

Social Justice Committee 2008-9 Annual Report

The Social Justice Committee started off the year with a focus on the 2008 election with many members of the committee (and the larger congregation as well)) working on voter registration and state/national campaigns. And early in 2009, the significant slate of issues (gay marriage, gender identity, medical marijuana, the death penalty, etc.) being addressed in New Hampshire came to dominate much of our focus throughout the rest of the church year.

The Committee sponsored “Appalachian Voices,” a speaker and presentation about mountaintop removal coal mining in the Appalachian Mts, and encouraged the congregation to send letters to US legislators. We also looked for ways to support Bill Sinkford’s Living Wage Campaign, but in the final analysis decided to wait for direction from the national office.

Recognition

The Social Justice Committee would like to recognize:

- Representative Paul Hackel, NH state representative, who worked very hard to keep the congregation informed of all the legislative activity that touched our UU values. He arranged for an excellent discussion with himself and Suzanne Harvey, and many members of the congregation participated actively.
- Dr. Jennifer Madden for her hard work and advocacy on transsexual rights issues. She has continually looked for ways to further people’s understanding, and advocate for needed legislation. NH came close but did not succeed in passing a gender identity anti-discrimination bill. (Next time, Jenny!)
- All our Social Justice Committee members, who do so much: (forgive me if I don’t recognize you individually)
 - Ellen Barr (Chair)
 - Adrian George
 - Ann Leach
 - Bob Keating
 - Elaine Thomas
 - Hilary Keating
 - Janie Andolsun
 - Jennifer Madden
 - Kim Hicks
 - Laurie Goodman
 - Marty Storer
 - Mary Ferguson
 - Miriam Swanson
 - Nathaniel Brooks
 - Paul Hackel
 - Roy Goodman
 - Sharon Machado
 - Shirley Rayburn
 - Sonya Hackel
 - Steve Edington
 - Tess George
- All the church members that participate in work to promote our UU values. Thank you for the service you do, letters you write, petitions you sign, meetings and rallies that you attend, etc., etc.

Our Physical Presence

Some of you may have noticed our smaller footprint in the Dining Room. Our green painted Phyllis Rockwell cabinet was retired last summer, and now all our current materials are in the Social Justice “corner” (which often serves as our table).

Action Groups

- Community Action (Members: Mary Ferguson, Bob Keating, Sarah Widhu, Ellen Barr)

The Community Action group, led by Mary Ferguson, continued its support for the Nashua Soup Kitchen (monthly meal preparation) and collection baskets (for paper products, linens, foods, cosmetics, etc.) for area organizations working toward ending homelessness. Both of these projects get a lot of congregational participation and run very successfully.

The group continued its focus on the Campaign to End Homelessness and to work with other groups, including the Greater Nashua Continuum of Care (www.endhomelessness.com) toward the goal of ending homelessness in Nashua.

In addition, although not a member of this action group, Jenn Morton did an outstanding job managing a monthly commitment we have to serve a dinner at the Soup Kitchen. Jenn takes care of all the communications and getting sufficient participation.

The management of the Sunday Outreach Collections continued to be a major focus for this team. Following are the results of the 2008-9 program:

Dates	#	Recipient	Amount
June, 2008 + summer	2+	Starr Island	\$2458.44
Sept, 2008	4	YMCA Strong Kids	\$2018.80
Oct, 2008	4	Bridges	\$1972.26
Nov – Jan 2009	12	Southern NH Services (home heating assistance)	\$5772.56
Xmas Eve	1	Nashua Soup Kitchen	\$3532.00
January, 2009	1	Living Wage Campaign (Bill Sinkford service)	\$914.00
January 2009	1	UUA Growth	\$809.00
February, 2009	4	Nashua Pastoral Care Center	\$1800.00
March, 2009	4	Donna Purkhiser Scholarship Fund (White Wing)	\$3758.50
April, 2009	4	Interfaith Hospitality	\$1742.50
May, 2009	5	Burundian Refugees program	\$2541.00
June, 2009	2	Habitat for Humanity	-unknown at time of printing-
Total			\$ \$27319.06

- Healthcare (Members: Ellen Barr, Pat Fields, Elizabeth Clark, Adrian George, David Golden, Marty Storer, Bob Keating, Mary Ferguson, Ann Leach, Miriam Swanson, Erika Consentino, Joan Connacher, Miriam Swanson, Mary Licking)

This year, the Healthcare Action Group, led by Ellen Barr, was paying close attention to the state and national discussions on healthcare reform. We had a meeting in April where we heard from David Golden (Physicians for a National Healthcare Program) who supports a single payer solution, and from Kaley Lentini, GSOP Healthcare activist and co-leader of the NH affiliate of HCAN (Healthcare for America Now) who supports a “hybrid” approach to reform. This type of plan would allow people to keep their existing insurance if they like it, but offer a public option to everyone else.

- Iraq War/Road to Peace

This group was not active during 2008-9.

- Green Sanctuary

Although there were some efforts to re-energize the Green Sanctuary program for the 2008-9 church year, without a dedicated leader, this church-wide, multi-faceted program could not take off. The Social Justice Committee recognizes that in order to be successful Green Sanctuary cannot be led from one committee, that the program requires a team of leaders across the church, perhaps with high level coordination from the Executive Team. The Committee also recognizes that with other high level commitments, such as our Strategic Planning, the church may just not have sufficient motivation to dedicate the needed resources for Green Sanctuary at this time.

The UU Action Network (UUAN)

This year, we saw a diminished role of the UU Action Network with Tess George resigning as the coordinator and a decision by the Board to cut the position to quarter time. Chris Rueggeberg, the new coordinator, met once with our committee, and although we stayed connected through all the NH legislative actions, there wasn't much opportunity to work together. In addition, we saw a weakening of all the connections that Tess had built among the NH UU Social Justice groups.

The Granite State Organizing Project (GSOP)

We continued this year as a member organization of the Granite State Organizing Project, a coalition of religious, labor, and civic organizations who come together to work at a systemic level on certain state and local issues as they pertain to social justice and the common good. This year GSOP focused on:

- Healthcare —co-leading NH Healthcare for America Now (see description under “Healthcare”)
- Burundian Refugees—helping with their resettlement in New Hampshire.
- Housing—legislation to protect tenants from out-of-state landlords who have non-compliant housing.

Chairmanship

The 2008-9 year completes my third year as Social Justice chair, and I have communicated to committee members my need to step down. As of this time, no one has come forward to lead the committee, and members of the congregation may take notice that the position for the 2009-10 church year is open.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Barr
Chair, Social Justice Committee