

Social Justice Team Annual Report FY'20- Jean Bowen, Chairperson and Carolyn Hurdis, Co-Chairperson

The pandemic has interrupted social justice work as normally conducted and directed our activities in other directions. The extraordinary challenges that faced South County elders, minority members of the community and individuals with limited means meant that we responded to assist the Covid 19 Mutual Aid and Support Group, the Jonnycake Center and participate in social action efforts in Rhode Island. The crisis affecting immigrants and individuals detained at the Wyatt Center became more pressing as some of us looked for emergency housing for a RI family detained out of state and car rallies now became common place. Many of our members became isolated in their own homes and in congregate settings and emergency food procurements (including ice cream) became a necessity.

Many of us responded to the call for social justice and reform after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Numerous events, rallies and marches have taken place to protest chokeholds, police reform and funding. Rev. DL has held two zoom all congregation events as of this writing to come to discover our implicit bias and white privilege. This continued conversation will lead to both internal discussions and offer congregants opportunities for advocacy in the community and in Rhode Island.

We are appreciative of the extra support our congregation members gave to folks in need that included outreach to the South Kingstown, Exeter, North Kingstown and Narragansett communities. A special recognition should be acknowledged to Rev. DL Helfer who personally gives his time to the crisis experienced by immigrants.

The UUA GA2020 officially went virtual. Significant work went into making this an online experience for UU's across the country. Although we were terribly disappointed that this was not to be held in Providence, Betsy, Sky, Mary Alice and I have participated in calls with the GA Planning Committee. We advocated for the Tomaquag Museum to participate in a meaningful way so that they would still experience exposure and the educational opportunity that the Narragansett Native American provides. Loren Spears presented a workshop "Spirituality of Native Americans". We submitted videos produced by PBS Rhode Island to be included in the Sunday morning service with the Donate button visible for UU's to make donations to the Tomaquag Museum.

Women's Issues - Gail Burchard

The Huddle group moved from meeting at the Peace Dale Library to the Peace Dale Guild. We are concerned on getting the 2020 Census information and making sure folks are returning the inquiries, or filing online. Deb Kopech and Patricia Cole lead the group and are trying to make all aware and involved in our local and state governments... supporting the issues that I believe most UUs hold dear to their hearts... such as supporting candidates who we believe will support climate change, immigration laws that do not burden those who are already here, etc. (pretty much strong democrats). Since we have been restricted to our homes and social

distancing, Deb Kopech, has been sending out a daily briefing to all members as to what our Governor is doing and other pertinent info for South County.

Since Sept., Dining for Women continued to hold their monthly potlucks in the Oneto Community Room at our UUCSC, until we had to stay in our homes. On April 7 & May 5 we have Zoom DFW gatherings, and the larger national group (now with 501 chapters) have been virtually meeting weekly on Zoom on Thursday evenings. The organization continues to grow, and as we all experience covid19, so do the developing countries, where we support our grantees. Our local chapter, since our inception, has raised \$21,326, by monthly donations or contributions at our potlucks. The focus is on health, education, advocacy - connecting with our own congress members to support foreign aid that will assist in empowering women and eliminating some of the gender inequality in these developing countries. We have over 100 interested members, with about 20 - 25 attending our potlucks.

The Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County Faith Alliance-Donna Caldwell

The DVRCSC is a non-profit agency that works toward a future free of violence, and to build a community in which individuals share the responsibility to create a culture of safety and personal dignity. Their Faith Alliance brings together representatives of the Faith Communities in South County to support their efforts and carry their message back to our institutions. This past year we met quarterly, focusing on their new initiative to provide violence education and prevention resources to the youth of our community. As always, we continue to share our activities and resources to promote non-violence. In October 2019 (National Domestic Violence Awareness Month) we highlighted their work at our October service and they were the recipients of our share the plate collection.

DISABILITY JUSTICE - Betsy Dalton

Actions for this year:

- Designed and launched a new, more flexible website that is more visually accessible for all in the UUCSC congregation
- Worked with Facilities Committee to establish more handicap-accessible parking places at UUCSC
- Developed plan with Facilities Committee for installation of more bannisters to assist with access and safety
- Support continued operation of accessible door opener at front ramp entrance to UUCSC
- Support continued operation of hearing loop systems in the UUCSC sanctuary
- Will offer a virtual poster session entitled Accessibility for ALL: From Inspiration to Reality at the UUA GA 2020 in June 2020. Prepared and presented by Myron Waldman and Betsy Dalton

Green Team Task Force - Lisa Petrie, Chairperson

Members: Marie Schopac, Jan Creamer, Larry Kelland, John Glasheen, Suzanne Marcy, Patience Peck, and new member Wendy Kahn (she attended our last meeting and our workshop in March). (Note: Some members participate only sporadically, and several of us have circumstances that prevent us from being as active as we used to be.)

6/30/19—Hosted a special Sunday service led by two young activists from the Sunrise Movement, the youth-powered movement that brought us the Green New Deal.

9/13/19—Held our 9th annual Local Foods Banquet, a potluck dinner with live music by Nick Smith and Susan Pavlow, as well as information on local events and actions relating to social and environmental justice.

9/20— Three of our members participated in a late-afternoon Climate Vigil in Westerly as part of a global mobilization to demand strong action ahead of the UN Climate Summit in New York.

1/18/20—Collaborated with Barbara Holtzman, Martina Muller, Rev DL, and Etta Zasloff to host a workshop based on “The Work that Reconnects,” an approach developed by writer, activist, and Buddhist eco-philosopher Joanna Macy to help individuals reclaim their power by facing and feeling “our deepest, most healing responses to the world’s crises...”

RACIAL JUSTICE - Carolyn Hurdis, Chairperson, Penny Hall, Co-Chairperson

Members of Committee---Jean Bowen, Val Follett, John Glasheen, Dori Lawson, Carol Layne, Russell Stokes, Susan Strakosch

Although the Racial Justice Committee’s work was cut short by the coronavirus, significant tasks were accomplished.

Jean Bowen and Carolyn Hurdis put together a presentation for the UU Congregations in RI and wrote a comprehensive proposal for the Tomaquag Museum to be the recipient of the Sunday service plate at GA2020. Our proposal was selected by the UUA Board of Directors. The Tomaquag Museum has videos done by PBS RI which will be viewed during the Sunday morning service with a Donate button available for UU’s to contribute. Loren Spears, Executive Director conducted a workshop, “Spirituality of Native Americans”.

In the fall we continued to work with the Housing Authority by attending their monthly Board meetings. Kate Brewster, executive director of the Johnny Cake Center, attended our meeting and spoke about how the Housing Authority is not supportive of its residents. She encouraged us to continue to attend monthly meetings and to apply for an opening on the Board which two members did. 3 openings have been filled by South Kingstown residents.

The committee organized a legislative forum to be held Sunday, March 29th which was cancelled.

A congregational book study group was organized on the UUA common read of Roxanne Ortiz's An Indigenous People's History. A group of 40 people was led in discussion by Carol Layne and Rev DL after church on March 1st.

Dori and Tom Lawson continued working with the Asylum and Sanctuary groups at First Unitarian in Providence and the Coalition of organizations advocating for immigrants and people incarcerated at the Wyatt Detention Center.

SHARE THE PLATE

Objectives

- I. Raise awareness within the congregation of social justice concerns in our community.
- II. Give congregants an opportunity to stand as a witness for social justice by providing direct support to selected initiatives and organizations.

Our Members are very GENEROUS. We were able to bring to the Congregation some old faces and some new. We made a change for the summer months to collect for 3 months instead of 2 as the summer services can be lightly attended.

None the less our partnerships with the organizations brought knowledge to us and some relief to them.

Here is a summary of activities

Share the Plate – UUCSC Partners		
MONTH	ORGANIZATION	DONATION
2019		
January February	Nature's Trust	\$592.50
March April	AMOR	\$483.00
May June July	Habitat for Humanity – South Kingstown	\$775.00
August September October	Domestic Violence Center of South County	\$744.50
November December	Black and Pink	\$418.50
Christmas Eve Eve	AGAPE	
2020		
January February	Jonnycake Center of Peacedale	\$397.75
March April	General Assembly Fund Raising for Congregation Attendance	\$220.00 to date

Going forward in these changing times we are exploring different ways to connect to our local organizations so keep watching!