

# Social Justice in Action Team Manual

*"The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to foresee the consequences of human behavior (both individual and institutional), with the intention of making history in place of being merely pushed around by it."*

—James Luther Adams, Unitarian Universalist Theologian and Teacher

*Justice is love in action.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

## **Section 1. The UUCS Social Justice in Action Team is guided by our UU Values**

The **Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalist Association** state that “We covenant to affirm and promote.

- 1) the inherent worth and dignity of every person.
- 2) Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- 3) Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- 4) A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- 5) The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- 6) The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- 7) Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

**The vision of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem** “is to build a joyful home for free religious exploration where we nurture the hopes and serve the needs of our world.

**Our mission** “to provide a respectful home for intellectual, spiritual, and creative exploration, and to build a community of fellowship, caring and service that lights the flame of social action.”

Guided by our seven UU principles, inspired by the vision and mission of the UUCS and mindful of widespread injustice, indifference to needless suffering and oppression in the world, the purpose of the Social Justice in Action Team is to advocate for social, economic and environmental justice and promote compassionate service within our congregation, our community, state, nation and world.

## **Section 2. The relation of the Social Justice in Action Team to the congregation**

The SJAT may represent (UUCS) on issues which the congregation has taken a stand (such as marriage equality, transportation equity, and Move to Amend). It may also represent Unitarian Universalists on social justice issues when the national Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has taken a stand. If and when the SJAT feels called to take a position on matters that neither UUCS nor the UUA have made official statements, the SJAT will clearly state that they are speaking solely on their own behalf.

The SJAT recognizes that our whole congregation is called to promote social justice in our wider world. To this end the SJAT strives to facilitate congregational involvement in social justice initiatives and actions in non-divisive, inclusive and meaningful ways. To facilitate such involvement the SJAT will strive to...

**Engage** by conferring with members (especially key leaders and active members) to elicit their social justice concerns and learn of their current involvements in or support for social justice and social service endeavors. This may include one on one conversations that will enable the SJAT to strengthen relations with our members and learn of their current involvements and interests.

**Educate** by enhancing members' knowledge and awareness of pressing social justice issues. Confer with the minister to offer social justice themed worship services. Offer classes, facilitate social justice discussion groups and provide pertinent information to the congregation and others through the various means available – print, digital, video, etc. Special attention will be given to inform the congregation of the social justice initiatives of our larger movement – the Unitarian Universalist Association and social justice educational material provided by the UUA.

**Empower:** The SJAT will offer concrete proposals for social justice actions such as advocacy, public witnessing to our UU values and other effective means that are congruent with our covenantal values.

### **Section 3: Team Functions and Roles:**

To insure that the SJAT is effective, it's important to identify the essential functions and define the committee roles needed to accomplish them. One person may fulfill more than one role or more people might fulfill one particular function as a subcommittee. As the team evolves the roles may change and the manual should be edited regularly to reflect such changes.

**SJAT Meeting Covenant:** Inasmuch as we seek to embody the values we profess we covenant to be mindful of how we conduct our meetings, insuring that we are inclusive of all voices and create caring and compassionate relationships.

#### **Role descriptions for SJAT**

**Facilitator:** Creates agendas for the yearly cycle of monthly meetings; Convenes and chairs meetings. Recruits SJAT members to fulfill various team functions and consults with congregational leaders on volunteer recruitment for the SJAT. Serves as liaison to the Program Council or delegates this role to another member of the SJAT. Consults and coordinates program activities with the minister.

**Communication Coordinator:** Takes minutes (or records action steps) and presents them at future meetings for review and approval. Publicizes SJAT meetings to the rest of the congregation and invites newcomers to join. Reviews and annually updates this manual as the SJAT evolves in its practices. Manages SJAT page on the UUUCS website.

**Congregational Liaison:** Insures that the SJAT consults with congregation members to invite their input on possible SJAT programs and activities; offers guidance for congregational involvement in and support of SJAT programs and initiatives; makes congregation aware of the Social Justice programs and activities of the SJAT and our larger association, including UU Voices for Justice and the UUA.

**Common Read Coordinator:** Apprises congregation of the UUA's annual Common Read and facilitates the formation of book discussion groups using a UU covenant group model.

**Education Coordinator:** Works closely with the Congregational liaison to stay apprised of UUA and district social justice programs and activities; coordinates social justice educational and informational activities – might include showing social justice themed documentaries, leading discussions, collecting social justice literature to display on social justice table.

**Social Justice Table Host Coordinator:** Schedules Sunday hosts at SJAT table during fellowship hour.

Oversees organization of materials to be displayed: e.g., informational materials, petitions, books. Facilitates social justice table discussions during fellowship hours.

**Immediate Action Coordinator:** Facilitates timely responses to various social justice issues that arise during the year. Every month appeals come to us to offer support for certain causes, legislation, activities and programs. The immediate action coordinator will present these for our consideration at the SJAT monthly meetings and to the team electronically when more immediate response is required.

**Community Coordinator:** The SJAT aspires to provide a venue for a variety of progressive groups and organizations to gather and share news of their programs, initiatives and activities. In 2012 we held a “social justice summit” at which a number of such groups participated and invited wider involvement in their respective activities. Community Coordinator works to create such opportunities for us to connect with other progressive groups to join in common cause.

**Social Service Liaison:** UUUCS has a number of vital social service programs that operate semi-independently which serve the homeless, hungry, and others. As necessary, the SJAT social service liaison may serve to provide guidance on how to publicize these programs and help coordinate their various activities to avoid conflicts with scheduling, fund-raising, or recruitment. The SJAT social service liaison will also, in coordination with the minister and staff, offer guidance to newly forming social service programs.

**Share the Plate Coordinator:** At UUUCS we began a practice of “sharing the plate” (the Sunday offering) with outside local organizations that share our values and serve the community. Each year we will select recipients. The Share the Plate Coordinator, in consultation with the rest of the team and with input from the congregation, will facilitate this annual selection. [Please refer to Appendix B, Share-the-Plate-Guidelines for more information.](#)

**Minister:** Is an ex officio member of the SJAT. Offers guidance, counsel and support. Coordinates with team to integrate social justice themes into worship services and other pertinent areas of congregational life. Reminds the SJAT of our spiritual grounding in our UU Values (see section 1).

### Appendix A:

Annual SJAT Timeline (listing additional events and activities beyond regular monthly activities. See UUA's "Social Justice Action Calendar" on website under "Social Justice" for monthly reminders of important social justice themes.)

**January:** Budget completed.

Social justice themed music concert.

**February:** Work with minister on social justice themed service this month.

One Billion Rising

Roy Zimmerman

**March:** Climate Justice Month begins.

**April:** Earth Day

Cordon Road Cleanup

**May:** Work with minister on social justice themed service this month.

Congregational meeting.

**June:** Juneteenth

**July:**

**August:** Capitol Pride

**September:** Begin Common Read groups (the UUA selects a book with a social justice theme once a year for members' small group discussions in congregations.)

34 Days of Peace (Oregonians for Peace)

**October:** Cordon Road Cleanup

**November:** Work with minister for social justice themed service this month.

Social Justice Summit

**December:** Share-the-plate recipients finalized.

## **Appendix B: Share the Plate Guidelines**

1. Contact the organization about 1 month in advance. Willamette Humane Society, for example, required 4 weeks advance notice to schedule a speaker.
2. Start with an organization's web page to find an email or web form to contact the organization. Edit the form letter (attached) and send it to an outreach contact or a general email contact. If there is no email address, call to get an email address or verbally inform the agency of the opportunity to speak.
3. Try to schedule the speaker on the first Sunday of the month. Other Sunday's are fine if needed for the organization due to scheduling conflicts. However, in months with 5 Sundays, please do not schedule a speaker on the fifth Sunday. Fifth Sunday offerings go to an internal program so it causes confusion.
4. Guest speakers do not have to attend both services and they **are not required** to attend at all to receive the donation. They are also invited to have a table in the Fellowship Hall between services if they so choose.
5. Please be clear and polite providing information that the presentation needs to be under 4 minutes so the service doesn't go over time.
6. Ask them to arrive prior to the service so they can be introduced to the Celebrant Anchor (CA). The CA will be the one introducing the speaker from the pulpit and meeting them beforehand allows the CA to know who they will be introducing.
7. Please pin down the details **two weeks prior to their visit** and email the Share the Plate Coordinator with the following information:
  - a. name of the contact(s) who will be coming.
  - b. the day they are coming.
  - c. if they will be coming to one or both services.
  - d. if they would like a table set up for them in the Fellowship Hall.
8. This information is needed at least two weeks prior to the Sunday they will be speaking so it can be entered into the project management software that the Worship Team uses.
9. A few days to a week before they are scheduled to visit, please email/call them to verify all the details and address any last minute questions or changes.
10. On the day of their visit, be available to greet the speaker and introduce them to the Celebrant Anchor (CA) for the day. The Share the Plate Coordinator will tell you who the CA is ahead of time. If the speaker cancels at the last minute and you can not be there to tell the CA, please call the Share the Plate Coordinator so the information can be relayed.

11. If they have stated they would like a table set up in the Fellowship Hall, please do so. The corner next to the piano is a good place to set up the table. The door to the storage room with tables is usually open. If not, someone should be around to open it for you.
12. Let the visitor know that they are welcome to get coffee and/or refreshments.
13. Help take down the table at the end of the second service coffee hour.
14. Within a week after the visit, please send a thank you message to the speaker letting them know we appreciate them for coming to speak to us.

Greetings,

My name is <your name here>. I am a member of the congregation at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem. We are grateful for the good work you do for our community and, inasmuch as your mission aligns with our own Unitarian Universalist values (see our purposes and principles below), we'd like to offer you some support.

Each month, our congregation shares a percentage of its offerings to a community organization. In <insert month here>, <organization's name here> will be the recipient of those funds. We'd be honored if a member of your organization could join us to give a very brief description of your mission at each of our two Sunday services. You are also invited to set up a table in our Fellowship Hall, where we meet for coffee after each service, so that you can further educate our congregation about your organization and/or solicit volunteers. The donation to your organization is not contingent on anyone from your organization attending, but we hope you will come so that we can meet you and build a relationship.

We aim to schedule these presentations for the first Sunday of the month, but they can be scheduled another Sunday within the month to fit your schedule. Our first service starts at 9:30 a.m. The second begins at 11:15 a.m. You are welcome to speak, briefly, at one or both of the services. If you choose to come to only one service, we encourage you to do so at our second service since it has greater attendance. Please let us know if you would like us to set up a table for you in our Fellowship Hall so that you can display materials and meet with congregants. We finalize the timeline for each service two weeks ahead of time, so your timely response to this message is appreciated.

Our congregation is located at 5090 Center Street NE, Salem, OR 97317.

I look forward to hearing back from you whether you are interested in attending or if you would like to decline. Please feel free to ask any questions you might have. I will answer them to the best of my ability.

<salutation here>,

<your name here>

<your email address here>

<\*optional\* your phone number here>

## **Unitarian Universalist Principles**

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

15. 1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.