one or more of the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism.

5. List the goals for your group or project.

For shorter-term Project: What do you plan to accomplish? What is your timeline?

For ongoing Groups: What will be your goals for the upcoming year?

6. Budget—In your responses, please be as specific as possible.

- What budgetary support from the UUAA's General Fund do you anticipate your group will need, and for what purpose(s)?
- Are there other budgetary sources from which you anticipate your group will request/receive funding?

7. What non-budgetary support from the congregation do you anticipate your group will need? Please be as specific as possible.

UUAA Social Justice Council Policy for Handling Requests for Honoraria November 2020

Social justice groups provide a summary of annual goals and financial needs to the Social Justice Council (SJC) in the fall for the fiscal year starting January 01. The SJC is flexible and also reviews requests during the year as the need arises, depending on remaining budget. Financial support typically goes toward books, supplies, scholarships and speaker fees for groups in the community, external to UUAA. On rare occasions the SJC will also consider an honorarium for individuals. Compensating and honoring the time of speakers and other individuals, especially those with marginalized identities, is in itself a justice issue and a way of living out the values of our community.

The SJC policy for awarding honoraria to individuals is based on stewarding its resources in a just way:

- Individuals must be external to UUAA (non-members and having no affiliation with UUAA)
- An honorarium is offered for an individual's time spent working with a social justice group on an activity central to the group's annual goals
- The activity will be initiated by the UUAA social justice group
- The social justice group will provide a summary of the activities that require help, how paying an honorarium will support the goals of the group, and a rationale for financial support for this help.
- This documentation will be integrated with the annual summary and financial request; if submitting mid-year, documentation will be submitted as an addendum to annual summary of activities and budget request
- Requests will be submitted to the SJC treasurer and e-mailed to: sjcouncil@uuaa.org, for discussion and vote by the SJC.