

USH Social Justice Council Meeting
Minutes, February 20, 2024
7:00-8:30 pm

Reminder: Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month from 7 pm to 8:30 pm

Attendees: Judy Sullivan, Chair, Gloria Bent, Dana Donovan, Louise Harmon, Susan Hope, Fred Louis, Sherry Manetta, Gloria Mengual, Joanne Orlando

Judy called the meeting to order, gave the reading, and we checked in. Minutes of the prior meeting had been approved by email.

Report on Accessibility Issues---Gloria Bent

Gloria circulated a memo from the EqUual Access Disability Subcommittee on disability issues, particularly concerning the chancel, along with comments from David Newton, Chair of Building and Grounds. A group of individuals, along with the Subcommittee, will meet after services on March 10th to review the issues and flag down other disability needs. Dana Donovan has a friend who works at Bullock Access in East Harford who may be able to come assess the problems with the lift. He will contact Cliff Bullock and let the Subcommittee know when he will be available. We also discussed how to facilitate more active participation for those members of the church who use Zoom for meetings and services. Gloria framed this as an issue of accessibility.

Report on The Sum of Us podcast series---Gloria Mengual

Gloria reported on the first two sessions of The Sum of Us podcast discussions. She discussed the desirability of getting someone local to report on the relevant issues from the podcast. For the February 22nd session, she has someone from an organization that supports legislation in Connecticut to give restaurant workers full minimum wage. (There will be opportunities for members to go to the Legislative Office Building to talk to legislators and get actively involved.) Gloria will be sending an email out to Social Justice Council members and the Board, asking for help finding other local activists to give the Connecticut angle on the issues for the March, May, and June sessions.

Report on Horace Bushnell Children's Food Pantry---Judy Sullivan+ on behalf of Diana Heymann

Judy and Diana met with Lisa Marie, their contact at Horace Bushnell, who reports that their big grant had been cut. In addition, it was learned that Horace Bushnell must purchase food from CT Food Share which has become more expensive. Diana is going to put a memo in the next Enews about what kinds of foods should be donated, urging members of USH to remain generous.

Report on GNOs—Judy Sullivan

In November, USH raised \$1663 for CT Foodshare, and in December, USH raised \$1030 for Operation Fuel. This month, our GNO is the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network. Joanne Orlando is coordinating with The Village for March. Jim Venneman is coordinating with the Brother Carl Hardrick Institute in April. The youth group will be covering the GNO in June. We discussed the May GNO, and Judy is going to send a link to a possible GNO, Disability Rights Connecticut. We will be discussing the GNO for May at the next meeting.

Report on the Connecticut UU Social Justice Ministry---Dana Donovan

Dana attended a meeting in New Haven, along with members from eight other UU congregations in the state, to discuss the possibility of coordinating activism by all UU congregations on social justice issues. It is at the organizing and planning stage now. Dana and Judy Sullivan are going to represent USH as alternates. Ct Connect, for example, is the equivalent of GHIAA in the Southwestern part of the state, while GHIAA covers the Hartford area. If all the UU congregations in the state coordinated efforts, we could broaden our base and become more politically powerful. Another reason for UU congregations to coordinate is the reluctance of more conservative members of interfaith alliances to tackle sensitive issues, such as abortion or LGBTQ rights---issues that UU congregations are well suited to take on. Judy will forward their new Facebook group link.

GHIAA House Meetings---Judy Sullivan

USH is co-hosting a House Meeting on Wednesday, March 20, from 6 to 8 pm, with two other congregations, The Urban Hope Refuge Church, led by Rev. A.J. Johnson, and the New Antioch Baptist Church, led by Pastor Jeff Powell. It will be held at USH, and we can accommodate up to 40 people. As is true of all the house meetings going on throughout GHIAA, registration will take place through the GHIAA website. The house meeting will start in the sanctuary, and then go into breakout groups, each with a facilitator and a notetaker. Meetings will be held at other congregations. So far; twelve have been scheduled. Anyone is welcome to attend any house meeting. Addresses of the locations will only be given to participants for security purposes. The focus is on local concerns---at the state level. Individuals will be asked to tell stories about social injustices that have happened to them personally, or to those close to them. The purpose of the house meetings is to help GHIAA isolate the issues it wants to focus on in their next legislative agenda. Dana recommended that a house meeting be held at Seabury. Judy also thought it might be good to invite individuals from former GNOs to participate.

New Business---Fred Louis

Fred has been approached by a group that wants support for a resolution in Congress, banning nuclear weapons. It was recommended that he report on this to the Committee at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.