



Economic Justice Spotlight

*Discover what UU congregations are doing to translate
their values into action, all across the country!*

Prepared by the Board of Trustees of the UUJEC

Our programs, materials and initiatives would not be possible without the generous support of our members, member congregations and grant-makers. A heartfelt “Thank You” to the UU Funding Panel for its continued commitment to the economic justice work we do.

Your help is needed to build upon our mission toward a just society. If you wish to donate or join UUJEC, please visit our membership page at <http://uujec.com/membership>.

We embarked on a journey of discovery, to understand the tireless and comprehensive work UU activists were doing to make our world more just. Our call for submissions drew interest from active social justice committees and congregations from every corner of the country. We are pleased to collaborate with them in sharing best practice approaches to justice work for our readers to learn from and to bring inspiration.

Enjoy the stories, share in the efforts and use the ideas you read as a model for your continued work in economic justice.

Contributing Congregations and Social Justice Committees:

- ❖ First Unitarian Society of Madison--Madison, Wisconsin
- ❖ BuxMont Unitarian Universalist Fellowship--Warrington, Pennsylvania
- ❖ Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship--Newbury Park, California
- ❖ Escalating Inequality Task Force of Metropolitan Detroit--Detroit, Michigan
- ❖ First Parish of Sudbury--Sudbury, Massachusetts
- ❖ First Universalist Church of Norway--Norway, Maine
- ❖ First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio--San Antonio, Texas
- ❖ Mountain Vista Unitarian Universalist Congregation--Tucson, Arizona
- ❖ Social Action Ministry, Shoreline UU Church--Shoreline Washington
- ❖ Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice--Venice, Florida
- ❖ Unitarian Universalist Church West--Brookfield, Wisconsin
- ❖ Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady--Schenectady, New York

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

First Unitarian Society of Madison--Madison, Wisconsin

Congratulations to the First Unitarian Society of Madison for receiving the Economic Justice and Leadership Award from UUJEC. Becky Schigiel, Social Justice Coordinator for FUS shares the work and mission of the congregation:

Tell us about the economic justice work in your congregation.

The First Unitarian Society of Madison (FUS) has 10 Social Justice Ministry Teams working mostly on mass incarceration, homelessness, racial justice and worker rights. In our community, these areas are related and linked to our huge economic and educational racial disparities. Annually, members provide about 40 meals and 100 volunteer shifts at three homeless shelters. Offertory collections fund shelter initiatives, mentoring, reproductive justice, and workers' rights. Our Eviction Prevention Fund helped 79 households get into or keep housing in 2015.

With other coalitions, we are leading the Fight for \$15, supporting unions (under terrible assault), and finding new ways to leverage power for all that goes into sustainable working conditions (schedules, transportation, etc.).

We support a new early learning center which works along the two-generation model to lift families out of poverty; and another program which helps returning prisoners gain self-sufficiency. Our members are leaders in an interfaith network which advocates effectively at the state level, with successes such as increasing treatment and diversion (in lieu of incarceration) funding by \$1.5 million dollars in 2015, and continuing to hold back against a push for a new county jail in favor of funding economic empowerment.



Since 2013, we have hosted an NPR-facilitated racial justice panel, the Nuns on the Bus, directors of Interfaith Worker Justice; a Young Gifted and Black teach-in; and a "Food, Race, and Justice" event. We



moved away from Earth Day events toward promotion of the just society/ strong economy/ healthy planet understanding via ongoing education. Our anti-racism courses – whether taught by our ministers or allies – teach the history of structural racism and the present-day economic ramifications.

FUS sponsors a list of community summits and gatherings, as well as the monthly meeting of the newly formed WI Trans Health Coalition. Whether it's

through our religious school classroom projects, collections, or a community picnic-- we are showing up, speaking out, and breaking bread.

How is your congregational leadership involved in your economic justice work?

Rev. Michael Schuler, our Senior Minister, is a founding clergy member of the [WI Dignity at Work Coalition](#). Michael is on the Board of the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central WI as well as a clergy leader in network, mentioned above, working on incarceration. Rev. Schuler is a regular public voice for higher wages and moral working conditions. He wrote the introduction to and the UU piece of ICWJ's [Text Study Project](#).

Becky Schigiel, Coordinator of Social Justice Programs heads the transportation working group of the WI Dignity at Work Coalition, is on the board of the [Madison-area Urban Ministry](#), which advocates for and assists returning prisoners and the homeless, and on a committee of the WI Council of Churches, a leader in WI poverty work. Becky is working toward coordination with other congregations so that our aid to the homeless better becomes prevention.



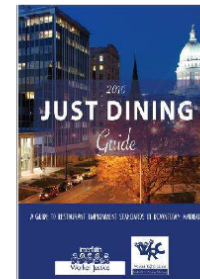
FUS is a [UUSC Justice Building Innovator site](#). Our Board is helping to launch our congregation-wide project: to complete a full equity impact assessment of our work. We will engage our stakeholders in helping us to do this audit, and to make whatever changes are needed to further align our impact with our intentions.

How has economic justice become a sustainable part of your congregational life?

We work with partners in a way that combines ongoing, long-term relationship building and economic support with responsiveness. Our ministers, staff and ministry teams keep us linked to the partners. Our volunteer work provides proximity to economic need for all members. Our shared offertory collection is another vehicle for sustained involvement with partners.

All of this builds the capacity to promote change. Here's an example:

We collect for the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice (ICWJ) every Labor Day Weekend. The sermon connects, and representatives from ICWJ are in the coffee hour to make personal connections. We sponsor ICWJ's annual event and gather a group to attend. We distribute ICWJ's [Just Dining Guide](#) to labor standards in local restaurants and build an understanding of how our restaurant dollars matter.



Our book club read "[Behind the Kitchen Door](#)." ICWJ is one of our service project partners every year on our Service Saturday event. In between, we are there to speak out for minimum wage increases, for collective bargaining rights, and against wage theft.

What results or changes have you noticed because of your activity?

FUS has long been a reliable partner, in financial support, in people power, as a host in the work for economic justice. In terms of changes in our congregation, we are bringing more of the whole congregation into our community partnerships. Members are becoming more personally awake to the reality of the economic need in our community and in Wisconsin.

We've hosted a new, locally written play, poetry and art from prisoners, and a full-sized solitary confinement cell replica. Our Black Lives Matter sign was vandalized twice, and we put a line of people out front with signs and songs. Relationships are being built, and -- slowly -- we are a part of racial and economic desegregation.



FUS Facebook Image



FUS Facebook Image

We have a Social Justice Roundtable quarterly, and we can see that our ministry teams are understanding the intersections of their work. Justice leadership is broadening to include young adults, parents of young children, while members of all ages keep extending beyond comfort zones in experiences and skillsets. People talk about race, about incarceration, about housing -- and members call each other into conversations about how to make our community really work.

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC Administrator Rachel Bennett Steury and FUS Madison Social Justice Coordinator Becky Schigiel. To reach FUS, please contact info@fusmadison.org.

FUS Additional Resources:

FUS Website: www.fusmadison.org

FUS YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/fusmadison>

Food, Race, and Justice: Solutions from Detroit to Madison

https://www.fusmadison.org/media/MadisonUnitarian_Feb16_pages.pdf

Microfinance resources and Investor Profile:

<http://www.wccn.org/investor-profile-first-unitarian-society-of-madison/>

From Me to We: Community Action

<http://workerjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/MetoWe.pdf>

Social Justice Service

<https://fusmadison.org/service>

First Unitarian Society Reverend Dr. Michael A. Schuler's letter to Chief Koval

<http://www.vgbcoalition.org/blog/item/618-first-unitarian-society-reverend-dr-michael-a-schuler-s-letter-to-chief-koval-re-handsoffbrandi>

A Year of Progress in Social Justice

https://www.fusmadison.org/media/MadisonUnitarian_Dec15.pdf

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

BuxMont Unitarian Universalist Fellowship--Warrington, PA

BuxMont UU Fellowship's Peace and Justice Committee drives a thriving social justice ministry. Their Peace and Justice Committee is a composite of the Peace Initiative, Diversity Task Force, Green Sanctuary, Reproductive Justice, Immigration Liaison, Friday Movies, Oxfam Hunger Banquet and their Split Plate Program.



Photo retrieved from BuxMont Webpage

Located in Warrington, PA, BuxMont UUF has donated over \$100,000 to non-profit organizations since 2004. Their guidelines are that the organization is non-profit and non-partisan (following 501 C3 rules). The charity must address social justice issues, promote fair and equal treatment while empowering marginalized communities to reduce poverty, racism, homophobia and ageism while reducing violence and preserving the environment.

The Fellowship has supported Doylestown Shelter as an apartment partner for 25 years. As a partner, they provide a welcome basket of linens, pillows and towels to help with a fresh start. They also assist in finding educational and employment opportunities, so it's more than a donation—they are actively involved with the clients. The average age of a client is 9. The goal for clients is housing independence. And when the clients move out, the Fellowship helps by locating furnishings for their new home. Doylestown also has a food pantry that BuxMont UUF helps support.

BuxMont's RE Peace and Justice Class decided to support KIVA, where they loaned \$25 to Mr. Hatem from Palestine to help him in buying a taxi to support his family. BuxMont UU Fellowship has been working with UUPLAN, Pennsylvania's State Action Network, to stop anti-immigrant bills from passing—despite the legislature introducing 15 such measures.



BuxMonts' vision statement is to be "well-known in our Fellowship and our community for our leadership in peace and justice issues. We will actively encourage all members and friends to commit to living out the UU principles in our daily lives to create and maintain a more peaceful and just society fighting for economic justice."

It looks like they are succeeding in their effort!

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC Co-Chair Terry Lowman and BuxMont member Celia Sharp. To learn more about Buxmont UU Fellowship, contact Celia Sharp at celiamsharp@yahoo.com

Additional Resources:

BuxMont website: <http://www.buxmontuu.org/make-a-difference/peace-and-justice/>

BuxMont Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/BuxMontUU>

Bucks County Apartment Partner:

<http://www.buckscounty.org/LivingAndWorking/Services/homeless-shelters>

UUPLAN webpage: <https://www.uuplan.com/>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

Conejo Valley UU Fellowship--Newbury Park, CA

Pamela Lopez, Outreach Director for CVUUF shares the work and mission of the congregation:

Tell us about the economic justice work in your congregation.

Conejo Valley UU Fellowship's Mission Statement is: Our mission is to nurture spiritually courageous people who transform the world through justice and compassion. As part of living our faith we have a strong commitment to economic justice. We have hosted monthly meetings addressing the issue of escalating inequality. The meetings are attended by both members of CVUUF and the outside community.



We are strong advocates for the \$15/hour minimum wage. In doing so, members of our support staff (child care, maintenance, etc.) have gotten the benefit in a salary increase reflecting this. We



Photo by
Edgard
Franks

had over 200 people sign petitions to increase the minimum wage in California. Through the advocacy of our escalating inequality group, we have enrolled the congregation into endorsing the Farm Workers Bill of Rights for farm workers in Ventura County. Members of our congregation have been lobbying our county supervisors to advocate for fair treatment of farm workers. Additionally, meetings are being scheduled with growers to have the complete story for effective advocacy.

We had an ongoing, intensive six-month long study group of Thomas Piketty's Capital in the 21st Century. CVUUF Escalating Inequality group co-sponsored and participated in Ventura Stories Feb. 20th event focusing on minimum wage, low-income housing, Farm Workers Bill of Rights and early childhood education.

Community Forums (our ongoing speakers' series) have recently included the following discussions:

- Guest speaker David Korten;
- Chuck Collins discussing his book "99 to 1: How Wealth Inequality is Wrecking Our Country";
- "What is TPP? To Protect the People and Our Planet";
- "Capitalism and Climate Change - the Politics of Global Warming";
- "The Importance of Early Childhood Education - The First Five Years";
- David Cobb - Founder, Move to Amend - taking the money out of politics;

- Screening and discussion of "Inequality for All".

How is the leadership of your congregation involved in your economic justice work?

The CVUUF Board called for a vote on the endorsement of the Farm Workers Bill of Rights. Sermons on economic justice have included (in the past twelve months): "What Affects One Affects Us All" service on inequality "Our Work on this Planet" (\$15/hr minimum wage): "First in the Country" Rev. Hines & Maricela Morales, local community organizer, (Farmworkers Bill of Rights); "Transforming the World Through Justice and Compassion" (general activism including economic justice) Ventura Stories event coordinated by Escalating Inequality chair, Michael Teasdale, Board Trustee, Matthew Weisman; Council Outreach Director, Pamela Lopez. Special collections include: Social Justice Fund for Ventura County, MICOP - Support for indigenous youth, MANNA/FOOD SHARE - Local Food Bank.



Ventura Stories Event. Photo Provided by UUJEC



Board and Council leadership are involved in: Escalating Inequality Study Group, Feeding Hands (monthly meal for homeless neighbors), advocating for minimum wage and Farm Workers Bill of Rights, special community education events, reproductive Justice - with equal access to reproductive care - there is greater access to economic independence.

*CVUUF Community Forum,
Photo from CVUUF Facebook page.*

How have you made economic justice activity a sustainable part of your congregational life?

There is an ongoing monthly scheduled meeting exploring the issue of economic justice. It is generally attended by at least ten people each meeting. Projects regularly are created there. The Feeding Hands program (providing 100-120 dinners to those neighbors less fortunate) has been ongoing monthly for at least fifteen years. Several special collections are dedicated to economic justice work each year.

What results or changes have you noticed because of your activity?

The congregation has become more aware of the economic injustices faced by our community. Our endorsement of the Farm Workers Bill of Rights was unanimous. County Supervisors have indicated



CVUUF Members meeting with the Social Justice Fund of Ventura County. Photo provided by Michael Teasdale

they will not bring it up in session. We have scheduled lobbying meetings to encourage public conversations on the issues presented in the Bill of Rights and congregational members have attended open hearings on the issues of farmworkers. Members of our congregation got over 200 people to sign petitions to the CA Legislature to raise the minimum wage. It helped prod the state in their efforts.

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC Administrator Rachel Bennett Steury and CVUUF Outreach Director Pamela Lopez. To reach CVUUF, please contact Pamela at outreachdirector@cvuuf.org.

Additional Resources:

CVUUF Social Justice webpage: <https://cvuuf.org/justice/social-action/>

CVUUF Community Forum webpage: <https://cvuuf.org/justice/community-forum/>

CVUUF Twitter Page <https://twitter.com/uuconejo>

CVUUF Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CVUUF>

Farmworker Bill of Rights Report:

<http://www.nwuujn.org/view/article/57a0eeca0cf25f2d92e34b31/?topic=51cbfc62f702fc2ba812591d>

Social Justice Fund of Ventura County: <http://www.socialjusticefundvc.org/>

CVUUF Event Notices:

[http://www.thecamarilloacorn.com/news/2016-02-](http://www.thecamarilloacorn.com/news/2016-02-12/Community/Workshop%20looks%20at%20local%20economic%20issues.html)

[12/Community/Workshop looks at local economic issues.html](http://www.thecamarilloacorn.com/news/2016-02-12/Community/Workshop looks at local economic issues.html)

<http://conejovalley.happeningmag.com/event/capitalism-climate-change-forum-newbury-park/>

<http://www.wherevent.com/detail/Cvuuf-Community-Forum-TPP-To-Protect-People-and-the-Planet-or-Corporate-Profits>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

Escalating Inequality Task Force of Metropolitan Detroit

Five UU congregations in the Detroit, Michigan metro area joined forces in early 2015 to form the Escalating Inequality Task Force: Beacon UU Congregation in Troy; First UU Church of Detroit; Northwest UU Church in Southfield; UU Church of Farmington, and Birmingham Unitarian Church in Bloomfield Hills.

Recognizing that while many of their fellow congregants have some understanding of economic inequality, a broader and deeper understanding of the history, complexities, and intersecting causes needed to be identified to effect meaningful change.

They started by conducting a full-day, facilitated Class Conversations Workshop, followed by book readings and discussions focused on class barriers. Economic inequality-themed Sunday services and sermons were facilitated by the task force and pastoral leadership. Sermons on economic justice and worship service activities, such as class background surveys which point to diversity within congregations, have brought the issue of escalating inequality and its social and economic determinants to the entire congregation, broadening understanding and generating discussion.

The last winter, they presented a speaker series featuring three topics from the broad spectrum of economic inequality: (1) historic and current class-based drivers of inequality, (2) how the justice system disfavors people of low or no income, and (3) the effects of structural racism on economic status and opportunity.

The Task Force publicized the public forums and facilitated engagement in legislative petition drives, while spotlighting other opportunities for congregants to voice their opinions and take action on policy initiatives to address economic inequality. Their strategy recognized that there was no silver bullet for something this complex, but as understanding of multiple facets of the issue increased, the easier it became to recognize steps to support efforts to close the economic gap and oppose actions that would make it worse.



Q&A with Chuck Collins at the Winter Speaker Series, 2016 Photo provided by Pat Hammer

The Task Force itself is composed of social justice leaders in their individual congregations. Among the leadership are congregational board members and chairs of social justice programs, as well as the activists who bring their experience to the discussion and organize the outreach and advocacy activities within each congregation.

This collaboration of shared talent and resources has facilitated their ability to reach a broader audience and has helped them break out of the tunnel vision and group think of a single congregation.

Economic justice topics are now a regular feature in congregational newsletters, social media posts and action alerts. The Task Force has created a Google Drive storage link to host Escalating Inequality Task Force information to be shared among the coalition congregations.

In addition to the Detroit area coalition, Task Force congregations are members of the Michigan UU Social Justice Network ([MUUSJN](#)). MUUSJN is coalition of 27 UU churches and fellowships statewide who work together to advocate for social justice. MUUSJN provides its members and allies with information, talking points and calls to action on statewide issues, including those related to economic justice.



*Task Force Escalating Inequality Event 2016
Photo provided by Pat Hammer.*

Individual congregations have, for many years, engaged in a variety of community service projects that treat the effects of economic injustice such as homelessness, hunger, lack of affordable housing, and disparities in K-12 education. Volunteer leaders and teams coordinate this work in UU congregations, which one could say makes for a sustainable activity as the economic gap continues to widen.

They are in the early stages of planning a project to organize members of coalition congregations by legislative districts and to provide a process and support for UUs to bring a concerted voice to legislators on critical local, state, and national issues related to economic inequality. The intent is to build relationships and rapport with legislators to influence public policy and ultimately have a positive effect on economic inequality.

The workshops and forums have enabled the Task Force to identify and welcome new leadership, which strengthens and enlivens the planning process. They've noticed, too, a gradual increase in the number of people who are "tuning in" to the reality that economic inequality is a factor in so many issues in Michigan communities.

People are asking what they can do to change the situation. This has led to actions such as:

- (1) Hosting community conversations about inclusiveness in the Cass Corridor of Detroit where people with money are moving in, bringing revenue for renewal and rebuilding, but low-income people are being excluded in the vision of "new Detroit."
- (2) Hosting a community session with the Regional Transit Authority CEO to discuss needs and plans for significant public transit improvements throughout the region to open up economic opportunity for many who are constrained by transportation access and cost.

- (3) Initiating dialog with law enforcement and elected officials about the treatment of people of color, recognizing that racist actions and attitudes lead to disadvantages including a debilitating imbalance in economic opportunity.
- (4) Joining with other advocacy groups demanding attention to the Flint water crisis long before it hit the national news, and also to the water shutoffs in Detroit.
- (5) Collecting signatures on a petition proposing mandated earned sick time for Michigan workers.
- (6) Engaging in local voter registration drives and promoting use of the absentee ballot to increase voter turnout in the current election, which, in addition to elective office at every level, has important local issues on the ballot, such as approval of a regional transportation plan for southeast Michigan.

Some congregants have commented that they like the approach of working together across five congregations because of its potential to strengthen their impact and foster connections with other UUs. Information is more readily shared about all social justice events which encourages participation in each other's activities.

They see this coalition work as both dealing with inequality issues, but also as a way to build a stronger UU community...

This article was developed in collaboration between UUJEC Co-Chair Terry Lowman and Task Force Chair Pat Hammer. Contact Pat Hammer, Escalating Inequality Task Force / Metropolitan Detroit Region patriciajhammer@gmail.com 248.644.6568 for more information on Task Force events and materials.

Additional Resources

Escalating Inequality Series Audio Recordings from Winter 2016 <http://www.uufarmington.org/inequality/>
Escalating Inequality Series Informational Flyer from Winter 2016
<http://uujec.com/Portals/0/PDFs/2016%20Winter%20Speaker%20Series%20Flyer%20final.pdf>
Flint water crisis compelled Unitarian Universalists to action
<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/flint-crisis-compelled-uu-response>
Beacon UU Congregation website: <http://www.beaconcongregation.org/>
Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BeaconUUC/>
First UU Church of Detroit website: <http://www.1stuu.org/>
Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/1stUUDetroit/>
Northwest UU Church website: http://www.northwestuu.org/static_archive/index.htm
Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Northwest-Unitarian-Universalist-Church-164926493532952/>
UU Church of Farmington website: <http://www.uufarmington.org/>
Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UU-Farmington-Official-Unitarian-Universalist-398459356853278/>
Birmingham Unitarian Church website: <http://www.bucmi.org/>
Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BirminghamUnitarianChurch/>
Michigan UU Social Justice Network Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MUUSJN/>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

First Parish of Sudbury--Sudbury, Massachusetts

Living Our Faith at First Parish

Living Our Faith is our overall umbrella for our congregation's social justice activities. Our minister, director of religious education, past president, treasurer, assistant treasurer, and administrator all participate actively.

We fly a Black Lives Matter banner and post Black Lives Matter signs on our property, we hosted a community forum on why we have done so (panelists included our minister, a person who talked about White privilege, our police chief, a Black 50-year resident of Sudbury, and me), and we intend to take follow-up actions in the Fall. Our minister and our assistant treasurer had items in our local paper about why we support BLM, and I had a column on BLM published there.



Photo from First Parish Facebook page.

We collect backpacks for homeless children in the Fall, have a Secret Santa collection for disadvantaged children at Christmas time, and make quilts that we donate to hospice patients and victims of domestic violence. Our quilters raised more than \$1600 for the Free Metrowest Clinic by making and raffling a very special quilt.

We have supported a Haitian-American family since the eldest child was about to graduate from Middle School. The three eldest children in this family have graduated from college —one is working towards becoming a physician, another is working towards becoming a nurse — and the two youngest (twins) are now college freshmen.



*First Parish members and members of the Haitian-American Family they support.
Photo provided by First Parish.*

For about the last nine years we have mentored a lifer — visiting him monthly, and communicating with him during the intervening weeks. He is now in the Boston University College Behind Bars Program, and has completed two English, one American History and one Sociology course with grades of A, A- B+and B. We collect and deliver food for the Sudbury Food Pantry weekly, and serve at a Maynard food pantry at least monthly.

This church year we made a full plate donation to Syrian refugees, as we do to the Metrowest Free Medical Clinic each Christmas Eve. We have monthly share-the-plates for organizations such as UUMassAction, Employment Options, Domestic Violence Roundtable, Dignity in Asylum, Coalition for the Homeless, three local food pantries, and Human Rights Watch. We held letter writing sessions to legislators for single-payer health bills, the We the People Act, LGBTQ public accommodations, improvements in the criminal justice system, and to foreign officials for Amnesty International's annual Write for Rights.



We showed "Out at Work" as one of our monthly film screenings, and donated to PFLAG, GLAD, OUT and the UUSC. We are members of UU Mass Action and UUJEC.

We Walk for Hunger and Walk for Family Promise. We buy Fair Trade coffee for use in our church, and we used to sell it and fair trade chocolate. Our sustainable food group meets monthly, and individual members belong to Community Support Agriculture Program. One of us is a commissioner on the Sudbury Housing Authority that provides affordable housing. Another is a member of Sudbury's Board of Selectmen, where she advocates for affordable housing.



First Parish Peace and Justice Vigil, Photo provided by First Parish.

Although it may seem that our church gives charity more than it works for justice, we do bring about more justice by the help we give people.

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC Administrator Rachel Bennett Steury and Rev. Judy Deutsch of First Parish. To reach First Parish, please contact Judy at revjd@aol.com.

Additional Resources:

First Parish webpage: <http://fpsudbury.org/>

First Parish Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/First-Parish-of-Sudbury-104705979571381/>

MetroWest Free Clinic: <http://metrowestfreemedicalprogram.org/>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

First Universalist Church of Norway--Norway, Maine

Nancy Lee Piper Office Manager for First Universalist Church of Norway shares their efforts with UUJEC.

Tell us about the economic justice work in your congregation.

First Universalist Church of Norway's Social Justice Committee is devoted, dedicated, active, and far-reaching. As a small "Welcoming Congregation" with an enormous desire to positively impact varieties of causes and actions, devotion to social justice not only tops the agenda of the committee, but impacts the entire church community as well as the community at large. At the forefront in 2016 and capturing additional attention with each ensuing week is the Peace Vigil, a regular Thursday afternoon hour of reflection and witness to peace at the front of the First Universalist Church along Main Street.

Demonstrating both the need for and presence of peace in all facets of humanity, participants hold signs with words such as "Witness for Non-Violence", "Standing on the Side of Peace" and "Witness for Peace" to portray a dedication to solidarity and a willingness to stand together for a necessary eminence in all humanity has to offer. The Peace Vigil has drawn significant community attention and the action is to grow the peace vigil locally and beyond.



Photo from Norway UU Facebook page

As active participants communicating the need for quality resources for homeless teenagers and other struggling people, to educating the public in the truth and reconciliation of Tribal Native Nations' social justice issues through Maine Wabanaki REACH programs, to clothing drives for immigrants and refugees, to hosting 25 years of Community Lunch Programs with the Area Association of Churches to 4th Sunday collections that reach people, programs, animals, and environmental causes, to communicating the need for climate change focus and responsible gun ownership, First Universalist Church of Norway enormously impacts a multitude of important issues not only in a financial capacity, but involves itself actively with contributions of time, written and verbal communication, outreach measures, and expanding the focus of important issues beyond the intimate church family.

How is the leadership of your congregation involved in your economic justice work?

Leadership at First Universalist Church of Norway revolves around devotion, dedication, activity, and reaching beyond the walls of the congregation. Leadership asserts itself from the Board of Trustees to the chair of the Social Justice Committee facilitating direction to the committee members themselves to those not directly on the committee coming together to not only support the causes but get involved in the physical, mental and emotional demands of contributing. Individuals, small groups and large groups step

forward to commit to making change and then fostering those actions through execution, completion, and success.

These same individuals and groups, whether directly sitting on the committee or not, collect and deliver food to local food pantries, collect, sort, organize and deliver clothing for clothing drives, contribute household and other goods to Community Lunch for individuals who frequent Community Lunch and can benefit from other sustainable goods to organizing and staffing events that educate as well as inspire, to contributing generously to 4th Sunday collections to organizing and executing fundraising events, concerts, and activities solely for social justice causes as well as donating percentages of other fundraising events to the social justice account for current actions as well as future actions. Social and economic justice issues are at the forefront of conversation both inside and outside the church, and everyone, regardless of their level of dedication, devotion, commitment, or activity is a leader in the sense that they take responsibility for the principles of Unitarian Universalism and ensure those principles are present in the conduct of their everyday lives.



How have you made economic justice a sustainable part of your congregational life?

Economic and social justice activity as a sustainable part of congregational life is exemplified through multiple communication vehicles to keep our church community informed as well as alert the public to the many church activities that impact the community at large. Whether direct telephone communication to members and friends who don't utilize new technologies, to email blasts that engage and inform everyone through catchy and specific subject lines, to the unveiling of a fresh, modernized website to weekly press releases that exhibit the diversity of First Universalist Church of Norway's social and economic justice involvement, to inbox emails from organizations and UUA supported causes, First Universalist Church of Norway seeks sustainability through communication and awareness.

First Universalist Church of Norway creates and contributes to economic and social justice sustainability by offering low cost long-term, short-term and one-time rentals of the many room and room combinations of the church. Groups such as AA, Community Sing, Choir groups, artist groups, Community Lunch, Safe Voices, Community Concepts, Healthy Oxford Hills and other individual and group programs have all benefitted. Blake House, once the church's parsonage, has long been home to local businesses that enjoy reduced rents and have been long time patrons of the church.

Divesting from fossil fuels and investing its endowment in socially and environmentally responsible companies despite the reality of lower returns has been an important and conscious action of the voting body of the congregation. The saying, "putting your money where your mouth is" certainly is true of First Universalist Church of Norway. Through a generous donation from the son of a now deceased member, First Universalist Church also switched from oil heat to propane to be more environmentally responsible. Communication, outreach, awareness, empathy, and compassion are foundations of First Universalist Church of Norway's economic and social justice sustainability practices.



What results or changes have you noticed because of your activity?

Paramount to inspiring positive social and economic change for all people is involvement, understanding, participative leadership, and perseverance. First Universalist Church of Norway focuses on these important components and this is apparent in the attention the Peace Vigil is getting from people not directly connected to the church, as well as the conceptual ideas for change that are being addressed as a result of the Peace Vigil.

More new people are attending church on Sunday to "discover what we're all about", as well as individuals and families approaching the minister and office manager about becoming members of the church. Additional groups and organizations are contacting the church to benefit not only from the low-cost rentals but to connect to the social and economic activities and partner with the church to collectively enhance one another's messages as well as implore and seek change.



Photo from Norway UU Facebook Page

Participative leadership is a direct result of social and economic justice practices of First Universalist Church of Norway as more congregational members and friends are stepping forward with ideas, suggestions, constructive criticisms, reflections and analysis for improvements, focuses, movements, and initializing direction to connective causes in relationship to current activities. First Universalist Church of Norway continues to seek both changes and results that benefit the focus and purpose of economic and social change for the better, whether that is utilizing concepts and formats that work or revitalizing actions with fresh approaches and ideas that bring better results. As a congregation, open to suggestion and innovation, First Universalist Church of Norway works to optimize positive change for all.

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC Administrator Rachel Bennett Steury and Norway UU Office Manager Nancy Lee Piper. To reach Norway UU, please contact Nancy at norwayuu@gwi.net.

Additional Resources

Norway UU Webpage www.norwayuu.org

Norway UU Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/NorwayUUChurch/>

Norway UU Social Justice webpage <http://www.norwayuu.org/social-responsibility/>

Maine-Wabanaki REACH <http://www.mainewabanakireach.org/>

Fossil Fuel Divestment <http://www.greenfaith.org/programs/divest-and-reinvest/listing-of-known-religious-divestment-efforts>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio—San Antonio, Texas

The First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio Texas (First UU) has 420 members and encourages members of the congregation to become active in social justice. This encouragement is manifested in many ways in the San Antonio community.

First UU has been part of the economic development strategy for San Antonio, Texas for over 40 years. The congregation works closely with interfaith community organizations. First UU actively works with an organization called, “Community Organized for Public Service and the Metro Alliance” (COPS/Metro). COPS/Metro has a long history of grassroots community organizing and is an affiliate of Industrial Area Foundation (IAF). The IAF was developed in the 1930s by Saul Alinsky, considered by many to be the founder of modern community organizing. COPS/Metro was founded in 1974 and “projects itself as an agent for fair and equitable distribution of the city’s resources and services.”



Past, Present, and Future COPS/Metro leaders from First UU. Photo from First UU Facebook page

First UU employs the IAF model of a leader, which is someone with many relationships and a following. In the First UU congregation, at least 20 members meet this definition. These 20 key economic justice leaders regularly attend meetings and talk with others about issues of concern including child care for low wage earners, real job training, a living wage, legislation to curb economic abuse of those economically challenged, and immigration.



Fall Assembly “Who Is My Neighbor” Photo from Metro/Cops Facebook page

Through its affiliation with COPS/Metro First UU is a valuable and much-needed resource for the low income working families of San Antonio. For many low income working families the cost of childcare is an impediment to being employed. When the cost of childcare exceeds, or nearly approaches, one’s take home pay, being employed makes little economic sense. First UU has supported San Antonio’s “After School Challenge” and the “Summer Recreation Program”, which offers a safe child day care system, a much-needed resource for the community.

Furthering its goal of social justice, First UU helped develop an award-winning long-term job training program, Project QUEST. QUEST provides scholarships and services for low-wage workers through training at the local community college. The focus is to provide training of skills which are in demand. To date there have been over 6,000 graduates through Project QUEST. The mission statement of Project QUEST is “to strengthen the economy with highly qualified employees for in-demand, living wage careers”.



Diane Duesterhoeft, one of the UU leaders in the San Antonio living wage campaign, testifies before the Bexar County Commissioners Court. Photo by Jorge Montiel

For many years, First UU has been advocating for a living wage for workers. First UU was the lead congregation insisting that any tax abatement for the city of San Antonio or County of Bexar be tied to a living wage. First UU was a strong advocate for the public sector living wage campaign in the last two years, for which over 6,000 workers benefited from the public sector living wage campaign, with a \$14 an hour wage for 2017 and \$15 an hour wage for 2018.

Young adults at First UU have been involved in social justice actions including legislation to curb the out-of-control payday lending business, which preys on low income individuals. The legislation being proposed in the upcoming legislative session is significant in enhancing individuals’ rights and requiring the communication of these rights to the individuals.

First UU helped develop a statewide network called the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry made up of 48 UU congregations in the state. TXUUJM communicate and coordinate a focused effort to advance significant issues and is holding a legislative training day in November 2016. TXUUJM has a legislative action day planned mid-February, 2017 just after the session starts where they hope to get 200 Texas UU’s from across the state to the Capital.



Living Wage Press Conference. Rev. Dr. Josh Snyder, Minister, First UU. Photo by Hank Auderer.

With a history of concern for social and economic justice for immigrants, First UU was part of the sanctuary movement in the 1980s. A Guatemalan family that First UU provided a sanctuary sponsorship to is still working with the congregation today.

The 420 members of First UU make up a small percentage of the population of 2,000,000 in the San



Antonio metropolitan area. Yet through the effort and energy of its members the region has been positively impacted. We at the UUJEC honor First UU's efforts and see them as an example for others.

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC board member Jim Black and First UU Social Justice Committee member Mike Phillips. To reach out to First UU, please contact Mike at mcmphillips@yahoo.com.

Members of First UU accept the UUJEC Certificate of Recognition for their Economic Justice work. Photo from First UU Twitter page.

First UU Additional Resources

First UU Website: <http://uusat.org/>

First UU Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/FirstUUChurchSA>

First UU Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/First-Unitarian-Universalist-Church-of-San-Antonio-11608568314/>

Cops/Metro Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/copsmetro/>

First UU Social Action webpage: <http://uusat.org/how-we-serve/social-justice/>

TXUUM Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/TXUUM/>

Webcast: C.O.P.S./Metro Alliance: Blessed are the history makers:

<http://nowcastsa.com/blogs/webcast-copsmetro-alliance-blessed-are-history-makers>

San Antonio interfaith coalition cheers living wage victories:

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/sanantoniolivingwage>

COPS / Metro Raises Wages AGAIN, Makes QUEST a Line-Item on City Budget:

<http://us5.campaign-archive2.com/?u=18c087e16c4694dafc5d36617&id=148e89aea5>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

Mountain Vista UU Congregation--Tucson, Arizona

The Mountain Vista Unitarian Universalist Congregation (MVUU) has a vision. Since its founding in 1989 with fifty-five charter members, MVUU has dedicated its energies to outreach in northwest Tucson. The members then and now provide pantry supplies, meals-on-wheels, rides to doctors' appointment, home handymen for the elderly, and financial support to those in need.



When the congregation's minister, the Reverend Ron Phares, arrived in 2013, action and advocacy around economic justice exploded. Rev. Ron came up with an idea: a Justice Coordinating Committee (JCC), made up of a few members and himself that would focus on justice work through a "lens." The first several years, that lens was "Economic Disparity" in Tucson and the United States.

Rev. Ron Phares, photo provided by MVUU

The JCC then formed the Committee of the Whole, comprising thirty-five members of the congregation. With this expansion, a comprehensive, successful Life-Span Faith Development program entitled "Living Inequality" was offered in February and April 2016. Those who attended viewed Robert Reich's documentary "Inequality for All," formed discussion groups, and wrote covenants called "Money Memoirs." Much was learned about income disparity, poverty in America, and the controversial education issues in Arizona.



*MVUU Living Wage Demonstration.
Photo Provided by MVUU*



MVUU's mission is "To Welcome, Care For, and Inspire those within and beyond our walls." As Mountain Vista's economic justice activities turn more and more to action and advocacy, the members strive to make economic justice a sustainable part of congregational life. The momentum caused by increased justice involvement by MVUU members has resulted in a palpable rise in energy, enthusiasm, and concern for the well-being of others.

UUJAZ and MVUU Lobby Day. Photo Provided by MVUU

These changes of heart have also coalesced and strengthened the church community. Mountain Vista has established a three-pronged focus—Fellowship, Justice Outreach, and Spiritual Path—for its congregants and visitors alike to know what matters most to the folks attending MVUU.

The congregation of Mountain Vista Unitarian Universalist is truly an inspiration for others. The activities and commitment to economic justice issues demonstrate how a vision can become a reality. Then the reality provides momentum to energize more commitment and action expanding what is being done. The members credit their minister, Ron Phares, with being the catalyst for much of the momentum.



*Public Banking Forum at MVUU.
Photo Provided by MVUU*



*Rep. Leach office LD11 Representative
Vince Leach with MVUU members Betty
Meikle, Richard Kopp, Mary Nell Hoover,
Cynthia Chaffee. Photo provided by MVUU.*

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC board member Jim Black and Mountain Vista UU member Elizabeth Reed. To reach MVUU, please contact Elizabeth at reedeliz@gmail.com

Additional Resources:

MVUU website: <http://www.mvuu.org/>

MVUU Beyond Our Walls Initiatives: <http://www.mvuu.org/beyond-our-walls>

MVUU YouTube Channel” <https://www.youtube.com/user/MVUUCongregation>

MVUU Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Mountain.Vista.Unitarian.Universalist/>

Unitarian Universalist Justice Arizona Network: <http://www.uujaz.org/>

Rev. Phares sermon, Redeeming Our Future:

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51c749c2e4b01f34284eaa4c/t/573f4bca45bf21ef89c1868d/1463765963230/2016_05_15+RedeemingOurFuture+Phares.pdf

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

Social Action Ministry, Shoreline UU Church--Shoreline WA

The Social Action Ministry of Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Church (Shoreline UUC) of Shoreline, Washington, designed a very comprehensive and interactive six session course on “Escalating



Economic Inequality”. The course syllabus and materials are available on Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community’s [website](#). The six session course begins with a reading from the “father of capitalism, Adam Smith, and discussions regarding readings “For and against income inequality”, then ending the six sessions with readings and discussions about twenty-first century tax issues. The lesson plans for the course are well thought out and developed, making it easy for any congregation or group to implement. “Escalating Economic Inequality” course reflects the commitment Shoreline UUC has made to address income inequality.

The entire Social Action Ministry at Shoreline UUC voted to make economic inequality one of its four top priority issues. The SUUC Social Action Ministry’s [webpage](#) states its commitment to help develop a just economic community. The first listed priority is, “To reduce economic inequality, especially by working to reform [Washington’s] regressive state tax system, securing living wages and protection from unjust treatment for all workers, mending the shredded social safety net, and investing in the common good.”

Through the congregation’s efforts, a real awareness has been built of the structural causes of poverty and of excessive wealth and consumption. Their minister, Rev. Kate Landis, has added a perspective on how racism contributes to economic inequality. Economic inequality has been incorporated into Shoreline UUC’s religious education by addressing issues of the homeless. Aiding the homeless has been a focus for the entire congregation. The congregation has assisted its neighbors in a local homeless encampment and built personal relationships with them.



Photo Provided by Bob Beekman



Photo Provided by Bob Beekman

Shoreline UUC's Social Action Ministry has also led congregants in political advocacy at the state and municipal level (in Seattle and Shoreline) for changing the state's regressive tax system, raising the minimum wage, and meeting the needs of the homeless and other citizens in precarious and disadvantaged situations.

Truly Shoreline UUC is an example of a congregation working toward economic justice through its leadership and work in a sustainable way. The congregation's value is put into action through charitable giving, volunteer service, education and research, advocacy in the political process, public witness and direct action, and networking and organization.

This article was developed in collaboration between UUJEC Board member Jim Black and Social Action Ministry Communications Coordinator Bob Beekman. Contact Bob at rlbeekman@gmail.com more information on events and materials.

Additional Resources:

Shoreline UUC Escalating Inequality Study Series:

<http://uujec.com/Escalating-Inequality/Shoreline-UU-Study-Series>

Social Action Ministry Info Page: <http://www.nwuujn.org/topics/view/5548de810cf2ab913fd7e70b/>

NWUJN Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/nwuujn>

Shoreline UUC website: <http://www.shorelineuu.org/>

Shoreline UUC Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ShorelineUU/photos/?tab=albums>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice--Venice, Florida

Marty King, Chair and Social Justice Team Leader of UUCOV shares their efforts with UUJEC.

Tell us about the economic justice work in your congregation.

Our congregation works on economic justice on many fronts. Our Community Outreach Committee is part of a national organization called Family Promise, and in conjunction and rotating with other area churches, this year has hosted and fed ten families, six of whom now have permanent housing and sustainable employment. In addition, the committee members have provided for "backpack kids" during the school year, so children have food over the weekend. They participate weekly in sandwich making at the Center of Hope, which also provides help and counseling once the people come in. Food Pantry distribution is done year-round. They also are involved in community dinners, and "coffee talks."



Many members of the congregation contribute their time, skills and money. One Sunday of each month, the collection plate is dedicated solely to a designated charity in our community. Members provide after-school tutoring at the Laurel Community Center. We are developing a program to help public schools provide for needy children.

Our Common Good Committee works to help disenfranchised voters, and for the Move to Amend. They circulate petitions, go to demonstrations and public meetings, and write letters when needed. This committee has worked hard to educate the congregation and inspire them to work toward justice for the poor, and minorities, who disproportionately represented in our prisons in the USA. Members visit people who are incarcerated.



Photo provided by UUCOV Facebook Page

Our Green Sanctuary Committee regards global warming as an economic issue, as it will impact most severely on the poor. We have conducted an all-day workshop with the Pachamama Alliance, and our congregation contributed a significant amount of money to put solar panels on our sanctuary roof. We are working hard to share information about gardening and consuming to live more sustainable lives.

How is the leadership of your congregation involved in your economic justice work?

Our leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to economic justice by supporting the above programs, and working side-by-side with the membership to accomplish our goals. Kindra Muntz, Chair of the Common Good Committee spearheaded an effort to get Move to Amend on the ballot at GA. A few years ago, she was one of the leaders in Florida who sponsored a constitutional amendment to develop a paper ballot. Our previous ballots had been punch cards, which were a problem in 2000, and this was followed by electronic ballots which could not be verified in a close or challenged election. So, this reform has impacted favorably on all voters in Florida.



Photo Provided by UUCOV.ORG

Community Outreach Committee, have devoted countless hours to working with the homeless and hungry in the area. Phil Veach and Steve Batchelor have steadily worked and recruited others in the food programs cited above, with the goal of helping less fortunate school children and their families.

The leaders of the Green Sanctuary Committee have provided ongoing connections through the Pachamama Alliance, [Transition Venice](#), and other organizations to alert the congregation to the problem of climate change and inform them of ways they can help. A tree planting program has been undertaken. In all these ways, the Executive Board has been willing to devote time and resources to make these things happen, and have supported the various committees with their own help and counseling. Our new Religious Education Director has been instrumental in bringing in community resources, and in offering help to neighboring schools.

How have you made economic justice activity a sustainable part of your congregational life?

Everything the Congregation is doing is ongoing, and therefore, sustainable. Long-term commitments have been made, with no end in sight, at least until some of these serious problems might be solved, which we know will take years. By working together, we do not become discouraged. Our Seven Principles guide us, and we are thankful to belong to the UUA, as our hope for the future is that by concerted, determined and long-term efforts, we can work for meaningful change.

None of these problems can be easily solved, which is why it is so important to work together for greater impact. Members donate to a different charity each month, and thousands of dollars are collected each year for the worthiest causes in our community, many of them helping low-income children and families. Our small congregation was able to raise \$40,000 last spring from individual donations so that we could go totally solar. We plant native plants and trees to conserve water, and to avoid the runoff that excess fertilizer and chemicals would entail. The congregation is committed to the ongoing success of all these programs, and investigating ways in which we can do more.

What results or changes have you noticed because of your activity?

Homeless families have found sustainable housing and improved jobs through Family Promise. While the need is great, and this only addresses a small percentage of homeless people, it is a concrete way in which families' lives can be improved. Hungry children and their families are being fed every week because of our efforts providing food. A letter-writing campaign has resulted in the postponement of the execution of a man, poor, badly represented legally, and on death row. Hopefully, there will be time to have his sentence overturned.



Many people have been registered to vote for the first time in Florida. Good candidates have been encouraged to run for election by members helping them to be put on the ballot. The role of big spending in elections that destroys the democratic process is being challenged by a constitutional amendment, the Move to Amend. Voting reforms have been put in place due to the leadership, work and donations by members of our congregation, working with others in the community.

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC Administrator Rachel Bennett Steury and UUCOV Social Justice Team Leader Marty King. To reach UUCOV, please contact Marty at mking18@juno.com

Additional Resources

UUCOV Website: www.uucov.org

UUCOV Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/uucov/>

Family Promise: <http://familypromise.org/>

Center of Hope: <http://www.salvationarmyflorida.org/westpalmbeach/programs/center-of-hope-transitional-housing/>

Pachamama Alliance: <https://www.pachamama.org/>

Transition Venice: <https://www.meetup.com/Transition-Venice/>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

Unitarian Universalist Church West--Brookfield, WI

Ann Heidkamp, Social Action Council Chair for UUCW, shares their work:

Tell us about the economic justice work in your congregation.

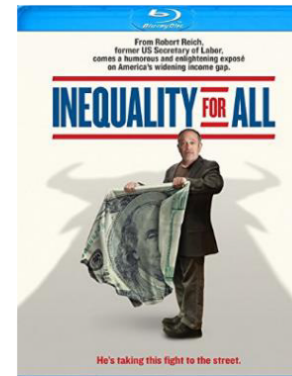
Our Social Action Council decided to use "Escalating Inequality: Our Call to Action" as our on-going social action theme for the foreseeable future (at least as long as the Study Action issue). We saw it as a way to show the systemic underpinning of the work we were already doing on various issues -

- Food collection and serving at [The Guesthouse](#), a homeless shelter;
- Home building locally through Habitat for Humanity and in biennial trips to Nicaragua through [Bridges to Community](#);
- Reducing mass incarceration through a statewide faith based organization, [WISDOM](#);
- Engaging in community organizing in metro Milwaukee through membership in a grassroots organization, [Common Ground](#);
- Participating in increasing the minimum wage through local organization, [WI Jobs Now](#), and
- Participating in rallies and marches of the [Coalition for Justice for Dontre Hamilton](#), an unarmed black man killed by a police officer.

To introduce the theme, our minister and social action team collaborated on a full Sunday worship service on Escalating Inequality. We began with a short video on growing wage inequality from [Politizane](#) and explained why we selected the theme and how it relates to our current social action projects. We reflected on statistics about the vast differences in race, education, and income between the city and the main suburbs of our members and did an interactive exercise related to the myth of bootstrapping oneself up the income ladder. The sermon was on the systemic nature of inequality, both economic and racial.

We provided everyone with a calendar of upcoming Escalating Inequality education and action events in the spring and fall, including a multi-generational poverty simulation called "[Food for Today](#)" lead by our local Hunger Task Force. There were opportunities to participate in actions around no public funding for the new NBA arena without equal investment in city neighborhoods by Common Ground. Participation was sought in Fight for \$15 rallies with low wage workers from WI Jobs Now.

A 10-mile bus trip was arranged with UUCW members and low wage workers from WI Jobs Now driving from our suburban church through working class and poverty stricken neighborhoods. We ended the trip reflecting together about the impact of low wages on all aspects of our lives. UUCW showed the "[Inequality for All](#)" film as a public event co-sponsored with Catholics for Peace and Justice.



We participated in WI Council of Churches “People of Faith United for Justice” lobbying day to advocate for reducing mass incarceration and for budget items that affected those in poverty. We also offered the Class Conscious: Class and Classism in UU Life course.

In late Fall of 2016, we used our Escalating Inequality theme to begin a deeper look at issues of racial injustice. We joined with the other 4 UU congregations in our metro area to begin a collaboration around Black Lives Matter, particularly in cooperation with the Coalition for Justice for Dontre Hamilton. Milwaukee is the most segregated metro area in the US and our racial divide underlies all of the other issues we are working on - wages, housing, incarceration.

In January, 2016, our UUCW congregation overwhelming passed a motion in support of Black Lives Matter and taking public stands to show our support. We had a banner blessing and public witness along our busy suburban street on 4-10-16 that received favorable coverage on 3 local TV stations. On April 30th, UU's provided the children's activities at the Coalition for Justice's Dontre Day on the second anniversary of his death. With the other congregations we are participating more visibly in local racial justice programs and actions and are offering a series of workshops on racial justice for our congregations to better examine our own white privilege and racism and to increase our ability to be effective white allies. Work on all the other issues continues, but with what we hope is to gain a deeper understanding of the way racism and economic inequality perpetuate the current systems - especially in our hyper-segregated city/metro area.



Photo from “Black Lives Matter to Wisconsin UU’s” Facebook page

How is the leadership of your congregation involved in your economic justice work?

Our ministers weave social action into almost every sermon and at least several times a year have worship services explicitly around topics related to Inequality. As described above we had a full service on our Escalating Inequality theme to introduce it to the whole congregation. The ministers have also spoken a number of times on racial inequality and how systemic forces keep it in place - and the need for action to oppose them. These messages have been well received by the congregation. The senior minister is also the staff person for the Social Action Council and plays an active role in it.

The Board is very open and receptive to social action initiatives. For example, for a number of years our funds have been ethically invested, they approved a Split the Plate program about 8 years ago, they approved membership in Common Ground, a grassroots community organization in our area, and they endorsed, beginning in 2004, the biennial trips our congregation takes to build houses in Nicaragua and allow for fundraising for that project. The impact of these trips on our congregation has been profound.

Since 2004 over 150 adults and youth have participated in the 10 day house building trips to Nicaragua (through an organization called Bridges to Community) and seen first-hand the poverty of a third world country. In the program they work side by side with the Nicaraguans in the villages where the houses are being built and reflect with them on issues of first world - third world justice. The members come back with a deeper understanding of their own privilege and want to take action - both on local social justice issues and in leadership in the church. As a result, the majority of Board members since 2004, have the Nicaragua experience and are much more willing to take bolder stands on social justice issues that come before the board than was previously the case.



UUCW members in Nicaragua Photo from UUCW website

In terms of the staff, the Religious Education Director has been a big proponent of building multi-generational social action in to the RE curriculum and has partnered with the Social Action Council on a number of projects, the most recent one being the poverty simulation "Food for Today" which was about the impact of low income and food deserts on adequate diets for poor people. She has also promoted the educational events related to our Escalating Inequality program through the Adult Religious Ed programs and takes care of the registration and logistics for us. This included our North Ave. bus tour and Class Conscious programs. She usually attends our Social Action Council meetings.

How has economic justice become a sustainable part of your congregational life?

By introducing Escalating Inequality as a multi-year theme that underpins all our social action work, we have helped the congregation understand the need to examine the systemic nature of the social problems we are trying to address. It also helps the congregation understand that solving social issues is not fast and requires dedicated effort over years.

In our Escalating Inequality work, we have emphasized the need to work with partners and so for every issue we want to work on we have consciously sought out community groups that share our values that are already organizing around the issue. This approach has allowed us to have groups of members actively engaged in particular issues they care most about and bringing their experience and learning back to the congregation without us as a congregation having to organize the work ourselves. This is a much more sustainable model than trying to figure out ourselves how to work for change around an issue of concern.

In the late 1990's our church established a Social Action Endowment fund, that produces about \$3000 a year in interest that the Social Action Council can decide on how to use to further the church's social action mission. Originally the money was mostly used for small grants to various social service projects that applied for help. Since we now have the Split the Plate program that funds a different social justice organization each month, the Social Action Council changed the policies of the fund to allow for funding of projects that help engage the congregation in social justice education and action. So recently we have used

the fund to help pay our dues to Common Ground; to pay for the bus and lunch expenses related to the North Ave. tour with WI Jobs Now; to cover the costs of the Black Lives Matter banner and to support a series of Poverty Summits (listening sessions about the concerns of poor people) put on around the state by the WISDOM organization. Having this fund definitely helps sustain our Escalating Inequality work now and into the future.

What results or changes have you noticed because of your activity?

Our social action work has changed in recent years from a focus on social service and education to a focus on service, education, advocacy, organizing, and witness. The Social Action Council had been moving in this direction since about 2012 as we utilized UUA resources about effective social action to do more strategic planning and as the cumulative effect of ministerial messages and a critical mass of members having the Nicaragua experience began to coalesce.

However, I would say that it was the Escalating Inequality Study Action issue that helped us really bring this vision of social action to a reality. Members could recognize in the Escalating Inequality theme how our own middle class lifestyle is threatened by the existing system of economic and racial inequality - and could also see how our own privilege is sustaining those systems. As a result of offering both targeted educational programs along with a variety of options of working for specific systemic changes with partner organizations more members are engaged in work for economic and racial justice. This is creating an important feedback loop - the more members engaged, the more members encourage others to get engaged, the more experience and understanding in the congregation results in a willingness by the congregation to take bolder steps.



UUCW Members working with Habitat for Humanity Photo from UUCW Website

And on it goes...

Additional Resources:

To learn more about UUCW, contact Social Action Council Chair Ann Heidkamp at heidkama@wi.rr.com

UUCW Website <http://uucw.org>

UUCW Nicaragua Brigade Brochure

http://uucw.org/files/2016-Nica-Brochure_2-pg_Rev_2015_11_15_v9.pdf

UUCW Escalating Inequality Presentation

http://uujec.com/Portals/0/PDFs/MidAmerica_Assembly_Escalating_Inequality_UUCW.pdf

Black Lives Matter to Wisconsin UU's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Black-Lives-Matter-to-Wisconsin-UUs-104090156617591/>

"Class and Classism in UU Life" course <http://www.uufames.org/class-conscious>

"Food for Today" Educational Presentations

<https://www.hungertaskforce.org/learn-about-hunger/educational-presentations/>

Politizane Wealth Inequality in America <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQniinsM>

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady--Schenectady, New York

Robin Schnell, Chair of the UUSS Social Action Council shares their efforts with UUJEC.

Please tell us about the economic justice work in your congregation.

In April of 2015, our congregation voted to get involved in Economic Justice via a project that could involve all ages, connect us to the wider community, work toward solutions to poverty and educate ourselves. To that end, we joined Family Promise, a nationwide organization that houses homeless families with congregations for a week at a time. Congregants donated bedding, signed up to prepare meals, set up and take down bedrooms in our religious ed. building, stay overnight while the families were with us, and serve as task coordinators. Children have made welcome signs and have played with the guest children. Guests have come to our services and to a folk concert held in our Great Hall.



In order to better educate ourselves, we offered scholarships to Bridges out of Poverty training. Seven people did the training and we will offer the scholarships again when the program is offered. A small



Photo from UUSS webpage

handful of us have gone to the capital to advocate with legislators for raising the wage to \$15, and have rallied in front of fast food restaurants and city hall for this. A coffee discussion drew about thirty congregation members to discuss this issue. Our most recent activity has been to donate books to a local low-income elementary school so that each child can take home books of their very own at the end of the school year. On an ongoing basis, we collect diapers and personal care products for the local food pantry, homeless shelters and people reentering after incarceration. For many years, congregation members have worked in soup kitchens and a summer lunch program for kids. We

have had strong participation and continue to look for new ways to increase our understanding and activism. For the fall, we want to better understand privilege and its effect on society and poverty.

How is the leadership of your congregation involved in your economic justice work?

Turning our religious ed. building into a dormitory for three separate weeks so far has required the support of our minister, RE director, and our board. We are all proud of the success of this very ambitious project and look forward to hosting a meeting of the volunteer coordinators from participating congregations. One of the other things our congregation does is donate one or two collection plates a month to a non-profit. Social Action tries to tie the collection to the sermon theme, the board must approve all of the organizations. Our minister, Rev. Margret O'Neill, has been enormously helpful with encouragement and suggestions.



Photo from UUSS Facebook page

How have you made economic justice activity a sustainable part of your congregational life?

We witnessed an uptick in collections whenever the plate gets donated to organizations, which is a sign of congregational support. It's an established part of our services that makes us feel good. Family Promise, too, is something that we're proud of. Because the organization had just established a chapter in our area when we joined, we had to do our three weeks of hosting very close together, which caused us to see some volunteer burnout. Fortunately, we could enlist local college students and members of other congregations to fill some gaps, which actually fit with our mission to increase our involvement with the wider community.



Our collection bins often overflow as children grow out of a diaper size or members pick up extra toothpaste or sundries for the bins. I don't foresee a change there. Our sign-up sheets for the soup kitchen or the summer lunch program get filled in. In the area of international economic justice, our congregation joined Jubilee last year. This organization that fights for debt relief, asks that we take up one collection for them each year, and preach a sermon. We also participate in Justice Sunday each year with a collection for UUSC.

What results or changes have you noticed because of your activity?

Having the umbrella of economic justice as a guide for our activities has broadened our thinking about what the roots of economic injustice are. Some of us went to a Black Lives Matter meeting. In the past, I think we would have thought about justice, but not made the tie to economic justice. Our congregation is predominantly white, middle class and well educated—white privilege is strongly in evidence. We hope that by understanding how that has affected our lives, we will be better advocates for systemic change. Joining Family Promise has energized the volunteer spirit in us. At least one member who hadn't been attending services lately came back to volunteer for this project, and new members are joining in.

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC Administrator Rachel Bennett Steury and USS Social Action Chair Robin Schnell. To reach USS, please contact Robin at r.hary.schnell@gmail.com.

Additional Resources:

USS Webpage: <http://uuschenectady.org/justice/social-justice/>

USS Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/USSchenectady>

USS Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/uuschenectady>

Family Promise Organization: <http://familypromise.org/>

Bridges Out of Poverty: <http://www.ahaprocess.com/solutions/community/>

Jubilee: <http://www.jubileeusa.org/>

USSC Justice Sunday: <http://www.ussc.org/justice-sunday-2017/>



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