

SFUU Social Justice Conversation

August 30, 2021 - 6-7:15 pm

Instead of our regular monthly Social Justice Committee meeting, we invited members of the congregation to meet via zoom to share the social issues that speak to them. An ad was placed in multiple eBeacons, and members of the SJ committee personally contacted congregants that have shown an interest in social justice issues in the past.

Members present: Carol Koons, Barb Munn, Loretta Saenz, Millee Livingston, Mary Lou Bailey; Rev Alex.

Participants from the Congregation:

Stevie Rea, Fred Waters, Ken Lake, Brian Jansen, Marsha von Dessoneck, Kelly Chandler, Linda Snyder, Meg Dorsey

Chalice Lighting and Opening Words

Commitment - *Dorothy Day*

People say, what is the sense of our small effort.

They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time.

A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that.

No one has the right to sit down and feel hopeless.

There's too much work to be done.

Quick Check-in Go Around: What's On Our Hearts about Social Justice?

- Climate Action and the Environmental Social Justice that goes along with that
- Voter equality and getting the right information out to people
- Climate Justice - terrified about what is happening on our planet
- Voter registration, voter suppression, the environment
- Worried about the people in New Orleans who have lost their homes and the Afghans who are in need now
- Inequality and voter access underlies the climate issues, if people can't vote they won't be able to participate in the votes that will allow us to change our climate
- Rise of fascism and the fear that creates and how that relates to all these other issues. AND, the need to be able to build bridges to people who think differently than I do
- Global warming, here in the foothills we see the effects directly. AND what can I do that can make a difference?
- To try to help those who can't, and that encompasses a wide variety of actions.
- Many in the younger generation are concerned about the whole world! Social justice, gun control, the climate - it's overwhelming
- Climate Change and the effects of forest fires here in CA

Words from Rev Alex

All social Justice work can be overwhelming - so it helps to scale the work down to match our abilities - what we can actually do to make a difference?

- How might we be called to do just what we may be able to do?
- What are the organizations that are already doing the work that we are called to do?
 - Collective efforts are powerful and normally are what it takes to get something done.
 - This will help to make the work that we want to do seem to be more feasible.

All social justice really is intertwined and interconnected.

Also, the work of justice is *internal* work, it needs to start with our own choices. Whatever help we are offering others we are also offering to ourselves.

Alex has been doing some research talking to religious leaders in our area to see what they are doing in the realm of social justice. Here is what they have heard:

- Food Insecurity is a big problem
 - Auburn Interfaith Food Closet helps with that
- LBGTQ issues
 - WINDyouth.org - operate out of Sacramento - offer shelter, warm meals, and many other services to homeless youth (many of which end up in Sacramento)
 - PFLAG has a strong chapter here
- Racism
 - Black Lives Matter group in Sacramento is doing good work.

Rev Alex's previous work in Social Justice:

- When in the Bay area worked on Immigration Rights and Hotel Workers rights
- After moving to Connecticut (went to seminary, got ordained), Alex's justice worked centered around equal rights LBGTQYA inclusion in society at large (marriage equality campaigns, equal rights campaigns) - the change in the Supreme Court threatens this
- Food Insecurity has been a big focus for me in the last few years. Worked in Nicaragua and Mozambique to address food insecurity and work on community-building

Alex's Question for Us:

What is it that you feel called to do? How much of this work needs to be done immediately, how much involves planning ahead for?

Ideas from participants:

- It might be time to check in with our congregation to ask “what are your passions in terms of social justice?” Let’s make sure that we are doing the work of the congregation.
- Whatever social justice work that we do, it needs to be sustainable. And to be sustainable, it needs to be done from our hearts, from a sense of passion and a calling. This work won't happen if our congregation doesn't get involved.
- Right now, we have talked about some bandaid things - like working on the recall - this is more like fighting a brush fire - it is not a pig picture thing. But there are other bigger issues that you want to pay attention to.
 - Alex's response: Yes, this describes crisis response as opposed to proactive justice-building.
- Climate Justice is very important to our group, BUT there are other kinds of social justice.
- PPOFT (Placer People of Faith) sponsors many different social justice programs
- The Gathering Inn now has a trailer with a full kitchen - as a congregation we could help prepare meals once a month for the homeless (Meg has a connection with this through her work) - doing this kind of work together strengthens our community and our connections to with each other. This kind of work is direct action and meaningful.
 - Alex's response: Perhaps we could create a “social service opportunity list” - this could be a good entry place for new members of the congregation to find their space in the congregation.
- The list needs to be conscious of safety and health of our congregants
- Possibilities to put on this list include:
 - Gathering Inn
 - Food Closet
 - Acres of Hope
 - Placer County Dept of Social Services?
 - could provide a list of people that need something
- Reach out to the congregation with some kind of survey or questionnaire to determine what their concerns are, what would they like their social justice committee to focus on. Also ask what they are engaged in right now and what organizations are they involved with that could be included in a social justice service opportunity list?” We need people to help lead the various focus issues - interest in actually leading should be part of the survey.

- How can those involved in various social justice projects avoid burn out?

An Opportunity Coming Up (idea brought by Rev Alex)

There is an opportunity for us to address food insecurity at the end of the month if you are interested in bringing it to the congregation:

- September 26, 2 pm
- Organized by folks from the Lutheran and Episcopal Churches in Auburn
- They will be preparing meal packages for [Rise Against Hunger](#) and we are invited to join them to help do the work - just need to show up and help package. We could also contribute financially - that would be welcome but not necessary. (The cost is \$3000, which is being split by the Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church)