

Minutes - Social Justice Action Committee Meeting May 12, 2014 7:00 to 8:30 pm, North Chapel library

In Attendance: Akankha Perkins, Anne Marinello, Richard Schramm

April Minutes were approved

Report from the Board

Anne Marinello reported on the Board's April meeting, its June dinner/committee meetings for all committees, its consideration of the responses to the survey about activities while Daniel was on sabbatical, and its planned work on the North Chapel's mission and vision.

Edible Garden Proposal

We discussed the plan for an edible garden on North Chapel land between the church and the parsonage. Although we did not have the plan in front of us to study in depth, we found the provision of food and education inherent in the plan to our liking.

Proposal to Board on Collaboration Strategy

We reviewed a draft proposal to the Board for a more transparent and clear policy on collaboration efforts with organizations outside of the North Chapel. Our recommendation was for the Board to educate committees on the value and principles of collaboration, support the creation of a space on the website that provides information about committee collaborations with outside organizations and links to those organizational websites, ways to accommodate those organizations (e.g information tables during social hour, opportunities to sign petitions, publicity about organizational needs) and criteria to prioritize choices of outside organizations to work with.

We agreed that the proposal needed to be clear that we would provide webspace and other forms of support principally to organizations that our committees had working relationships with, not just any organization asking for support. Richard agreed to add this stipulation to the proposal.

Summary Report

We reviewed a summary statement of the work done by the SJA Committee since January 2013 and shared a few high fives for what we, a small committee, were able to accomplish (see below).

Committee Leadership Discussion

Peter Rousmaniere has agreed to chair the committee starting in the fall. At this point no one has volunteered to serve as a co-chair with Peter.

Plans for Fall

We agreed that we would devote our June meeting to a discussion of plans for the fall.

Social Justice Action Committee Activities January 2013 – May 2014

The Social Justice Action Committee's mission is to encourage, support and coordinate the social justice activities of the North Chapel in ways that align themselves with our community building and spiritual purpose and that use our resources efficiently and fairly. Social Justice Action includes economic, social and environmental development and justice activities.

Towards this end, in early 2013 we surveyed members and friends of the North Chapel to determine social justice areas of most importance to them, where they felt they needed more education, where they were currently involved and new areas they would like to become involved in. The areas ranked highest in importance were Hunger (81%), Community Building (70%), Environmental Justice (64%), Local and global Poverty (64%), Gun Violence (60%) and Youth Issues (59%)

In July 2013, we conducted a Service on Youth and gathered 47 comment/suggestion cards from the congregation; we then organized and distributed these comments. We created a Youth Task force led by Jackie Fischer and Anne Marinello.

In the fall 2013, we conducted four post - Sunday Service "update and action" sessions and other informational sessions on youth affairs (Change the World Kids, Ottauquechee Community Partnership), sustainability and environmental justice (Sustainable Woodstock), local and global poverty (Life and Hope) and reducing gun violence (GunSense Vermont).

We developed an alliance with the Woodstock Area Job Bank to create more jobs, especially for high school youth.

We worked to create a better presence of Social Justice Action activities and the projects we support by expanding our coverage on the North Chapel website, formulated a guide for internal and external collaboration approved by the Board, and began work on a policy statement to guide our committee's decisions on projects to support and requests for help to respond to.

In early 2014, we organized, marketed and carried out three social justice events for North Chapel members and the larger community. The first, Autobiography of Race in February, facilitated by Janet Davis, attracted 30 participants; the second, Class and Privilege in March, facilitated by Rita Hardiman, was attended by 15-20 participants; finally, 30 people came to our third event in April, a showing of the film "Inequality for All" featuring Robert Reich, at the NWPL.

Throughout this entire period, the SJS Committee provided publicity and other support for many North Chapel and community organizations/events including Life and Hope, the "Youth Summit," Newtown anniversary vigil, GunSense, the Job Bank, WISE, and the Listen Center. One of our members, Peter Rousmaniere, is working to discontinue the lighting of Christian holiday symbols at Christmas and Easter on public land on top of Mount Tom.

This coming year we will continue to support activities that are consistent with the North Chapel mission and social justice priorities. In this effort we plan to collaborate more often with other groups, like the social justice committees of other local faith-based organizations, as well as the many groups we worked with this year both within and outside of the North Chapel.