

**Social Justice Council  
Annual Report  
2024-2025**

**Social Justice Council Members:** Nancy Bettinger, Brenda Black, Davalene Cooper (Chair), Ellie Handleman, Laura Harbottle, Jennifer Lincoln, 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 education, 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 continues to focus on these issues.

We also note that this is an especially concerning time for those of us who believe in a fair and just world—and as we try to create a more beloved community. The new administration is dismantling many programs and policies aimed at creating a more diverse, caring, and loving world. We will continue to try to keep the congregation informed of actions to resist these changes to programs and policies that support our Unitarian Universalist values in the world. 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. There is much to do during this time, and we will try to do as much as possible to put our values into the world.

Here is the summary of our activities and events this past year, consistent with the specific issues described above.

In March, we presented a series of programs related to our anti-racism work. First, in cooperation with the Hingham Unity Council, we presented the film, *Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America*, at the Hingham Shipyard Theaters. We are grateful to the owners of the theater for donating the space and employees so that admission to the event was free. This was a community event; we had a good turnout, somewhere between 80 and 100 people. We have the DVD of the film, and it can be checked out from the church office for private viewings; we do not have the rights to show it again in a public venue. We enjoyed working with the Hingham Unity Council on this program and hope we might work together again on a future program or project.

Second, on a Sunday after church, we shared the Hingham Historical Society video lecture by Wayne Eckerson on the *Role of Hingham and New England in Slavery and the Triangle Trade* that was originally given on November 15, 2020. About 20 people stayed to see the lecture; we also shared the link in our weekly newsletter so anyone who missed it could view it on their own. Here is that link again for anyone who has yet to view the lecture: [Benjamin Lincoln's World: Role of Hingham and New England in Slavery and the Triangle Trade](#).

Third, we released our initial report on slavery at Old Ship. This is a project we have been working on for at least the past two years, and we are grateful to Laura Harbottle and Carol Valentine for their research, and to Laura for creating the initial draft of the report. We want to acknowledge the extensive assistance Paula Bagger and Eileen McIntyre from the Hingham Historical Society provided to our team. We also are grateful to Hingham Town Clerk Carol Falvey and Michael Achille, Local History and Reference Librarian at the Hingham Public Library, for their assistance. We hope we discover more information on this topic and see this report as a beginning point to learning and understanding our entire history. The report has been posted on our website and can be found at [Slavery-at-Old-Ship-Final-Report-3-18-2025.pdf](#).

As part of our work in dismantling white supremacy, we are participating in the UUA's "All Church Read" this spring. The common read, *Authentic Selves: Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families* is an important and interesting book. We invite everyone to read the book and attend an in-person or Zoom discussion in June as part of Pride Month. Rev. Carie also will be discussing the book in one of her sermons or reflections that same month. The book is available from bookstores, including online ones. You may learn more about the book at [inSpirit: UUA Bookstore and Gift Shop: Authentic Selves](#).

We hosted a Forum on the AntiRacist Table in January. The Antiracist Table was created to educate Americans about African American history and the Black experience, along with rehumanizing Black people and motivating action to help create an Anti-racist America. Ultimately, this project asks us whether we want to dismantle racism in ourselves, our families, our community, our schools, and our workplaces. Brenda Black, Ellie Handleman, Laura Harbottle, and Patti Smith engaged in this program for six months and shared their experiences at the forum. Following the forum, several members of the congregation formed their own discussion groups to engage in this program. You can learn more about this program at [Help create an AntiRacist America- The AntiRacist Table](#). We encourage anyone who is interested to either form their own group or do the program on their own.

This year, we provided programing and information about the UUA General Assembly's Action of Immediate Witness: Solidarity with Palestinians. You may read the AIW at this link: [\[AMENDED\] Proposed AIW - Solidarity with Palestinians - General Assembly 2024 / GA Business - Unitarian Universalist Association Forums \(uua.org\)](#). Consistent with the AIW's call for teach-ins on this issue, the SJC, along with the Lifelong Learning Committee, hosted a five session speaker series for congregants in the fall. We also have shared information from the UUs for Justice in the Middle East organizations.

Additionally, the SJC requested the Board sign a MA Peace Action Resolution urging Senators Markey and Warren to "cosponsor and vote in favor of the Joint Resolutions of Disapproval (JRDs) (S.J.Res.111 to S.J.Res.116) introduced on September 25 by Senators Sanders, Welch, Schatz and Merkley to block the delivery of an additional \$20B of U.S. weapons to Israel, over and above the record-breaking amount of \$17.9B in

weapons already delivered since October 7, 2023.” The Board voted unanimously to sign the MA Peace Action resolution.

Finally, in April, we named the Palestine Children’s Relief Fund as our special plate recipient. The war in Gaza has made their work more difficult and more critical in helping children injured by bombings and other actions of war. We hope our support helps in some small way to alleviate some of the suffering of children in Gaza and the West Bank.

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 with 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. Contact Patti Smith if interested in finding out more about the reading group.

Old Ship is a supporting congregation of the UU Urban Ministry in Boston. We were excited to welcome the UUUM’s Executive Director, the Rev. Mary Margaret Earl, to our pulpit in January. Rev. Mary Margaret shared with us more of the work of the Urban Ministry at a forum following the service. 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 Artist Catalog (available online at [UUUM.org](http://UUUM.org)) as a place 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 and our May special plate will support the UUUM’s Roxbury Youth Program.

We were excited to welcome the Rev. Laura Randall to our pulpit in March. Rev. Laura is Director for Congregation Relations at the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). She encouraged us to join the newly created Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Resistance Network that aims to build power to resist authoritarianism. The fight for human rights has never been more urgent, and this Resistance Network is a rapid mobilization hub—uniting people of faith and conscience to take action when civil liberties, democracy, and human rights are under attack. Click here to join this network: [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee | Action Center](#).

This year, we have strengthened our relationship with UU Mass Action. Ellie Handleman is our contact with UU Mass Action. We were pleased to welcome Claire Karl B.W. Muller to our pulpit in March. Claire Karl joined the team at UU Mass Action in 2020. They lead the UU Mass Action work on Indigenous Solidarity, as well as being the Movement Building

director. Claire Karl spoke to this political moment, and how our work leads to more justice and relationship. UU Mass Action was one of the major sponsors of the “Hands Off” Rally—Boston on April 5, an event that Old Ship’s Board of Trustees also co-sponsored. We look forward to being more engaged with UU Mass Action, especially around issues related to indigenous peoples’ rights.

In October, we held a Blanket Drive for the migrant families at the Quincy Welcome Center. We collected new blankets for migrant families being served by Bay State Community Services. Thanks to everyone who contributed a blanket to spread warmth and love to these families.

Old Ship again participated in the UU the Vote program. This is primarily a program to get out the vote. We generated a total of 2,330 postcards to get out the vote. Additionally, some Old Shippers participated in phone and text banks. Ellie Handleman coordinated our work in this program. This work continues to support the democratic process—one of the important to the values of our faith.

Instead of a more traditional summer service, the SJC showed the documentary film, *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code*. "In the summer of 1995, Chicago experienced an unthinkable disaster, when extremely high humidity and a layer of heat-retaining pollution drove the heat index up to more than 126 degrees. *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code* tells the story of this tragic heatwave, the most traumatic in U.S. history, in which 739 citizens died over the course of just a single week, most of them poor, elderly, and African American." We had a good turnout for this film and plan to do something like this again this coming summer.

This year, we have done less on the issue of climate justice—that issue was the focus of much of our work last year during the fall (2023). However, we are excited that there are members of the congregation who are interested in reestablishing the Green Sanctuary Program at Old Ship. We look forward to their leading the congregation in this area. We welcomed their invitation to Laura Burns to provide a guest sermon and follow up presentation in February which offered inspiration and practical information on how we each can take action to reduce our carbon emissions. We have, however, with the assistance of Ron Pollara, continued to monitor and support the specific green building design requirements for the 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 "green and sustainable" and work 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 of 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 by providing the meals for the shelter. 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. 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 continue to collect food as part of our Sunday morning services and this year, we bring forward the food collected during the offering. We also supported the Hingham Food Pantry through one of our special plate collections. This year, we also designated a "birthday cake" kit drive and provided the ingredients, candles, and disposable pan for making a birthday cake. The food pantry told us these kits were well received. Finally, we participated in a special holiday breakfast collection, and donated several boxes of pancake mix, bottles of pancake syrup, and hot cocoa mix. 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](mailto: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, through Janice McPhillips, organized the 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! Many Old Shippers were involved in this event, shopping, cooking, serving, and cleaning up after dinner. Thank you all for bringing some holiday joy to the families served by the SSFH. We hope to provide the meal for this event again this coming December.

We again participated in SSFH's holiday gift program. We provided gifts to 9 families consisting of 30 men, women, and children. These families were either currently living in shelters or had just moved into more permanent housing. Altogether, we purchased almost 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! The SJC gives special thanks to Carol Valentine who checked in the gifts as they arrived at 14 Main, to Nina Wellford who helped Davalene Cooper pack the gifts into bags, and to Kate Philbin, Laura Harbottle, and Rev. Carie who helped load the cars, to Kate and Laura who delivered the gifts, and to Louise Smith and Lisa Sawyer who were back-up drivers, if needed. It really does take a village to successfully make this program happen!

- **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. Davalene Cooper assisted in creating new text for the new 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 outreach offerings. 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. Listed below is the list of recipients for this church year, with the amounts donated as available. In addition, our Christmas Eve Offering was equally split between UUSC, Father Bill's and the UU Urban Ministry. Each organization received \$649.00. 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!

Month	Recipient	Amount Collected, if known at the time of this report
October 2024	Hingham Food Pantry	\$1616.90
November 2024	Friends of the Homeless of the South Shore Holiday Dinner	Total donation was \$1220.37. After reimbursing the expenses for the Holiday Dinner for the families living in FHSS shelters, we sent them a check for \$784.93.
December 2024	UUSC Guest at Your Table Program	\$5647.10
January 2025	UU Urban Ministry—Renewal House	\$1349.60
February 2025	Heet, Inc.	\$702.33

March 2024	UU Mass Action	\$1162.38
April 2025	Palestine Children's Relief Fund	To be determined
May 2025	UU Urban Ministry—Roxbury Youth Program	To be determined