

## **Social Justice Team Annual Report 2018 - Jean Bowen, Chairperson**

The Social Justice Team continues to function as a collaboration of interest areas specific to social justice. The individual groups work independently and pull in interested members of the congregation.

Our Members are now integrated into numerous community organizations working to expand our advocacy outreach including: Tomaquag Museum, AMOR, The Woman Project, South County Huddle, SURJ, Indivisible, UU Legislative Ministry, the Faith Advisory Board of the Domestic Violence Resource Center, Nature's Trust RI, Fossil Free RI, RI Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. Rev. David Helfer serves on the Board of Directors of RI Interfaith Power and Light, the RI Council of Churches. These are a few of the many organizations that our leadership adds our values and principles of Unitarian Universalism to the community.

The Team sponsored a Legislative Forum in November, 2017 with subject area speakers from our membership speaking on racial justice, environmental justice, women's rights, immigration reform, mental health and gun sensible legislation. Area legislators were invited to respond to our comments and explain their views and committee responsibilities. This was well attended by congregants and community.

Social Justice Team members, including Rev. David, regularly travel to the RI State Legislature for the purpose of witnessing and testifying in public hearings on the legislation that our members are pressing for passage. These include banning the bump stocks on automatic weapons, the "red flag" extreme risk protective orders and passage of the minimum wage increase.

The Disability and Accessibility Committee recommended and made improvements for accessibility by adding a hearing loop in the sanctuary, temporary disability parking signs to increase spaces for people with DMV parking signs. Discussions of inclusion, facility improvements and temporary accommodations are on-going with the Facilities Committee. Some recommendations include setting up sitting areas in the sanctuary during coffee hour to alleviate crowding, adding an electronic push button to the ramped doorway into the Oneto Room, adding signage from walk pointing to the ramp, enhance speakers to the back of sanctuary, add speakers to the library and the community room and revise "welcoming" statement on OOS. This committee needs a Chairperson! Members: Tom Nerney, Jean Bowen, David Damon, Essjay Foulkrad, Donna Caldwell and Susan Jacobson.

### Immigrant Justice

The scope and challenges involved in creating sanctuary are beyond a congregation of our size. We are considering future ways to support sanctuary at First Unitarian in Providence as the sanctuary movement shines a spotlight on the challenges confronting undocumented immigrants.

If an immigrant justice team is formed in the future, there are many ways beyond sanctuary to support immigrant justice. Such a group will support efforts including education within the congregation, active participation with an advocacy group such as AMOR and involvement with other RI organizations and interfaith collaboration. 5 congregants recently were trained by

AMOR to be available for rapid response when requested to provide support in court, translation and advocacy requests. Dorie Lawson is the contact.

Share the Plate

Our Established Guidelines:

We recommend that the donations be collected in two-month consecutive collections that are shared with the congregation 50/50. The collections will be utilized as contributions to local non-profits and their programs. We believe that donations in our community will enhance programs that meet the goals of our own Social Justice areas of impact. We will be open to special collections for extraordinary disasters and emergencies.

We will prioritize justice areas over charity. We will place emphasis on local, small non-profits and program funding that would benefit and grow local movements. Our priority justice areas are the environment, race and cultural justice, women’s rights, LGBTQIA, economic and disability/aging concerns. It is our intention these donations will enhance our visibility in the communities where we draw members. The Generosity of the Congregation is very much appreciated!

Summary of Collections and Donations

MONTH	Organization	Donation
2017		
January	Haiti Relief	\$176.50
February	Crossroads RI	\$144.75
March/ April	Tomaquag Museum	\$487.50
May /June	Domestic Violence Resource Center	\$536.50
July / August	Thundermist Access Team	\$321.50
September/October	UUA/ UUSC Hurricane Harvey Relief	\$801.50
November / December	Planned Parenthood of New England	\$562.00
Christmas Eve/Eve	The Women Project	\$706.50
2018		
January/February	Narrow River Preservation Association	\$431.50
March/April	AMOR	\$425.50

Up Coming Initiatives for Share the Plate

May/June – Environment

Farm Fresh RI- Bonus Bucks Nutrition Incentives Program – [www.farmfreshri.org](http://www.farmfreshri.org)  
 19% percent of Rhode Islanders live in poverty, and nearly 30 percent of Providence residents live below the poverty line (US Census Bureau). People affected by poverty can be more at risk for obesity and diet-related disease. To help address this, we provide nutrition incentives in the form of Bonus Bucks to low-income families at farmers markets across the state — helping farmers sell more local foods and making fresh, nutritious options more accessible.

July/August - LGBTQIA Rights

Youth Pride RI - <http://youthprideri.org/>

Youth Pride Inc. (YPI) is an affirming space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning young people to build community, develop connections and be themselves. Youth come together from a wide range of backgrounds and join with one another over common issues.

September/October          Disability Concerns

Gaits of Harmony - <http://www.gaitsofharmony.org/>

Mission - Gaits of Harmony provides all people with opportunities to educate, enrich and empower themselves in order to meet the challenges of their daily lives through interaction with horses.

Harmony will serve thirty clients and involve members of the community to help serve its mission.

November/December - Community Involvement

Welcome House & Jonnycake Center [https:// welcomehouseofsouthcounty.org/](https://welcomehouseofsouthcounty.org/) and [www.jonnycakecenter.org](http://www.jonnycakecenter.org)

Welcome House of South County is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization dedicated to helping end homelessness in Washington County since 1989. We offer emergency shelter, a soup kitchen, transitional and supportive permanent housing as well as case management and advocacy for neighbors in need.

The UUCSC will be asked to provide Gift Cards to local business to be distributed to the guests of the Welcome House and Johnny Cakes Center. More information will be provided to the congregation.

The Social Justice Committee Share the Plate sub-committee invites the members and friends of the UUCSC to input suggestions to local organizations that help fulfill our Mission.

Contact:

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Welcome House and Jonnycake Center - our relationship with these social service agencies is a long one. Mary Fulton has offered to enhance our visibility with them and members of the congregation. Last year we brought 220 pounds of food to Jonnycake Center. Welcome House receives monthly contributions of food from us for their kitchen. The two agencies are working together to identify the needs of 550 children and 80 elders in need of holiday gift cards. We recommend that this holiday season Religious Education and the Congregation will ask for gift cards for these two programs.

Women's Issues - Gail Burchard regularly attends the South County Huddle an outgrowth from the first Women's March. They advocate for key legislation affecting women's reproductive health care and abortion. The Woman Project held their first quilt making in the sanctuary. The massive quilt making took over the sanctuary with sewing machines and ironing boards everywhere. Gail and Val Follett have started a Dining for Women potluck and fundraising initiative that benefits worthy and vetted non-profits that assist women in Africa, the middle East and other parts of the world. Although not a Social Justice or UUCSC project they meet in the Oneto room once a month and many congregants participate.

Other subcommittees under Social Justice not mentioned above, include Equal Exchange (separate annual report), The Green Task Force (separate annual report), Guest at Your Table (separate annual report) and Racial Justice (separate annual report).