

UUSJ Newsletter - Fall 2009

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

An affiliate of the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Council

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Chair's Corner:

I have just attended the UUSJ Social Justice Leaders Gathering and therefore my thoughts tend to concentrate on information provided by the event. Jean Pierce, Chair Elect of UUSJ, will be writing a report on that event. But, let me comment that it was a stimulating, successful event. I counted 19 people attending, representing 10 or more CAUUC congregations, which was an excellent turn out.

In the last issue of UUSJ News, I asked the question: "So, can we do it all? That is, can we communicate better, link our CAUUC congregations closer together for social justice,

Matching Grant

In recent years UUs for Social Justice' financial balances have been gradually declining. To help restore UUSJ to a healthier financial position, one of it's Board members has challenged UUSJ supporters to contribute to the organization during the October through December, 2009, calendar quarter, and to encourage such giving has promised to match each contribution to UUSJ during those three months through a dollar for dollar match of your contributions. Contributions should be sent to U.U.s for Social Justice, 1448 E. 52nd St., Chicago, IL 60615. Thank you, if you can help us with a contribution, to help take advantage of this matching grant.

UUSJ Annual Meeting

Sunday, December 6, 2009

2 PM to 3 PM – Program: Growing
Divide Update (Workshop)

3 PM to 5 PM – Business Meeting
at

Beverly Unitarian Church
10244 S. Longwood Drive
Chicago, IL 60643

support our congregations, and develop some new community organizing techniques without aid, staff, and with very little money?" I still think that was a pretty good question.

My answer to the question noted above, is that we're working on it and some progress has been made. The following are a few signs of progress:

- (1) Communication and linking are both improving with the use of internet, conference calls, and frequent phone contacts. These systems add to our newsletters (*UUSJ News and CAUUC News*) so that we try to reach as many people and congregations as possible.
- (2) Workshops and conferences. The CAUUC "Now is the Time" workshop and the UUSJ Social Justice Leaders Gathering serve to increase our support for CAUUC congregations and to

- improve our community organizing skills.
- (3) The Chicago Marketing Initiative provides a variety of information and tools to help individual congregations, UUSJ, and CAUUC to define themselves and present clear positive pictures to our communities.
 - (4) The UU Advocacy Network of Illinois, still a work in progress, has the potential to help all of us (CAUUC, UUSJ, congregations, and individual UUs) extend our reach and influence beyond the Chicagoland area

All in all, these are signs of progress and I certainly hope these trends will continue over the coming year.
Gene Horcher (773) 561-5296 Email: horcher@att.net

Social Justice Leaders Gathering October 17

by Jean Pierce – UUSJ Chair Elect

Eighteen Social Justice leaders gathered at Hinsdale Unitarian Church on Saturday, October 17 to network and to learn about services available to them through UUSJ, the Chicagoland Marketing Initiative, and CAUUC. Representing 10 congregations in the Chicagoland area, representatives shared a wealth of information about current efforts. Many of the programs described will be listed in the expanded UUSJ database. During a discussion period, we explored issues about special collections and collaborations with local organizations. For lunch, participants met with others who shared special interests regarding peace, the environment, human rights, racial justice, the economy, and social justice processes.

In the afternoon, Allan Lindrup provided an overview of UUSJ and the Action Alert network. The Social Justice database, which lists contact information, is available at www.uusforsocialjustice.org. To date, seven congregations have contributed to the expanded version of the database, which contains information about projects in the region.

Mike Murschel explained information about positioning, branding, and public relations for publicizing social justice programs and events. He encouraged us to visit his website at www.mjmwriter.com and to contact him at mike@mjmwriter.com for more information about media kits, press releases, crisis communication, etc. While congregations would be responsible for purchasing his services, the expenses are reasonable. Margaret Shaklee described three services provided by CAUUC: maintaining the website at www.uuchicago.org, establishing an IL UU Advocacy Network, and sponsoring an annual meeting. She depends on our congregations to provide updated information which she can post on the website. Margaret invited us to express our interest in participating in creating the Network. She noted that this year's CAUUC annual meeting will held on Saturday, Nov. 7, at the North Shore Unitarian Church, 2100 Half Day Road, Deerfield, IL 60015.

Report of the Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness

This task force will be presenting an updated *Growing Divide* workshop as the program portion of the UUSJ Annual Meeting, which will be held at Beverly

Unitarian Church, 10244 S. Longwood Dr., Chicago 60643, on Sunday, December 6, starting at 2 p.m. A Study Action Issue, on National Economic Reform, has been proposed by the UU Just Economic Community, with the assistance of several congregations. Congregations will be asked to vote on proposed Study Action Issues by February, 2010.

The most recent Action Alert from this task force was in support of H.R. 3012, the TRADE Act, which would require that the U.S. renegotiate our existing trade agreements, including NAFTA and participation in WTO, to bring those agreements in line with strong environmental, labor, human rights and other standards, or end U.S. participation in them if that is not possible. Those standards would also apply to any new agreements the U.S. might consider entering into.

This task force awarded the current Home and Hope Booster grant to the Hyde Park Transitional Housing Project (HPTHP), which was the only nomination submitted. The nomination came from the Social Justice Council at First Unitarian Church of Chicago. This transitional housing project provides stable housing, plus weekly mentoring, for up to two years, to homeless families with decent prospects for achieving economic independence, once provided that stable housing and mentoring. U.U.s constitute the largest faith group on the HPTHP Board of Directors, including Secretary, Case Manager, Trustee for Fundraising, and Recruiter. Those four U.U. Board members provide about 840 hours of volunteer service per year to HPTHP. In 2008 13 U.U. individuals and couples contributed roughly \$1,700 to HPTHP. In addition, First Unitarian Church

provides free space for HPTHP to store donated furniture until it is needed.

The next regular meeting of this task force has been scheduled for Saturday, January 16, 2010, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield, Chicago. All are welcome.

Allan Lindrup, Co-Chair, at 773-643-8061 or uusj@sbcglobal.net

Ron Chew, Co-Chair, at 708-524-9695 or ronnkarla@aol.com

UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

Action Alert: We are planning an Action Alert when the US Senate bill 1733 "Clean Energy and American Power Act" comes out of committee. A fairly positive energy bill has already passed the US House, but we fear that a bipartisan coalition of senators will attach offshore oil drilling, nuclear energy, and/or "clean" coal along with the other positive funding for renewable energy. Our Action Alert will probably request changes in the Senate bill 1733.

Educational Inserts: We've completed and will be mailing our updated revision of the insert on Household Hazardous Waste Disposal since the old one very much needed updating for the currently active sites accepting household hazardous waste, their addresses, schedules and proper contacts. Another one about the carbon footprint of wine has been proposed.

Next meeting is Sunday, December 13, 2009 from 3 to 5 PM at the Unity Temple, 875 Lake Street, Oak Park. All are welcome.

With any questions, contact:

Andrew T. Fisher – Chair
847-492-1055 or fisher.a@sbcglobal.net

UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

The Peace Task Force sponsored a program at the summer quarterly meeting of UUSJ which featured Kathy Kelly and Dan Pearson of Voices for Creative Non-Violence. The program, titled "Eyewitness to War, Witness to Peace, at home and abroad", was well received, and was followed by questions, answers, and discussion. The turnout was a total of 29, which is excellent for UUSJ quarterly programs.

Other activities of the Peace Task Force include: action alerts, networking, and participation in community peace events. We are researching three bills in congress, two dealing with the war in Afghanistan and one dealing with foreign assistance. We noted an increase in peace activities this fall in most of our congregations with a large variety of

sermons, projects, and activities. For example, some churches are considering peace pole installations or rededications. We are following the proposed Statement of Conscience by the UUA General Assembly meeting in June. It was referred back to the churches for further study and comments. Material is to be sent to our churches this fall, but so far none on the Peace Task Force has seen this material.

Rev. Jean Darling has agreed to be co-chair of the Peace Task Force, along with Gene Horcher. Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, 1/16/10, 2:15 PM at Third Unitarian Church, 301 N. Mayfield in Chicago. All CAUUC area church members and friends are welcome to attend. To attend by conference call, dial 1-800-704-9804, then enter the code 892781#.

If you have any questions or suggestions, contact Gene Horcher, (773) 561-5296, email: horcher@att.net

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