

Social Justice Council Annual Report 2025-2026

Social Justice Council Members: Nancy Bettinger, Brenda Black, Bob Caravana, Davalene Cooper (Chair), Ellie Handleman, Laura Harbottle, David Murphy, Kate Philbin, Karen Plaskon, and Patti Smith.

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. In the past year, we also have added some programs and projects related to protecting democracy. As part of the work related to democracy, we are planning to again participate in UU the Vote, especially as it related to getting out the vote during the midterm congressional elections. We expect to begin this work sometime later this spring or early in the summer. Stay tuned and read the updates that will be in the newsletters!

As we have stated each year in our annual report, we 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. This also includes suggestions for our monthly outreach offering for the months of October through May. In general, our monthly outreach offerings go to organizations that are non-profit organizations under the U.S. tax code. We also try to support organizations where our support is particularly meaningful in terms of our donations. For example, we do not generally support large nonprofit organizations that have millions of dollars available to them and many supporters. Instead, we prefer to support organizations where our donations are especially needed and effective for the organization's programs.

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

This past year, we continued our work exploring Old Ship's historical relationship to the enslavement of people among members of our congregation, including our ministers. This work began last year with the release of our report on Slavery at Old Ship. 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 this work, we drafted a Historical and Land Acknowledgement to recognize this aspect of our history. The Board of Trustees discussed this

proposed statement with the Council and ultimately adopted a revised version of it. This statement was introduced to the congregation at its March 22 worship service. Here is the text of the statement, which will be read at all public events in the Meeting House.

First Parish in Hingham (Old Ship) Historical and Land Acknowledgement

As a people committed to justice, equity, and interdependence, we pause each week to remember our history. This land was once occupied by the Indigenous people whose descendants still live throughout the region and are now known as the Massachusett Tribe at Ponkapoag. We acknowledge that our church continues to benefit from past injustices, including slavery. We remember that history, and imagine the world that is possible, and will become, as we act in solidarity with Indigenous People, Black People, and Other People of Color for our human liberation.

We hope this statement is the beginning of a more robust effort to understand our history and act in solidarity with the groups specified in the last sentence. We see this as a call to continue to act for justice and work to create the beloved community.

In other anti-racism work, in October, we sponsored a program with Melanie Morrison, a racial justice education and UCC minister, in discussing her most recent book, *Becoming Trustworthy White Allies*. We had a good discussion and appreciated Melanie's willingness to be with us on Zoom.

In other work around anti-racism and the dismantling of white supremacy culture, 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. Patti Smith is leading this effort and contact her if you are interested in finding out more about the reading group.

Last year, we presented information about a project entitled, The 30 Day Anti-Racist Table. We had a group that tested the program before we launched it more generally (Brenda Black, Laura Harbottle, Ellie Handleman, and Patti Smith). Two groups began the program in the spring. One group consisted of Nancy Bettinger, Davalene Cooper, David Murphy, and Sharon Prehn. The second group consisted of Chris Johnson, Karen Plaskon, and Nina Wellford. Before these two groups finished the program, the website became inactive and unavailable. However, we recently discovered the website is again activated and has moved to the Mighty software platform. Anyone who wishes to form a group

of 3 of 4 to engage in this program can find the information at [Help create an AntiRacist America- The AntiRacist Table](#).

In terms of climate justice, we have supported the activities of the reactivated Green Sanctuary group, led by Louise Smith. This year, they have focused on the relationship between climate justice and how we eat and consume food. We supported their forum on this issue in February. We also supported and assisted Ron Pollara's HVAC grant proposal as a greening project for our buildings. For more details of the work of Green Sanctuary, please see their report in this Annual Report book.

Old Ship is a supporting congregation of the UU Urban Ministry in Boston. 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) 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 outreach offering supported UUUM's domestic shelter, Renewal House. Vinnie Myles, Director of Development and Communication for the Urban Ministry, visited with us in January as part of our outreach offering.

This year, we have strengthened our relationship with UU Mass Action. Ellie Handleman is our contact with UU Mass Action, and she has been joined by Nancy Bettinger in this work. They have organized Old Ship members to be a part of the UU Mass Action Advocacy Day which is scheduled to take place on April 16, 2026. We look forward to continuing to strengthen this relationship.

In April, we plan to offer two forums. On April 19, we have arranged for a speaker from Compassionate Choices to discuss the End-of-Life Options Bill in Massachusetts. We look forward to learning how we can effectively advocate for this legislation. The following week, on April 26, we will have a speaker from the North American Indian Center of Boston (NAICOB) available after church to speak in the parlor. As the oldest urban Indian center in Massachusetts, the mission of NAICOB is to empower the Native American community with the goal of improving the quality of life of Indigenous peoples. We have done the initial planning for additional forums, which we plan to schedule next year.

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 the members of each team. **Team 2:** Sharon Prehn (team leader) Nina Wellford, Chris Johnson, Ellen Curtin, Susan Weisenbeck, Judy Sneath, Mary Markel & David Murphy. **Team 3:** Peggy Weymouth (team leader), Ronnie Scott, Julie Kembel, Avis Goldstein, Stephanie Connolly, Kathi Lesko, Pam King. **Team 4:** Dave Petrie (team leader), Mid Walsh, Brenda Black & Ron Pollara, Jean Railton, Stewart Lewack, Diane and Rich Elliott, Liz Maillet, Diane and Bill Walcott. **Team 5:** Janice McPhillips (team leader), Janet Blampied, Susan Read-Brown, Roseanne Bush, Laura Harbottle, Kathie Mignacca, Caryn Schneider, Gail Moran Slater, Jill Temme. **Team 6:** Lisa Sawyer and Pia Young (Co-leaders), Fan Leonard, Davalene Cooper, Jack Gomez, Susannah Thomas, Catherine Mayes, Kathryn White, Margo Mitchell, Elaine Cusker, Glenda Tabaczynski. This year, cooking **Team 1** retired and we were able to replace it with a new team. We are grateful to our retiring team (Charlotte Champagne (team leader), Mary Petrino, Bob Casey, Kathy Lynch, Kevin Mulvey & Bruce Mauer) and to our new team! And we welcome our new Team 1 members: Janet Asnes (team leader), Brenda Black, Terrence and Jenny Case, Rowen Case and Luna Blake, Liz Flint, Dana Kintigh, Meg Gibbons, Carie Johnsen, Gail Nathanson, and Louise Smith. Thanks to everyone who helps with this effort! **Provide lunches for 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 will also support the Hingham Food Pantry through our outreach offering in May. Thanks to Kate Philbin 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.
We encourage members and friends to Join the UUSC's Resistance Network: Building Power to Defend Human Rights and Democracy. This is a rapid response network that mobilizes people of faith and conscience to defend freedoms and protect communities facing injustice. Whether resisting civil society crackdowns, defending trans and non-binary communities, supporting people in migration, or countering climate regression, the network acts with urgency and solidarity. Click here to join the network: [Join UUSC's Resistance Network – UUSC](#).
- **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. Thanks to Davalene Cooper's coordination, 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 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/Share the Plate Offerings:** As was true last year, the congregation has been especially generous in supporting our

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. 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 2025	Weetumuw School in Mashpee	\$1183.81
November 2025	Friends of the Homeless of the South Shore Holiday Dinner	After reimbursing the expenses for the Holiday Dinner for the families living in FHSS shelters, we sent them a check for \$426.76.
December 2025	UUSC Guest at Your Table Program	\$6180.59
January 2026	UU Urban Ministry—Renewal House	\$1,245.48
February 2026	Neighbors Helping Neighbors in Minneapolis	\$507.41
March 2026	LUCE Immigrant Justice Network of Massachusetts	To be determined
April 2026	North American Indian Center of Boston (NAICOB)	To be determined
May 2026	Hingham Food Pantry	To be determined