



BENDING TOWARD JUSTICE

"The moral arc of the universe is long,
but it bends toward justice."
Theodore Parker

ST. LAWRENCE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST DISTRICT SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM 2008 -2009

FAITH WORKS: A UU PERSPECTIVE

In the words of the early 19th century theologian Hosea Ballou: "There is one inevitable criterion of judgment touching religious faith in doctrinal matters, can you reduce it to practice? If not, have none of it."

Spirituality and action for justice are a seamless garment. Action flows organically from a spirituality of thanksgiving for being. It is a natural consequence of who we are and the nature of our religious convictions. Faith and action are part of the same motion.

While a non-creedal faith, we are united in the belief that we create life meanings in the very struggle for justice in the community. "...the road to holiness necessarily passes through the road of action." (Dag Hammarskjold) The holy for us emerges from engagement in the search for Beloved Community.

Ultimately we are joined by a mystical oneness that has informed all the prophets of humanity - an interdependent web of being in which "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself because thy neighbor is thyself." (David Rhys Williams)

How Faith Works in the St. Lawrence District

The **Social Justice Council (SJC)** of the St. Lawrence Unitarian Universalist District (SLUUD) was authorized by the 2005 District Assembly to support the work of justice-making within and among Unitarian Universalist congregations in the district. Its mission is to make the collective voice of Unitarian Universalists heard in the world.

The purposes of SJC are

- * **to connect** our congregations and their representatives. Websites and list serves will be created to share information, events and actions. Issue-oriented groups will be facilitated.
- * **to serve** our congregations and their representatives by providing them with information and education. This will be done through an annual social justice conference, denominational training events and worship services.
- * **to grow** our congregations both spiritually and socially to insure our collective voice is heard more loudly and clearly on issues of importance.

SJC is composed of seven members and a part-time **Social Justice Coordinator** to facilitate the work of the districts and the congregations. The Council provides consultative services,

posts to the SLUUD website, sponsors an **electronic newsletter, *Agenda for Change*** for over 350 UU's across New York State and beyond. The monthly newsletter connects UU's to social justice issues and resources at state and national levels. SJC sponsors an annual social justice conference, **Politics and Liberal Religious Values: Campaign 2008**, which will be held October 4, 2008, at the First Unitarian Society of Schenectady with NY Public Interest Group activist Blair Horner as guest speaker. (See the flyer on the SLD Website)

SJC works closely with **Interfaith Impact of New York State (IINYS)**, a progressive coalition of Protestants, Reform Jews, Unitarian Universalists and other who share our vision of progressive religion in the public square. SLUUD is a member of IINYS. SJC will also work with other UU social justice programs, including the Unitarian Universalist Association, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) and other affiliated groups.

Specifically, it is the goal of the SJC to create a **Social Justice Network (SJM)** among the district congregations. SJC will coordinate communications among congregations and individuals. It is hoped that there will be a social justice program in every congregation in the district. SJC stands ready to consult with individual congregations and clusters to hone organizational skills.

There is a renewed focus on advocacy in the district. The District Executive will be empowered to speak on behalf of the St. Lawrence District. While many of our congregations have programs in social service and education, it is hoped that there will be increased emphasis on social witness, advocacy and community organizing. The foci of social justice work will be at the local, state and national levels.

Contact: Richard S. Gilbert, Social Justice Coordinator, Rsgilbert@uuma.org; 585-244-7403
Social Justice Council
c/o 70 Harper Street - Rochester, NY 14607

Connections:

St. Lawrence District Website: www.sld.uua.org
UUA website: www.uua.org
UUA Advocacy and Witness: www.org./justice
UUSC: www.uusc.org
Tom Chulak, District Executive: tchulak@uua.org

How Can I Help?

SLUUD Social Justice Program

I would like to:

- ___ 1. Receive the *Agenda for Change* newsletter.
- ___ 2. Help set-up a local social justice training event
- ___ 3. Help establish a social justice group in my congregation
- ___ 4. Other (please specify)

Name (Please print)

Address:

Street _____

Zip Code _____

Phone _____

E-Mail _____

Congregation
