

# *UUSJ Newsletter – Winter 2019*

## *Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice*

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### ***Chair's Corner:***

Hi! Allan Lindrup writing. During 2019 I will be serving as the Chair of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice. It is my second round as Chair. For those who don't know me too well, I was one of the founders of UUSJ back in 1990, and have served on its Board of Trustees in various capacities, most often as Treasurer, during each of the years since then. Chicago area Social Justice Activists had been acting as the Chicago Area Chapter of the UU Service Committee (UUSC) during the late 1980s and early 1990s. When several of us wanted to organize a Chicago Walk for the Homeless the UUSC said they didn't want the legal risk, so we would need to set up a separate non-profit to do that. Consequently, UUSJ was born, incorporating in 1990 and securing Sec. 501(c)(3) status under the IRS code in 1991. For a couple years UUSJ and the Chicago Area Chapter of UUSC had interlocking Boards. Then, in 1992 or 1993, UUSC decided to close down all their chapters around the country, saying that they were too independent. UUSJ continued, to facilitate Chicago Area UUs to work together for social justice and to

### **UUSJ Winter Quarterly Meeting**

The UUSJ Winter Board Meeting will take place at First Unitarian Church of Chicago, 5650 S. Woodlawn, Saturday, March 2, from 10 AM to Noon. There will be no program.

promote UU social justice values in the public arena.

Over the past 12 months UUSJ has gained one new task force, the Interfaith Criminal Justice Task Force, and lost one, the UU Multiracial Unity Action Caucus, which departed in October to become an independent organization. As we move into the New Year, I want to say thanks for our departing Board members service. Mike Wolf served UUSJ for three years as he went through the three year Chair cycle (Chair-Elect/ Chair/ and then Immediate Past Chair), while Eileen Klees served as UUSJ's Treasurer in 2018. Both of them were from Beverly Unitarian Church. We welcome two new members of our Board, Karla Chew, of Third Unitarian Church, who rejoins the Board to serve for a second time as Treasurer, and

Shawn Dream, of Unity Temple UU, who is our new Board Secretary. Another fairly new Board member is Linda Groetzinger, of Second Unitarian Church, who took over as Chair of the Peace Task a couple months before the 2018 Annual Meeting. Our new Chair-Elect is Andrew Fisher of the Unitarian Church of Evanston, who also serves as our Communications Director, and also Chairs the UUSJ Environmental Task Force.

UUSJ always remains open to new task forces. Chicago area UUs who want to initiate a new task force, with a social justice focus different than that of our existing task forces, need to do outreach and gather a minimum of five activists, from at least three Chicago area U.U. congregations. Once you have met, set your mission and identified some ways in which you will work to advance it, and selected a Chair or Co-Chairs to lead the new task force, you can contact me or others on the UUSJ Board to get on the agenda for our next quarterly Board meeting, where a motion to recognize the new task force can be considered. Once a new task force is recognized it will receive a budget allocation from UUSJ.

2019 should prove to be a good year for progressive legislation in Illinois, as we have both a more progressive General Assembly and also a more progressive new Governor. At the federal level we can expect the newly elected House to achieve some things through negotiations with the more conservative Senate and President. In other areas progressive ideas will be considered in the House to get

the ideas before the American public, with the hope of passing them through both chambers in the following Congress that starts in 2021, when there may well be a Democratic Senate majority as well as a new Democratic President.

The UUSJ Board will hold its Winter Quarterly Meeting on Saturday, March 2, between 10 a.m. and Noon, at the First Unitarian Church of Chicago. If you have something related to UUSJ or Chicago area UUs working together for social justice, feel free to get in touch with me.

Allan Lindrup, Chair  
[uusj@sbcglobal.net](mailto:uusj@sbcglobal.net) or 773-595-4921

## **UUSJ Economic Justice and Homelessness Task Force Report**

In the fall of 2018 this task force had two Action Alerts. One was in support of Illinois Senate Bill 2411, the "License to Work" legislation, which would have ended the practice of suspending drivers' licenses for non-driving financial obligations. This practice is particularly burdensome for low income individuals, who often lose employment as a consequence, and thus their ability to provide for themselves and their families. This legislation had passed the state Senate. We hoped it would be voted on in the House in the veto or lame duck sessions, but that did not happen, so the bill died at the end of

the last General Assembly and will need to return to square one in the new General Assembly. The second urged the submission of comments to the Department of Homeland Security in response to its proposed regulations that would have made refugees, asylum seekers, and other immigrants ineligible for eventual citizenship if they were assessed as having used public benefits or even have been likely to do so based on their income level (which was labeled the "public burden" test). At our January 19th task force meeting we agreed that our first Action Alert of 2019 would be to encourage the Illinois General Assembly to increase the state's minimum wage to \$15 and to do so over a period of no more than 24 to 30 months after enactment.

Our most recent Home and Hope Booster grant, in the amount of \$525, was sent to Beds Plus at Pilgrim Faith UCC in Oak Lawn, an emergency over-night shelter for families that operates from October to April. It was nominated by the Social Justice Committee at Beverly Unitarian Church. That congregation assists this shelter with roughly 100 volunteer hours per year, along with the proceeds of special collections each September and October. The task force set the deadline for nominations for the next Home and Hope Booster grant as March 31.

In 2018 this task force was a strong supporter of the Poor People's Campaign. We do not anticipate that campaign will be as active in Illinois in 2019, as we anticipate that many of the goals of the campaign

will be able to get passed by the General Assembly and signed into law without the need for non-violent civil disobedience.

This task force has long been a member of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, and at our recent task force meeting we voted to renew that membership for another year. We set our next task force meeting for Saturday, April 13, between 12:30 and 2 p.m. We hope to hold that meeting at Third Unitarian Church, but that site has not yet been finalized. If you would like to attend the meeting, please contact the task force Chair to get the meeting notice and proposed agenda.

Allan Lindrup, task force Chair  
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## **UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report**

### **Congregational Reports:**

(1) First Unitarian Church of Chicago  
First, they had a movie on the third Friday of November, with 8 attending, "Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse", how the advertising industry is encouraging over consumption. Second, The Board approved an extensive new recycling plan, including a recycling center in Hull Chapel. Third, the \$5,000 they have for a proper commercial dishwasher will finally be used to install one this spring along with other capital campaign items for the church.

(2) Beverly Unitarian Church  
Fran Sowa attended a program sponsored by the Beverly Area Planning

Association (BAPA) which informed residents about government and industry sponsored programs designed to help them reduce their energy costs and environmental impact. Green Sanctuary Group will invite the Association to share this information at a BUC mini-forum following the Earth Day Service in April. Secondly, Beverly Unitarian's Capital Campaign has raised sufficient funds to secure the Church building's turrets. If the campaign obtains sufficient grants to complete other needed work, Green Sanctuary will propose that a renewable energy source be incorporated in the plans.

(3) Evanston The green team has a goal of zero waste by composting biodegradable cups, etc. and a composting bin outside for members and friends, as well as recycling. The two rain gardens are doing well.

(4) UU Society of Geneva – Bill Koehl reported that things were basically the same. They had a Friday film “The Reluctant Radical” which he highly recommends.

Since the Fall UUSJ Newsletter, the Environmental task force has issued **one action alert**: on January 18 to the Chicago aldermen to support the Ordinance, sponsored by Ald. Gilbert Villegas, which is proposing a 1-percent tax on real estate sales of \$750,000 and up to pay for the estimated \$2 billion it would cost to replace all residential feeder lines containing lead.

**Educational inserts:** The ones by Allan Lindrup on solar energy and the one by Andrew Fisher on Beyond LEED – The Living Building Concept have been distributed.

**Next meeting:** Will start at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 23rd at Bee Zee, 242 S. Wabash, Chicago  
With any questions, contact:  
Andrew T. Fisher – Chair  
847-492-1832 or  
[fishorgn1580@gmail.com](mailto:fishorgn1580@gmail.com)

## UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

Meeting at Second Unitarian Church on Saturday, January 19, 2019, we began the process of selecting the focus for the New Year, perhaps longer. With Linda Groetzinger, Gene Horcher, Evan Freund, and Jane Bannor in attendance, we agreed that working to increase efforts of our congregations towards peace on a national and international scale has to be understood in the context of working for social justice. Justice at every level is a prerequisite for peace.

According to Defense One, as of March 2018, the US is involved in wars in seven countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Niger, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. On December 13, 2018, the U.S. Senate voted 56-41 to end US support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen. It was a long over-due bipartisan reminder that the Congress controls the war-making powers. The hope is that in 2019, the House will join the Senate and the US role in supplying and assisting Saudi Arabia in the devastation of Yemen can end.

The Peace Task Force agreed that our role is to seek to engage more UUs through our congregations, in various ways, towards the goal of reducing the war-making of the US, to reduce the US military budget which currently officially accounts for more than half of the national budget, to support nuclear disarmament and arms control, and to strengthen US support for international organizations such as the UN, its conventions on the Law of the Sea, the Rights of Children, Women, and People with Disabilities, and the World Court. World community building can build for peace, and international cooperation is under grave threat.

We noted that “The Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office

promotes the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all, as reflected in the United Nations Charter. Through targeted education, advocacy, and outreach, we engage Unitarian Universalists in support of international cooperation and the work of the UN.”  
<https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un>.

Every year, the Peace Task Force participates in the International Day of Peace demonstrations/ festivities in September, and the Tax Day Demonstration on the military budget's use of our income taxes in April. We need to prepare for these.

The Peace Task Force is responsible for the program for the Spring Quarter meeting of UUSJ. We look forward to this opportunity. Linda is tasked with gathering information and sharing it with the task force email list in anticipation of our next meeting:

BY CONFERENCE CALL ONLY on Wednesday, February 20th, from 11:00 to 1:00.

For questions, please contact Linda Groetzinger at [Lgroetzinger@yahoo.com](mailto:Lgroetzinger@yahoo.com), or 773-484-0883. (Leave your name and a message.)

## **Interfaith Criminal Justice Task Force Report**

The task force met during the snow storm on January 19th at Second Unitarian Church for the first time since October. Evan Freund was elected Chair for 2019. A spirited discussion on a number of topics ensued. Nine members from five congregations were present.

In discussing the prospects for drug law reform,

- We unanimously agreed that any abatement of drug crime penalties should apply retroactively to people currently in prison, and that retroactive clemency and expungement should be awarded as part of any drug law relaxation.

- We agreed that felony review of drug crimes should be instituted by the States' Attorney Kim Foxx's office, and that budget be provided for this.

People's Lobby is in favor of this reform.

- Access to rehabilitation and treatment plans should be included in any drug reform laws.

In discussing reform of the Chicago Police Department,

- We were encouraged that the Consent Decree for Chicago Police Reform will be approved soon.

- We support the proposals before the City Council for a civilian review board with policy oversight and encourage alderpeople to vote in favor of the GAPA proposal endorsed previously, or CPAC.

- The Annual MLK day forum of Community Renewal Society featured mayoral candidates with an opportunity to express support for GAPA.

In discussing reforms of the Illinois Department of Corrections, the group

- Noted that two additional consent decrees in Lippert v Baldwin and Rasha v Baldwin have been entered. The former requires the delivery of adequate general medical care and the latter the availability of mental health care to Illinois prison inmates. Rasha has been in place for several years, and the official court monitor has just ordered IDOC to hire additional psychiatrists. Both decrees will create cost pressure for reducing prison populations, which will become increasingly expensive to care for as the number of aged prisoners increases. The impetus for cost containment was

created in California by similar decrees, which has resulted in widespread sentencing reform, partly accomplished through referenda.

- The greater costs of delivering adequate medical care to incarcerated individuals will increase pressure on the legislature to introduce sentencing reform, some previously recommended by Governor Rauner's bipartisan commission on sentencing and justice reform but never acted upon by the legislature.
- Discussed the possibility that volunteers could be recruited to help the John Howard Association respond to inquiries and complaints from prisoners in Illinois Prisons. The John Howard Association is legislatively mandated in Illinois to enjoy protected communications with prisoners and the responsibility to survey conditions in Illinois prisons.

- We discussed the Fair Housing Initiative and how people can support it by contacting their County Board members.

- As regards community mental health facilities, we are concerned about the unavailability of community services to marginalized and at-risk groups who frequently vulnerable to law enforcement actions.

- We encourage members to invite interested individuals from congregations throughout the metro Chicago region to join the ICJ Task Force. We plan to meet monthly on the third Saturday of each month. Our next meeting will be on Saturday, February 16th at 1:00 at St Chrysostom's Episcopal Church on North Dearborn St in Chicago.

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