

**Social Justice Council
Annual Report
2023-2024**

Social Justice Council Members: Brenda Black, Davalene Cooper (Chair), Ellie Handleman, David Murphy, Kate Philbin, Jean Railton, Lisa Sawyer, Patti Smith, and Karen Churchill (Board liaison).

The Social Justice Council (SJC) works to facilitate and support social justice activities and projects at Old Ship Church. 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. The SJC has decided to continue with this focus for the upcoming year(s) as we still have much work to do on these issues.

We also want to encourage members of our congregation to engage with our UU the Vote Campaign here at Old Ship in this important election year. We have signed up to be a UU the Vote “Good Trouble” Congregation. Ellie Handleman will be leading this work. We will post more information in the monthly and weekly newsletters as we become more involved with these non-partisan “get out the vote” efforts. In the meantime, you may learn more about this initiative at uuthevote.org.

We also welcome suggestions from the congregation for specific activities or projects to support. If you have an idea, contact us for assistance and support. We will try to help you with your project.

This past year we have done the following things consistent with the specific issues described above.

- We began the church year with a special collection for the new temporary shelter in Quincy that was created to serve the increase in migrants, especially from Haiti and South America, and those experiencing homelessness. We filled an SUV with needed items, including baby wipes, portable playpens, diapers (all sizes), formula, toothbrushes, toothpaste, body wash, soap, men’s and women’s deodorant, baby lotion, and more than \$500 in gift cards to Target and Walmart. The shelter expressed their gratitude for these needed items.
- Last fall, we hosted a two part community wide event related to climate justice. Our first event was a showing of the film, *The Letter*, based on Pope Francis’ Letter for the Earth. This powerful film highlights the work of five climate justice activists from around the world. The second part of the series was a panel of community climate justice activists who focused on what we as individuals can do to affect climate justice. Representatives from Hingham NetZero, Cleaner Greener Hingham, and the Hingham Climate Action Planning Committee participated.

- We sponsored an “All Church Read” on how are Climate Change and White Supremacy Culture are connected? We asked the congregation to read a book that connects these two issues. The book, *Climate Change is Racist: Race, Privilege and the Struggle for Climate Justice* by Jeremy Williams, argues that climate change “is structurally racist, disproportionately caused by majority White people in majority White countries, with the damage unleashed overwhelmingly on people of colour.” We had a good discussion on Zoom with about 25 members of our community. We are considering doing this kind of an all church book read in the future, perhaps on racial justice. Thanks to Brenda Black and Ellie Handleman for leading this discussion.
- This spring, we hosted several forums. With our special plate collections in January, February, and March, we had representatives from the designated organizations, each of whom presented information about their work and how we at Old Ship might engage even more in supporting the important work they do. In January, the forum was with the UU Urban Ministry. In February, it was with the International Institute of New England. And in March, it was with Father Bill’s and MainSpring. In April, we had a forum on Honduras Hope—an organization we have supported in the past—and gave them an opportunity to sell baskets made by the women they work with in Honduras.
- We continue to sponsor an anti-racism/social justice book group that has met monthly for the past several years. This group has read a variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction, authored primarily by persons of color. This “drop in” group usually had 9-10 participants at each session. Our group includes people who have a connection to members of Old Ship, and as a result, we have participants from Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, and Missouri. This has made for richer discussions as the issues of social justice sometimes have different challenges in different parts of the country.
- We continue to support the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry (UUUM), as Old Ship is a supporting member congregation of this organization. We continue to consider how 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 have continued to advertise their online Artist Catalog as a site for gifts during the holidays. We also advertise their Community Conversations programs in our newsletter and have received feedback that some Old Shippers have attended these programs, which feature the intersection of race, poverty, education, and other social justice issues. Our January special plate supported the UUUM’s domestic shelter, Renewal House. Vinnie Myles, UUUM’s Director of Development, spoke briefly before this special plate offering, and then stayed for an informal conversation during coffee hour. n.
- 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 and on how we might acknowledge our history of

supporting white supremacy and slavery. Laura Harbottle has led us in this work, in conjunction with the Task Force on Widening the Circle.

- As a member congregation of Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light, we informed the congregation of various programs related to climate justice. This year, we will celebrate Earth Day on April 21 with the showing of a film Common Ground, made possible through this collaboration with 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 in our efforts to create a more just and peaceful world!

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. This year has seen an increase in the number of meals needed and our cooking teams have expanded to serve approximately 150 people. Thanks to everyone who helps with this effort!
- **Provide lunches for the Anderson Veterans Home:** We at Old Ship are part of a community wide interfaith effort to provide six lunches twice a week (Tuesday and Friday) to the Anderson Veterans Home on Fort Hill Street in Hingham. Lunch consists of a deli-meat sandwich, chips, fresh fruit, cookie or brownie, and water or juice. Thanks to all who helped with this effort and let us know if you would like to be part of the program this coming October (our new month for this year). You can do this individually, as a family, or as a group of friends. The lunches are left in a cooler outside the side door of the home. Thanks to Davalene Cooper for coordinating this project.
- **Support the Hingham Food Pantry:** We have resumed collections of food as part of our Sunday morning services and hope our collection will increase as more people return to the Meeting House. We also supported the Hingham Food Pantry through one of our special plate collections. This year, we also have designated two specific Sundays for a food drive for the pantry—requesting specific food items. We think this was a successful effort and will do this again next year. Thanks to Kate Philbin and Jean Railton for coordinating getting our donations to the food pantry.

- **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 60 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):** As a congregation, we support the Service Committee primarily through the annual Guest at Your Table fundraising program. We also provide information from the Service Committee about its programs and action alerts in the monthly newsletter.
- **Support the South Shore Friends of the Homeless:** This year, the Board of Trustees took on the task of preparing and serving the meal for a holiday dinner serving those living in shelters or temporary housing through the South Shore Friends of the Homeless (SSFH). This community event took place at the Hingham Congregational Church, which donated the space, and was a great success! We appreciate that the Board organized this event for our congregation. And we are grateful we were able to work with both the Hingham Congregational Church and the Hingham Women's Club to bring some holiday joy to the families served by the SSFH. We hope this dinner will take place again this next church year.

We again participated in SSFH's holiday gift program. We adopted 7 families for the holidays, consisting of 35 individuals, including fathers, mothers, grandmothers, teenagers, children, and infants. These families were either currently living in shelters or had just moved into more permanent housing. Altogether, we purchased more than 100 presents for these families. It was an incredible success, and we were so excited to deliver these gifts to the SSFH. We plan to participate in this holiday gift program again next 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!

- **Update the 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.
- **Coordinate the Monthly Outreach 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, and at a time when many in our congregation are dealing with increased costs due to inflation. 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 2023 | Hingham Food Pantry | \$910.79 |
| November 2023 | Friends of the Homeless of the South Shore Holiday Dinner | We collected a total of \$1513.18, and after deducting the expenses for the holiday dinner, we sent a check for \$948.60 to the Friends. |

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| December 2023 | UUSC Guest at Your Table Program | \$1602.82 |
| January 2024 | UU Urban Ministry—Renewal House | \$1156.72 |
| February 2024 | International Institute of New England | \$1,370.26 |
| March 2024 | Father Bill's and MainSpring | \$1268.25 |
| April 2024 | Interfaith Power & Light | To be determined |
| May 2024 | Pink Haven Project | To be determined |

In addition, our Christmas Eve Offering of \$1720 was equally split between UUSC, Father Bill's and the UU Urban Ministry. We are deeply appreciative of these special plates and Christmas Eve donations that serve to lessen the suffering in our world. This is one of the ways we are making a difference in our world. Thank you!