

**First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany**  
**Social Responsibilities Council October 5, 2014 Meeting Minutes—As Submitted**

**Present:** Patty Burch, Jaye Holly, Martha Musser, Don Odell, Jean Poppei, Jessica Rae, Robb Smith, Betsy Wright

**SRC Members Absent:** Ed Hancock, Karen Kaufmann, Renee Panetta, Jacqui Williams

**Others present:** Sharon Bradley, Lois Griffin, Ann Kearney, David Musser, Sam Trumbore

The meeting was called to order at 11:52 AM.

Jean Poppei, chair, opened the meeting with the lighting of the chalice and a reading from *The Mosaic Makers* by Alyse Ford.

### **Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The May 2014 minutes were approved. The September 2014 minutes were approved with the following change: the words *Police Commission on Community Relations* were replaced with *and other groups* because we were unsure of the correct title.

### **Changes to the Agenda**

Betsy asked to add a report on the Green Sanctuary Committee and Robb and Jessica asked to add a report on the North Star Peace Walk. Jaye asked to add SRC Communications to Current Issues.

### **Reports/Updates**

*Appointed Members.* The elected members appointed the following additional members to SRC: Don Odell, Renee Panetta, Robb Smith, Jacqui Williams, and Betsy Wright.

*Green sanctuary Committee.* Betsy reported that at least nine FUUSANs participated in the People's Climate March on September 21. Recycling has increased since the installation of new containers,. The forum on solar power went well and was attended by about 30 people. The committee will meet on Sunday, October 12. Betsy hopes to get gardeners involved in the committee.

*North Star Peace Walk.* Jessica reported that participants walked to the library, where there were interesting speakers on such topics as Hinduism, Buddhism, and meditation. No one from FUUSA spoke. The walkers stopped at the Underground Railroad site, Albany Cure Violence, and other places and had a chance to talk with neighbors in the West Hill neighborhood.

*Sheridan Preparatory Academy.* Martha reported that she and Lois Griffin had met with Mrs. Sanchez-Gayle, principal, and Ms. Whitehead, parent coordinator. They reported that they would like to have more volunteers and asked us to submit a list of volunteers with the times that they are available and note those who have already been approved by the district. Any one wishing to volunteer should contact Martha or Lois. They also asked for assistance with the

parent-teacher organization and Lois reported that Thayer Heath had volunteered to work with that organization. Mrs. Gayle stated that the playground equipment was unattractive, inadequate and inferior to that of most other schools. She asked for FUUSA's help in obtaining a grant to purchase new playground equipment. Martha agreed to assist the school and parent-teacher association with writing a grant. Two possible sources of funds were discussed: the Home Depot and Kaboom. Martha asked SRC members if they believed that helping the school construct a new playground would be a worthwhile project in which to involve the congregation. SRC members agreed that it would be. Before a grant application is submitted, the liabilities and responsibilities of FUUSA and the school must be clearly delineated and approval of FUUSA's Board of Trustees must be obtained. Martha will review possibilities for funding and submit a possible plan to Mrs. Gayle for completing a grant application with the involvement of teachers, parents, and FUUSA.

*NYCLU Dinner.* It was agreed that Jean should write a check on behalf of SRC to sponsor a table. Individuals who wish to attend the dinner should make their own arrangements.

*Focus Food Pantry.* Patty submitted the following report: We collected \$527.00 in September using the FFP envelopes that were stuffed in the Order of Service. We have enough pre-printed envelopes to get us through the FUUSA 2014-15 church year. On October 26, we will set up a table in Channing Hall to make soup bags for the Pantry clients. They are an alternative to the high(er) sodium content often found in canned soups. Then we will be having the soup making Sunday on the same Sunday as we collect the envelopes, the 4th Sunday of the month, October-March. Also on October 26, we will have our Undie Sunday collection day. Patty will use the Facebook account as well as the Thursday Preview and word of mouth to announce the collection day. Save the Date: January 25, 2015 for the second annual Empty Bowl Luncheon—early afternoon (exact times tba).

*Jewish Voice for Peace Talk.* Jean submitted the following report: I attended an event in Albany 9/30/14 which I found both informative and engaging. Organized by the local **Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)** chapter: “**The Crisis in Israel and Palestine: A Critical Conversation,**” with Rebecca Vilkomerson, National Executive Director of JVP and Barry Trachtenberg, Associate Professor and Director of the Judaic Studies Program at SUNYA. I learned, for example, that by the beginning of the fall, the number of chapters of JVP had risen from 25 to 65, as people decided they could no longer be silent about what was happening in Gaza. I learned, too, that the local JVP and the local Palestinian Rights organization met with Rep. Paul Tonka recently and felt it was a useful meeting. Rebecca Vilkomerson suggested that people check out a movement: BDS. Here's what I found: “The global movement for a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights was initiated by Palestinian civil society in 2005, and is coordinated by the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), established in 2007. BDS is a strategy that allows people of conscience to play an effective role in the Palestinian struggle for justice.”

### **Current Issues for Discussion:**

*SRC communication.* Jaye asked to discuss how we use email to communicate with each other, because we are receiving too many emails from the listserv. When too many emails are sent,

important things get overlooked. Jaye suggested that it would be more appropriate to use a form of social media for our discussions. We discussed developing an SRC covenant on how to communicate and putting words in the subject line of emails to indicate urgency. For example, making it clear when a vote is required. It was agreed that for most issues the general SRC email address should be used, rather than the members-only email address. Jean wants to set up tab for SRC on the FUUSA website. Sam agreed that a tab can be set up. It was suggested that we keep a calendar of social justice events in a central place. Jaye will take responsibility for bringing suggestions to the next meeting.

*Day of Simple Giving (November 15).* Does SRC want to be a sponsor? Renee will be asked to followup with Roberta Sandler to find out what sponsorship means. We need to know what SRC has done in the past and what Renee recommends. November 15 is also the first day of the FUUSA Holiday Bazaar.

*Guest at Your Table and Holiday Cards.* Don: SRC needs volunteers to man the SRC table at the bazaar. The SRC table will sell Christmas cards and collect donations for Guest at Your Table. Don reported that the funds received for the two initiatives should be kept separate. The Guest at My Table program has discontinued the boxes and is looking for different ways to collect donations. It has suggested that congregations have potluck dinners at individual houses to collect donations. Members were not in favor of this plan because of the number of such dinners already in place. Leah came up with an alternative to boxes last year. Another alternative to boxes would be Chinese food containers for kids to decorate. Jean spoke to Leah about the theme *Love Connects Us* used in the grades 4 and 5 class. The class could bring a banner to coffee hours and ask for contributions. The question is do we want to discontinue Guest at Your Table or do it in a different way. Don will check with Leah about a plan for implementing Guest at Your Table. Two or three volunteers will help Don with these initiatives.

*Room Donations.* Since the September meeting, information about the SRC policy of waiving room rental charges for 13 selected events sponsored by non-profit organizations has been placed on the FUUSA website with the room-rental information. Anticipating the possibility that requests for donations will increase, Martha reviewed some ideas for reviewing and selecting applicants for room donations. These ideas include establishing a deadline for submitting applications for a given month so that a number of applications can be reviewed simultaneously and limiting the number of application approved in any given month. We agreed that we would establish these rules after we see an increase in applications. Martha will submit a written proposal at that time.

We have approved the following donations for the 2014-15 church year.

Interfaith Story Circle	Film and discussion	Sept. 28, 2014	Emerson
League of Women Voters	Candidate Event	Oct. 21, 2014	Emerson
Pause	Growing a Green Economy	Nov. 18, 2014	Emerson
Capital Region Refugee Roundtable	Art exhibition	June 6, 2015	Channing

*Forum scheduling.* The September minutes lists a number of suggestions for forums: At the October 26 forum, Sue Cyperts from the League of Women Voters will advocate for Ballot Proposition 1. This proposition is controversial and Karen will try to get someone on other side

to speak against the proposition. A November forum is needed. One possibility is the mental health forum Karen is trying to arrange. Betsy reported that Green Sanctuary has been assigned three forums and may do one in November or December. Members agreed with Robb’s proposal for an April forum on public advocacy as a UU. This forum would proceed the May 4 Legislative Advocacy Day.

*Common Read for FUUSA.* The UUA suggestion is *Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square* by Paul Rasor (Skinner House Books, 2013), which asserts that conservative Christianity is not the only valid religious voice in our national social policy. The 2014-15 Common Read invites Unitarian Universalists to explore and claim our contribution, as religious liberals, to the pressing moral and ethical debates of our contemporary world. Betsy suggested alternatives for a congregational read that are consistent with our social justice mission: Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (a National Book Award Winner) and Solomon Northup’s memoir, *Twelve Years a Slave*. Jean suggested Amy Seidl’s *Finding Higher Ground: Adaptation in the Age of Warming* which talks about animal adaptation to climate change, with implications for human cultural adaptation. Betsy reported that 24 people borrowed last year’s UUA read, *Behind the Kitchen Door*. In addition, members of the Walker Book Club discussed this book at a monthly meeting.

*Tabulation of Congregational Study/Action Issues ballots for FUUSA.* Jean distributed a table tabulating the number of votes each issue received. The counts were as follows:

Issue	Yes	No	Abstain	No Opinion	Priority
Empowerment: Age and Mobility Reconsidered	10	5	6	6	4,3,1,6,4,6
Ending the War on Terror	16	4	2		1,5,5,4,3,5
Escalating Inequality	25				2,1,2,4,1,3,2,3,1,1,1
Gun Violence: A Public Health Issue	23	1	1		2,3,1,5,2,4,3,3
Renewing and Securing our American Democracy	26	1	1		3,1,6,2,1,1,1,2,2,2
UU Values and the Pursuit of a Just Peace for Israelis and Palestinians	19	2			6,4,2,2,5,4
Total Ballots	30				

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45.