

Social Responsibilities Council Minutes of February 1, 2015

Attendees: Jean Poppei (Chair), Patty Burch, Ed Hancock, Karen Kaufmann, Don Odell, Renee Panetta, Jessica Rae, Robb Smith, Betsy Wright, Charlie Silberman (guest presenter), Lois Griffin, Matt Lesniak, Elizabeth Berberian, Michele Vazquez, Sandra Steubing, Ann Kearney, Dee Van Riper.

Opening Details

The meeting was opened by the Chair with a reading from William Sinkford's Faith in the Face of Disaster: A UU Response to Hurricane Katrina. There was one revision to the agenda: , Don wanted to report on the Statement of Conscience. The minutes from January 4, 2015 were approved. The reports of various committees that were submitted to the Chair and attached to the agenda are deemed part of these minutes and will be included at the end.

Reports and Updates

Concerning the give-away-the-plate, there are 3 giveaways remaining. Patty mentioned that the SRC has two requests for the giveaway, the first being Unirondack collection for scholarships and the second, proposed by Neal Andrews via Ann Brandon, being support for refugee children for summer camps. Patty pointed out that Neal Andrews had requested a giveaway last year but was too late for the church year. Other causes deemed worthy by members include Sheridan Preparatory School and, from previous years, Community Roots -- the former Community Gardens. Voting on the giveaways was tabled for another date.

Lois reported that the playground is still the main goal of Sheridan Prep's principal, who may be willing to talk to the congregation about a plate giveaway. Musical instruments are also needed and donations sought, but there also seems to be a fund through the City of Albany available for that purpose. Lois will alert the SRC later if Sheridan Prep is seeking books of any nature.

Renee stated that the FOCUS Food Pantry needs two volunteers to work the last Saturday in February. Betsy volunteered, as did Michele.

Betsy reported that things are going smoothly with the Green Sanctuary Committee but that the GSC potluck had been moved to the first Friday in April. The next GSC forum will take place on March 8 and will concern green and sustainable investing.

Jessica is pleased that the CAAMI meeting date, time, and place are now on the FUUSA website in our Social Justice section.. She commented that 22 people were arrested for civil disobedience at the State of the State, but that charges were dropped against all but one. Jessica could not report on recent CAAMI events, as she had not been able to attend. As a reminder, CAAMI meets the second Tuesday each month at 7 p.m. at the Social Justice Center, and has a letter writing day on Wednesday. Jessica has great respect for Angelica Clark of CAAM who has provided some excellent leadership for the collective; Jessica suggested that those interested

in learning more about CAAMI activities could sign up on their list serve or check out their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NYCAAMI>

Robb reported that Interfaith Impact NYS has been working closely with the Labor Religion Coalition on Moral Mondays, which meet each week in the War Room of the Capitol from 12 to 1 p.m. The Family Planning Day of Advocacy was disrupted by the removal of Speaker Silver. Robb reminded the Council that 9 of the women's agenda items still remain to be passed by the legislature, since the provision involving orders of protection was carved out and enacted. Concerning wage issues, Robb supports a \$7.50 per hour salary for tipped workers, but also supports the elimination of the tip/cash wage system. Work on wage issues continues.

Don reported that he has sent in the Board of Trustees vote on the Statement of Conscience in support of its going before the General Assembly this June. He encourages people to check out the current Windows for more information and for links.

Current Issues

Special Appeal

Charles Silberman is a bilingual teacher and mentor who works through the New York State Migrant Program. He is currently working on citizenship issues with a 20-year-old man whom he has been mentoring since the young man was a student at Albany High. He is seeking funds to pay a lawyer to proceed with guardianship and immigration issues and would like the SRC or FUUSA to make tax deductible donations to Centro Civico, or non-tax deductible donations to Gofundme, which is a web site. Robb suggested Mr. Silberman contact Office for New Americans, which is an agency designed to assist needy immigrants. No vote was taken concerning this request for donations although individual members may wish to make a contribution.

Forums

February 8, 2015: call for food in support of Jacqui's Forum on Black History: Betsy, Patti, Ann, Karen, and Jean will bring finger foods. These refreshments are being offered to encourage attendees, especially those with children. Betsy will contact Patti Jo Newell to see if she can advertize Jacqui Williams' presentation.

May 2015: Tim Burch, a master gardener and a FUUSAn, is willing to do a forum on vegetable gardening. Another possibility for the May Forum is one on Reproductive Justice, in light of an earlier discussion about raising awareness each year about the UUA study/action topic.. It was decided that Tim should give his forum. Robb volunteered that he will speak a bit to Reproductive Justice in his April Forum on advocacy.

Renee passed out a timeline for planning and advertizing future forums. The timeline is intended to provide a guideline, but will require some editing for our purposes. All agreed that advertizing forums is the most difficult aspect of forum planning despite the fact that internal advertizing (though program, order of service and Windows) is relatively easy. Sandy stated

that forum planning ideally should occur six months ahead, and suggested that two SRC meetings, one in early fall or late summer and one in January, deal with forum planning. Betsy said that she felt it was difficult for an individual to both prepare for a forum and do the advertizing herself. Karen and Sandy offered to form a subcommittee to work out logistics for good forum planning in general.

Stand against Racism

A question arose whether SRC wanted to organize an event around Stand Against Racism. It was noted that no event was scheduled in 2014. Karen commented that, as Chair in 2014, she had had difficulty deciphering whether the YWCA was still holding this event. Jean said that FUUSA's Sue Sterer works at the YWCA in Troy, so Sue may be able to clarify issues concerning a Stand Against Racism program. Renee suggested that FUUSA might be able to combine with Schenectady UUs, since Schenectady has a YWCA. Ed Hancock noted that he had seen the movie Selma and found it powerful. The SRC then tossed around the idea that a movie theater might be induced to show the movie Selma as part of Stand Against Racism. A panel discussion could occur following the showing. This matter was left unresolved.

Block Party at Sheridan Hollow

Jean mentioned that Chuck Manning asked if the SRC wanted to be involved again in the block party in Sheridan Hollow, sponsored by the New Jerusalem Church of the Saved. The expected date is Saturday, September 10, 2015. Previously, there was a charge of \$40 for FUUSA unless FUUSA brought its own table. Karen reminded the group that FUUSA has its own canopy.

Banner for SRC

Jean has been working with Alyssa on a banner for SRC-sponsored events. The Council was shown 3 versions and voted to accept one design. Jean will go ahead and have a banner made that can be carried easily by 2 people. Cost would be approximately \$50.

Survey to Assess Congregation Commitment

Renee brought a copy of a survey presented to the congregation in 2011. The procedure used previously involved having 4 SRC subcommittee chairs each give two-minute presentations, then asking the congregation to commit their time, energy and talent to various written options. Both Sandy and Karen stated that they felt the survey was helpful to them. Jean noted that current options would likely be changed, and it was noted that future congregational involvement may change if the congregation adopts a growth through service goal. No action was taken on the survey, but members involved with different sections of the survey are urged to edit it so that we might be able to use it later (at the Advocacy Forum?).

Next Meeting will be February 22 due to the conflict with the CRUUNY gathering.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Betsy Wright

Addendum: Reports listed on February Agenda

REPORTS

Patty: Focus Food pantry for January, 2015:

The monthly collection was held on Jan. 11 and \$800.00 was collected in checks and cash, using the envelopes 'stuffed' in the Order of Service. (The 4th Sunday of the month was the 25th and a Give Away the Plate was already on the calendar.) There were no soup bags created in January.

Give Away the Plate program. On Jan. 25 Trinity Alliance was the agency who benefited from the 'plate' collection-\$932.00. Kat Brown from the Development office was in attendance and talked about the mission for Trinity Alliance.

We have 2 requests for future Give Away the Plates:

1. **Unirondack collection** would be for scholarship monies for Summer 2015 submitted by Renee Panetta.

2. Request to send **Refugee children to summer camp**. Request from Neal Andrews from Refugees to Camp via Ann Brandon. There is a website -VolunteersforRefugees.org

Lois: Report on Sheridan Prep playground possibilities at PTA meeting

Present: Administration--Ms Gayle
Staff (support) Nina (or Nita)
Volunteer—Lois
Teachers—0
Parents-0

The 3 of us discussed the playground, mostly Ms Gayle saying how inadequate it was.

She would like 1) to see it expanded possibly to the back to the sidewalk including a grassy area 2) to have the amphitheater that abuts the school removed 3) have wood chips under the play equipment 4) have play equipment for the older children. Current is recycled and appropriate for the younger children. 5) have a basketball hoop. All the other Albany schools have much better playgrounds.

She added that she gave Mrs. Patterson the Kaboom info to apply for a grant. I suggested it would be good to know if Mrs. Patterson has done so. She said she would inquire. I stressed how important it is to communicate with Martha Musser re the grant, that it would not be good to have 2 different people applying for the same grant for the same place.

Ms Gayle has said she has looked into various ways to expand parking, including the

nearby State lot and the church across the street. (Approximately 50 faculty members)

I said that I would talk with Ron Bailey, the City Councilman for the area.

I asked if she had a "wish list." Her wishes are for musical instruments for their expanded music program this year and for a marquee to communicate better with parents. Also, books for use in the classroom.

99% of students qualify for free lunch. She has plenty of funds from Title 1 for students to take home. Ms. Gayle said she would be willing to come to FUUSA to speak for Give Away the Plate. Our meeting lasted approximate 45 minutes.

Martha: Room Donation Report:

As of January 31, 2014, SRC has made the following room donations for the 2014-15 church year.

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| Interfaith Story Circle | Film and discussion | Sept. 28, 2014 | Emerson |
| League of Women Voters | Candidate Event | Oct. 21, 2014 | Emerson |
| Pause | Controlling Climate Change | Nov. 18, 2014 | Emerson |
| Capital Region Refugee Roundtable | Art exhibition | June 6, 2015 | Channing |
| Capital Roots | Register gardeners | February 7, 2015 | Channing |
| SUNY School of Criminal Justice | Forum on Finding Justice | January 21, 2015 | Emerson |
| New Yorkers for Responsible Lending | Annual Meeting | October, Nov. weekday 2015 | Emerson |

Jean—Forums for the rest of the year:

- January 11: (Not) Talking about Suicide (Karen K.)
- February 15: When Did You Learn Black Lives Matter? (Jacqui W.)
- March 08: GSC Green/Sustainable Investing (Chris B.)
- April 12: Advocating for Social Justice (Robb)
- May 10: Open—one possibility: Planting a Vegetable Garden?