

**Social Justice Council
Annual Report
2021-2022**

Social Justice Council Members and Friends: Brenda Black, Turner Bledsoe, Davalene Cooper (Chair), Ellie Handelman, David Murphy, Kate Philbin, Ron Pollara, Jean Railton, Rev, Ken Read-Brown, Lisa Sawyer, Patti Smith, Laurie Ann Yeisley-Drogin, and Dana Kintigh (Board liaison).

The Social Justice Council (SJC) works to facilitate and support social justice activities and projects at Old Ship Church. The pandemic has presented many challenges in our efforts related to social justice, but we continue to explore social justice issues as best we can given the challenges of meeting in person. We also updated the congregation on ways to help by making donations related to Afghan resettlement, the war in Ukraine, and other emergency situations as they unfold. We have also continued to administer the special plate collections at Old Ship.

The SJC will be meeting this summer to plan our activities for the next church year. We hope to be able to present at least two in-person events, probably forums in the Meeting House, as well as other opportunities to advocate and/or volunteer for a fairer and more just world. We welcome suggestions from the congregation for specific activities or projects to support. We encourage anyone who has such a project or idea to contact the SJC for assistance and support.

At our 2021 annual meeting, the congregation unanimously approved our recommendation that the major focus of our social justice work be on racism, dismantling white supremacy, and climate justice. This past year we have done the following things consistent with this focus.

- We continued to sponsor an anti-racism book group that has met monthly during the 2021-2022 church year. This group has read a variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction, authored primarily by persons of color. This “drop in” group has usually had 15 or so participants at each session. This group will continue next year, but we are broadening our focus to include all our work in the area of social justice. Thus, the book group will be renamed the social justice book group and it will include books covering all three of social justice issues: racism, dismantling white supremacy, and climate justice.
 - *Everyone is invited to our May Anti-Racism Book Group meeting which will include the author of the book we are reading: **A Conspiracy of Mothers** by Colleen Van Niekerk (2021). This novel explores South Africa's racial classifications during apartheid, the government's construct of whiteness, and how those classifications affected laws and practices related to sexual assault. *To accommodate Colleen's schedule, we will meet at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11 on Zoom.* Thanks to Patti Smith for making these arrangements!*

- We continue to support the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry (UUUM). We hope as the pandemic lessens, we will be able to be more directly involved with the UUUM, as it fits into our anti-racism work. As a supporting congregation, we are entitled to three delegates to the UUUM Annual Meeting and representing Old Ship as delegates are Davalene Cooper, Lisa Sawyer, and Dianne Walcott. We still hope to be able to support the UUUM Artist in Residence program, but in the meantime, we advertised their online Artist Catalog as a possible site for gifts during the holidays. Our January special plate supported the UUUN's domestic shelter, Renewal House. Again, we hope to make the congregation aware of how to volunteer with, and support, the UUUM.
- We continue to explore how Old Ship can best acknowledge that our Meeting House is on land that was originally the home of the Massachusetts and other First Nation Tribes.
- Based upon our recommendation, the Board of Trustees established a task force to consider the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change, Widening the Circle of Concern. That task force is beginning its work on behalf of the congregation.
- As discussed at the end of this report, we are recommending that Old Ship become a member congregation of Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light.
- With the assistance of Ron Pollara, we continue to monitor and support the specific green building design requirements for a new Parish House. The overall goal is to consider the latest sustainable technologies, practices, and products that will make the new Old Ship Parish House Building "green and sustainable" and works toward a Net Zero Environmental Impact.

Finally, we want to thank everyone, including our SJC members and friends, for their support of our efforts to create a more just and peaceful world! We also want to thank the Rev. Ken Read-Brown for his participation and support in the work of the SJC for many years! We will miss you, Ken, and wish you the best as you begin your retirement life.

In addition to the efforts discussed above, this year, the SJC has continued to lead Old Ship's efforts to:

- **Provide meals for Father Bill's:** The six cooking teams staffed by Old Shippers and others from the area have continued to provide full dinner meals for those served at Father Bill's Shelter in Quincy. Each group makes dinner for the shelter four times during the year. Father Bill's has expressed deep appreciation for the consistency and commitment from the six teams during these challenging times. Thanks to Brenda Black for coordinating these teams. We also want to thank those who participate in this project, providing meals for the shelter four times per year. Here is the list of our six cooking teams. Thank you all!
 1. Charlotte Champagne (Team Leader), Mary Petrino, Bob Casey, Kathy Lynch, and Kevin Mulvey & Bruce Mauer

2. Sharon Prehn (Team Leader), Nina Wellford, Erica Goode, Carolyn Locke, Judy Sneath, and Mary Markel & David Murphy
 3. Peggy Weymouth (Team Leader), Nancy Hill, Ronnie Scott, Julie Kembel, Avis Goldstein, Stephanie Connolly, and Kathi Lesko
 4. Dave Petrie (Team Leader), Frank Cheney, Mid Walsh, Brenda Black & Ron Pollara, Paul Stone, Stewart Lewack, and Libby Benson
 5. Janice McPhillips (Team Leader), Janet Blampied, Susan Read-Brown, Roseanne Bush, Diane Clarke, Caryn Schneider, and Gail Moran Slater
 6. Pia Young and Lisa Sawyer (Team Leaders), Allan Greenberg, Barbara Ganem, Fan Leonard, and Davalene Cooper
- **Support the Hingham Food Pantry:** We have reminded the congregation of how to support the Hingham Food Pantry during COVID. We have resumed collections as part of our Sunday morning services, and hope our collection will increase as more people return to the Meeting House. We hope we will be able to hold our annual Stop and Shop next year.
 - **Maintain the Social Justice Action Alert Network:** We share information about actions members of the list may take to support issues affecting vulnerable populations. The list has about 65 members of the community. Davalene Cooper maintains the list and sends out the alerts. If you would like to join the list, contact Davalene at davalenecooper@verizon.net.
 - **Support the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC):** This year, as was true last year, our support was primarily through the annual Guest at Your Table fundraising program. The Coffeehouse Off the Square was unable to take place given COVID 19 protocols. The latest UUSC Annual Report includes the following awards for Old Ship for the last fiscal year: Creating Justice Banner Award (25-50% of the congregation are UUSC members) and James Luther Adams (a budgeted gift to UUSC of at least \$1 per member, funds received through the annual Christmas Eve offering at Old Ship). Our action alert network also sent out action alerts from UUSC. On October 10, 2021, the President of UUSC, Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, preached at Old Ship. It was a wonderful service and an opportunity for the congregation to learn more about the organization.
 - We have updated the congregation on the UUA and UUSC response to Russia's attack on Ukraine. UUSC's initial emergency response includes providing immediate funding to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) and the FemFund, two groups already on the ground working on equitable recovery for displaced people. The first steps include: 1) Distributing humanitarian aid to women, people of color, and LGBTQI+ individuals who have fled Ukraine — including delivery of food, cooking supplies, batteries, generators, lamps, and other necessities for those arriving in Poland, 2) Providing free legal assistance, counseling, and plain-language information to those arriving in Hungary, enabling them to access their rights as asylum seekers, and 3) Organizing support for grassroots groups who are fighting pushbacks of BIPOC migrants.

- Support for the South Shore Friends of the Homeless:** As was true last year, we were unable to provide space and the meal for a holiday dinner serving those living in shelters or temporary housing through the South Shore Friends of the Homeless (SSFH). We discovered another program of SSFH, however, and through that program, we provide holiday gifts to 10 families (a total of 36 individuals). Altogether, Old Shippers purchased 108 presents for these families. It was an incredible success, and we were so excited to deliver these gifts to the SSFH. We hope we can again participate in the holiday dinner once it returns, but we intend to again participate in the holiday gift program this coming year. Thanks to all of you who participated in the program and made the holiday a lot brighter for those being served by the SSFH!
- Old Ship Website:** Thanks to Dave Murphy, we have kept social justice information, including organizations and programs in need of financial donations and/or volunteers during the pandemic, updated on the Old Ship website.
- Social Justice Special Plate Collections:** As was true last year, the congregation has been especially generous in supporting our special plates. We thank everyone for this incredible support in a time of increased need. Here is the list of recipients for this church year, with the amounts donated as available.

Month	Recipient	Amount Collected, if known at the time of this report
October 2021	International Institute of New England for Afghan Resettlement	\$3398.30
November 2021	Free.	\$1156.62
December 2021	UUSC Guest at Your Table Program	\$5037.39
January 2021	UU Urban Ministry—Renewal House	\$1807.72
February 2022	Boston Health Care Program for the Homeless	\$1,857.84
March 2022	Old Ship Youth Group Service Trip	Not yet determined
April 2022	Massachusetts Climate Action Network	To be determined
May 2022	Outright LGBTQ Ukraine Emergency Fund	To be determined

In addition, our Christmas Eve Offering of \$4,568.22 was evenly split between UUSC, Father Bill's and Urban Ministry (\$1,522.74 each) We are deeply appreciative of these donations in support of social justice during the pandemic; these donations do serve to lessen the suffering in our world.

We invite members of our community to make suggestions for the recipients of the special collections for the 2022-2023 church year. For your reference, here is how the SJC makes decisions about special plate; we do have a few criteria. The group we select must be certified as a 501(c)(3) or equivalent for IRS purposes. This just helps us to know that the organization is legitimate and has taken steps to be recognized as a non-profit group. Beyond that, we have two or three annual special plates for organizations we always support, either because they are UU connected (UUSC and Renewal House) or because we use the special plate for a special event (i.e., the holiday dinner for Friends of the Homeless of the South Shore). Every other year, we designate one month for the Old Ship Youth Group Service Trip. Those are our only regularly designated groups.

Beyond that, we look for organizations that either meet an immediate need that is somewhat of an emergency, or a group that does work in areas that relate to our social justice focus (antiracism, dismantling white supremacy, and climate justice). Members of the SJC suggest groups, as do members of the congregation. We do try to "spread the love, and money, around," so other than our regular groups listed above, we do not usually designate the same group or organization in successive years.

Finally, we do look at how important our donations will be to the organization's work. We do not usually support groups that already receive lots of donations from other sources. We look for how our donations will impact the work.

Recommended Action for the 2022 Old Ship Annual Meeting:

Recently, the SJC again connected with Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light. This organization states its purpose on its website as follows:

As people of faith, we begin with love.

We see the earth not simply as an elegant mechanism, but as a *miracle of creation*.

We see people not only as producers, workers, and consumers, but as *unique and precious souls*.

We see *ecological healing* and *environmental justice* as our *sacred responsibility*.

What we hold sacred we will protect.

The organization is headed by the Rev. Cindy Davidson, a UU minister who has been connected to UU environmental issues for a long time. She just became the executive director of Mass Interfaith Power & Light two months ago. In addition, the policy director for the organization is another UU minister who many of us know, the Rev. Fred Small.

One of the ways to support this important organization is to become a Member Congregation. In looking at the list of congregations who have taken this step, we found that many of them are UU congregations. You may learn more about the organization at [Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light \(massipl.org\)](https://massipl.org). The list of Member Congregations can be found at [Our Member Congregations — Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light \(massipl.org\)](#).

The SJC thinks this would be a good way for us to be more involved with climate justice issues, and more supportive of the broader work in this area. There is a donation fee, which the SJC would pay from our budget this year. We do think this is a decision for the congregation to make, however, so we have requested that the following Article be included in the Warrant for the 2022 Annual Meeting.

Will the Congregation approve the recommendation of the Social Justice Council to become a Member Congregation of Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light?

We urge the congregation to support this Article.