

The Unitarian Universalist Association's



# **SOCIAL JUSTICE EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM HANDBOOK**



*...supporting congregational action for [transformational](#) social change*

3/2007

## Creating Community

"We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap  
Warranting endless competition among us  
But as a deliberate act of God  
To make us a community of brothers and sisters  
Jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer  
To the varied problems of life."

-Steven Biko.

*Biko is known for fighting South African apartheid in the late 60s and 70s. His death while in police custody became a worldwide symbol of the oppressive regime*

## Dismantling Oppression

"We are a gentle and generous people. But let us not forget our anger. May it fuel not only our commitment to compassion but also our commitment to make fundamental changes. Our vision of the Beloved Community must stand against a vision that would allow the privilege of the few to be accepted as just and even holy. Our religious vision must again and again ask the Gospel question "Who is my neighbor" and strive always to include more and more of us as we intone the words that gave birth to this nation, "We the people..." We are, and we should be, both a gentle, and an angry people."

-The Rev. William G. Sinkford, *Faith in the Face of Disaster: UU Response to Hurricane Katrina - A Gentle, Angry People* 9/6/2005

## Social Justice

"The challenge of social justice is to evoke a sense of community that we need to make our nation a better place, just as we make it a safer place.

It's a time for greatness--not for greed. It's a time for idealism -- not ideology. It is a time not just for compassionate words, but compassionate action."

-Marian Wright Edelman, *President, Children's Defense Fund*

## Honoring Earth

"Let every individual and institution now think and act as a responsible trustee of Earth, seeking choices in ecology, economics and ethics that will provide a sustainable future, eliminate pollution, poverty and violence, awaken the wonder of life and foster peaceful progress in the human adventure."

-John McConnell, *founder of International Earth Day*

## The Prophetic Liberal Church

"This much we can say. A church that does not concern itself with the struggle in history for human decency and justice, a church that does not show concern for the shape of things to come, a church that does not attempt to interpret the signs of the times, is not a prophetic church. The prophetic liberal church is not a church where the prophetic function is assigned merely to the few. The prophetic liberal church is the church in which persons think and work together to interpret the signs of the times in light of their faith, to make explicit through discussion the epochal thinking that the times demand. The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to foresee the consequences of human behavior (both individual and institutional), with the intention of making history in place of being merely pushed around by it."

-James Luther Adams, *"Taking Time Seriously," in The Prophethood of All Believer*

## Introduction

*The Social Justice Empowerment Program was launched in 1992. In that time, over 150 congregations have participated in the workshops and many others have used the materials. Congregational leaders report that the program has helped them to focus, strengthen, and grow their social justice programs. It has helped them to balance their program with a mix of service, education, organizing, advocacy, and public witness activities. It has made them more aware of how to draw on UUA resources and to join in national organizing and advocacy campaigns. Most of all, ministers and others tell us that the program has helped bring social justice into the heart of the spiritual life of the congregation.*

*Since 1992, our association of congregations has continued to develop our effectiveness in working for social justice and broaden our understandings of what social justice means. The increased effectiveness can be seen in the fact that over ten percent of our congregations are now involved in congregation-based community organizations, and many more than that are working in interfaith coalitions. Thousands of Unitarian Universalists have joined in interfaith and national advocacy efforts that the UUA has initiated and joined. Our broader (and deeper) understanding of justice is reflected in the fact that over half of our congregations are now officially Welcoming (to the bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender community) Congregations. In 1997, we embarked on an association-wide, anti-racism initiative, and since then we have started to work on issues affecting people with disabilities. Youth empowerment is on the rise and social justice activities that include the whole family are being organized. Most recently our Statement of Conscience on global warming, passed at General Assembly, represents our deeper commitment to the earth.*

*A new engaged spirituality has taken hold in our faith, and we are beginning to understand that to work for social justice is in itself a spiritual practice.*

*This updated handbook reflects these new understandings. It is designed to help social justice leaders and advocates be more strategic, to develop collective decision-making, to make good use of congregational resources, and put our UU faith into action. It incorporates materials from Inspired Faith—Effective Action (UUA Advocacy and Witness), Facilitating Circles of Change (Spirit of Action), and other sources.*

*Our thanks to the Social Justice Empowerment facilitators who have lovingly taken this program across the country to small fellowships, mid-sized congregations, and large churches; and to Rev. William Gardiner who established the program.*

*Special thanks are owed to the Rev. Carole Ann Cole who revised much of the materials and shepherded this project. To Rev. Cynthia Prescott who formatted the handbook. To Rev. Art McDonald who provided a new social justice bibliography. And to Charles Zoeller, Rev. Kathy Huff, Pam Kelly, Carl McCargo, Rev. Ralph Galen, Tom Esch, Pat Butler, and Barb Greve for their review and comments.*

*We hope you will find this resource useful for your congregation's contribution to justice.*

*In faith,*

*Susan Leslie  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Director of the Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness*

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# I. Foundations of Social Justice in the Congregation

# Theological/Philosophical Foundations of Transformative Social Justice

From its very beginning, the precepts of Unitarian Universalist faith have had significant political implications: “We need not think alike to love alike.” (Frances David, court preacher to Unitarian king, John Sigismund, around 1568.) Unitarians and their beliefs were a major influence on the founding of the US political system. Universalists and their beliefs were a major influence on US religion and culture.

Unitarian Universalism is a theology of engagement: We draw inspiration and truth from experiencing each other and the world around us. In doing so, we necessarily witness both the beauty and brokenness of our world. And that’s why we’re here, because we have chosen to do social justice work in the context of our religious community. Being religiously grounded is key to effectiveness because it helps frame issues from an authentic, religious perspective, and it helps us speak from a religious perspective when necessary.

- **Unitarian Universalist congregations are religious communities, not secular activist organizations.** Our primary purpose is not achieving political goals—although that may be a significant activity—but rather building relationships and meaning based on justice.
- **How the work is done is as important as the end goal of promoting justice.** If the justice work we do fails to build community—or worse yet destroys it—we will not have served our congregations or Association well.
- **Utilize an appropriate, healthy process for decision making.** Any congregational activity or decision can be divisive if done badly. The solution is not to avoid that activity or decision, but to assess the process.
- **Engage in personal transformation.** Our ability to create social transformation is linked with our willingness to go through personal transformation in the process. How can we expect the world to change if we’re not willing to?
- **Reflect on our actions.** Educator and writer Paulo Friere, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argued that people learn best from conversations with each other (rather than teacher to student), and that only a small amount is learned from action. It is the reflection on action that informs values and thus makes the real difference.
- **Build Strong Relationships.** The more we are in relationship with each other and approach social justice in ways that value this relationship, the better off we’ll be as a community. This type of sharing, namely personal, ethical, emotional, spiritual, and/or theological, is necessary both for effective justice work, and for personal and congregational development.

By facilitating personal development and building relationships, dialogue and reflection make social justice work more sustainable both individually and as a congregation.

## **The Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association**

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- \* The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- \* Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- \* Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- \* A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- \* The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- \* The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- \* Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

## **The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:**

- \* Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- \* Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- \* Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- \* Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- \* Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- \* Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

# Unitarian Universalist Values and Social Justice

How is our Unitarian Universalist theology/philosophy connected to our social justice work?

We do this work because:

- We are Unitarian and we believe in the interconnectedness of all creation and the oneness of the holy.
- We are Universalist and we believe in the underlying principle of universal love.
- We are Unitarian Universalist and we celebrate these beliefs in our First and Seventh Principles, calling us to be aware how we are in the world and in relationship with others. We covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all people and respect for the interdependent web of all creation of which we are a part.

Doing justice work from a religiously grounded place is beneficial because it:

- Sustains us: personally, congregationally
- Provides vision and grounding
- Gives us courage to engage in transformative work
- Helps to frame our issues authentically and morally
- Reflects our most deeply held values and beliefs
- Increases our clarity and effectiveness
- Allows us to speak with a religious voice and demonstrate that there is a plurality of religion

*-Inspired by Rev. Barbara W. ten Hove*

## Spiritually-Grounded, Transformative Congregation-Based Work

- Sustains us personally and congregationally by fostering personal religious growth and deepening collective religious understanding
- Provides a community space to authentically explore and address issues of systemic privilege and oppression
- Builds community and energy in the congregation—provide a vision and goal
- Mobilizes and inspire the congregation across generations
- Develops new leaders and skills
- Forms partnerships with other UU congregations, interfaith and secular groups
- Builds bridges across barriers of race, class, sexual orientation and other differences
- Creates partnerships between groups with systemic privilege and historically marginalized groups
- Helps people in need
- Changes culture and policy
- Garners media attention
- Raises the profile/presence of the congregation in the community
- Enables congregational growth and strengthens coalitions for justice

## Doing Social and Environmental Justice Work from a Spiritual/Philosophical Center

- Do relationship and community building throughout, and personal and spiritual sharing prior to planning the work. Discuss the differences between working in a Unitarian Universalist congregational setting and a secular one. Following are several suggestions for sharing spiritual and personal views:

➤ *Complete the following statements (participants may first complete on index card then share in large or small groups):*

As a Unitarian Universalist, social justice work is spiritual/philosophical for me because...

I believe the role of the congregation in working for social justice is....

The UU Principles and/or Sources most meaningful to me are ..... because...  
(see page 2 for Principles and Sources)

- Talk personally about why we're passionate about a given issue and why it's an important issue for Unitarian Universalism.
- Ask questions and share personal stories.
- Examine how systemic power, privilege and oppression impact the issue. Find out if there are groups who are the most affected by the issue that are active. If so, act as allies and take leadership from them.
- Be the change we wish to see. Model being centered, passionate, open-minded, and welcoming.
- Talk about social justice work in religious terms.
- Include rituals in all activities: start with a chalice lighting, reading, and/or meditation. End with a closing reading or brief sharing.
- Always plan time for reflection and discussion following significant activities or events.
- Participate in a small group ministry such as a covenant group to help stay centered/grounded (i.e., do an activity that meets people's needs).
- Work with the minister(s) or lay leaders to have a "Social Justice Sunday" in which members of the social action group lead and/or participate in the Sunday service at your congregation.
- Hold "one-on-one" meetings with fellow members of the social justice committee to discuss personal and spiritual motivations for involvement. Surprising information and inspiring insights may arise.

## Visioning Our Communities' Future

In these times, those who work for equality, justice, peace, and sustainability seem to face a daunting task. However, a great history of social movements began with visions when change seemed equally impossible. Participants are encouraged to anchor their collective visioning in the possibilities that exist in their own local communities. Current realities we know exist can provide the spark of inspiration for imagining more widespread shifts on the societal level.

*--From Spirit in Action: Facilitating Circles of Change Curriculum*

Create a positive vision of your community 10, 15, 25 years from now. How old will you be? How old will a child whom you know be?

Draw on seeds of hope that exist today that could grow into full blossom. What does the future community look like

How would you like the congregation's social justice program to look in five years? In ten years? Consider how it would be integrated into the life of the congregation and the community.

## Healing from Divisions and Acting with Accountability

"Being in diverse community is essential to making broad-based change in the United States. To enjoy the privilege and responsibility of being in diverse community, people are called to recognize that we share both a common humanity and particular social identities, which accord power in unbalanced ways. Bridging this power divide is at the heart of healing divisions...Although we may share similar visions, the realities of living in a structurally inequitable society shape the attitudes, behaviors, and interactions of us all. In order to confront the power, privilege, and oppression that grow from social identities, we who seek a better world are called to do our own personal change work."

*From Spirit in Action: Facilitating Circles of Change Curriculum Guide, 2005, Spirit in Action, Inc.*

Through General Assembly resolutions and other actions, UU congregations and their members have committed to act in ways that are anti-oppressive and accountable to historically marginalized groups in their congregations and communities.

**Accountability is the concept of being held responsible for ones actions and attitudes:**

- Accountability requires partnership with and taking leadership from the communities most affected by the issue being worked on.
- Reconciliation and action lead to right relationship and accountability.

**To be an accountable partner with community groups (and within our own congregations):**

- When considering a particular project, find out what is already happening in the community and talk to the individuals and group(s) most affected before taking action. Be conscious of the safety of those most at risk.
- Be willing to take a supporting role on issues that do not directly affect us. Take leadership from affected groups.
- Be conscious of how much “space” we take up. Are we listening or dominating the conversation? Are we showing respect to the work others have been doing, or barraging them with our solutions? Are we believing their stories and perspectives, or asking critical questions to make them prove themselves?
- Partner with organizations recognized as legitimate representatives of the community we are working with, not self-appointed groups.
- Foster awareness of your own and the congregation’s power, privilege, and history both as complicit with the status quo and as resisters and transformative agents.
- Structure meetings and events in a manner that is inclusive and accessible to many different people, including those with special needs.

For tips on *Becoming a Good Ally*, see <http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/ally101.html>. For information on the UUA *JUUST Change Anti-Oppression Consultancy* for Congregations and organizations see <http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/antiracism/consultancy.html>.

## Social Action: A Congregational Ministry

To best nurture a mutual ministry of activism in our congregations we must look at a variety of factors and aspects of congregational life. These include interpersonal relationships as well as congregational structures and policies. The following list of suggestions is included here as a guide (or a goal) for congregations seeking to improve their social action or social justice programs.

**Deepen Congregational Identity:** A successful social justice congregation has a sense of mission and purpose. Members are familiar with the history of the congregation's involvement in social justice in the community and its part in the larger UU movement.

**Develop Visions and Values:** Have a vision of what could be. Don't just identify problems. Connect political beliefs with spiritual values. Practice developing messages and framing issues with UU theology.

**Be Intentional:** In order to be successful, a congregation must intentionally set a path for justice work. Priorities should be established as a congregation; clear goals/objectives set; decision-making processes are clear. Discover the passion of the members. Carefully analyze the problems to be solved. Action is concrete, specific and manageable. Congregational structures are examined with social justice in mind. Changes are made to structures that do not support social justice efforts. Examples of congregational structures and policies to consider are: *Budget, By-laws, Representation (Who speaks for the congregation and when?), committee and task force structure, and leadership,*

**Pursue Ministerial Leadership:** Ministerial support for justice work-including preaching, connection to the wider justice world, goal setting, and leadership development-is key. A minister needs his or her congregation's support in achieving a healthy balance between pastoral and prophetic work.

**Keep the Faith:** As together we walk the path toward justice, there will be great successes and there will be times of great despair. This is why we dare not walk alone. Engage our UU faith as a source of strength and reflection for the congregation's social justice work. Encourage members to articulate how their theology informs their social justice efforts. Include activities at social justice programs that feed the soul – music, art, poetry, prayer.

**Make it Easy to Pursue Justice Work Through the Congregation:** In successful social justice congregations, at least 20% of the congregation is involved in some kind of justice work. Many members work or volunteer with justice-related organizations outside of church. Social justice ministry is seen as a part of the life of the congregation. Justice work is integrated into worship, RE, social programs, etc., and is highly visible. This means that new faces and new ideas are welcomed and incorporated into committees and taskforces. This requires an honest sense of when seasoned leaders should "step back" and make a commitment to leadership development. Many congregations have developed databases that chart members' interests, membership in other organizations, skills, and expertise and match them with justice efforts.

**Utilize UUA Resources Mindfully:** Our Association makes many resources and trainings available to its member congregations, and they should be reviewed and considered regularly. Anti-Racism training, JUUST Change Anti-Oppression Consultancy, Welcoming Congregation work or the Social Justice Empowerment Program might be just what's needed to start the congregation on a path toward more active role in society. Contact UUA staff listed at the end

of this workbook to discuss the best and most appropriate workshop or resources for your congregation.

**Make Full Use of the Financial Resources of the Congregation:** Social justice leaders should draw on the financial resources of the congregation and its members. They can also apply for funding from the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program.

**Be Mindful of Balance:** A variety of voices should be heard in planning meetings and in justice work. If social justice issues are raised by a single or a few voices only, this should be addressed. In addition, if the congregation engages in all (or most) of the various types of social justice work (service, education, advocacy, witness, organizing), the overall justice programming will be stronger and more effective.

**Be a Good Partner:** Join interfaith and community coalitions. There is power in numbers. The best community partner is a congregation that knows itself as well as its community. This also means knowing when to be involved and when to step back. Whether pursuing partnerships within the congregation or in the community, a special effort must be made to include groups and individuals traditionally marginalized by race, class, sexual orientation, disability, and age.

**Engage in Reflection and Evaluation. Don't Shy Away from Conflict:** Facing controversy quickly and with creativity can make all the difference in interpersonal and congregational relations and provide a strong foundation for justice work. Effective work is often based on consistent and continual evaluation of actions, programs, structures, and leadership.

# Integrating Social and Environmental Justice into the Whole of Congregational Life

In many Unitarian Universalist communities, the social justice program is not a vital part of the overall life of the congregation.

People in the congregation may be indifferent or uninvolved in the important social issues of our time. They may not have a way to become involved, or they may work on social justice in organizations other than our congregations. Whatever the reasons, they are not expressing the caring for important human needs and commitment to justice which are central parts of our liberal faith.

Often in these congregations, members of the social justice committee live on the periphery of the congregation. They are often a small fringe group of people. Either they do not feel supported by the other members of the church; or they have alienated themselves from the rest of the congregation. Their reaction can be one of self-righteousness, one-upmanship, and guilt mongering.

In some cases, social justice leaders and organizers in the congregation are people who are concerned about some special issues but not about the overall well-being of the religious institution. They may want to use the congregation to get support for their particular issue rather than identifying collective interests or community needs.

In other cases, congregational members do participate in social justice committee projects, but they have not been part of the decision-making to determine the social justice program.

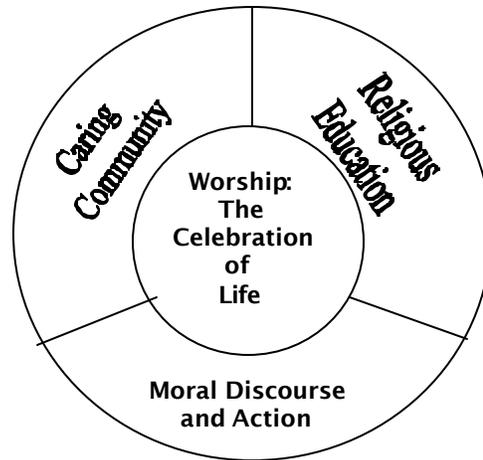
When the members of the congregation are uninvolved and the social justice committee is on the periphery, the congregation lacks the power to act in the world in the ways that it might. And when this happens our liberal faith loses its vitality.

If a congregation is to develop an effective social justice program, all of the members of the congregation must strive to make social justice a part of the life of the whole group. And social justice leaders need to do what they can to integrate a concern for social issues into the rest of the religious community.

While minister of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester NY, Rev. Richard Gilbert developed a model that helps us to understand how this can be done. Gilbert notes that each of these segments touches every other segment. He writes, "They are understood, not as administrative categories but as functions of the church occurring at many programmatic places. These aspects of the total program are interdependent. No one succeeds unless all the others succeed." Using Dick Gilbert's wheel, we see how we can build this vital connection between social justice ministry and the overall life of the congregation.

While social justice is not the sole reason the church exists, it is one very important dimension of congregational life. And all of the members of the congregation need to recognize its importance and support efforts for effective programs. The best ways to do this are to develop viable projects and integrate social justice ministry into the total life of the community.

## The Gilbert Model



According to Gilbert there are four dimensions of the religious life in the church:

- 1) The church as worshipping community,
- 2) the church as caring community in which a mutual ministry operates to meet personal needs,
- 3) the church as a community for life-span religious education, and
- 4) the church as a community of moral discourse and action.

Worship and the celebration of life are at the center of the life of our religious community. Through worship we express the values and meanings which are central to our faith. Here we find the inspiration to face the challenges of life and the motivation for action.

Our congregations are caring communities where people can find personal affirmation. Individuals come to the church for support at times of birth, marriage, and death. They look for acceptance in times of stress and turmoil. Many of our UU congregations have structured "caring committees" so that church members can be intentional about meeting these pastoral needs. As a community, we enjoy special events that bring us together like the fall fair, the annual retreat, the religious education picnic, and the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Our congregations are places for life-span education. We want our children to learn about values that can sustain them throughout their lives. Our adult education programs provide opportunities for people to learn about our liberal religious faith tradition and to grow as persons.

In moral discourse we discuss the important ethical and social issues of our day. And we take action on issues we feel strongly about.

Social justice leaders need to recognize that "moral discourse and action" is just one aspect of the total life of our religious community—an important aspect—but still only one part. The congregation does not exist solely to do social justice. As a holistic institution, all four parts need to function well.

This is why social justice organizers need to pay special attention to supporting the total life of the church. We can show our concern for the overall life of the church by supporting other programs such as religious education and music. We can show our support by giving generous pledges, and taking an active role in the all-church canvass. And social activists will benefit from this because the total church is the community that provides us with a place to

meet, financial support of our programs, and volunteers to act on the issues we think are important.

How do we integrate social justice into the overall life of the congregation?

One obvious way to do this is through the Sunday morning service. There, the minister/s or a guest speaker can do a sermon on an important social justice issue. Or a church committee can do a panel or a program on something that is happening in the larger community.

We can also integrate social justice work into the congregation's education program. Whenever we do panels on social issues or community forums, we are doing educational programs about social justice issues.

The UUA offers religious education curricula which provide materials for youth and adults on how Unitarian Universalists can act in the world. Some congregations have found this to be a wonderful way of building bridges across the generations in their religious community. See <http://www.uua.org/re/> for more information.

## Five Main Approaches to Social Justice Work: Ways to Take Action

Methodist minister Thomas Price wrote an article entitled "The Four Types of Social Concern" which identifies the different ways we can respond to social issues. A fifth approach is that of advocacy. And of course, all approaches to social justice should include an orientation of healing divisions and acting with accountability.

The five types of social justice action are:

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

**Examples:** collecting money, donating food or clothing, tutoring, sheltering the homeless, homes for senior citizens, programs for senior citizens, child care programs, food programs, youth clubs, scouts, hospitals

**Strengths:** It is doing something in the present. Hungry people are fed; homeless people are housed. When done in an accountable way to homeless communities, such programs are done in partnership with those being served and some of the homeless themselves act as co-leaders of the project.

**Challenges:** Relieving the symptoms does not always solve the problem and often has little impact on public policy, resulting in far more hunger and homelessness. Providing information on anti-poverty legislation in combination with service can bridge this gap.

**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 issues and also interpret the issue within the context of liberal religious values.

**Examples:** public meetings, workshops, resolutions, drama, public forums, worship services and sermons

**Strengths:** People's consciousness is raised. When done accountably, those most 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 form letters and postcards available at the event, can help overcome this problem.

**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 to the editor, passing resolutions, communicating to the wider community through press releases and/or press conferences, organizing petition campaigns, changing your lifestyle

**Strengths:** People in the community know where you stand on a given issue. At its best, our witness involves partnering with others in the community, especially those most affected.

**Challenges:** The temptation to believe that speaking out will in itself solve the problem. Gaining media attention that emphasizes solutions as well as highlighting the problem can create momentum.

**ADVOCACY:** The purpose of advocacy is to work through the legislative process to impact public policy.

**Examples:** visiting elected representatives in a delegation, writing letters to elected officials, giving testimony at public hearings

**Strengths:** Public policy is, to some extent, affected. Policy makers can be particularly moved by testimonials from people experiencing hardship and oppression from current policies.

**Challenges:** Taking stands on controversial issues can split a congregation. A careful process should be used.

**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 for good or evil. This approach is based on the recognition that individuals have little power to change their situations without the empowerment of groups who know how to organize and influence power.

**Examples:** developing a strong organization, influencing policy and decision-makers, empowering people so they can achieve self-determination

**Strengths:** Oppressive systems are transformed. Partnerships are formed across lines of race, class, and gender identity, and new relationships are transforming for congregational members.

**Challenges:** Working in coalitions can be difficult and time consuming. Patience is required. Acceptance or tolerance of other religious beliefs and language can be challenging for Unitarian Universalists. This approach may involve more political struggle than many members of a congregation feel comfortable with.

It is important to remember these five approaches when structuring social justice programs. In fact, these five approaches to doing social justice ministry do not exist in isolation from one another. Rather, they are complementary. Ideally, we would have programs in our congregations on specific issues which would include all five approaches and are done in a way that heals divisions and are accountable to marginalized and oppressed communities.

Such is the case in the **First UU Church of Columbus, OH**. This congregation has a multi-faceted program to empower homeless people.

In the **service** component, individuals go through an eight-week training program to develop a personal relationship with a homeless person living in one of two local shelters. These volunteers serve as sounding boards and advocate for people at government and social welfare agencies. Members of the congregation also provide money, food, and clothing.

In the **educational** part of the program, forums on homelessness are held for members of the congregation and the wider community. Guest speakers do sermons on the topic. Announcements are made in the church service and articles are put in the congregation's newsletter.

With regard to **witnessing**, members of the congregation participate in rallies to save the general assistance program. They issue press releases providing information about the problem of homelessness and what their congregation is doing about it.

In terms of **advocacy**, church members lobby elected officials about this issue. This was especially true when members of the City Council needed to find extra money to keep one of the shelters open.

With regard to **community organizing**, the congregation is a member of BREAD: Building Responsibility, Equality and Dignity in Columbus. Over the past three years, BREAD initiated and maintained a Jubilee Housing Campaign to address the dramatic shortage of affordable housing in central Ohio. As a result, the Columbus–Franklin County Affordable Housing Trust Fund was created. This fund will target at least half of its resources to low-income families. The city and county have invested \$6.2 million in the Affordable Housing Trust Fun. As a result of these programs, many homeless people have found jobs and homes.

## II. Social Justice Program Structure in the Congregation

# Structuring Social Justice in the Congregation

This section provides information on how to structure the social justice program in a local congregation.

The material covers:

- Structuring Social Justice Programs in Small Congregations and Fellowships, Mid-Size and Large Congregations
- Effective Committees and Task Groups

## Size of Congregation

The Alban Institute categorizes congregations based on their attendance. The Institute uses four categories:

- Family 0-50
- Pastoral 50-150
- Program 150-350
- Corporate 350+

The **family congregation** has 50 or less people who attend. It is often composed of two or three dominant families. This congregation is run by lay leaders. The leadership style is usually matriarchal or patriarchal. If there is a minister, she or he serves more like a chaplain. Everyone knows everyone else in the group. There is little long range planning. People care for one another in a one-to-one way. Such congregations can be closed to outsiders. Each of these congregations has unique capacities that need to be identified and utilized.

The **pastoral congregation** has between 50-150 people who attend. In these congregations, the minister is the leader. She or he knows everyone in the congregation. In these congregations, the members expect that the minister will do the caring. When conflicts appear in these congregations, it is often between people vying for the minister's attention. Such congregations sometimes do planning for the future but there is often no follow through. In working with these congregations, we need to be particularly attentive to aligning ourselves with the minister's energy and leadership style. When 100 or fewer people attend, one strategy is to choose one or two issues on which to focus the congregation's social justice program.

The **program size** congregation has between 150-350 people attending. The difference between the pastoral size and the program size is that the congregation is too large for the minister to know all of the members. Therefore, lay leadership is more important. In these congregations, the minister has more of a managerial role than a pastoral role. Lay leadership is usually stronger in a program congregation than in the family or pastoral size one. Planning and implementation is also more effective. However, members may have more loyalty to a particular program, like music or social justice, than to the congregation as a whole. These are congregations which have great potential for action groups. Hiring community ministers or other social justice staff for clusters of these congregations can greatly facilitate their programs.

The **corporate size** congregation has 350 or more members attending. In these congregations, lay leadership is very strong. The senior minister is more of a symbolic figure or visionary leader. Several people usually serve on the professional leadership team. All Souls Church, New York, with its 1,300 people involved in 25 action groups and its fund raising of \$250,000 just for social justice, is a good example of a corporate size program. If

they haven't already, these congregations need to hire social justice staff to coordinate their programs.

See <http://www.uua.org/justice> for information about paid social justice staff.

### **Percentage of Attendance as a Guideline for Participation in Social Justice Programming**

A survey of congregations with vital social justice programs indicates that 20% of attendance is a good guideline for figuring how many people can be involved in the congregation's social justice program. Of course, there are some congregations where a much higher percentage than this is involved.

Functional action groups should have at least 5 members; 10 is preferable. That means a congregation with a Sunday attendance of 200 can have 40 people involved in 4 action groups of 10. 300 attending can have 60 people involved in 6 groups. 500 attending can have 100 involved and so on. A congregation in New York State which has 350 people attending on Sunday, had only 15 people serving on its social justice committee. According to social justice empowerment metrics, 70 people would be involved in action groups. In fact, 70 people came to the empowerment workshop and they formed 7 new action groups.

Of course in smaller congregations where fewer people attend, there are fewer people to support many action groups. In those situations, we need to use different strategies like picking one or two issues that all the members of the congregation can focus on.

### **Age, Race, and Socio-Economic Factors**

The age range of a congregation's members is an important factor to consider when structuring the social justice program. Consideration should be given to the target age groups to reach and to have more involved. Inclusiveness is another significant factor in a successful social justice program. Consider the various racial and cultural viewpoints and needs in the congregation and local community and how welcoming the congregation is to them. Finally, socio-economic factors must be considered when organizing the social justice program. Plan meeting times around when working people can meet. Find ways of making involvement doable for busy parents. Consider the cost and whether those interested can afford to be involved and whether they have transportation.

## Structuring Social Justice Programs in Small Congregations and Fellowships

The size of a congregation has a lot to do with how to structure a program. There is a difference between structuring a program in a small congregation and a mid-size or large congregation. In a small congregation, the work is organized through a social justice committee. In a mid-size or large congregation, the ideal way to work is through a task group and a coordinating committee. In addition, when developing a social justice program in a small church or fellowship, remember to involve the whole congregation in developing the social justice program and pick one or two focus areas. Small groups can't support a whole network of task groups like a larger congregation can. But hopefully they can pick one or two issues that can receive broad support from the members of the group.

There are 780 fellowships and congregations that have less than 150 members. The number of Unitarian Universalist congregations is 1,055.

Fellowships and small congregations do not have a large number of people or a sizable budget for their program. But they do have certain strengths on which they can build to do effective social justice ministry. These strengths include:

- A strong feeling of family and community
- A short chain of command
- Ease of communication
- Often located in communities where they can provide important leadership

Fellowships and small congregations also have particular challenges as they carry out their social justice programs. These challenges are:

- Often there is no committee, or the existing committee is small
- Since there are so few people on the committee the members can get burned out easily
- Personality clashes in the committee or in the congregation can be particularly harmful
- The congregation's budget often contains no money for the social justice program
- Members of the congregation may be providing leadership to the social change groups in the community and as a result may not have time for church projects
- Sometimes groups exist in conservative communities where it is difficult to take a stand on a controversial issue
- Often there is no building to provide a community identity

In spite of these obstacles, small congregations have been able to do some significant programming. Following are some examples:

**Berrien Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in St. Joseph, MI** was the recipient of the UUA 2004 Bennett Award for Congregational Action on Human Justice and Social Action. This small fellowship of 42 adult members co-sponsored with a local radio station a city-wide public forum for criminal justice reform in response to outrage in the community sparked over the death of a young African American man killed in an accident during a police pursuit. "Weighing the Scales of Justice" brought together a wide array of criminal justice officials—from a Circuit Court Judge, two criminal attorneys, the County Sheriff, the Police Chief, an officer of the State Parole Board and others—with leaders and members of the community. The

forum was held on the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday to examine strengths and weaknesses in the justice system. The police and officials were thanked for the good work they do and much needed reforms were identified collectively. These included jury recruitment and selection, the judicial electoral process, racial profiling and racial imbalances in sentencing, overly harsh sentencing, setting of high bonds, lack of training for indigent-defense lawyers, issues of venue, and a history of wrongful convictions. The forum provided an opportunity for honest dialogue and accountability for instituting reforms was established.

The fellowship then went on to use their prize money of \$500 to support a new voter registration and Get Out The Vote initiative in Benton Harbor, Michigan, a 96% African-American community.

They recruited a community Task Force and together created the Voters Involved in America (VIA) organization for the purpose of increasing the voter participation in a community that had only 37% voter turn-out in 2000 and historically low turnouts in local elections. They applied for and received a grant from the UUA's Social Responsibility Fund in the amount of \$2000. They did further fund-raising, signed a joint-effort agreement with the national ACORN program, Project Vote, and went to work.

Over 1600 new voters were registered. In addition, VIA distributed an educational brochure, produced and hung over one-hundred, 4' x 2' red, white and blue signs on utility poles throughout the city of Benton Harbor, and supported and staffed a phone bank which became active the weekend before the election and throughout the day on November 2nd.

Leaders of the fellowship's Community Outreach and Social Action Committee reported that the work laid the foundation for continued involvement of the Fellowship in Benton Harbor, as well as an increase in citizen involvement in the revitalization of the city. MLK Day 2006, VIA developed a program to build on the newly registered voter base by continuing voter education efforts, increasing voter turnout at local elections, and let Benton Harbor announce to the county, state and country: "We are a Voting Community!" The chair of the committee writes, "We at CO/SA are very proud to be part of a religious community that supports and works for a democracy that encourages total citizen involvement."

Members attributed their success to their ability to be trusted by people in positions of authority and people in the community. Factors included the Fellowship's reputation for fairness, for speaking out, for their ongoing service and mentoring projects in the community, and because several members served on boards and in elected position and were known in government and non-profit and interfaith circles.

Unitarian Universalists are often uniquely poised to help heal divisions, build bridges, and gain institutional reforms that address systemic oppression. See <http://www.uua.org/awards/bennett.html> for more information about this effort.

**Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church** with a membership of 85 plus 35 church school enrollment has amplified its voice through its development of a vital interfaith Social Advocacy Program. See <http://www.alleghenyuu.org/prog/socadv.html>. As a member of the Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN), the congregation joins 32 other multi-racial and economically diverse congregations and organization in Southwest Pennsylvania. PIIN engages community organizing and issue advocacy to address the root causes of problems and bring about systemic change through changes in policies and legislation. The congregation works through the Central Northside Neighborhood Council on issues from neighborhood clean-up to affordable housing, racial justice, and community building events. Members of the

congregation also participate in weekly peace vigils with the Thomas Merton Center and hold educational forums on war and non-violence. Other projects of the fellowship include Just Harvest--a hunger advocacy, Habitat for Humanity, Northside Common Ministries—advocacy for the homeless and a food pantry, and the Pleasant Valley Homeless Shelter. The building is in constant use by neighborhood groups. The congregation is currently participating in the Welcoming Congregation program.

While still small, the congregation has had steady growth from a low-point of only a dozen members ten years ago. Members attribute the church's growth to the success of their community outreach and social advocacy efforts. They hired a minister to do community outreach and social advocacy and eventually hired him to be the parish minister. The social justice program has grown from a small social justice committee to a Social Advocacy Council that adopts projects with board approval. The board president estimates that 80% of the members are involved in at least one aspect of their social justice ministry. Most recently, the congregation is working with other UUs in Pennsylvania to develop a UU Legislative Ministry to work on statewide advocacy issues from a liberal religious perspective. When one calls the fellowship, the recording welcomes the caller to "Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church, a liberal religious community working for social and economic justice."

**The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Visalia, CA** with just 24 members has a social and environmental justice committee that coordinates the fellowship's activities. Because of their small size, the congregation aligns its work with the national Statements of Conscience (SOC) adopted at General Assembly in order to avail themselves of national resources. The work is conducted through networking with other congregations and organizations. Currently, the congregation is engaged in implementing the recently adopted SOC on global warming and participates in the California Interfaith Power & Light coalition that provides resources on renewable energy practices and engages in advocacy for ecological stewardship. Recently, the board chartered a green sanctuary committee to participate in the UU Ministry for Earth green sanctuary program.

The fellowship also works with the UU Legislative Ministry of California (UULM of CA) and is currently hosting a UULM of CA "Cottage Conversation" on same-sex marriage.

The fellowship meets in a Quaker Meeting House on Sunday afternoons and once a month the service is followed by a potluck supper and a committee meeting. An annual retreat is held in August where members review their mission, social justice vision and activities, and assess their capacity in order to stay focused and effective.

**The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes (UUFES) in Tamworth NH** includes in its congregational mission statement, "To act on our Unitarian Universalist principles to improve our community, locally and globally, through social action and outreach." This rapidly growing congregation of 100 members and a vibrant Sunday School enrollment recently purchased their own building.

The Social Concerns Committee coordinates with the Caring and Sharing Committee to raise funds for local charities and to recruit volunteers for a school-based mentoring program. Independently, the Social Concerns Committee has involved the congregation in voter turn-out drives, protection of civil liberties campaigns, and a successful effort to stop a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

There was such a high turn out when the Committee showed the movie "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price" that a new economic justice group was created to work with the

UUA/UUSC-sponsored interfaith Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign and for an increase in the minimum wage.

The congregation also engages in advocacy through the UU statewide advocacy network, NH Faithful Democracy, which has mobilized Unitarian Universalists on marriage equality, opposition to the Patriot Act, water rights, and economic justice issues.

While some of the work arises spontaneously, the committee had purposely shown the Wal-Mart film and invited American Friends Service Committee and other allies to the meeting with the hopes of increasing their economic justice work. That decision was based on 1) their participation in the state network, 2) their understanding that they would have other UU congregations and interfaith and community partners to organize with and thus have some impact, and 3) that the UUA and UUSC are involved in living wage/minimum wage campaigns and could provide resources.

Generally, the Social Concerns Committee is responsible for determining the focus of the congregation's social justice work. They work closely with the minister and the board, and participate in annual meetings and retreats to hear members' concerns. Action task forces are created as needed.

UUFES was featured as a "Breakthrough Congregation" at the 2006 General Assembly.

## Structuring Social Justice Programs in Mid-Size and Large Congregations

Mid-size congregations have between 150 and 550 members. Large congregations have more than 550 members. Mid-size and large congregations that have strong social justice programs carry out their programs through task or action groups. By using task groups, a congregation can have a number of substantial ongoing projects.

Task groups are necessary because it is difficult for a social justice committee to manage several projects at the same time. There isn't enough time in a monthly meeting to do all the committee business and also develop in depth projects. Typically, there is a pattern where ten people come to the meeting with ten issues. During the meeting, each person tries to persuade the other people to work on their issue. But the group can never achieve a consensus. At the end of the meeting everyone goes home frustrated. At the next meeting, the cycle is repeated.

The best way to start task forces is to identify those issues about which people are deeply concerned, as people will act on issues they feel strongly about. UU congregations are having a lot of success organizing people around women's issues, environmental issues, and peace issues because these are issues Unitarian Universalists care deeply about. Once the congregation's passion is identified, other strategic and objective criteria regarding grounding, accountability, fit and opportunity need to be reviewed before a final decision is made. See Section IV. of this handbook.

### Coordinating the Task Groups

Once members of a congregation have taken the steps to set up the task groups, then they must develop a way to coordinate these groups and develop an overall program. Often they set up a coordinating group or a council.

In some situations, the task groups meet together once a month. Such is the case with the **UU Community Church in Park Forest, IL**. This congregation has task forces called Hunger and Homeless Housing, Peace and World Affairs, Women's Issues, and Ecology. The task forces have a joint meeting the last Sunday of each month at a 9:30 a.m. adult forum. They share the news of their activities and host speakers on other social justice issues. During this meeting, people are also encouraged to write letters to legislators.

Other congregations structure their coordinating so that the task group leaders meet only four or five times a year. For example, **First Unitarian Society in Chicago, IL** has a social justice council. The council consists of a regular liaison from each task force, denominational groups, larger community groups, and three at-large representatives. The councils meet at least quarterly. The council proposes policies and task forces to the Trustees, establishes priorities and goals regarding social justice, and initiates, facilitates, and coordinates activities consistent with its goals.

One of the most effective ways of coordinating the task groups comes to us from the **Allen Avenue UU Church in Portland, ME**. One evening a month, all the task forces are brought together. For the first twenty minutes, everyone meets to discuss issues like funding, recruiting, and developing publicity. They take only one issue a month to discuss. Then the task groups go to separate meeting rooms for an hour and a half to work on their social justice issues. At the end of the meeting, the task group members come back together to share with the other people what they talked about and ways that others can help them with

their projects. The advantages of this model are that all the members of the task forces meet together instead of just the leaders of the task force; participants still get to focus on their projects because they break into separate groups; members of task force groups have a face-to-face opportunity to stay informed about what other task groups are doing.

In 2003, Allen Avenue UU received the UUA Bennett Award for Congregational Action on Human Justice and Social Action for their outstanding social justice program. They are a certified Green Sanctuary and Welcoming Congregation. Other elements of their social justice program include church-wide participation and intergenerational involvement, connections between service and advocacy efforts, and interfaith cooperation with the Maine Council of Churches and Maine Interfaith Power and Light. The social action committee organized broad congregational participation in public witness to prevent and end war with Iraq. Congregation members attended the Many and One Rally in Lewiston where a hate group had targeted the Somali community. The Allen Ave. congregation also has an outstanding partnership with the Sudanese community in which they have been good allies and helped build schools for children in refugee camps in Uganda. The social action committee has focused on "making social action part of the programming in worship services, religious education, adult enrichment programs, forums and publications." Allen Ave UU also received the Northeast District annual award for social justice in 2003.

**The UU Congregation of Columbia, MD** held a Social Justice Empowerment Workshop to restructure and focus their social justice program. At the workshop, they generated a huge brainstorm list of new projects which they consolidated into four major committees: environmental, community impact, social justice, and welcoming congregation. They reorganized and expanded the social action council to play more of a coordinating and management role and to be more efficient.

They presented the plan of an expanded council and revamped how it manages projects to the administrative team for approval. Then they held another workshop with the congregation and presented the new structure which was adopted by congregational vote.

The Council has 9 members and meets monthly with liaisons and members-at-large. Committees have a chair, a vice chair (who will be the incoming chair), council liaison (sometimes the chair, sometimes another person), and a secretary and meet 4 times a year.

Projects must be approved by the Social Justice Council. There must be a designated project leader and at least two other members. Project Development Form asks for a description of the project-its goal, expected length/time frame, money needed, and how it connects to UU values and the congregation's mission.

No project will be excluded if it has enough people, but the Council will give first priority for money and leadership training to those projects that demonstrate the greatest 'fit' with the congregation. The congregation has revised its by-laws to reflect these changes and the Leadership Council has proposed that all the congregation's councils adopt this model.

The environmental group is new and is developing a water conservation and water rights project.

Community Impact is the new umbrella for community organizing work already going on through a new CBCO start-up organization with the Industrial Areas Foundation and for a pre-school for the community.

Social Justice is the new umbrella for the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (a metro-DC area UU social justice group)

**First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon**, one of the largest UU congregations with over 1,100 members and over 500 in the children's religious education program, uses the Social Justice Council model quite effectively. The congregation's mission is: "To create a welcoming community of diverse individuals; to promote love, reason, and freedom in religion; to foster lifelong spiritual growth; and to act for social justice."

The Social Justice Council has a mission statement, a belief and policy framework, goals, responsibilities and membership designation that support the congregational mission and vision.

The mission of the Social Justice Program is: "To coordinate and support the congregation's effort to advocate, educate, organize, serve and witness for social action; to establish First Unitarian Church as a beacon of hope and social justice to our community."

The congregation has several ongoing Action Groups that include: Economic Justice, Ministry for Earth, Beloved Community, Global AIDS Awareness, UU Service Committee Projects, Peace Action, and an interfaith coalition core group.

The congregation is widely known in the Pacific Northwest region for its stands and actions to end the war in Iraq, to support same-sex marriage, to support fair trade, and to promote sustainable living. First Unitarian was one of the first Green Sanctuary congregations and is a Welcoming Congregation.

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Santa Monica** coordinates its social action efforts through its Faith in Action Commission. Its mission is to empower the congregation to choose social justice issues for study and action, and to integrate these activities fully into the overall life of the congregation in a way that is rooted in the moral and ethical values of UU faith as expressed in the congregational Vision Statement and the Principles and Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Action is based on careful research, analysis and thoughtful study embracing service, education, witness and advocacy issues through a range of activities including task forces, community organizing, study groups, alliance building, committees and ad hoc groups as needed.

Up to 3 broad and inclusive Faith in Action Focus Issues are chosen to be the primary emphasis of the congregation's social action efforts on a yearly cycle. These issues are to be chosen in a spirit of reflection on the moral and ethical values of UU faith.

An annual congregational meeting is held in order to determine the focus issue or issues. The meeting is facilitated and organized by the Faith in Action Commission (with the help of staff, where appropriate). At this meeting, congregants democratically vote on the issues. This meeting may be considered a "Town Hall Meeting" and does not require the 1/6th majority membership presence that is required as a quorum for a formal congregational vote.

If more than one issue is chosen, a task group is formed around each issue to study and undertake action on that issue and recruit congregational participation.

If only one issue is chosen, a follow-up meeting may be held to determine whether to form one or more task groups focused on the same issue.

Issue-oriented task groups established by this process may be called Task Forces, Committees, or Study Groups, depending upon the nature of the issue(s) and the preferences of the participants.

Task Forces currently include: Economic Justice Initiative, Hunger Initiative, Peace and Civil Liberties Committee, and a Women's Alliance. The congregation has liaisons with the UU Legislative Ministry of CA, the UU Service Committee, and the UU United Nations Office.

The congregation is active in several campaigns including living wage, support for same-sex marriage, and efforts to oppose the *Patriot Act*. Faith in Action contributes financial aids and volunteers to a local food bank and homeless shelter.

The **UU Community Church of Santa Monica** is a Welcoming Congregation and a designated Peace Site (part of the World Citizen Peace Sites program).

There is no "best way" to coordinate task groups. Each congregation needs to experiment to see what works best for it.

# Sample Social Justice Councils

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ASHEVILLE (NC) SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

### Purpose/Responsibilities:

- Poll the congregation to identify issues of concern. Use the information to influence direction of current issue teams, authorize the formation of new issue teams, and/or retire existing issue teams as required.
- Coordinate the work of the issue teams providing advice, assistance and oversight as required. Prepare annual overall evaluation of congregation's social justice work for annual report. Ensure social justice projects involve broad range of church community (age, abilities, etc). Measure proposed projects against guidelines for fit, grounding, and opportunity as well as breadth of activities (service, witnessing, advocacy, community organizing, and education).
- Supervise the social justice budget allocation, financial records and allocation of funds. Propose fund-raising activities to support social justice projects. Develop proposed budget for subsequent year.
- Create opportunities for social justice leadership development and training.
- Identify and draft proposed church-wide policies dealing with social justice matters.
- Communicate the social justice work of the congregation as broadly as possible both within and outside the church.
- Assist issue teams in recruiting volunteers. Identify and understand special talents of church members.
- Identify and link with resources of denominational social change groups.
- Create alliances with community organizations and interfaith groups.

### Members of the Council:

- Council Chair(s)
- Finance Advisor
- Intergenerational Advisor
- Communications Advisor
- Recruiting Advisor
- Leader(s) of Issue Team(s)
- Minister (ex officio)

### Meeting Frequency:

- The Social Justice Council will meet \_\_\_\_\_
- The Board liaison will be welcome to attend but is not required to do so

## UUCA Issue Teams

### Purpose/Responsibilities

- Conduct issues-related education forums/events for the congregation.
- Identify and define needs and interests to be addressed based on congregational input. Create opportunities for individual and congregational commitments.
- Identify projects with concrete, achievable goals. Define problems to be addressed in clear and concise terms with detailed action plan, activities to include the broadest possible range of members (age, abilities, etc), and request for necessary funding. Consider guidelines for fit, grounding, and opportunity and include activities for service, witnessing, advocacy, community organizing, and education whenever possible.
- Gain approval of projects from Social Justice Council.
- Identify action items and collaborate with community partners necessary to achieve goals.
- Coordinate projects including recruiting volunteers, overseeing action items and time-line (if applicable), evaluating results, and celebrating successes.

# Social Justice Action Groups

2003-2004

## Economic Justice

- Educates congregation on economic issues
- Promotes fair and just economic policies and practices.
- Creates educational resources for other Unitarian Universalists and our allies..
- Organizes lectures and forums by leading economic activists/authors

For more information, please contact:  
Coney Cliffe, 503-238-7683

## Beloved Community

- Fosters the spirit of understanding and respect for racial and cultural diversity.
- Offers classes, film series and workshops to congregation in order to stimulate conversation, insight and personal transformation.
- Creating an anti-racism curriculum which will be piloted in the Spring of 2004

For more information, please contact:  
Frank Nelson, nelson0119@earthlink.net

## Seventh Principle

- Seeks to promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.
- Provides concrete ways to be more ecologically responsible, including ways to live more simply and to reduce global warming and junk mail.
- Helps church maintain it's Green Sanctuary status.
- Provides classes, lectures and other special events to highlight ecological issues.

For more information, please contact:  
Barbara Ford, 503-621-9587

## UU's for Global AIDS Awareness

- Educates congregation on the AIDS epidemic, especially as it relates to African countries.
- Successfully passed an "Action of Immediate Witness" at the 2003 General Assembly, thereby drawing attention and resources to the African AIDS epidemic.
- Organize lectures and special events to promote AIDS awareness, including World AIDS Day.

For more information, please contact:  
Ann Pickett, 503-246-8629

## Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good (MACG)

- Part of a collaborative effort among churches, schools, synagogues, labor unions and community groups to work for the common good.
- Working to create a greater sense of connectedness between congregants of this church.
- Dedicated to promoting meaningful discussion that analyzes the impact of public trends on our private lives.

For more information, please contact:  
Margaret Grubkov, 503-284-9557

### Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)

- Highlights the mission of UUSC by celebrating Annual UUSC Sunday.
- Sells Equal Exchange coffee, tea and chocolate to promote fair trade and to raise funds for UUSC
- Raises money for UUSC by selling holiday cards
- Provides information on UUSC Youth Camps and other UUSC projects.

For more information, please contact:  
Madeleine Lefebvre, 503-247-7503

### Peace Action

- Organizes ways in which our congregation can act for peace.
- Provides celebrations and rituals by which to express our sorrows and joys related to the U.S. Occupation of Iraq.
- Orchestrating a Voter Registration/Education/Mobilization Campaign.
- Circulates information and gathers signatures for peace-related political advocacy.
- Connects our congregation with other community groups working for peace.

For more information, please contact:  
Shirley Gagne, 503-235-6189

### Recent Special Events

- New York Times columnist and economist Paul Krugman came to the church to discuss the economy and U.S. Occupation of Iraq. Attendance 100.
- The church hosted a community-wide Peace Day event on Nov. 11th. Attendance 100 plus!
- Our congregation takes an hour each delivered at the end of January and is now in use throughout the year.

### Social Justice Council

- Oversees the administration and operation of the Social Justice Program.
- Coordinates the annual Alternatives 2000 Festival.
- Takes public stands on social justice issues.
- Nurture the growth of new groups.
- Sponsors special events related to social justice.
- Meets monthly to coordinate the social justice activities of the church.

For more information, please contact:  
Wesley Bohlen, 503-247-7503

### Mission of the Social Justice Program

- To maintain and support the congregation's efforts to advance, through creative, innovative and other means for social reform, to establish Unitarian Church as a heart of hope and social justice in our community.

# *First Unitarian Church Social Justice Council*

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## **Mission of the Social Justice Council**

- To fulfill the Church's mission to act for social justice by empowering individual members and the congregation as a whole

## **Basic Belief and Policy Framework**

- Our work will be most effective if it concentrates on systemic change, but also includes charity for those in need
- Our work will of necessity bring us into conflict with those who resist change, either because of their fear of change or because the present conditions serve their interests
- Where conflict results from our press for systemic change, we will pursue our agenda vigorously and relentlessly, but with good humor, with fairness, with open minds, and with compassionate hearts
- We will see "victory" as progress on the road to greater social justice and never as a vanquishing of an enemy
- We will work for social justice, not because it makes us feel good to "do good," but because our work to serve others is central to our own Awakening as spiritual beings
- We will always be mindful of the spiritual basis for our work and not allow our work to become merely partisan political efforts
- We are permanently committed to continuous social justice reform and recognize no permanent allies nor permanent adversaries among other religious groups or political parties
- We welcome all progressive social justice work by other groups of all kinds; we will join with them in common cause whenever that joining adds strength to the effort
- We agree that in our work together, we will:
  - Count all voices equally
  - Listen to hear
  - Leave baggage at the door
  - Take no strong side
  - Look for the Light in our conflict

## **Goals**

- Provide information to members and members of the First Unitarian congregation and other UU congregations about social justice work underway in the Church
- Encourage and facilitate the formation and successful work of Action Groups which adhere to the principles of the Church and the Social Justice Council
- Encourage and facilitate both forums for learning about social justice issues and practical action to bring about systemic change

# *First Unitarian Church*

## *Social Justice Council*

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### **Responsibilities of the Social Justice Council**

- Review proposed new Social Justice Action Groups to determine whether and how they fit the criteria established by the Church and the Council
- Monitor the activities of the Action Groups and other social justice groups to provide assistance where needed or counseling where actual or proposed actions are outside the criteria established by the Social Justice Council
- Develop and assure the implementation of efficient processes for accomplishing social justice work so that a minimum of time and energy is spent dealing with process and a maximum on actual social justice work
- Approve budgets and exercise budgetary control of the Social Justice Council itself and of all related Action Groups
- Assure that no Social Justice action by the Council or any Action Group is in violation of the rules under which the Church is a tax exempt body
- Review and approve major Social Justice initiatives proposed to be conducted in the name of the Church or of the Social Justice Council
- Actively pursue connections with other groups in the community which are working for social justice
- Prepare, and update at least annually, a strategic plan for Social Justice initiatives that look three to five years into the future
- Assure continuity from year to year for all social justice initiatives, with protocols for change over of Council members and Action Group chairs

### **Membership of the Social Justice Council**

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Social Justice Director
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Action Group Chairs or representatives
- At-Large Members
  - Youth Group
  - United Nations Delegate
  - Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- Ex Officio: Board of Trustees Vice Moderator

## Effective Committees and Task Groups

To create an effective social justice program, structures are needed to carry out the program. As noted earlier, smaller congregations will work through a social justice committee. Larger congregations will have task forces and a social justice-coordinating group. Whether the group is a committee, a task force, or a coordinating group, it is important to have designated leaders, a job description, liaisons who link them to other groups, a calendar for carrying out tasks, outside group networking, volunteer training, and an evaluation process.

**COMMITTEE JOB DESCRIPTION** – The social justice committee and the task forces should have a job description which includes size, terms of office, leadership, budget, liaisons, and responsibilities.

1. **COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP** – Leadership of the committee might include:
  - a) Chair: Runs the meetings and coordinates the program
  - b) Vice-Chair: Serves if the chair is absent, and rotates into the chair in the following year
  - c) Secretary: Keeps minutes and committee records; sends out notes of the meetings
  - d) Treasurer: Supervises the budget and keeps financial records
  - e) Outreach Coordinator: Handles publicity, communications, and outreach
2. **COMMITTEE LIAISONS** – The committee can have liaisons who link the committee to other church groups or community organizations, including:
  - a) Board or church council
  - b) Other churches, ecumenical, or interfaith groups
  - c) Unitarian Universalist projects such as the UU Service Committee, or the UU United Nation Office
  - d) Other community organizations
3. **COMMITTEE CALENDAR** – Certain tasks need to be done at certain times of the year. It may be helpful to create a schedule to ensure that these tasks will be carried out.

### FALL

- Review job descriptions
- Determine liaisons to church board and committees, community groups, and interfaith organizations
- Set meeting schedule for the year
- Plan fund raising activities
- Determine what will be done about announcements in the Sunday Service

### WINTER

- Plan the budget for the committee and task groups so that it will be part of the congregation's budget and annual canvass

### SPRING

- Recruit new members for the Social Justice Committee and the task forces
- Elect officers for the coming year
- Have a special session to evaluate the work of the committee for the past year and set new goals for the coming year
- Hold an issues forum

4. **IDENTIFY RESOURCE PEOPLE** – It helps to identify the people in the congregation who are currently working on social justice issues and the projects they are working on. These people can provide information, facilitate networking, and help locate resources.

One way to do this is to create a committee of people who know the members of your congregation. Include two long-time members and a couple of new members who know some of the newer people. At an evening meeting, have the committee members go through the directory and list beside people's names the different ways they are involved in the community and support social change groups. This creates a list of people who will support the congregation's social justice program.

Another method for identifying who is involved in the community is to hang a large piece of newsprint on a large wall. Then, before the worship service, or during the coffee hour, have people write the different ways they are involved in doing social justice work in the community.

5. **NETWORKING WITH INTERFAITH GROUPS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS** – It also helps to identify the interfaith groups and organizations operating in the community that people can work with. Such groups often have information to share. They may have influence the congregation doesn't possess.

Forming alliances with such groups can achieve together what the congregation cannot accomplish separately.

6. **TRAINING** – Congregation members need many different kinds of skills to be effective social change agents. Such skills include running effective meetings, lobbying, working with the media, and developing community organizations.

The district leadership schools teach valuable group process skills. Contact your district executive for further information. See <http://www.uua.org/DIST/>.

The Unitarian Universalist Association's *Office for Congregational Advocacy & Witness* provides consultation on how to develop effective social justice programs in local congregations. See Contact Susan Leslie at (617) 948-6407 or [sleslie@uua.org](mailto:sleslie@uua.org) for more information.

The UUA's *Washington Office for Advocacy* does training in strategic planning, lobbying, and advocacy work. Contact Rob Keithan at (202) 296-4672 or [rkeithan@uua.org](mailto:rkeithan@uua.org) for more information. For more resources see <http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/>.

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) can provide information and training on a variety of social justice issues (domestic and foreign). Call (617) 888-6600 for more information or go to [<http://www.uua.org>](http://www.uua.org).

7. **PROGRAM EVALUATION** – ongoing evaluation is important

After completing a major action or project, take some time to evaluate what was accomplished. What went well? What could be done differently next time? Using a process like this helps to affirm the congregation and their achievements. It also reinforces the idea that we are all continually learning how to do social justice work more effectively.

At the end of the year, set aside a time to evaluate what has been accomplished and set new goals for the year to come. This can be done at a Saturday workshop or at a special evening meeting.

### **Suggestions for an Evaluation Meeting**

- (1) Start the meeting with some social time or a meal.
- (2) Have a brief worship service to set a positive tone.
- (3) Consider having the minister or a member of the congregation give a short talk on how social justice work provides an opportunity to express our faith.
- (4) Engage the participants in a process to determine the strengths of the program and the areas that need to be improved.
  - (a) Give each person a 3x5-index card. Ask them to take five minutes to write three things they like about the congregation's social justice program.
  - (b) Have participants break into groups of four or five. Have each group choose a reporter to report back to the larger group. Tell the groups to take eight minutes to reach a consensus on three things they like about the program.
  - (c) Bring participants back into the larger group and ask the reporters to give their group's results.
  - (d) Have someone write the items on newsprint as the reporters from each group share their observations with the total group.
  - (e) Review the items listed. This is a time to celebrate what the group has accomplished during the previous year. Determine some ways to share this good news with other members of the congregation and the wider community.
- (5) After each group has shared:
  - (a) Ask people to turn over their 3x5 cards (or give them another card). Invite them to take five minutes to write three things they would like to see improved in the congregation's social justice program.
  - (b) Repeat steps (b) through (e) above.

This process should generate lots of suggestions for improvement in the program that can be discussed. Choose a few issues that are clear priorities. Create some small groups to discuss these issues in detail and bring back some recommendations to the whole group.

# Social Justice Committee Job Description: A Working Model

A job description enables the members of a social justice committee to understand the tasks and functions of their group.

Usually in the fall, the committee gathers to start a new year. This is a good time for the committee to write or revise the job description. Writing a job description reminds the long-time members of what they are supposed to accomplish. It gives new committee members a chance to learn the tasks of the group.

Below are listed some descriptive elements to consider for the Social Justice Committee. These can be adapted for each congregation's needs.

- Minimum number of members
- Terms of office
- Budget amount

## Purpose, Tasks and Goals

1. Purpose: *To inform and educate congregation members and the public in areas of social concern; to find ways and means to rectify social injustices; to sponsor and support groups organized to deal with social problems; and to develop informed leaders to foster a just and peaceful world.*
2. Coordination: *Members of the committee will serve as liaisons to the Board of Trustees, the Church Council, the District, and the local Interfaith Coalition for Peace and Justice.*
3. Provide opportunities for members and friends of the congregation to participate in social service projects, examples: *collecting money, donating food and clothing, and supporting senior citizen and youth programs.*
4. Conduct educational programs (worship services, seminars, forums) to raise people's consciousness about social issues.
5. Enable members and friends of the congregation to witness about social issues including: *letters and visits to elected officials, letters to the editor, participating in demonstrations, testifying at public hearings.*
6. Encourage members and friends of the congregation to organize to change the system of oppression and injustice.
7. Research and analyze issues in depth. Develops action strategies aimed at achieving significant results.
8. Develop public statements in the name of the committee or where appropriate, in the name of the congregation.
9. Publicize what it is doing so that people in the church and in the wider community know what is happening and how they can become involved.
10. Use the special talents of church members and local citizens to implement

change. Many of our members have special gifts as problem solvers, organizers, and researchers. Others enjoy doing hands-on work: typing, serving food, or covering overnight shifts at a shelter.

11. Train people in organizational and social change skills.
12. Ensure that the church building is used to facilitate social change: having special programs housed in the church, opening the church for meetings of community groups, allowing controversial groups a place to meet.
13. Make sure church financial resources are used for moral ends: ethical investing of endowment funds, fundraising for community projects, purchasing supplies from organizations involved in social change, purchasing environmentally safe products, use of church building to support bail bonds, etc.
14. Develop links with and uses the resources of denominational social change groups: *UU Service Committee, Cambridge Forum, UU United Nations Office, the UU Peace Network, etc.*
15. Create alliances with community organizations: *NAACP, NOW, RAINBOW COALITION*, and churches and synagogues (ecumenical and interfaith).
16. Develop a budget to allocate the financial resources of the committee. Educate members of the congregation on the use of the financial resources of the church to bring about social change.

### III. Social Justice Leadership and Involving More People

# Getting People Involved in Social Justice Programs

Leaders of social justice programs in local congregations are often looking for ways to get more people involved in their committees, task groups, and projects. Below are some suggestions which can help, along with your current successful practices.

## 1. Infuse social justice into the total life of the congregation by making it part of worship, education, and a caring community.

By making social justice a part of the congregation's other programs, bridges are built between the social justice program and these areas. This process helps more members of the congregation become aware of what the social justice people are doing and generates more support from all the members of the congregation for the work.

## 2. Use processes that involve the whole congregation in choosing issues to work on.

Section V. of this handbook provides several models for getting the whole congregation involved in selecting and developing social justice issues to be worked on. When people are involved in picking the issues, they are more willing to do something about them.

## 3. Make use of task groups.

Forming task groups enables a congregation to do several projects at the same time. Every time a task group forms around an emerging issue, an opportunity is provided for the new people to become involved.

For example, the **All Souls Church in New York City** has task groups on hunger, homelessness, A.I.D.S., and children. They report that every time they start a new task force, they get dozens of new people involved.

## 4. Develop good public relations.

Effective publicity keeps people informed about what is happening in the social justice program and shows them ways they can get involved.

The committee and the task forces need to communicate to members of the congregation what they are trying to accomplish in their programs. Publicity is important in recruiting volunteers and in keeping people informed about what is happening. Ways of publicizing the work of the committee include:

**a) Newsletter:** Ideally, social justice leaders would put a story in every newsletter about some aspect of the social justice program. Articles can cover projects being carried out by the task groups, activities in the community that members are involved with, denominational social justice programs, and current events.

**b) Congregational Listserve:** Can be used to survey the congregation and for brief announcements of new projects, events, and meetings and updates on ongoing projects,

**c) Bulletin boards:** These can be used to display meeting notices, information concerning current projects, and pictures of the committee members.

**d) Pamphlet rack:** Brochures, pamphlets, and flyers can be put in the pamphlet rack.

**e) Literature and letter writing table:** Many social justice committees set up tables during the Sunday morning coffee hour to distribute information about the congregation's social justice programs. Letter writing is an easy way of getting people involved in a task that is an effective way to influence legislators.

**f) Announcements in the Sunday Service:** Congregations handle announcements during the worship service in a wide variety of ways. Announcements are more effective when they are targeted on a few issues instead of a large number of them. One possibility is to pick one or two major projects during a month and focus the announcements on them. It helps to supplement the verbal presentation with an insert in the order of service.

**g) Conducting forums or educational programs:** Publicizing an event such as a forum provides a good opportunity to publicize the overall program as well.

**h) Publicity in the Community:** The social justice program and the congregation are also helped by publicity in the community. Sometimes it is difficult to get stories written in major metropolitan newspapers. But local and neighborhood papers are often eager to get material about local actions and projects. It is helpful to take steps to establish a relationship with a reporter from a local paper and feed stories to that person. Supplying pictures will interest a newspaper even more in printing the story.

## **5. Use an effective recruitment strategy to select people for your committee and task forces.**

In the spring, committees and task groups usually recruit new members for the fall.

Be intentional about developing a strategy for recruitment in order to get new people involved in the program. Too often people put an announcement in the newsletter and then wonder why they don't get a response. To get good quality people to serve on the social justice committee or task groups, an effective recruitment strategy is necessary.

One approach to recruiting is--

- Have committee (or task group) members think about how many people they need to recruit for the coming year.
- Have the group brainstorm the names of people they think would be good additions to the committee. It's helpful to consider the skills and resources such folks would bring to the work. If 3 people are needed, make a list of 6, figuring that half the group will say yes.
- Rank the order of candidates.
- Assign committee members to make personal contact with your potential recruits.
- Utilize a congregational database that tracks members' interests to do target recruiting.

Face-to-face contact is the most effective way to do recruiting. One suggestion is to arrange for a special time to get together with the person. It might be a luncheon, or another social occasion that allows an hour to explain what the program is and why the committee or task group would like that person to be involved in it. Be specific about

what the person is being asked to do. The person being recruited can ask questions and get the information they need to determine if they want to make a commitment to your project. Or, one may discover that the person is interested in a different project!

Another way of recruiting is sending a representative of the social justice program to orientation sessions for new members. There, new church members interested in social justice issues can be identified and informed of the congregation's social justice programs.

Developing brochures on the history of social justice in the life of the church and on the current social justice activities is also useful. The brochures can be put out at the social justice table, put in literature racks, and handed out at new member meetings.

## **6. Offer a diversity of program opportunities that provide different ways for people to be involved.**

A congregation's social justice program should be broad in scope because people do social justice in different ways based on their personality, temperament, interests, abilities, and values. More opportunities are provided for people to be involved when programs are oriented around these different needs. A broad program also provides flexibility that fits the demands of a situation.

It is important to remember the various approaches to social justice when structuring and trying to get people involved in social justice programs. Recognize that members of the congregation have different styles and temperaments when it comes to doing social justice ministry. One person may feel comfortable doing hands-on, direct service while another may have the energy to change the system through advocacy and community organizing. There should be room for both types of people in our congregations and our work.

We Unitarian Universalists like to pride ourselves on our theological diversity. Our congregations provide a religious home for people with very different theologies: theists, humanists, pagans, Christians, Jews, Buddhists and others. Hopefully, we can have the same kind of tolerance/acceptance for our different social justice modes as well.

### **Finding Your Congregation's Passion**

Many congregations work to identify the passion of the members before deciding on issue focus and specific projects. Some hold house meetings; others conduct Appreciative Inquiry (See <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>) such as the UU Congregation of Atlanta that involved 200 members in a process that invited people to remember the best times gone by and to dream of good times to come. Others use e-mail surveys such as First Parish in Brookline MA or telephone interviews. First Universalist in Minneapolis held one-on-one meetings with 75% of the congregation.

### **One-on-Ones**

A one-on-one is a term developed by community organizers to describe a personal conversation between an individual community member and an organizer to learn about his/her concerns, level of interest and commitment for an issue, and the resources the person

has to offer. At the same time, the activist organizer can introduce the issues of the congregation or social justice committee, and increase the level of awareness of the issue.

One-on-ones should take place in a quiet setting and last 30 minutes to an hour, during which time the congregational organizer and the congregation member should develop a level of trust with one another. The community member will do most of the talking in a one-on-one, while the "interviewer" asks questions to clarify points and learn more detail.

### **How would one-on-ones help our congregation?**

Facilitating one-on-one conversations between members of the social action group and other members of the congregation is a way to find out which issues the congregational members are most passionate about, what they have already been involved in, and what actions they might be interested in organizing. This enables the social justice committee to do its justice work in tune with the passion and desires of the members of the congregation. This means the social justice committee will be MUCH more effective!

Some congregations have found it useful to have the Board of Trustees convene a group to conduct the one-on-ones to ensure a broad approach to identifying congregational concerns and to build trust about how the results will be interpreted.

### **With whom should we conduct one-on-ones?**

One-on-ones can start with a member of the congregation whom the social action group knows:

- Contact that person and ask to sit down and visit with her or him.
- Brainstorm about who are the stakeholders in social justice in your congregation.
- Ask to meet with congregational board members.
- Every one-on-one should lead to future contacts. Ask for names of other members who may care about the issue.

### **What should be asked in a one-on-one?**

Find out about the person to be interviewed. Ask open-ended questions such as--

- How long has he or she been a member of the congregation?
- How long has the member lived in the community?
- Has the member been involved in social justice work through the congregation?
- Has the member ever been involved in other social justice organizations?
- How would the member wish to see the congregation be involved in the community?
- What would the member like to see happen in the neighborhood around the congregation?
- Has the issue in question affected her or him?
- What way would the member consider being involved? Does he or she have special interests or skills to contribute?
- Are there other people the member would suggest you talk to?

*Thanks to the Marin Institute for information on one-on-ones. For more information on conducting one-on-ones in your congregation, see **Sustainable Action: Planting the Seeds of Relational Organizing** at <http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/relationalorganizingplantingseeds.pdf>; Contact Susan Leslie at [sleslie@uua.org](mailto:sleslie@uua.org).*

## Creating a Caring Community for Those Involved in Social Justice Ministry

Participants in the congregation's social justice programs want to feel that they are part of a caring and trusting community. Part of caring for the world is caring for one another as persons. Developing this sense of caring community involves running effective meetings, attending to the spiritual needs of the participants, enjoying social time together, and celebrating accomplishments.

The committee or task groups should meet on a regular basis. The important thing is to get the meeting date on everyone's schedule. A meeting notice with an agenda should be sent out to committee members ahead of time.

Here are some suggestions for how to structure task group or committee meetings.

### Plan Social Time

People participate in social justice programs to meet important personal needs as well as to work on social issues. Such needs include being part of a group, making a difference in the world, and having a chance to live one's faith. Moreover, each of us needs a sense that we are part of a community that cares for us as a person.

For these reasons, it is important to build social time into the meetings. This is a time for people to get to know one another, to share what is going on in their lives, and to enjoy one another's company.

Social justice groups help people meet these needs in different ways. Some have potluck suppers before the meeting or send out for pizza. Others have a special social time for a half-hour before the meeting. A group member is assigned to provide beverages and refreshments. This can also be a time to write letters to political leaders on pending legislation.

**All Souls Church Unitarian in Washington, DC** devotes the first fifteen minutes of every meeting to one-to-one conversations based on community organizing models. See [Sustainable Action: Planting the Seeds of Relational Organizing](http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/relationalorganizingplantingseeds.pdf) by Louise Green, the church's social justice director at <http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/relationalorganizingplantingseeds.pdf>.

### Worship Together

Some are concerned about making a stronger connection between living a spiritual life and doing social justice work. One way to do this is to have a brief worship experience as part of the meeting. Some groups begin their meetings with worship. Others end the meeting in this way. A member of the group volunteers to lead the worship. That person may read something from literature or poetry, lead singing, or guide a meditation. Personal sharing can be woven in and builds community.

## **Set an Agenda**

It is good to send out a meeting notice and a copy of the agenda before the meeting. Review the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. See if there are any additional items anybody wants to add.

It also helps to have the group look at the total agenda to see which items are most important. Assign a priority ranking to each of the items. In addition, determine how much time is needed for each agenda item and write the number of minutes beside it. Then assign a timekeeper to make sure the group keeps on task. Summarize the major decisions at the end of the meeting and write them on newsprint with the names of members assigned any follow-up tasks.

## **Evaluate Your Progress**

Evaluate the meeting and decide what should be on the agenda for the next meeting. Evaluation can involve in-depth discussion of what was learned or a go-around to each member of the group about what went well and what could be improved or a simple one-word summation by each participant.

The UUA Board of Trustees and other Unitarian Universalist organizations engage in process observation that reflects on group dynamics, including any power issues that arise and correspond with privilege such as sharing, amount of talking time, recognition and affirmation of ideas.

## **Celebrate Your Accomplishments**

Sometimes people will work on an event like a public forum or demonstration for months. When the event is over, nothing happens. People just go on about their business. But this is an opportunity to bring folks together for a celebration. Have a party! Let people enjoy being together and affirm what they accomplished. Organizing for social change is hard work. Often, it takes determination to get things done. So it is important to take steps to make it fun. Unless the work is pleasurable, people will burn out and perceive the group as being self-righteous.

An excellent resource for running effective meetings and developing a group consensus is [Working Together: A Manual for Helping Groups Work More Effectively](#), by Robert Biagi. You can order this book from the Citizen Involvement Training Project, 138 Hasbrouck, Division of Continuing Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst MA, 01003. The phone number is (413) 545-3450.

## **Provide Childcare and Youth Activities**

The busy schedules of working families can prevent them from attending social justice meetings and participating in activities. Provide food and childcare, offer a homework club, show a movie, or have a youth activity that is part of the social justice issue so that families can attend together.

## Leadership Development: Keeping Social Justice Programs Vibrant in the Long Term

Sustaining a social justice program in the congregation depends on the committee or group's ability to develop new leaders who will take on responsibility and can lead the congregation in new and positive directions. Leadership development needs to be a part of everything we do, as we engage in congregation-based social justice work.

### Steps you can take to develop new leaders:

- Once assuming a leadership position, consider one of the **first priorities** to find a replacement and work with him or her throughout the term.
- Try not to do things for people that they can do themselves. This is especially important when working in **partnership**.
- **Alternate** who runs or facilitates meetings, who serves as spokesperson, and who plans or takes responsibility for various actions.
- Ask for feedback from new members of the committee or from other members of the congregation on decisions that are being made. **Be willing to be challenged and to change.**
- If doing something alone, stop and think about why that's the case and if only one person should be doing it at all. Sometimes it's better to let something fall than to carry it solely on one person's shoulders. This can be a good wake up call for others in that they **cannot rely on one person to do all the work.**
- Provide **varying types of engagement** for members of the congregation. Different people will want to do different types of social justice work—direct service, education, witness, and advocacy—and new leaders will emerge naturally.
- Do **one-on-one conversations** between members of the group. These conversations not only allow people to understand each other's motivations and interests, but also build an accountability structure in which people begin working on behalf of the group rather than themselves individually.

## **Role of the Congregation, the Board of Trustees, and the Minister in Social Justice Ministry**

Below is an explanation of the roles the congregation, board, and minister play in the life of the congregation. Your congregation may operate somewhat differently; however, when developing a plan to involve more people in the social justice program, it helps to understand these roles and how they can be utilized to build the program, recruit leaders, and make social justice more central to congregational life.

### **THE ROLE OF THE CONGREGATION**

There are a number of ways the members of the whole congregation can be involved in making decisions about social justice issues. These include:

- Defining the congregation's mission in the world and its members' vision
- Establishing priorities for task forces
- Making commitments to key projects
- Voting on controversial issues
- Providing funds for social justice programs
- Determining policies for socially responsible investing
- Making decisions about General Assembly Resolutions

#### **Defining the congregation's mission in the world**

Writing a mission statement is one way a congregation can develop clarity about its social justice ministry. The process of writing a mission statement enables a group to clarify the purposes for which it exists. This is why the UUA Statement of Principles and Purposes is valuable.

The **First Unitarian Church of Oakland, CA** involved all of the members of the congregation in writing a mission statement. Neighborhood meetings were set up where people could discuss what they thought the congregation's mission should be. A statement was drafted and then voted on at a congregational meeting.

Many congregations are also engaging in visioning processes, such as the exercise in Section I., to help them act on their dreams and hopes and not just work on problems.

#### **Establishing priorities for task forces**

Several congregations have developed methods to involve all the members of the church in picking issues for task forces to work on. The **First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY** involves its members in a three-stage process for picking issues, which goes on for several months. The **UU Church in West Brookfield, WI** votes on project proposals at their annual meeting. These methods, and others, are described in detail in Section V. of this manual.

In addition to involving as many members as possible, it's important to apply criteria that further the congregation's vision, fit the congregation well, and are accountable to the community. See Section IV. of this handbook.

### **Making commitments to key projects**

From time to time, a congregation may have to decide whether to make a commitment to a major project. This may include using congregational resources to fund a community group, allowing a community program to use space in the congregation's building, or establishing a non-profit corporation.

In the late 1960's, All Souls Church in Washington DC involved its members in a two year process to decide whether to form a non-profit housing corporation. A committee was established to research the project. After enough information was collected, a series of hearings were held. Finally, the congregation voted to join with a local community organization and form a non-profit housing corporation to build a multi-million dollar project.

A number of other congregations have used similar processes to determine whether to build housing projects for senior citizens.

### **Voting on controversial issues**

Congregations also have to take votes on how the church will respond to controversial social issues. In recent years, dozens of our congregations have grappled with whether to support same-sex marriage, oppose the war in Iraq, or join a living wage campaign. Such issues can be contentious. There are suggestions in this handbook on dealing with controversial issues in Section V.

### **Providing funds for social justice programs**

Typically at its annual meeting, the members of the congregation vote on a proposed budget for the coming year. In this voting process, the members determine the importance of each of the congregation's programs: religious education, building maintenance, adult programs, music, and social justice. Those concerned that there be a vital social justice program can urge the members of the congregation to make it a priority in the budget.

### **Determining policies for socially responsible investing**

Members of congregations can take steps to ensure that the investment of the congregation's endowment funds is consistent with their principles. Are there people in the congregation working diligently for peace while the church's endowment fund is invested in defense spending? Do members of the congregation believe in racial justice while the money is invested in corporations that oppose affirmative action or support brutal dictatorships?

The members of the congregation as a whole should vote to determine the socially responsible investing policies for the congregation. These decisions are not just the responsibility of the investment committee of the board of the congregation. The way the congregation's money is invested is an expression of the values of that religious community. Therefore, all the members of that community should have an opportunity to express their needs and concerns. Some finance committees resist this approach because they have more financial expertise than other members and believe that there is a conflict between social justice and fiduciary responsibility.

One approach to socially responsible investing is to avoid companies that have poor records on particular social issues. Some areas to consider are nuclear power, nuclear weapons, defense spending in general, environmental practices, economic development, labor and community relations, equal employment opportunities, occupational health and safety, infant formula abuse, human rights, alcohol, tobacco products, and gambling.

Another form of socially responsible investing is more affirmative in nature. Such investments are often called “socially positive investments” or “alternative investments.” Here the investor is looking to invest in companies that contribute to a just, healthy, and peaceful society.

Community investing is another alternative that includes investing in community development corporations, minority businesses, low income housing, worker-owned businesses, renewable energy projects, and other socially positive ventures.

One way to insure that the congregation’s funds are invested ethically is to make them part of the Unitarian Universalist Association’s General Investment Fund. Not only does it yield a competitive rate of return but it saves management costs, and congregational participation enhances the whole association’s shareholder advocacy efforts. The UUA is a participant in the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility that coordinates interfaith shareholder activism. To find out more about this possibility, see <http://www.uua.org/finance/sri/>.

### **Making decisions about General Assembly Resolutions**

Each year members of UU local societies and delegates to the General Assembly have an opportunity to participate in the UUA Social Witness Process. There are a number of places where congregations can be actively involved in this process including proposing a resolution, voting in the Parish Poll, and using the Study/Action Guides.

Congregational projects that are based on Statements of Conscience (formerly known as General Resolutions) can be funded by the UU Funding Program.

For more information about how the Social Witness process works see the section in this handbook called “Social Concerns and the UUA Social Witness Process in the Resource Section and see UUA Commission on Social Witness at <http://www.uua.org/csw/>.

### **THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The Board of Trustees of the congregation also has a role in providing leadership for the congregation’s social justice program.

Since the Board and the ministers have the responsibility for the total life of the congregation, they can work to make sure that social justice concerns are integrated into the overall program. This involves infusing social justice concerns into the education, worship, and community building aspects of the church’s life. It means creating a healthy balance among all of the congregation’s programs.

The Board also provides leadership in ensuring that the congregation is a “moral community” which exemplifies the values its members consider to be important. This includes non-discriminatory hiring practices, socially responsible investing policies for endowment funds, and purchasing church supplies with environmental values in mind.

The Board should make sure that a viable structure—including task forces and a coordinating mechanism—exists for the social justice program.

The Board can also ensure that the social justice program has enough financial resources to carry out its program. This includes adequate funding in the congregation's budget and the provision for special fund raising events.

## **THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER**

Ministers have a special role to play in raising a prophetic voice. Ministers represent the congregation in the community and are its public face. As leaders of the congregation, ministers who consider social justice to be part of their ministry have an enormous influence on how much of a role the social justice program will have in the congregation's life.

Ministers can encourage social justice involvement by:

- Preaching sermons on social justice
- Joining interfaith coalitions
- Attending clergy lobby days
- Participating in and/or organizing congregational delegations to visit elected officials
- Leading the congregation in developing an anti-oppressive transformational approach to social justice

## IV. Strategic Planning and Community-Based Issues

# Organizing The Congregation: History, Resources, and Relationships

## Start with:

- The congregation's history related to social justice work:



- Historical Happenings:
- Current Happenings:

## **In the congregation**

- Who is in the congregation?
- What are the assets within the congregation, in terms of people, experience, money, time, resources, experience?
- What are the needs and interests of the members of the congregation?
- What is going on right now, in terms of social justice work?
- Other questions?

## **In the community**

- Who lives in the community?
- Who lives in the physical space near the congregation?
- What social justice organizing is already going on?
- What relationships does the congregation already have within the community?
- What relationships do members of the congregation already have with community members or organization

## Mapping the Congregation's Connections:

***Consider the many relationships the congregation has in the local community***

Where do congregants volunteer?

Which boards do they serve on?

Where do they work?

With whom does the congregation hold joint events?

To whom does the congregation give money?

What are other relationships members of the congregation maintain? Think creatively! Partnerships may exist where we least expect them!

Create a database of the congregational members' connections and interests.

Add to the diagram circles that represent the congregation's current community partners. Add additional categories as needed.



## Stakeholder Analysis

To move from studying social justice issues into constructive action for social change, consider how we will work with people affected by or engaged in particular issues.

The approach described here for choosing goals and setting an action agenda is based on developing a deeper understanding and forming collaborative relationships before forming a strategic plan.

Perhaps from the social justice committee's studies and research, particular problems can be identified that resonate widely with the congregation. In order to really define and understand the problem from the many points of view of all those involved, interview one-on-one the "stakeholders" in the problem.

- Stakeholders may be individual or group members of the congregation (especially if this is an internal issue).
- Stakeholders may be individual people or groups of people directly affected by an issue (e.g. people who are homeless or an oppressed group).
- Stakeholders may be representatives of a community or statewide group that is organizing on an issue.
- They may be elected representatives, or members of statewide, national, or inter-national networks.
- Those who are oppressed by and those who benefit from a problematic situation can be thought of as stakeholders.

If power were equally distributed and we could get all the stakeholders to come together for dialogue and decision-making, negotiating "win-win" solutions to issues would be the name of the game. But power dynamics among stakeholders tend to be very unequal. Whether or not all the stakeholder groups assemble, it helps if people from your group understand the power dynamics and the stated (and if possible some of the unstated) issues of the stakeholders.

To hold effective dialogue with stakeholders, we need to create a respectful climate for discussion that will allow real listening. We are called to listen with an open mind, trying to understand our own prejudices and stereotypes, framing our ways of thinking in new ways, communicating in the language of the other, opening our minds to alternative points of view, and seeking creative alternatives to fixed positions. As Unitarian Universalists who seek justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, we want to be sure that the voices of the less powerful and marginalized be heard.

*From Pam Kelly, a Social Justice Empowerment Facilitator who has 30 years of experience as a community organizer and worked for New England Neighbor to Neighbor, Piedmont Peace Project, The Center for Psychology and Social Change, The Massachusetts Senior Action Council and Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community. Pam developed the above reflections on working with stakeholder groups when she was the Director for Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community.*

## Out of the Congregation and Into the Community

Out of the Congregation and Into the Community At the national level, the UUA does all of our social justice work in coalitions. As a small, majority white, largely middle-class denomination, we are able to amplify our voice, engage in cross-class and interracial collaborations, and be more effective.

Benefits of community partnerships and coalitions include:

- Fitting the work into an existing structure, not re-inventing the wheel! Filling a niche in the community organization that may be empty
- Strength in numbers!
- More people = more hands. More people = more impact!
- Opportunities for future collaboration on other issues
- Doing the work in an accountable way
- Bringing different constituencies together
- Work is more effective
- Increase community connections
- Groups can specialize and take responsibility for different facets of the work
- Wider message
- Increased opportunities for media.
- Seeing issues from multiple points of view.
- Spreading the impact of Unitarian Universalism!
- Others?

# Strategic Planning and Implementation: Grounding, Accountability, Fit and Opportunity

## Choosing an Issue: Determining Grounding, Accountability, Fit, and Opportunity

When evaluating issue-based priorities, consider the following for each issue:

**Grounding:** Does the issue have authentic and deep Unitarian Universalist roots? Does it link to the current identity and theology/philosophy of Unitarian Universalists?

- Theology/philosophy – What is the spiritual, philosophical, historical, and ethical basis for our position?
- Worship and Congregational Life – What is our members' engagement on the theme in the congregation?
- Social Action – Is there historic and current UU engagement on the theme in the public arena?

**Accountability:** Is the issue of concern to marginalized groups in the congregation and in the community?

- Can the congregation be an effective and sensitive ally?
- Can reconciliation and right relationship be an outcome of working on this issue?
- Are there opportunities for dismantling institutional oppression? For systemic reform? For reparations?

**Fit:** Is there a match between our congregation's resources, aspirations, and ability to make a real difference?

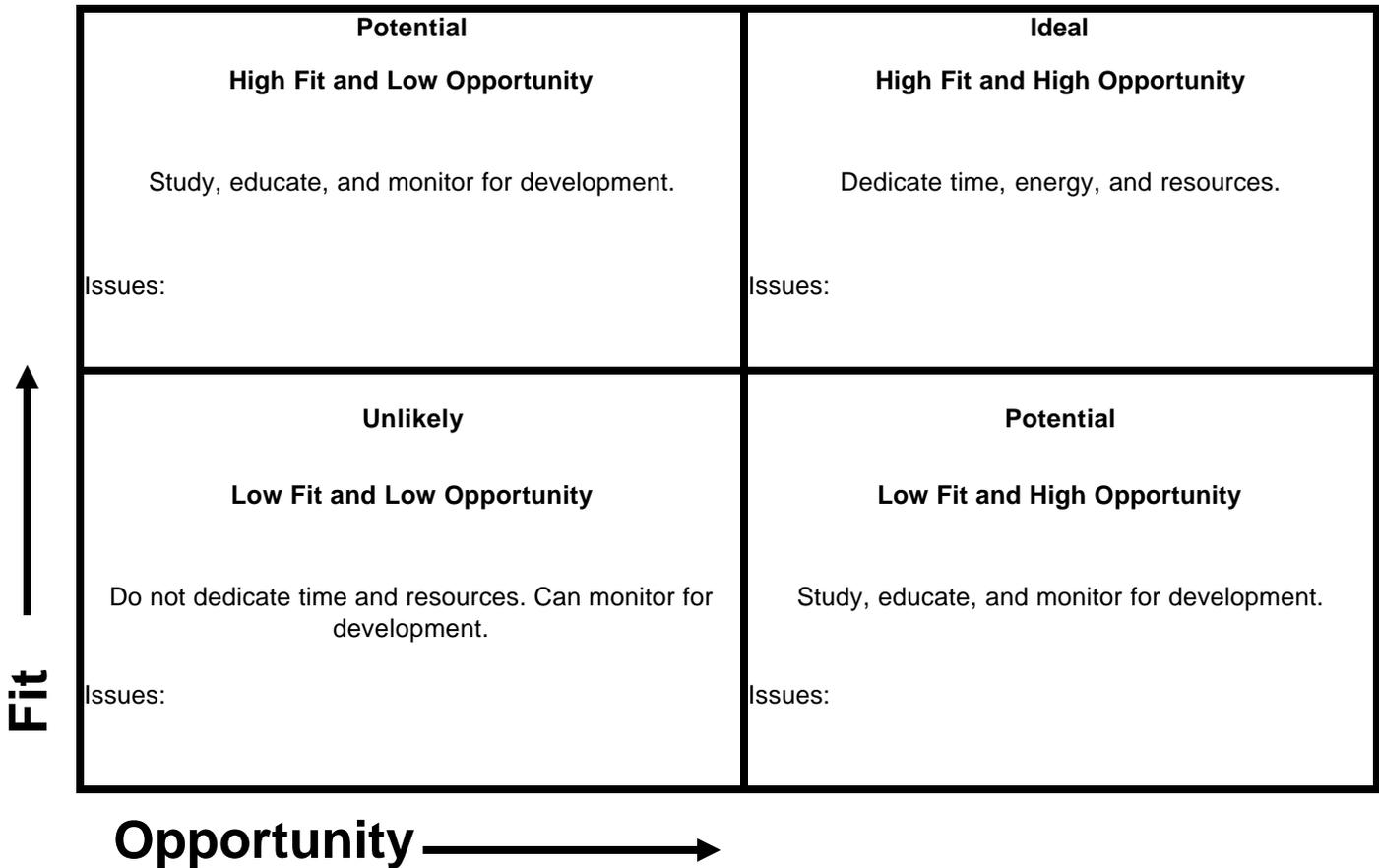
- Informed and Inspiring Leaders – Are there Unitarian Universalists who are or could publicly represent a UU perspective on the theme?
- Institutional Resources – Is there a task group devoted to the issue? Has the minister spoken out? Is there money available for the effort? What UUA offices, committees, affiliates, publications, curricula exist to support the congregation in taking a position?
- Partners – Are there national and/or local interfaith and allied organizations the congregation or UUA has a history of partnership with or that are actively seeking partners?

**Opportunity:** Is there likelihood that the congregation can be a respected participant in the public dialogue on this issue? Are there allies the congregation can work with? Are there debates in the public arena, proposed legislation that Unitarian Universalists can influence?

- Relevance in News and Public Dialogue – What is the degree to which the theme is or could become a meaningful factor in news coverage or public debate?
- Other Voices – Congruent: What religious and secular organizations share our views and are vocal?
- Other Voices – Contrary: What religious and secular organizations oppose our views and are vocal?

For issues where there is grounding and accountability, use the chart below to plot the amount of fit and opportunity. The issues with high fit and high opportunity are ones to consider making priorities. Potential issues may include:

- Criminal Justice Reform
- Environment/Global Warming
- Health Care
- Affordable Housing
- Marriage Equality
- Religious Freedom
- Sexuality Education
- Voting Rights



# Creating a Strategic Plan

It is important when creating a strategic plan to distinguish between goals, strategies, and tactics.

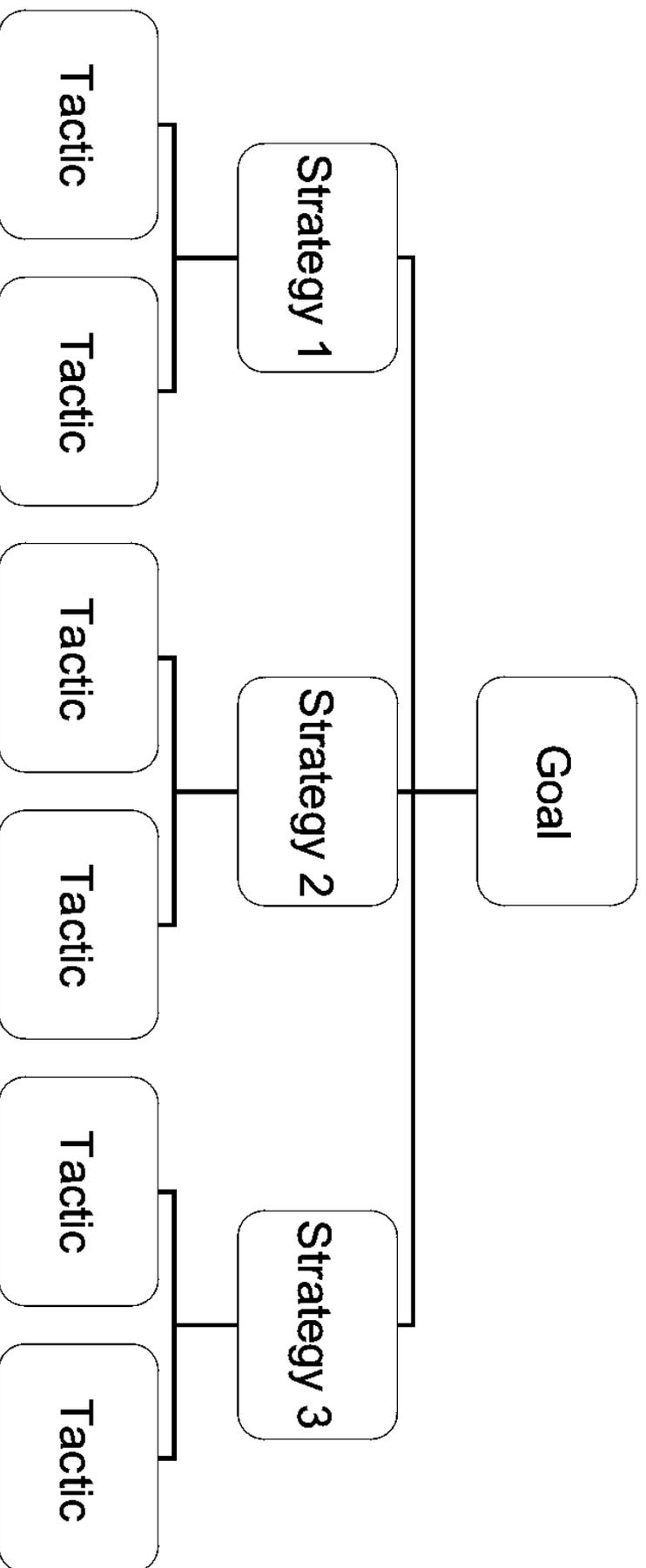
1. **Issue Selection:** Choose an issue that has **grounding** with your congregation's history and theology /philosophy, accountability to marginalized groups, **fit** with its current passion and resources, and where there is **opportunity** to make a real difference. Discerning grounding and fit requires knowing the congregation. Discerning accountability and opportunity means understanding the larger community and the current status and context for the issue.
2. **Problem:** Clearly and concisely define the problem. It's all right to begin broadly, but the outcome should be a single, specific sentence. For example, start with "civil rights for BGLT people" to "our state does not support the civil benefits of marriage to same-sex couples."
3. **Goal:** The solution to this problem is the goal. It should be clear and achievable. For example: "to secure the civil benefits of marriage for same-sex couples in our state." To be accountable when defining problems and goals, be sure to listen to the experience and desires of the people/groups most affected. This work cannot be done in a vacuum.
4. **Strategies:** Identify the strategies which, when successfully implemented will achieve the goal. The first step in this process is identifying who has the power to change what needs to be changed. In the above case, it's the state legislature. That group (and, for the most part, every group, including the general public) can be broken down into three parts: those who are supportive, those who are in opposition, and those who might be swayed. In general, supportive folks should be enlisted in the work of persuading those in the middle through education and advocacy work at those in the middle. Energy should not be expended on entrenched opponents. Identify people and ally groups with whom to partner. What resources do they have to offer? Who is the opposition? What is known about their work? What is the unique voice of the UU congregation? The answers to these questions, will start to indicate what strategies are necessary. In this case (like many), there will likely be an education strategy, a media strategy, an advocacy strategy, and an organizing strategy. In general, these strategies will not change throughout the life of the plan.
5. **Tactics:** Tactics are the particular activities necessary to implement strategies. For example, a public forum is an education tactic, but a single forum alone does not complete the strategy nor achieve the goal. Tactics should be evaluated regularly to ensure that they are effective. Be flexible--do not be wed to any one tactic. Remember that a tactic is NOT the goal, but merely a way of getting there.

# Creating a Strategic Plan

**A goal is:** the concrete, achievable outcome you wish to see.

**Strategies are:** the concepts or plans that, when combined, will achieve your goal.

**Tactics are:** the specific actions that, when done, will complete your strategy.



## Skills and Tactics

There are different skills and tactics required in the various types of social justice work.

### Service

General tips: In addition to the direct benefits to others, service is an opportunity for individuals to build relationships and grow spiritually. As such, reflecting on the service is equally important as the service itself. How did it make participants feel? What was the relationship like between congregational members and those being served? What role did race, class, gender, and other factors play?

- Soup Kitchen
- Clothing Drive
- Thanksgiving Food Drive
- Adopt-a-Family Programs
- Care Packages for Military
- Women and Men
- Homeless Shelter
- Medical Clinic
- Blood Drive

### Education

General Tips: Have an idea of what kind of programs the congregation or community partners are interested in and would attend. Educational programs and messages can be tailored to general or specific audiences. Know your audience! If inviting a congregation or community-wide audience, be sure to touch on aspects of each constituency's involvement in an issue. Include some form of follow-up action or reflection on the forum or class. Have an advocacy campaign for attendees to sign up for or work on a service project with your Adult or Youth Religious Education class.

- Congregational Forum
- Community Forum
- Guest Speaker
- Adult RE classes
- Children/Youth RE classes
- Community classes
- Pulpit exchange with partner churches (UU and other denominations)
- Letters to the Editor (local)
- Op-Ed in local paper

### Organizing

One example of partnership: Congregation Based Community Organizing (CBCO) is a movement that seeks to establish grassroots organizations for purposes of increasing social integration and power in civil society.

CBCO Organizations are:

- Interfaith
- Economically Diverse
- Multi-Ethnic
- Multi-Racial

Goals include making civic, regional and state-wide, and national changes for social improvement.

Over 100 Unitarian Universalist congregations are members of CBCOs. The Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness provides resources and support for congregations interested in or engaged in CBCO.

Contact Susan Leslie, Director of the Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness, at <[sleslie@uua.org](mailto:sleslie@uua.org)> or (617) 948-4607 for more information or to share your congregation's story of involvement in your local CBCO. To learn more, visit: [www.uua.org/programs/justice/cbco.html](http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/cbco.html).

Other examples of partnerships and coalitions:

- Groups within your congregation (including but not limited to the Youth Group, RE parents, Campus Ministry group, Women's group, etc.)
- Interfaith Organizations and other religious groups in your community
- Other Unitarian Universalist congregations in your area
- National Organizations
- Secular Community Organizations
- Local government or city council
- Schools or Universities

# Advocacy

Often the first question congregational leaders have about engaging in advocacy is what is legally allowed and what will threaten the congregation's tax exempt status.

## IRS Guidelines and Congregations: The Three Rules

1. No Limits on Advocacy and Education (activities that raise awareness on a given issue but don't encourage the public to support /oppose specific legislation).
2. Narrow Limit on Lobbying (advocating for or against specific pieces of legislation).
3. Total Limit on Partisan Politics (anything that advocates for or against candidates or parties).

### What you need to know about the restrictions on lobbying:

According to the IRS, lobbying must be an "unsubstantial" portion of an organization's activities. The IRS has not defined what this means exactly, but it's generally agreed that up to 5% is fine. However, that's 5% of the total activities of the organization, including money for the building and staff salaries, all staff and volunteer hours, etc. As such, it is highly, highly unlikely that any congregation would come anywhere near the "substantial" threshold.

### Effective Advocacy Starts with Selecting Priorities

Who has the power to make the change being advocated? If it's a group of people, such as a school board or city council, who are the ones the congregation is most likely to influence? That person or people are your advocacy priorities.

### The Approach Should Build a Relationship

The struggle for justice is long, and one of the keys to being successful in the long-term is building relationships—not just with fellow justice seekers, but also with those in power. Advocacy is an opportunity for relationship-building with the people and groups that have been identified as advocacy priorities: elected officials, their staff, etc. Therefore, your strategy and messages should be crafted in such a way that positions the congregation as credible, powerful, and helpful. If the message comes across as strident or intimidating, it could very well hurt the cause.

### Do Your Homework

The more that is known about an advocacy priority, the better the approach and message will be. This step can be as short as simply checking an official's website or as long as researching voting records, floor statements, legislation introduced, business connections, etc. At minimum you should probably find out:

- Their history and background (school, previous career, interests, etc)
- What committees they serve on
- Major legislation they've introduced or supported
- Past votes on relevant issues

**Customize Messages:** Tailor the messages to advocacy priorities. Think about what criteria they will be using to evaluate your request, and make your argument with that same criteria. For example, if their primary concerns are budget and

finance, they may be less likely to be persuaded by a human rights argument. Use facts and figures instead. In general:

- Tell compelling stories. Stories stick in people’s minds longer than random facts or arguments.
- Take advantage of expertise you have in the field. Speak from personal experience and connection to the issue.
- Support your points with factual evidence. Obtain or create fact sheets and other relevant resources to leave with the office.

**Effective Messengers:** In addition to having messages that are tailored to the official’s interests, in some cases it may be desirable to find individuals particularly suited to carrying the message.

- Individuals with a personal relationship to the official or staff person
- Individual representing organizations that have an existing relationship with the official or staff person
- Individuals who have some professional or personal attribute that the official may be particularly inclined to hear
- Experts in the field (academics, professionals, etc)
- Victims of the policy or lack of a policy

### **A Group Lobby Visit**

Organizing a group lobby visit is a highly efficient advocacy tactic. In addition to increasing the likelihood of meeting with the elected official, it allows the congregation to present more content in a more personal setting than other indirect methods. Also, the process of lobbying together builds relationships and purpose among activists.

If the congregation or social justice committee is part of a coalition, plan on group visits that include representatives from different types of organizations (business, education, labor, religious, etc). Or, plan a group visit with a specific group of people, such as those who would benefit from a policy change.

Tips Include:

- Decide on who will lobby and identify some possible dates.
- Identify one person or group-ideally one who already has a good relationship with the person or office-to set up the meeting.
- Once the meeting and participants are confirmed, make assignments for what each person will cover. Decide on what written materials you will take and who will prepare them.
- Whoever set up the meeting should take the lead and “facilitate” the visit: introductions, etc.

For more information on advocacy and lobbying, visit the Washington Office website at << [www.uua.org/uuawo](http://www.uua.org/uuawo) >> and select “Activist Resources” and then “Advocacy Tips.”

# Witness

## Communication and Using the Media

### Types of Media

- **Paid:** Advertising.
- **Unearned:** Coverage received without taking any steps to get it. For example, the paper covers the congregation's lobby day for marriage equality because they just happened to hear about it and decided it was newsworthy on their own.
- **Earned:** Coverage received due to intentionally seeking coverage. For example, the paper covers the congregation's lobby day for marriage equality because they were invited – a press release was issued, reporters were called.

### Earning Media

Successfully earning media requires (1) doing something that is newsworthy and (2) inviting coverage effectively. To meet both of these criteria, understand how the media works and plan accordingly.

#### 1. What is Newsworthy?

H. Fred Garcia, the UUA's expert media consultant, likes to sum up the components of a good news story as "the 5 C's." These are the elements that reporters are looking for. The 5 C's are:

- Conflict
- Contradiction
- Controversy
- Colorful language
- Cast of Characters

When seeking coverage, the question to ask is "What is the hook?" In seeking an answer, try to draw from the 5 Cs. Think of ways to involve these elements. If what's being planned seems like it is the same people doing the same things that they have always done, with nothing new or different, getting coverage will be difficult. The main exception is if the group has established itself as a credible voice in the community on a particular issue, and has good relationships with the media so they keep coming back to the group whenever the issue comes up.

#### 2. Working with the Media

Working with the media can feel intimidating, and it does require some particular skills and ways of thinking. The good news is that with adequate preparation, planning, and practice, most people and congregations can learn how to be effective. To learn more, see the *Sharing the Good News: A Public Relations Manual for Congregations*. This manual starts with tips for congregational organizing. The first chapter is "Forming and Effective Communications Committee," and then moves on to cover the specifics of media relations, including writing press releases, preparing for interviews, and other pertinent topics. This manual and other media resources including *Speaking to the Media as a Unitarian Universalist* by Peter Montgomery, June 2000, are available through the UUA's Justice homepage, <<[www.uua.org/justice](http://www.uua.org/justice)>> via *Resources for Your Congregation and Media*.

Also see the resources offered by Fenton Communication, a public interest firm, at <<[http://www.fenton.com/pages/5\\_resources/1\\_bestpractices.htm](http://www.fenton.com/pages/5_resources/1_bestpractices.htm)>>. Their guide *Now Hear This* lays out the steps necessary for a successful media campaign, and the recently-released *This Just In: 10 Lessons From Two Decades of Public Communication* is very helpful.

## Developing the Message

Whatever the strategy, tactic, or activity, a campaign should be guided by a clear message.

Ideally the message says

- (1) Who is the congregation or committee?
- (2) What is the congregation or committee doing?
- (3) Why should others join?

1. **Identify and segment the audience** to be reached as much as possible. The audience should never be “the public,” but specific groups and sub-groups that are likely to be mobilized or changed by the work.
2. **Clearly define the problem and the solution.** Identify the actions /changes that are needed.
3. **Frame the message.** What is intended for folks to think and feel when they hear the message? What are the key concepts to be communicated?
4. **Message development:** What are the concise words and phrases that will communicate the message effectively? What words will activate the frame (i.e., trigger the concepts) being sought? What popular slogans or concepts can be adapted/subverted for the cause?

Things to keep in mind:

- Make sure messages are concise, grounded in UU theology, and easy to understand.
- Use big ideas and universal values like fairness, equality, justice, protection, reward-for-work, family, community.
- Tell the truth as we see it—tell it forcefully, straightforwardly, articulately, with moral conviction and without hesitation.
- Have no more than three main message points. For example, on the issue of marriage:
  - All families deserve the legal benefits of marriage.
  - Civil marriage is a civil right.
  - Unitarian Universalists stand on the side of love.

## V. Taking Action As a Congregation

## Congregation-Wide Issues and Decision-Making

Unitarian Universalist congregations are democratic religious communities. This means that every member has the right to participate in making the important decisions that affect the life of the congregation. For this reason, we have congregational meetings, and we involve people in democratic decision making through our boards and committees.

Democratic decision-making is essential in the social justice program as well. When all the members of the congregation have the opportunity to be involved in picking some of the issues that will be worked on, they have a deeper appreciation of the importance of social justice in the overall life of the religious community. This is also an effective way to draw together members from various parts of the congregation: RE, worship, and so forth, to select an issue that concerns many members and provides a variety of ways to be involved.

Though there may be several on-going or new social justice task force projects that haven't been voted on and which may involve only a few congregants, developing one or more congregation-wide social justice projects, with many entry points and ways of being involved, can help make the social justice program a central part of congregational life. In addition, reviewing the social justice history of the congregation can help identify long-term concerns and passions that have united congregants over time.

Below are several models for involving the congregation in democratic decision making about social justice issues. Though some advocate allowing the congregation to originate the issue selected, it is also possible for the Social Justice Council to select the issue. In addition, the issue may be chosen during the empowerment workshop if attendance is enough to represent the entire congregation (20% or more) or has been empowered to do so.

**First Unitarian Church of Rochester, Rochester, NY** has used two models for organizing social justice programs in congregations. The Rochester Model comes to us from the First Unitarian Church of Rochester. The congregation in the late seventies and early eighties originally used the first model. This is a good design for a congregation that has no task force in place or wants to create some additional ones. Later, in the 90's second model was used (see explanation on the following page).

Model 1: Each spring, the Social Responsibility Committee (SRS) polls the members of the congregation as to their interest and participation in social action issues. The issues listed for voting include General Resolutions to the UUA, program priorities of the UU Service Committee (UUSC), and important local issues suggested by members of the SRC or other members of the congregation.

The results of the poll are published, and advocates of issues to be presented to the congregation are encouraged to develop the issue by completing *A Strategic Planning Process Worksheet for Group Action*. These advocates often work through the summer to analyze the issues and develop strategies.

In September, an official meeting is called for the congregation to select social responsibility agenda for the year from the issues presented. The format of the congregational meeting follows.

1. Tables are set up in the meeting room for advocates of the various issues to present their material and talk with interested persons.

2. The meeting is called to order and the whole process explained.
3. Each issue is presented by an advocate who may speak for no longer than five minutes. The focus here is not so much an argumentation on the pros and cons of the issue as to why the congregation should adopt it for study and action.
4. There is a brief discussion for clarification.
5. The congregation votes on how many issues it feels it can support for the next church year.
6. The congregation votes (a variety of means are available) to rank order the issues. The leading choices are adopted up to the number of issues established (e.g. if the congregation says it can work on two issues and there are nine presented, the top two in the process of setting priorities are adopted).
7. The advocates of the issues selected or a member of the SRC have a brief organizational meeting to establish a time for the Task Force to meet and select leadership and program.

*Note: In the second year of the program, the previously selected issues may be lumped with all others or may be subject to an endorsement vote. Other issues may then be selected the same way.*

The SRC monitors the Task Forces and provides logistic support. Task Forces are provided funding from the SRC budget, given access to the newsletter, Sunday service, and other communication vehicles, and are priorities for the minister through sermons and study groups. They report regularly to the Board and congregation and can ask for Board and congregational action and additional support. The SRC considers and acts on other issues, but these are given lower priority than those selected by the congregation.

Method 2: The method that began being used by the Rochester congregation in 1992 is a modification of the above model. The SRC no longer takes a poll of the congregation. Instead, any individual or group may propose an issue for task force status by circulating a petition to get signatures from five church members willing to work on that task force, and five more additional people who support the issue but may not have time to act on it. These signatures are submitted to the SRC before the congregational meeting in the fall. Also included is an application form which describes the goals and activities for the project. The group may publicize the issue in a flyer.

A task force is approved for only one year. If, after consultation with the SRC, the group wants to continue in the next year, it goes through the same petition and voting process again in September. Groups that are not selected for task force status may either operate as an ad hoc committee, with reduced status and privileges, or disband. They may try the next year to again become a task force. Task forces that have been in existence but are not re-approved deserve a public thank-you for their work.

*NB/Another method for involving the congregation in picking social justice issues to focus on, comes to us from the **Unitarian Universalist Church West in Brookfield WI**. Brookfield is a congregation of 350 people. The Rev. Marni Harmony was serving as the minister of the congregation in 1983 when this model was first used.*

Three members of the congregation who are active in social justice projects in the community prepare a proposal for the members of the congregation to vote on. The following criteria are used.

1. The project should be an expression of Unitarian Universalist values.
2. The project should be focused on a local issue (or if there were a national group involved, that there be a local project).
3. The project must be one in which people commit not more than twenty hours a year.

4. The project must be something that people can do as a group experience.

All three people present their proposals at the congregation's annual meeting. The members of the congregation vote for one issue. That issue becomes the congregation's project for the year.

In 1983, the one issue they picked involved working with a shelter for homeless people. Church members committed themselves to going to the homeless shelter as a group, once a month. That meant it was a group experience with a limited time commitment.

The process was repeated at the congregation's next annual meeting. In the second year, the members voted to repeat the homeless project.

**The Unitarian Society of Germantown** is a congregation of 320 located in Philadelphia. The social justice committee wanted to increase participation in the church's social justice program and create some new task groups. They, therefore, developed the following model. The minister, two members of the social justice committee, two long-time members of the church, and two recent newcomers met to identify those individuals in the congregation who showed a commitment to social justice issues in their church and community-wide activities.

Using the church directory, they reviewed each congregant's areas of professional and avocational social justice involvement. They tried to think as broadly as possible about the ways people are active. They identified people who taught in an inner city school, served on the Board of Planned Parenthood, contributed generously to the Sierra Club, taught adult seminars on women's issues, participated in the nuclear freeze rally, had special knowledge about black studies, etc. The activities were written down beside the name of each person. Eighty of the 350 members of the church were identified as being active in social justice in some way.

A potluck supper meeting was arranged for this group of people. A letter was sent to 80 people inviting them to the meeting. The purpose of the meeting – an opportunity to think about possible social justice programming – was stated in the letter. A phone chain was set up and people received a personal phone call inviting them to the meeting. Fifty people came to the meeting.

A group-process method was used to help the group establish priorities following the potluck supper. The method used was the voting method described in this packet. The group selected three major areas: education for children, pro-choice action, and peace action. Task groups were set up at the meeting, consisting of those people who were interested in developing these ideas. The other members of the congregation were informed through the newsletter about the existence of these new groups.

**All Souls Church in New York City** has a membership of close to 1,300. The social justice committee decided to focus on the critical needs of children in their part of the city. Committee members then surveyed the community and gathered information on the needs of people, the programs that already existed to meet those needs, ideas for new program possibilities, and ways that people could become involved.

The social justice committee invited the congregation to a Saturday meeting. Representatives from various groups and organizations in the community came to the meeting to describe their programs as well as ideas for possible church-based projects. Each explained how volunteers from the church could help.

Members of the congregation were then invited to visit exhibit tables which had been set up by the presenters. After reviewing the exhibits, attendees then volunteered to work with whichever program interested them. Other members of the congregation were informed about the existence of these programs through the church newsletter.

**The Unitarian Fellowship of Morristown** is a congregation of 285. Members of its social justice committee wanted to develop projects in one area of action. They identified environmental issues as an area for organizing and then used the following method to get people involved in developing some projects.

A small group of people with some interest and expertise in this area were brought together by members of the social justice committee for the purpose of brainstorming the ways this broad area of concern could be focused. The purpose was to identify ways that people could be involved in concrete doable projects. This group identified five focus areas.

A meeting of congregational members interested in environmental issues was called. Thirty-five people attended. The leaders from the five focus groups made a brief presentation about their areas.

Five easels with newsprint were set up in different parts of the room. Each participant chose three of these five focus areas and then moved to the easel representing one of those areas for a brainstorming exercise focusing on possible actions to be taken in that area. After fifteen minutes each participant moved to another easel representing one of the remaining two focus areas they had chosen. After this second brainstorming session, participants moved to the easel representing their third choice. The leaders who made presentations about the five focus areas facilitated the brainstorming sessions and then summarized the results.

Task groups were formed around those areas in which people had expressed active interest. Taking ideas from the brainstorming sessions, they set priorities for achievable projects. The general population of the congregation was informed about the task forces through the newsletter.

## SAMPLE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

### **Unitarian Society of Hartford PROPOSAL FOR A SOCIAL JUSTICE EMPOWERMENT PROCESS**

This process assumes that there are three (3) different types of social justice projects (SJPs) in which the congregation may be engaged at any particular point in time.

- The Major Project is locally focused, is authorized for two years, and is subject to renewal by congregational vote for another two years. Only one major project is in action at a time. The Major Project is selected by a vote of the congregation at an annual meeting, from among three (3) proposals prepared and presented by a work group convened by the Council on Witness.
- Annual Projects are proposed and voted on by the congregation each year at the annual meeting. The congregational vote serves to prioritize the proposals. (Plan A: the Council on Witness then implements annual projects in priority order, subject only to available resources – both fiscal and personnel.) (Plan B: the Council on Witness establishes the maximum number of such proposals that can be in action in any given year and the congregational vote determines which proposals are selected.) These projects are authorized for one year only. In order to be renewed, a new proposal must be submitted and voted on by the congregation along with other proposals submitted at the same time.
- Emergent Projects are situations or issues which arise between one annual meeting and the next and which seem to require an immediate response. The Council on Witness sets aside a certain portion of its budget each year to address these situations and has discretion to initiate these projects within that budget as long as they are consistent with previously established criteria and are within the budget for emergent projects. The Council on Witness reports on these projects to the Board and the congregation in the same way they do their other projects. Projects which are Emergent Projects in one year may be submitted as proposals for Annual Projects in a subsequent year in the same manner as any other project.

#### ***November 2003 through June 2004***

The process would be managed by the Social Justice Empowerment Task Force (SJETF) until the new By-Laws are passed, the new Board is elected at the 2004 Annual Meeting, the chair of the Council on Witness is appointed, and the members of that Council are selected.

#### November – December 2003

- SJETF obtains authorization from the current Council to implement the Social Justice Empowerment Process (SJEP) until new governance structure (including Board and Council on Witness) is in place.
- Once authorized by the Council, SJETF identifies people in the congregation with particular SJ expertise and/or interest as work group.

#### January – February 2004

SJETF hosts one or more potluck(s) for the work group to accomplish the following:

- Develop the priorities, criteria, format and content for SJ Project proposals (Major, Annual, and Emergent). Criteria will include but are not limited to:
  - the extent to which UUA SAIs and SOCs will or will not be addressed in the proposals;
  - signatures of a minimum of (Plan A: five (5) members who are willing to work on the project and another five (5) who also support it) (Plan B: numbers in those two categories based on a % of the current membership in the congregation); and
  - the way that projects approved in previous fiscal years may be continued beyond their authorized time period.
- Develop three (3) different proposals for the Major Project for the 2004 – 2005 fiscal year.
- SJETF publishes criteria, format and content, and time frames for Annual Projects (including deadlines for submitting proposals) to congregation (“Request for Proposals”, or RFP), with appropriate education and technical assistance as needed.

#### March – May 2004

- SJETF presents the three proposals for the congregation’s Major Project to the congregation with appropriate opportunities for questions and feed-back.
- SJETF receives proposals for Annual Projects and qualifies them based solely on the extent to which they do or do not meet the published requirements for submitting proposals.
- SJETF publishes *all* proposals for Annual Projects that meet the requirements to the congregation, with sufficient opportunities for questions and discussion that will permit the congregation to make informed choices among the proposals.

#### Annual Meeting 2004

- The congregation votes on the three proposals for the Major Project, and the one with (a majority? at least 2/3? other?) of the congregation voting to support it is selected as the major project for fiscal year 2004 – 2005. The results of the vote are published to the congregation.
- Congregation votes among *all* proposals for Annual Projects. Based on congregational vote, SJETF either prioritizes *all* of the proposals of Annual Projects (Plan A) or selects the X number of projects that will be implemented (Plan B) and publishes the result of the congregational vote.

### ***On-Going Process***

July – August (The new Board and Council on Witness are now in place.)

- Council on Witness sets aside a certain portion of its budget for the upcoming fiscal year to fund not-yet-identified emergent issues that may arise before the next annual meeting.
- Council on Witness determines how much resources (budget and personnel) will be needed to carry out the Major Project approved by the congregation at the annual meeting.
- Council on Witness determines how many of the Annual Projects, beginning with those with the highest ranking, can be undertaken with the remaining resources (budget and personnel) (Plan A) or identifies the X Annual Projects selected by the congregational vote (Plan B).
- Council Witness takes appropriate action, such as authorizing or re-authorizing committees and/or task forces and allocating funds, to implement the Major Project the Annual Projects.
- Each committee and task force develops its measurable goals and objectives and budget for the up-coming fiscal year.
- Council on Witness combines the material from each committee and task force into the Council's work plan for the up-coming fiscal year and submits this to the newly-elected Board for approval.
- Upon approval of the Board, the Council on Witness authorizes its committees and task forces to implement their plans.

#### July through June

- If/when emergent SJ issues arise, the Council on Witness reviews proposals to address these issues against the previously-established criteria and authorizes resources (budget and personnel) and/or committee/task force action, where appropriate, to address these issues.
- Committees and task forces submit written reports, documenting expenses against budget and progress on goals and objectives, to Council on Witness at least quarterly.
- Council on Witness submits combined written report, documenting expenses against budget and progress on goals and objectives, to Board at least quarterly at time specified by the Board. These reports include Major, Annual and Emergent projects.

#### January

- Council on Witness reviews and, as needed, revises criteria for all three (3) types of new SJ Projects.
- Council on Witness reviews and, as needed, revises the format and content for submitting SJ Project proposals.
- Council on Witness reviews and, as needed, revises time frames for submitting, reviewing and presenting proposals.

- Council on Witness submits criteria, format and content, and time frames to Board for approval.

#### January – February

- If a new Major Project is to be selected or renewed, the Council on Witness creates a work group and hosts one or more potluck(s) for the work group to determine whether the Major Project should be submitted to the congregation for renewal and/or to develop three (3) proposals for the major SJ project for the next fiscal year.
- Council on Witness publishes criteria, format and content, and time frames (including deadlines for submitting proposals) for Annual Projects to congregation (“Request for Proposals”, or RFP), with appropriate education and technical assistance as needed.

#### March – May

- If needed that year, Council on Witness presents the proposal(s) for the Major Project to the congregation with appropriate opportunities for questions and feedback.
- Council on Witness receives proposals for Annual Projects and qualifies them based solely on the extent to which they do or do not meet the published requirements for submitting proposals.
- Council on Witness publishes *all* proposals for Annual Projects that meet the requirements to the congregation, with sufficient opportunities for questions and discussion that will permit the congregation to make informed choices among the proposals.

#### Annual Meeting

- Council on Witness either presents a report on the progress of the Major Project (if it is up for automatic renewal), or conducts a congregational vote on the three proposals for the Major Project, and the one with (a majority? at least 2/3? other?) of the congregation voting to support it is selected as the major project for upcoming fiscal year. The results of the vote are published to the congregation. Congregation votes among *all* proposals for Annual Projects. Based on congregational vote, Council on Witness prioritizes *all* of the proposals of Annual Projects and publishes the result of the congregational vote (Plan A) or selects the X Annual Projects that will be undertaken (Plan B).

## Congregational Resolutions

Another way to encourage congregation-wide participation in the social justice program is drafting a congregational resolution whereby the entire congregation votes on and takes a stand on a controversial issue.

When considering whether or not to pass a congregational resolution on an issue, there are several important questions that can help discern if and how to go about it.

The first thing to keep in mind is that anything done in a congregational setting can be divisive if done poorly. As faith communities, it is important to take a stand on the side of justice in a way that nurtures community. Hopefully, within the context of the congregation, people are willing to be emotionally and spiritually open; to take the risks and share their personal stories necessary for understanding, grieving, healing, and transformation often required when taking action. Ensuring that the congregation remains a safe space for this openness is critical to the success of whatever decision or project is being considered, especially if it is something that is controversial or will be a long-term project or has long-term ramifications. This does not mean that “controversial” issues should be avoided—just that they should be addressed thoroughly and thoughtfully. Space needs to be created so that if there is a minority in disagreement they still feel part of the community.

An important question when considering a congregational resolution is to ask how it helps reach a goal? Often, congregational resolutions are viewed as an end, rather than as a means to an end. *In terms of strategic planning, a congregational resolution is a tactic, not a goal.* Examples of goals are changing a particular public policy, changing the position of an elected official on a given issue, or preventing or requiring a certain type of action.

Goal-based planning has several important benefits. First and foremost, it leads to greater effectiveness. Biblically, this might be summed up as “Without vision, the people perish.” Without a clear vision and goal, the congregation’s attention and focus goes into the tactic of passing the resolution, rather than planning for advocacy and organizing needed to achieve the goal. Passing a congregational resolution will not change public policy. But if it’s part of an overall strategy, it could be an effective way to build awareness and participation in action by the congregation.

The process of passing a resolution can lead to greater understanding, stronger community and transformation in the congregation itself. It can lay the basis for authorizing clergy, staff, and members of the congregation to join interfaith and advocacy coalitions on behalf of the congregation. If the resolution is sent out as a press advisory or brought to a press conference that announces actions along with the resolution, it can become news and help call others to action.

In the context of a discussion of goals, passing a resolution necessitates a process of deeper discernment that has myriad benefits. It requires critical thinking and analysis of power structures and resources. It also allows for spiritual and theological development to play a greater part in the conversation, as participants reflect on how our UU history and theology inform perspective and goals on a given issue. It may encourage research into what’s already happening in the community, which can help build relationships and avoid re-inventing the wheel in terms of action planning.

When linked to goal-based planning, working on a resolution can help prioritize the work. Many congregational social justice programs suffer from a lack of focus, both between

different issues and with how work is done on a single issue. Taking the time to do a serious, goal-based planning process at the beginning of a campaign will save significant time and energy in the long run by creating a clear sense of where the congregation is going (goal) and how to get there (tactics).

If the congregation has not done a goal-based planning process, it is strongly suggested before moving forward with a congregational resolution. Please see Inspired Faith—Effective Action at <http://www.uua.org/uuawo/pdf/InspiredFaith2006-06-16.pdf>.

Essentially, a congregational resolution is appropriate if:

- There is a compelling reason for doing so that serves an articulated long-term goal that isn't sufficiently served through action by a social action committee or subgroup of the congregation. Being able to articulate reasons for this can be helpful in bringing the idea of a resolution to the congregation.
- There is a plan for how to use the resolution after it's passed including how to communicate it to the media, to potential organizational partners, to elected officials, etc. The process of passing a resolution should be viewed as an organizing tool, building support and momentum for action. Again, being able to articulate a plan can be helpful in creating buy-in for a resolution by the congregation.
- There is a willingness to commit to a multi-month process of education and open discussion that allows differing opinions to be shared. While some folks may oppose any congregational action that they don't agree with, most won't hold the process hostage so long as they feel that they have been heard.
- There is a demonstrated grounding, history, and identity of the congregation with the issue that makes passage likely. In this case, a couple of post-worship meetings and telephone trees within the course of a month may be all the time required before holding a vote.
- There is a deep-felt need by historically marginalized groups for the congregation to stand with them in solidarity.

## How to Pass a Congregational Resolution

1. **Identify the goal of the resolution.** The first step is developing a clear intention and “pitch,” including:

- What precisely is the resolution on, i.e. is it a broad statement of concern or about a specific piece of legislation?
- What goal does it serve, such as influencing the position of elected officials, building coalitions, etc.
- How will it be used, e.g. with the media, as part of a national campaign?

Depending on the end goal, decide whether or not a resolution is the best way to get there. For Freedom to Marry campaigns, for example, there may be a few goals, including getting Members of Congress (or local elected officials) to oppose the Federal Marriage Amendment, and/or shaping public opinion in the community. A concern is that passing a congregational resolution can sometimes be so time-consuming that there isn't much time and energy left for the "real" work (such as organizing lobbying visits).

2. **Consult with individuals from communities most affected by the issue** both in and outside the congregation such as such as people of color, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender), low-income folks, youth and others. By doing so, accountability is created and relationships are built and strengthened.

3. **Talk to the minister**, social action chair, congregational president, and board members to:

a) Find out the procedures by which the congregation considers a resolution.

Many congregations have by-laws for adopting congregation-wide positions so check these first. If a process needs to be developed, other congregations' practices may be helpful. (See examples below.)

b) Gain ministerial and congregational leadership support that is needed for any congregation-wide effort to succeed.

4. **Draft the resolution.** First and foremost, the resolution should be grounded in Unitarian Universalism. Research General Assembly statements of conscience and resolutions, UU history, and UU writings.

To create trust and reflect a diversity of perspectives, a few people should draft the resolution. Members and others with expertise should be consulted. Leadership from communities affected by the issue should be sought.

5. **Line up support.** Share plans to introduce the resolution with members who will support it and ask for their input in how to build consensus to pass it.

6. **Urge open discussion** on the issue. Schedule time for internal education. Consider showing a video or inviting an outside speaker. Allow small group time for processing of feelings and sharing of stories.

7. **Introduce the resolution.** Be sure that everyone involved in the decision has a copy of the resolution. Be available to answer questions or to provide background information.

**Be sure to alert the media** and lawmakers once the resolution passes. Send a press release to the local press and make follow-up phone calls. Send a copy of the ratified resolution to coalition partners.

Passing a short resolution along with a fundraising drive to publish it in a local paper might help to shape public opinion. A resolution may receive media attention if it is tied to the launch of an action campaign. In general, the media are drawn to “verbs” rather than “words.” Such a campaign could even become a growth opportunity for the congregation.

### **Examples of Congregational Resolutions on a Social Justice Issue**

Resolutions can be as simple as one sentence, but are typically a few paragraphs and should be no longer than one page. A congregation may want to check UUA General Assembly resolutions for content and style. For a full listing of UUA and General Assembly social justice statements see <http://www.uua.org/actions/>.

To create trust and reflect a diversity of opinion, a few people should draft the resolution. Members and others with expertise should be consulted. Leadership from communities affected by the issue, such as people of color, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender), low-income folks, youth and others should be sought.

### **A Congregational Resolution for a Moratorium on Executions**

Over sixty Unitarian Universalist congregations have resolutions against the death penalty and/or for a moratorium on the death penalty. Below is the resolution passed by the Richmond VA congregation.

We, the members of the First Unitarian Church of Richmond, Virginia adhere to the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism:

*The inherent worth and dignity of every person;  
Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;  
Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation;  
A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;  
The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large;  
The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;  
Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*

Whereas there is ample evidence that the death penalty is applied in a racist manner: In 1990, the United States General Accounting Office reported “a pattern of evidence indicating racial disparities in charging, sentencing and imposition of the death penalty.” Nationwide, 82% of those put to death had been convicted of murdering a white person even though people of color are the victims in more than half of all homicides; and

Whereas death sentences are generally reserved for the poor: About 90% of those persons facing capital charges cannot afford their own attorney. No state, including Virginia, has met standards developed by the American Bar Association (ABA) for appointment, performance and compensation of counsel for indigent prisoners, and

Whereas prisoner appeals have been severely curtailed, increasing the risk of imprisonment and execution of innocent people: In a series of rulings since 1991, the Supreme Court has drastically restricted the rights of death row prisoners to appeal their convictions and death sentences in federal courts, even in cases where prisoners present compelling evidence of innocence. In 1996, new legislation drastically limited federal court review of death row prisoners, and

Whereas the American Bar Association has concluded that administration of the death penalty is “a haphazard maze of unfair practices with no internal consistency” and has called for a moratorium on executions.

Therefore, be it resolved that the First Unitarian Church of Richmond, Virginia calls on the Governor and our representatives to the Virginia General Assembly, the President of the United States and our members in the United States Congress, to adopt executive policies and orders and enact legislation imposing a moratorium on executions at least until policies and procedures are fully implemented which:

Eliminate discrimination in capital sentencing;

Ensure that death penalty cases are administered fairly and impartially;

Entirely eliminate the risk that innocent persons may be executed;

Prevent the execution of mentally retarded persons:

Prevent the execution of persons who were under the age of 18 at the time of their offenses.

Be it further resolved that copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, State Senators and Delegates in the Virginia General Assembly representing districts serving our Church members, the President of the United States, the two United States Senators from Virginia, and those Members of the United States House of Representatives representing districts serving our Church members.

### **First Unitarian Oakland Resolution on Preventing War with Iraq, October 2002**

When many congregations were acting to prevent war in Iraq, members of First Unitarian in Oakland felt strongly that they wanted to pass a resolution and make a strong public statement in a fairly short period of time. They modeled a careful and inclusive process for passing resolutions. First, the justice council gathered extensive feedback from their 400 member congregation prior to drafting a resolution. They reported that in “over less than four weeks the minister preached on the subject twice; we held three after-church forums; conducted a written poll (150+ responses) on whether church attendees agreed with a statement from a local anti-war coalition; telephoned 40 church members to discuss their personal views, paying particular attention to those who felt security issues might justify force; and held numerous face-to-face conversations with church members. The congregational core team supported the feedback process by conducting most of the telephone conversations.” They also held forums questioning the moves toward war with the People’s Nonviolent Response Coalition during this time.

The resolution was very short and specific: “First Unitarian Church of Oakland is opposed to a unilateral pre-emptive strike by the United States against Iraq at this time.” It was passed unanimously and the congregation joined The People’s Nonviolent Response Coalition.

## **UU Community Church of Santa Monica Peace & Civil Liberties Committee**

On October 1, 2002, 18 people met to form a new Peace Task Force. Discussion centered on the impending war in Iraq and its implications, but the group's focus has since widened to include many peace-related and civil liberties issues. In November 2002, they drafted a Statement of Conscience that was ratified by the congregation at a special meeting.

### **Statement of Conscience Regarding U.S. Unilateral Military Action**

This Statement of Conscience was adapted by the Peace Committee of the Faith in Action Program, from a Statement of Conscience written by the minister and members of our church. It was approved by our Board of Directors, and was accepted as our church's public position on the issue at a special congregational vote held on November 10, 2002.

We believe it is in the best interests of our country and of world peace for us to act in concert with the United Nations, and not unilaterally, to bring about Iraq's compliance with United Nations resolutions concerning weapons of mass destruction and respect for human rights.

We believe that seeking unilaterally to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein, especially through force of arms, will incite further hatred and violence between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds and will impede efforts to suppress terrorism, restore stability in Afghanistan, and end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

We believe that the idea of preemptive military action is both against international law and accepted standards of national sovereignty.

We believe that both compassion and prudence dictate that military force should be used only when every other option has been found wanting and when the threat posed by inaction can be convincingly shown to be greater than the destruction and loss of life inherent in military action.

Because of these beliefs, the Congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Santa Monica urges the government of the United States of America to refrain from military action against Iraq without United Nations approval. Instead, we urge our government to work diligently within the framework of the United Nations to pressure Iraq to dismantle its capacity to make, deploy, and use weapons of mass destruction and comply with all United Nations resolutions in the most immediate future.

## **UU Fellowship of Raleigh, NC Resolution on Freedom to Marry, December 2004**

Dozens of Unitarian Universalist congregations have adopted resolutions in support of marriage equality.

A Statement of Conscience on Freedom to Marry was adopted by unanimous vote by the UU Fellowship of Raleigh NC at congregational meeting on Dec. 12, 2004 following several educational events, sermons, and advocacy activities on the part of the minister and members in the months beforehand.

“We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh, affirm the basic right of same-gender couples to marry and to share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities, and commitments of civil marriage.”

**The Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Fairfax (Oakton VA) has adopted two ways in which UUCF can take public positions on social justice issues.**

### **UUCF Social Justice Council Advocacy Process**

There are two ways in which UUCF can take public positions on social justice issues.

#### **1. Social Justice Council (SJC) resolutions**

- Review proposals for SJC action submitted to the council by any member of UUCF
- Strive for consensus, can decide by  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote (6 out of 8 council members)
- Reflects the Council position only.

#### **2. Congregational Resolutions and/or positions.**

- Reviewed by the SJC
- Notify all ministers, relevant UUCF committees and the congregation as a whole and invite comment within 90 days of notification.
- Hold congregational study and discussion session, issue background papers, forums, newsletter articles, etc.
- Provide all members with (1) text of the proposed congregational resolution as approved by the SJC; (2) a summary of comments the received to date; (3) copy of the SJC procedures; and (4) supplementary documents.
- If deemed desirable, petition for a congregational meeting.
- Board holds a special meeting, or schedules a vote at an Annual Meeting.
- Vote taken and decided by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all members present.
- Respectfully accept diversity of opinion.
- The vote is not considered to bind any individual UUCF member to the position or to devalue those members who oppose the position.

*Summary taken from Social Justice Council Charter as approved in June, 1997 and Procedures for UUCF Position on Social Justice Issues, approved by UUCF Board, 3/13/2000.*

**The Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan has a policy and procedure for adopting public policy statements that involves issues coming through the Faith in Action Committee to the Board of Trustees for approval and referral to the congregation for adoption.**

Criteria for congregation-wide resolutions include:

- Fit with the core values of our Church;
- Fit the UU Principles;
- Timeliness/ Urgency;
- Availability of sufficient information to make a decision;
- Discussion of the issue will advance the mission of the Church.

# Sample Congregational Policies and Procedures

## Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (UUCF) Social Justice Council Advocacy Policy and Procedures, Approved 2000

### Policy

The purpose of the Social Justice Council Advocacy Policy is to make policy decisions and take positions as a Council on social justice issues, and to take positions as a congregation after completion of an appropriate policy-making process which the Board has approved.

*From the UUCF SJC Charter approved by the UUCF Board of Trustees, 7/13/97*

### Concept Statement on Advocacy

The Social Justice Council accepts the authority and responsibility for making, on its own behalf (and not on behalf of the UUCF as a whole), public expressions of position on matters of social justice and conscience in connection with public policy, and related issues of the day. The Council will arrive at such positions following full and open discussion within the Council, guided by commonly shared UU Principles and Beliefs, and the UUCF Mission & Covenant Statement. The goal shall be to arrive at a consensus, but it shall be sufficient and required that at least 6 Council members (including the Lay Minister) be in favor of the position to be taken. It is expected that all council members be engaged in the discussion surrounding any position considered for public advocacy.

*Advocacy Statement appended to charter by the SJC 10/22/97*

### Procedures

- I. There are two ways in which UUCF can take public positions on social justice issues: (1) Social Justice Council (SJC) resolutions and (2) Congregational Resolutions. The Social Justice Council (SJC) reviews both types of resolutions. Also UUCF members may seek direct approval of a Congregational resolution by petitioning for a congregational meeting.
- II. Individuals seeking Social Justice Council endorsement of a position submit a proposal to the Council for action. The Council then reviews the proposed resolution for consistency with UU Shared Principles, existing UUA resolutions, UUCF mission statements, and other relevant considerations. The Council decides by vote, as provided in SJC by-laws, whether to endorse the proposal. Social Justice Council endorsements represent the views of the Council only and do not constitute congregational endorsement.
- III. If the Social Justice Council feels that wider congregational support for a resolution is desirable, it proceeds, with the cooperation of all interested parties, as follows:
  - A. The Council notifies all UUCF ministers (including lay ministers), relevant UUCF committees and the congregation as a whole of the proposed resolution and invites comment within 90 days of notification. During that period, the Council coordinates appropriate measures for congregational study and discussion, such as background papers, forums, newsletter articles and the like.
  - B. The Social Justice Council arranges to provide each UUCF member with (1) the text of the proposed congregational resolution as approved by the SJC, (2) a summary of comments received to date, (3) a copy of these procedures, and (4) appropriate supplementary documents.

- C. The Board then schedules a congregational vote on the resolution at the next Annual Meeting or at a special congregational meeting for the purpose of considering one or more social justice resolutions in accordance with UUCF by-laws. A Congregational social justice resolution requires a favorable vote by three-fourths of all members present and voting.

In keeping with our UU Shared Principles, a Congregational social justice resolution does not bind any individual UUCF member to the position nor in any way devalues those members who oppose the position. Minority opinions foster the diversity we cherish and represent an opportunity for continued dialogue among ourselves and in the community at large.

*Unanimously approved by the Social Justice Council on 3/13/00 and approved by the UUCF Board of Trustees*

**Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan**  
**Faith in Action Committee**  
Policy on Public Statements

1. No member or friend of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan (hereafter known as the Church) will make a statement on their own in the name of the Church, or on behalf of the church. This includes letters to the editor, statements to any governmental body, oral or written, or to any public or private organization. A person may identify himself or herself as a member or friend of the Church if it is clear that the opinion expressed is that of the individual making the statement and not the position of the Church. Statements may be about or refer to ballot issues, or any other type of issue. However, in no case will a statement contain a political partisan reference and the name of the Church.
2. The Faith in Action Committee identifies issues that may be important to the Church and the greater community. The Committee provides information to the entire congregation and initiates discussion on the issue. Issues may include, but are not limited to, resolutions that will come before the General Assembly or that have previously been passed by the General Assembly.
3. When the Faith in Action Committee believes an issue is worthy of taking a public stand, the Committee presents the issue to the Board of Trustees in the form of a resolution. The Board may recommend a resolution for congregational discussion with the intent of having the congregation reach formal consensus at a duly called Congregational Meeting, called for this purpose. The discussion may take several formats and need not be part of a Congregational Meeting, but no formal agreement may be reached other than at a Congregation Meeting for that purpose. Informal discussions may continue for weeks or months. The Board may choose not to recommend a resolution to the Congregation. In this case, the Board is advised to pursue a process for discussion of the resolution among Church members and friends. Alternatively, if the Board chooses not to recommend a resolution for any discussion, a Congregational Meeting may be called by a petition signed by thirty percent of the active members of the Church.
4. The Board's decision in response to a resolution from the Faith in Action Committee should be based on at least the following considerations:

- Fit with the core values of our Church;
- Fit the Unitarian Universalist Principles;
- Timeliness/ Urgency;
- Availability of sufficient information to make a decision;
- Discussion of the issue will advance the mission of the Church.

The Board will report back to the Faith in Action Committee the rationale for its decision.

5. No resolution may support or criticize a candidate for public office or any political party.
6. When consensus on a resolution is reached, the Congregation must then concur as to how the resolution will be made public. Some options are:
  - The Board President;
  - Any member of the Board;
  - The chair of the Faith in Action Committee;
  - Any member of the Committee;
  - Any member of the congregation;
  - The minister;
  - Or some combination of the above.

The resolution may be expressed either written or orally to an appropriate, designated recipient.

## Important Points for Social Justice Advocates in the Congregation

Discussion about controversial issues can sometimes be heated and divisive in the life of a congregation. Sometimes there isn't time for full discussion and maybe only one side is presented. Pressure or coercion is used to get votes, rather than persuasion. And appeals are made to guilt and not to reason. These are examples of bad process. And they alienate persons and divide congregations.

As a faith community, we Unitarian Universalists are trying to live by our Principles and Purposes and respond to crucial social issues at the same time that we honor the values and traditions of our democratic religious communities.

That is why social justice leaders need to take special responsibility for using effective and fair processes which respect the individuals involved and provide ample time for discussion and reflection. It means honoring individual rights while working toward group consensus. It requires making sure there is time for full discussion and that all sides of the argument are presented.

Remember, how the issue is processed is as important as the issue itself. Success in processing one issue creates enthusiasm for taking on other issues in the future.

Social justice leaders need to avoid attitudes of arrogance, and self-righteousness. It is dangerous to divide the world into those who are "moral" and those who are "immoral." It is important to understand that not everyone in the church or community is going to agree with them about issues, and that is okay.

Social justice advocates need to be responsible in how they conduct their business. Sometimes programs are not well conceived or presented. Persons who speak on issues are poorly prepared. Statements are made that are not thought through or are hastily put together. Simple solutions are offered for complex problems. Social justice leaders need to do their homework. They need to be well prepared for meetings and show that they have studied the issue in depth. They need to be particularly aware of both sides of the arguments.

## Dealing with Controversial Social Justice Issues

- Conflict doesn't only happen around social justice issues in the congregation. Many (some would say all) decisions in the life of the church involve conflict. Questions arise: Should the congregation build a new organ or keep the old one? What kind of hymns should be sung? What kind of music should there be on Sunday morning? Should the minister wear a robe or not? Sometimes people can get very heated about these issues.
- It is unfair to single out social justice as being especially conflict laden. Oftentimes, the congregation needs to address how it processes controversy in any area of its life.
- The decision not to take stands will alienate people just as the decision to take stands will.
- Leadership in situations involving controversy involves walking a fine line. Activists need to remember to build the institutions that are a base of support. Institutionalists need to remember that Unitarian Universalism stands for some very important principles in the world. A good way to create a win-win situation is to vote only on controversial issues that will build the ethical integrity and moral identity of congregations. Then, let members of the congregation who are concerned about particular issues in the community organize action groups or lobbying groups around those issues.

### Summary:

Clearly, asking the congregation to take a stand on an issue is a process that usually involves long-term organizing and lots of listening. If not done from a faith-based perspective, the attempt can be divisive. However, there are some issues that may be central to the congregation's identity and can be acted on quickly and unanimously. If a resolution is needed immediately, it is either best to do so through the social justice committee or to make the resolution very short and very broad. For the resolution to be meaningful beyond the congregation, it needs to be developed with community partners and in coalitions, and have the input of affected communities. For the resolution to be effective, it needs to be shared with the media and be part of an action plan.

### Pros

- Passing a resolution is a form of public witness.
- It can rally the congregation, mobilize action and participation in the social justice committee or a particular issue task force.
- It can create awareness about the congregation and Unitarian Universalism in the community.
- It promotes solidarity with partner organizations working on the same issue, as well as with other congregations that have also taken a stand.
- It promotes dialogue/debate in the congregation and deepens faith.
- It can create conditions to help people have the courage to speak out and act.

### Cons

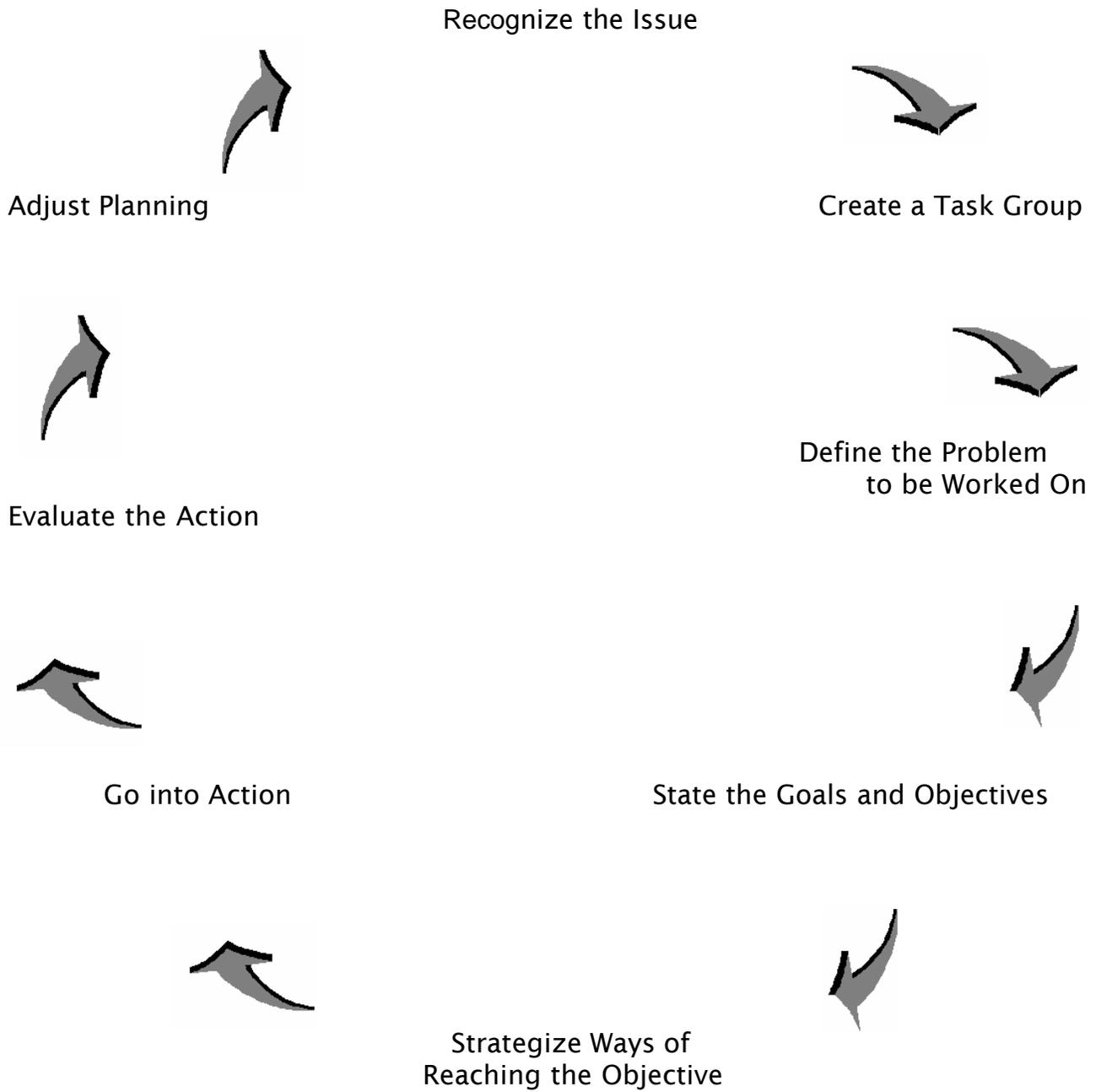
- Energy spent on creating a statement can divert attention from action.
- If the process becomes too time-consuming, there may be little concrete results.
- Passing a resolution can be divisive, especially if done poorly.
- Those in the minority may feel marginalized.

- If final vote is not done by secret ballot, it may not be an accurate representation of where the congregation stands.
- There may be better ways to organize for an issue.
- Those wanting to take action may feel limited unless or until there is a vote.

As with all issues, there is no “one way” for congregations to act. Remember that whether an issue is one that involves fairly easy consensus or one that involves a lot of education and discussion, the end result needs to lead to action for justice and a strengthening of congregational identity and community.

## VI. Action Planning for Social Justice Task Force Groups

# The Social Change Cycle



# The Social Change Cycle

Too often social activists go into action without defining the problem, identifying alternative solutions, stating the goals, and thinking through strategies. And then, they wonder why they are ineffective.

The social change cycle is a step-by-step process which provides a method for developing an understanding of an issue and creating an action plan.

## 1. Recognize an issue

There are many issues in the world that call for people's attention. But we can't respond to all of them. The challenge for people doing social justice ministry in a congregation is to identify those issues for which people feel strongly, so they will make a commitment to take action. An issue should be selected based on the grounding, fit, accountability, and opportunity factors noted in Section IV.

## 2. Create a task group

It is helpful if people do a group building process before they begin to work on an issue. This enables group members to define how they will work with one another. They can express their hopes and fears about the project. And, they can describe the resources which each of them brings to the tasks at hand.

## 3. Define the problem to be worked on

This step involves understanding why the issue that has been chosen is a problem. A problem is a situation or condition of individuals or groups that is considered undesirable for certain reasons.

Often people go into action without understanding the issue they are responding to. That is why taking the time to define the problem may be the most important step in this process.

## 4. State the goals and objectives

The problem states the situation in negative, undesirable terms, while the goal states a positive, desirable situation. A goal is a declarative statement indicating a desirable procedure, process, or relationship. It expresses what the group plans to accomplish.

For example, if the problem is homelessness, the goal can be stated: to help homeless people achieve decent housing.

The objectives for achieving this goal might be to open a shelter for homeless people in the congregation, run a series of community forums on homelessness, or advocate with local politicians about new services for the homeless.

## 5. Strategize ways of reaching your objectives

A strategy is a series of group activities that are carried out to reach the desired objectives. It involves raising money, publicizing an issue, and identifying other people with whom you want to work.

## 6. Go into action

Now the group is ready to go into action.

## 7. Celebrate and evaluate the action

Evaluate what happened. What did you learn from the experience? What would you do differently next time?

## 8. Plan for the next step

The group has completed one action step. Now it is time to start planning the next one.

## AN EXAMPLE OF THE SOCIAL CHANGE CYCLE

**This example comes from the UU Peace Fellowship of the Delaware Valley in Philadelphia.** It describes the process that the Peace Fellowship went through as its members addressed the issue of the Star Wars missile system.

**Choosing the issue:** During the late 1980s, the Reagan administration put forth the idea of building the Strategic Defense Initiative, called SDI or Star Wars.

**Defining the problem:** SDI was an important part of the escalating arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. The government argued that it would protect the United States from a nuclear attack. Peace activists opposed the system for several reasons. First, it wouldn't work. Second, it would be a big boondoggle for the defense contractors. And third, it was a violation of the 1972 IBM Treaty.

**Goals and Objectives:** The goal of this program was to stop the development of the SDI system and encourage negotiations with the Soviet Union to de-escalate the arms race.

The objective that the group decided on was to invite Robert Bowman, one of the leading opponents of Star Wars, to the city for a community forum and appearance in the local media. Other ideas included the formation of a study group and lobbying congress.

### **Strategy:**

1. Make arrangements with the speaker.
2. Send out publicity for the event.
3. Contact the media.
4. Prepare refreshments for a reception.
5. Raise \$2,000 to pay for the speaker's fee and expenses.
6. Subcommittees were organized to carry out these tasks.

**Go into action:** Robert Bowman came to Philadelphia. He appeared on several radio talk shows. He did an interview with the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and he spoke at a public forum attended by 200 people. The forum was held at the Unitarian Society of Germantown in Philadelphia.

**Celebrate and evaluate:** The members of the group felt successful about what they accomplished. A party was held at the home of one of the members a week after the event.

People had a chance to be together in community to affirm what they had accomplished together.

About one half hour was spent in evaluating what they did. People were asked to comment on what had gone well. They also talked about what they would have done differently if they were to do a similar event again.

Plan: At the next meeting the group decided to continue to work on the issue of Star Wars. The next objective was to lobby with their legislators.

## SHORT AND LONG TERM PROJECTS

There are important differences between short and long-term projects/actions. We can react quickly to some issues and not others.

For example, an earthquake or hurricane happens in some part of the world and people want to respond. On the next Sunday, you can take up a special collection during the worship service or gather clothing afterwards.

In 1990, Unitarian Universalists had to respond very quickly to the prospect of a war in the Middle East. Iraq invaded Kuwait. The American government and the United Nations decided to go to war if the Iraqis did not leave Kuwait. Congress was going to vote on the issue. If people in our congregations wanted to make an impact one way or another on the congressional vote, they needed to move fast.

Yet, there are also cases where projects will not be successful unless people take a longer amount of time to think them through and implement appropriate actions.

For example, support for the famous Roe v. Wade court case came out of a study group set up by the Women's Alliance in the First Unitarian Church of Dallas. This group took over a year to study the issues concerning the availability of services for abortion. In the spring of 1970, the Roe v. Wade case was heard in Dallas, brought by attorneys Linda Coffee and Sarah Weddington. Both were recent law school graduates. Members of the congregation met them at the Fifth Circuit Court hearing. A loving supportive alliance was formed that enabled these young lawyers to bring this case to the Supreme Court.

A second example of a long-term project comes from the All-Souls Unitarian Church in Washington, DC. The congregation decided in the late sixties to do something to provide housing for low-income people. A task force took two years to study housing programs, form an alliance with a community group, and develop an educational process for the congregation. This resulted in a multi-million dollar housing project.

A third example comes from the congregation in Plymouth NH. Members of the congregation became concerned about the fact that open space was lost because land was being gobbled up for development. They created a task force to study the situation for a year. At the end of their study process, they decided to join with some other people in the state to start a land conservation trust program. They have played an important leadership role in their state.

# Preparing an Action Plan

To be effective in doing social justice programming, it helps to take the time to develop an issue and see it through. Too often religious social activists set out to do something without really defining the problem or thinking through the most effective strategies. People go into action without defining the issue, identifying alternative solutions, stating the goals, and thinking through strategies. And then they wonder why they were ineffective.

This is a step-by-step process which provides a method for developing an understanding of an issue and creating an action plan. This process usually can't be done in one two-hour meeting. It may take five or six meetings lasting over several months. Some groups have taken a year or two to develop an in-depth project.

## 1. Choose an Issue

There are innumerable social justice issues we can work on. Our challenge as people doing social justice within the framework of congregational life is to identify those issues which our people feel strongly enough about that they will make a commitment to become involved in some kind of action.

There are two chapters in this manual on involving the congregation in setting priorities for task group issues. Section II. is called "Structuring Social Justice in the Congregation" and Section V. is called "Processes for Deciding on a Congregation-Wide Issue".

Presently, the most popular issues around which Unitarian Universalists are organizing are hunger, the environment, homelessness, reproductive rights, peace, children's issues, AIDS and Marriage Equality.

Dieter Hessel in his book *Social Ministry* suggests the following criteria for picking issues to work on.

1. Serious and pervasive condition
2. Demands ethical action
3. Neglected by powers and authorities
4. Most urgent to poor and vulnerable
5. Also middle class interest
6. An opportunity for empowerment
7. Arouses broad community concern
8. Has both global and local dimensions
9. Has concrete and manageable handles
10. A denominational or ecumenical priority
11. Chance to make a systematic difference as well as to meet a service need
12. Will elicit resources of the congregation: talent, money, leaders' support, members' energies
13. Available models for response
14. An issue the group can do something about with a reasonable amount of success
15. An issue which interested people and which, by getting involved, folks will derive a sense of satisfaction from
16. Group's response be unique (not the duplication of another organization's work)

## 2. Create a Task Group

Once you have identified an issue, you need to develop a group to work on it. There are a number of ways to gather people together in a meeting. Examples include writing an article for the newsletter, making announcements at Sunday services, putting flyers in the order of service, and phoning people whom you think might be interested. The more of these methods that you use, the more successful you will be in organizing the meeting.

Once you have assembled a group, it helps if people take the time to do a group building process before they begin to work on the project. Below are some suggested guidelines for building the team.

- A. Define how people in the group will work together.
  - Determine who will facilitate the meeting.
  - Make sure people are sitting in a way that works for the group.
  - Determine how decisions will be made. Will the group vote on decisions or use consensus methods?
  - How will the group evaluate its work as it goes along?
  - Use brainstorming and priority setting techniques when they are applicable.
- B. Help people to understand who they are in the group.
  - What are the hopes and fears each person has about being a member of the group?
  - What are the hopes and fears each person has about the task?
  - What personal resources does each person bring to the group?
  - What other resource people are known who are in the community?
  - What does each person want to learn while they are on the team?
- C. Define what the group will try to accomplish.
  - Compile on newsprint a list of the tasks, problems, items of business, etc., which group members think the team should deal with. Prioritize the list, ranking the items according to their importance.
  - Assign an anticipated time parameter for each task. Note these time parameters are not frozen, but may be changed by the group members as they do their work.

## 3. Define the Problem to be Worked on

This step involves understanding why the issue you have picked is a problem. A problem is a situation or condition of individuals or a group that is considered undesirable for certain reasons. Often people go into action without understanding the issue they are responding to. That is why taking the time to define the problem may be the most important step in the process.

The members of the group need to educate themselves about all the dimensions of the issue. You can read books and pamphlets to familiarize yourselves with the important points. You can meet with experts in the field who are members of your congregation. You can contact political leaders, grass roots organizers, university teachers, and other resource people. Making visits to community centers where people are working on issues is also a good way of becoming informed.

Here are some questions you can ask as you go through this process.

1. Why is this a problem?
2. How serious a problem is it?
3. How many people suffer from the problem?
4. How are people affected by the problem?
5. What are the economic, political, and social factors that make this a problem?
6. What are the conflicting values that make this a problem?
7. What are the power dimensions of the situation? Who is using power in negative or destructive ways? Who has the power to make a change?
8. What is the potential for change?
9. What are some alternative solutions to the problem? Hear the study of what other people are doing in other parts of the country that is important. Where do people have programs that are working effectively? How can these successful models be duplicated?
10. What are the religious assumptions that the group is operating out of? These would be affirmations, theological and ethical in nature, which describe the motivation of the group attacking a problem. They should state why the problem represents injustice and why achievement of the goal is a step toward justice.

#### 4. State the Goals and Objectives

The problem states the situation in negative, undesirable terms, while the goal states a positive, desirable situation. A goal is a declarative statement indicating a desirable procedure, process, or relationship. It indicates what the group plans to accomplish and gives direction in moving toward the fulfillment of your purpose.

The objectives are the way the group plans to reach the goal. Problems can rarely be completely eliminated so the size of the situation or condition is smaller in the statement of the objective. Use the following questions to ensure the objective is clear.

- a. Is the objective stated as a declarative statement?
- b. Does the objective cover all essential aspects indicated in the problem?
- c. Has the group limited the scope of the objective so that it is realistic?

For example, if the problem is homelessness, the goal can be stated as helping the homeless. The objectives for achieving this goal might be open a shelter for homeless people at the church, run a series of community forums on homelessness, advocate with local politicians about new services for the homeless.

Check to be sure the group knows what others are doing in the local community. Be sure not to do planning that someone else is already doing effectively. The group may also help an ongoing program be more effective by forming an alliance with them.

Before moving on to the next stage, re-check the problem statement, goal, and objective to see if there is a natural flow from one to the other.

#### 5. Develop Strategies and Tactics

A strategy is a series of group activities that are carried out to reach the desired objective(s).

Brainstorming is a good way to develop a strategy. When developing a strategy, consider some of these:

- a. List the tasks to be done and think of a time frame for each task.
- b. With whom does the group need to network for information or support?
- c. Who are the people needed to help with the project? Who may want to be involved? Make a special effort to establish personal contact with them.
- d. What are the financial costs? Work out a budget.
- e. Are there any informational handouts or brochures that need to be purchased or prepared?
- f. What publicity is needed?
- g. Is there any additional research and writing needed to be done?
- h. If group is going to have a public event, arrange for a time and meeting place.

Tactics are specific actions that make up a strategy. They indicate assignments of action to particular people, the details of what they are to do, and a time line for reporting on and completing tasks.

## 6. **Go Into Action**

Now the group is ready to go into action. Do something!

## 7. **Celebrate and Evaluate the Action**

Holding a social gathering after an action is a wonderful way of boosting morale and enhancing the energy in the group. Plan a party to celebrate what has been achieved. Sometimes people do the evaluation at the social gathering.

As soon as possible after a specific action, bring the participants together to evaluate what happened. What was learned from the experience? What went as planned? What didn't go as expected? Did the action help the group move toward achieving its goals and objectives? What should be done differently next time? How is the group functioning in terms of morale, efficiency, and commitment to the task?

## 8. **Plan for the Next Step**

The group has completed one action step. Now it is time to start planning the next one. Watch and learn from your successes.

## Defining the Issue: An Exercise

1. List on newsprint information that can help each person define the issue the group intends to work on. The following questions may be helpful in carrying out this task.

- Why is this a problem?
- How serious a problem is it?
- Who are the people affected by the problem?
- How many people are affected?
- What are the economic, political, and social factors that make this a problem?
- How will core UU values empower us to work on this issue?
- What is the potential for change?

2. Discuss what further information the group needs to define the problem.

For example, are there people in the congregation or in the wider community who can serve as resource people to help define the issue? This question can be further elaborated on when doing the stakeholder analysis in Section IV.

Are there books or videos that would be good sources of information?

## Worksheet: Developing an Action Plan

Goal Statement:

One Year Objectives:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How do these goals and objectives help to build the team?

What are the resources necessary to carry out these objectives?

Budget: What are the financial resources required?

What are the special problems, or obstacles the group expects to encounter?

Who are the allies we need to help us succeed?

Who are the groups to whom we should be accountable?

Evaluation: What are the milestones? How will we know if we succeed?

# Worksheet: Tasks (Tactics), Person or Persons Responsible, and Time Line for Each Objective

## FIRST OBJECTIVE

Tasks	Person/s Responsible	Time Line
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## SECOND OBJECTIVE

Tasks	Person/s Responsible	Time Line
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## THIRD OBJECTIVE

Tasks	Person/s Responsible	Time Line
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## FOURTH OBJECTIVE

Tasks:	Person/s Responsible	Time Line
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## Example of Developing an Action Plan

Below is a draft of a plan for the Pilot Projects Working Group for the Board Task Force for Racial and Cultural Diversity.

### **Goal Statement:**

To provide support and assistance to congregations who have demonstrated a commitment to join in the larger denominational effort to become an anti-racist, multicultural religious movement.

### **One Year Objectives:**

1. To define three models and working strategies for anti-racism at the congregational and district level.
2. To identify twenty-five congregations already committed to becoming anti-racist, multi-cultural congregations.
3. To select fifteen to eighteen congregations at different levels of understanding of anti racism that could serve as demonstration (or pilot) projects and aid in a larger analysis of how this work can be carried out most successfully.

### **How Do These Goals and Objectives Help to Build the Team?**

These objectives are achievable. They make effective use of the resources and capacities of the team members. They will provide a foundation for further work with the congregations in the future.

### **What Are the Resources Necessary to Carry Out These Objectives?**

Need to build the working group. Need to create core leadership for working group.

### **Budget: What Are the Financial Resources Required?**

Submit grant to funding panel for \$50,000

### **What Are the Special Problems or Obstacles You Expect to Encounter?**

Lack of adequate models.

Problems with identifying congregations who are engaged in this work.

### **Who Are the Allies We Need to Help Us Succeed?**

The Board Task Force for Racial and Cultural Diversity.  
The UU Minister's Association anti-racism initiative.

## Evaluation: What Are the Milestones? How Will We Know If We Succeed?

The results of the consultation will be very important in determining where we are.

### Determine the Tasks (Tactics), Person or Persons Responsible and Time Line for Each Objective

**Objective Number One:** Define models and working strategies

<b>Tasks:</b>	<b>Person/s Responsible</b>	<b>Time Line</b>
Hold planning meeting in New Orleans.	Bill and Marjorie	January 3-5
Research existing materials.	Mel	February

**Objective Number Two:** Identify congregations already committed

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Person/s Responsible</b>	<b>Time Line</b>
Generate a list of likely congregations.	All member of group send materials to Tracey	By April
Send mailing to congregations inviting them to consultation.	Tracey	By May 1
Hold consultation in fall	Create planning team	TBD
Develop a congregational assessment form.	Jim	TBD

**Objective Number Three:** Select a limited number of congregations

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Person/s Responsible</b>	<b>Time Line</b>
Create selection process to follow on the consultation.	Planning team.	By September 1
Identify resource people who will serve as consultants.	Jacqui	By October 1
Develop training modality for consultants.	Lola and Mel	By November 1

## Worksheet: Action Group Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation sheet is to evaluate the current state of the action group's work.

1. What are the goals the action group set for the past year?
2. What are the projects and activities that have been completed? What accomplishments have been made?
3. What are the projects and activities currently being worked on?
4. What projects or activities are still unfinished?
5. Where has the group fallen short? What needs to be improved?
6. What problems were encountered? How were they overcome?
7. Is the group functioning as an effective team with regard to how people work together and accomplish the task?
8. What has the group learned about making social change?
9. What problems might arise in the future as the group continues to work on its issue?
10. In what ways can the social justice leaders in the congregation support the group in the future?
11. Is this action group still necessary, or is its work completed? If it continues, what future projects are possible?

## Team Building Exercise

**Hopes:** What are the hopes each person in the group has about working on this issue and being a member of this group?

**Fears:** What are the fears each person in the group has about working on this issue and being a member of this group?

**Resources:** What personal resources does each person bring to the group? What other resource people are available in the church and in the community who can help work on this issue?

**Learnings:** What does each person want to learn while participating on this team? And what does the group as a whole need to learn if it is to work effectively?

### Planning the Next Steps for Your Action Group

1. When will the next meeting of the group take place?
2. Who will convene the next meeting?
3. What should be on the agenda for the next meeting?
4. What information needs to be gathered before the next meeting? Who will take responsibility for gathering this information?
5. How will the group publicize this meeting to others in the congregation?
6. Are there other people who should be invited to attend the next meeting?

### Prepare Report for Meeting of New Attendees

Choose one of the group members to make a three-minute presentation to the new attendees of this meeting. Clearly define the issue, key elements in the action plan, the team-building process, and the next steps the group will take.

In addition, consider if there is anything the group needs from the other new people who are at the meeting.

## VII. Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Resources

# UUA Social Justice Resources, Staff Contacts and Affiliate Organizations

## RESOURCES

UUA Social Justice Initiatives and Programs

[www.uua.org/socialjustice](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice)

Office for Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender Concerns

[www.uua.org/obgltc/](http://www.uua.org/obgltc/)

UUA Media Advocacy and Public Witness Resources

[www.uua.org/info/](http://www.uua.org/info/)

Social Justice Statements by Category and Keyword Search

[www.uua.org/actions](http://www.uua.org/actions).

Study Action Issues and Statements of Conscience and Commission on Social Witness Process

[www.uua.org/csw/](http://www.uua.org/csw/)

UU Service Committee

<http://www.uusc.org/>

Including:

UU Affordable Housing Corporation

<http://www.uuahc.org/>

UUs for a Just Economic Community

<http://www.uujec.net/>

Ministry for Earth

[www.uuministryforearth.org/index.shtml](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/index.shtml)

UU State Advocacy Networks and UU Legislative Ministries

<http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/affiliates.html>

## E-NEWSLETTERS & ACTION ALERTS

Social Action Chair (SAC) News

<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/sac-news>

From the UUA Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness SAC-News is a low-traffic announcement-only list for chairs and members of Unitarian Universalist Social Action Committees and other interested justice-makers. The site provides resources with direct links to the UUA website and provides news about UU and interfaith coalition efforts on various social justice issues and actions.

Advocacy News

<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/advocacy-news>

Advocacy News is the announcement-only list of the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy, whose mission is to effect public policy decisions made by the US Congress and Administration on issues of concern to the Unitarian Universalist Association. It keeps readers informed about what is being done and when to contact Members of Congress on critical justice issues. Expect an average of no more than one e-mail per week.

Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW) News  
<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/jtwnews>

A newsletter about the UUA Journey Toward Wholeness anti-oppression, anti-racist multicultural initiative; includes UU advocacy efforts, congregational resources and best practices.

Congregational Faith-Based Community Organizing  
[www.uua.org/programs/justice/cbco.html](http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/cbco.html)

Socially Responsible Investing Information and Resources  
[www.uua.org/finance/sri](http://www.uua.org/finance/sri)

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## **Financial Resources for the Social Justice Program**

Congregational social justice leaders need financial resources to carry out their programs. Money is needed for printing, publicity, supplies, phone calls, staff people, and so on. Some congregations give sizable contributions to social change groups.

Below are suggestions for how social justice committees can obtain funding from the congregation's budget, from special fund-raising projects, from the Unitarian Universalist Funding and other sources.

### **1. Money for social justice in the congregation's budget**

Try to get the congregation to appropriate a portion of its budget to support social justice programs. This is one way that the congregation can do something specific to support the values of liberal religion and the Principles and Purposes of our movement. It also ensures that social justice has the money needed to run its program.

Two percent of the congregation's overall budget is a reasonable amount to allocate for social justice programming. This should be seen as a minimum amount, since there are congregations that budget a higher percentage than this.

If the congregation has a \$100,000 budget, the Board should allocate \$2,000 for social justice programs. If the congregation has a \$200,000 budget, social justice should get \$4,000.

If the social justice program is not presently budgeted a fair share, work out a strategy for increasing the budgeted amount. But, do not simply go and ask the board for more money. Instead, determine the amount of monies needed to do specific projects. Then explain to the board why money is needed for these projects. If the board can't allocate two per cent, work out a strategy so that the social justice program can evolve to that amount over a two or three year period.

The program has a better chance of getting money for social justice programs when social justice activists support the congregation with generous pledges and take active roles in the annual fund-raising canvass.

### **2. Special fund-raising congregational practices**

A number of our congregations have been very successful in raising money for social justice projects. There are many ways to raise money.

A monthly, bi-weekly or weekly "Share the Plate" collection has become a growing practice among many UU congregations. It is a collection held in addition to the regular Sunday worship collection and is used to fund the congregation's social justice activities as well as to make contributions to other social justice organizations and coalitions. Typically, the collection is accompanied by the introduction of a representative from the ally organization or news of a congregational social justice effort so that awareness and participation are raised as well.

The UU Church of Nashua, NH reports that it raises \$20,000 annually through this weekly collection and that it has had no impact on the collection for the church.

The Social Justice Coordinating Council at the UU Church of Bloomington, IN sells fair trade coffee and tea as one of the ways to fund their social justice projects. Over 500 UU congregations participate in the UU Service Committee's Equal Exchange Interfaith Coffee Program which includes bulk sales for fundraising. See <http://www.uusc.org/info/coffeeproject.html> for more information. This practice not only raises funds but supports independent growers and cooperatives in developing countries.

The annual pledge drive at River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD (650 members), enables members to make a separate pledge for the congregation's support of social justice organizations.

Friends and members receive two pledge cards each spring, one for the general canvass and one for social justice outreach. In the spring of 2001, they pledged \$685,000 to the annual canvass and another \$100,000 for social justice. Add another \$50,000 collected at other fundraisers and members gave more than 10 percent of all member contributions to social justice work last year. Social justice pledging at River Road has been going on in this manner since 1974.

Special Events that the congregation becomes known for are also a great way to raise funds and build the congregation's identity and outreach in the community. **First Parish Brewster MA** hosts an annual formal Valentine's Day dance for Cape Cod's GLBT community and friends, raising at least \$6,000 each year to support issues and programs important to that community.

In 1991-92, **All Souls Church in New York** raised \$170,000 through special fund-raising programs to support its social justice programs. The congregation had a special travel auction at which they raised \$105,000, a fair that brought in \$25,000, and a fundraiser for an AIDS project, which netted \$40,000.

The social justice committee in the **Morristown, NJ** church held a service auction hoping to raise \$8,000 to support their projects. Imagine the "problem" they had when they raised \$14,000. They ended up giving the board of their congregation \$6,000.

The **UU Congregation of the Palisades in Englewood, NJ**, with some neighboring UU congregations, raised \$10,000 with a concert to help homeless people. They invited the Jubilee Choir from All Souls Church in Washington, DC to sing at the concert.

The **Unitarian Society of Germantown in Philadelphia** raises over \$10,000 a year through special collections, which are taken once a month at the Sunday service. The church board does a survey of the congregation to determine the projects that can be funded. Projects include: United Nations Sunday, Guest at Your Table (UUSC), Justice Sunday, and so on. Either the whole service is focused on the project, as is the case with Justice Sunday, or a brief period of time in the service is used.

The **Monterey Peninsula Unitarian Church in Carmel, CA** encourages its members to "fast for friends." Once a month a community group makes a brief presentation at a Sunday Service. A special collection is taken after the presentation. People contribute with the idea of fasting during the month to provide the money.

The **UU Church of Tampa, FL** designates a charity a month, for which it takes a special collection.

### **3. The Unitarian Universalist grants panels**

There are three different granting programs available through the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program (UUFPP).

The funding cycle is twice yearly with deadlines of September 15<sup>th</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup>. For more information, including information on past grantees, see <http://www.uua.org/uufp/index.html>. Contact the UUFPP at [uufp@aol.com](mailto:uufp@aol.com) or 617-971-9600.

#### **A. Fund for Unitarian Universalist Social Responsibility**

The Fund for Social Responsibility makes grants for projects that increase UU involvement in issues of social responsibility. Grants are made in support of social justice educational work, direct service projects, projects that enable Unitarian Universalists to witness about social issues, and projects organizing to change systems of oppression and injustice. Projects that seek to implement current or recent General Resolutions/Statements of Conscience will be welcomed. The maximum grant will be \$20,000; however, the typical grant will be smaller.

Members of congregations who are trying to get funding for projects sponsored by their church should apply to this fund.

#### **B. Fund for a Just Society**

The Fund for a Just Society makes grants to organizations addressing issues of social and economic injustice. Grants are given in support of specific projects focusing on "systematic" social change projects that challenge social, racial, political, and economic injustices and those that seek to transform the structures that create and maintain these injustices. Grants can be made up to \$20,000 and the average grant is \$6-9,000.

While the funds are not for UU congregations, UU social justice organizers who are working with local community groups should apply to this funding source.

#### **C. Fund for Unitarian Universalism** *(formerly the Denominational Grants Panel)*

The Fund for Unitarian Universalism supports projects that strengthen UU institutions, extend UU visibility and presence, enrich its community and worship life, or preserve and celebrate its religious heritage. Preference is given to the development of innovative, challenging, or experimental programs whose application or replication will have wide denominational impact. The maximum possible grant is \$20,000, and the average grant is \$7,000 and "challenge" or "matching" grants are often common.

#### **D. Fund for International Unitarian Universalism**

The Fund for International Unitarian Universalism makes grants to strengthen Unitarian Universalist organizations or projects working internationally. Grants are made to Unitarian/Universalist organizations or projects working internationally that:

- Promote the growth of religious institutions that are consistent with Unitarian/Universalist ideals and values.

- Strengthen Unitarian/Universalist institutions and community life.
  - Nurture and celebrate our free faith.
- 
- Encourage a generosity among Unitarian Universalists that is reflected in commitments of time, money and energy.

*Please Note: This fund has one funding cycle each year with a deadline of March 15th.*

In 2005, the Funds distributed \$875,221 to 123 organizations. Application forms and guidelines are available from the Funding Program office. Organizations and projects that are considering applying are strongly encouraged to talk with the Grants Administrator prior to filling out the application.

### **E. Unitarian Universalist Women’s Federation**

The UUWF Grants Program supports innovative social justice projects that affect women and girls and contributes to positive social change.

The first grants cycle begins with an October deadline for proposals. \$15,000 has been allocated for this first cycle, with the average grant anticipated to be about \$5,000.

See <http://www.uuwf.org/grants.html> for more information.

### **4. Resources**

See *Raising Money for Social Action* by Michael Durall, Member of the First Church, UU, in Belmont, Massachusetts, and author of the book *Creating Congregations of Generous People*, (Alban Institute, 1999) at <http://www.uua.org/uuawo/new/article.php?id=63>.

See **Grants and Related Resources--National Grantmakers** at <http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/priv.htm>.

**Raising Change** holds an annual social justice fundraising conference and provides workshops and resources. See [http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org/raising\\_change/](http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org/raising_change/).

# Commission on Social Witness (CSW) Process

<b>First Cycle Year (Selection Year)</b> 7/01/05 – GA 06	<p>October 1: Deadline for congregations, districts, and UUA sponsored organizations to submit proposed CSAIs.</p> <p>November 1: CSW places up to 10 proposed CSAIs on the Congregational Poll.</p> <p>November 15: The Congregational Poll is made available and congregations are notified of it.</p> <p>February 1: Deadline for congregations to vote in the Congregational Poll. A quorum of 25% of congregations must participate for the poll to be valid. If the poll is not valid, this process shall be repeated the following year. If it is valid, then the top five proposals are placed on the final agenda for General Assembly.</p>
	<p><b>GA 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. GA delegates select one CSAI for the next four years. Advocacy and Witness staff to conduct a workshop on the newly-selected issue.</li> </ul>
<b>Second Cycle Year (Study Year)</b> 7/1/06 – GA 07	<p>November 1: Deadline for Advocacy and Witness staff to prepare a Study/Action Resource Guide. The resource guide shall be made available and congregations notified of its availability.</p> <p>March 1: Deadline for congregations and districts to submit comments regarding the Congregational Study/Action Issue and the related resource guide to the Commission on Social Witness.</p>
	<p><b>GA 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CSW conducts workshops on the CSAI.</li> </ul>
<b>Third Cycle Year (Study Year)</b> 7/1/07 – GA 08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CSAI proposal process may start again.</li> </ul> <p>March 1: Deadline for congregations and districts to submit comments regarding the Congregational Study/Action Issue and the related resource guide to the Commission on Social Witness.</p>
	<p><b>GA 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CSW conducts workshops on the CSAI.</li> </ul>
<b>Fourth Cycle Year (Statement Year)</b> 7/1/08 – GA 09	<p>November 15: Deadline for CSW to prepare a draft Statement of Conscience. The draft UUA Statement of Conscience, a draft Statement of Conscience congregational comment form, and a ballot to place the draft UUA Statement of Conscience on the Final Agenda shall be included in the Congregational Poll, to be made available and congregations notified of its availability. Notice of the availability of these items shall be delivered to the congregations through the mail and by electronic mail.</p> <p>February 1: Deadline for Congregational Poll ballots and Congregational Comment Forms. For a draft UUA Statement of Conscience to be placed on the Final Agenda of the General Assembly, twenty-five percent (25%) of all certified congregations must participate in the ballot vote concerning such draft UUA Statement of Conscience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission on Social Witness shall then prepare a revised draft of the UUA Statement of Conscience taking into consideration comments received by the member congregations and districts and place this revised draft of the UUA Statement of Conscience on the Final Agenda.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>GA 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Assembly considers the Statement of Conscience. Approval requires a two-thirds vote. The Assembly may also, by a two-thirds vote, refer the Statement for an additional year of study.</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation Year (&amp; First Year Again)</b> 7/1/09 – GA 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregations and UUA staff carry out a year of implementation.</li> </ul> <p>October 1: The Study/Action process begins again; CSAI proposals are due.</p>
	<p><b>GA 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a Statement of Conscience was adopted in the previous year, workshops are held on it. This concludes the Study/Action cycle for that issue. A new CSAI is selected.</li> </ul>

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