

Faithful Action Leadership Council Meeting | First Universalist | June 6, 2016

Welcome: Justin welcomed everyone to the group. Several new prospects joined the meeting, who have been asked to become a member of the Council for the 2016-2017 year. People introduced themselves by talking about what justice issue(s) move them. Joan shared that the agenda would focus on looking back at the first year of the Council. Initial activities included putting Faithful Action guidelines with a Racial Justice Lens into practice and kicking off working groups on partnerships, communications, and advocacy. The Council hasn't launched all workstreams in the pipeline, but it was still a successful first year of a new approach to Faithful Action at First Universalist. The Council will pause over the summer and begin again in late August. She asked people to indicate areas that are of interest, including partnerships, advocacy, spiritual reflection, communications, process/systems/celebration, and outreach (to congregants).

Partnerships: This discussion was led by Marjorie, lead for the working group. Cindy launched the conversation by sharing a card from the students at AFA and highlighted that even one volunteer opportunity can make a difference.

Marjorie reviewed the partnership working group actions including the partnership application and approval process during the winter months.

- All partners that applied were selected for the coming year, beginning July 1, 2016, including Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, Beacon Interfaith, Simpson Housing Services, Project for Pride in Living, Minnesota Interfaith Power and Faith, EMERGE, and Augsburg Fairview Academy (AFA).
- Some partners received a one-year and others a two-year commitment from the church, depending on the level of maturity and success of the program with our congregation.

Turning toward the future, each community partner will receive two offering plates during the year; on that Sunday, they will be share a few words about their organization to begin the worship service and have several opportunities to shine a spotlight on the organization, including the Liberal, in the social hall, and an insert in the Sunday Order of Service.

Several other Partnership activities were discussed:

- Marjorie also mentioned the importance and desire for spiritual reflection opportunities for the volunteers.
- Each of the partner team leads (congregants who are the primary liaison to the community partner) are required to go through the racial justice training provided at First Universalist so there is a shared language.
- The Holiday Giving offering will go to one of the community partners in the future, with the process still to be determined by next year's Council.
- We are also discussing how to include the team leads in the council.

- There are still a lot of congregants who don't understand what's going on with the partnerships.
- Next year, we plan to celebrate the volunteers, partners, and Council actions. In the next year, we will also begin discussing how to support them.

Karen asked about what it means to be a partner; Joy asked that access to the application be transparent and accessible. Joan shared that the partnership working group created the application and made it visible last winter to all congregants. Cindy discussed the efforts to organize the resources in the group. Karen also asked about what it would mean to, for example, hear the voices of the people the organizations are serving to inform the work especially advocacy. Matt mentioned that the two-way street question was discussed during the development of the application. Joan said that the team leads were interested in learning how to use technology to recruit volunteers and that there is a separate working group addressing this need.

Spiritual Reflection: Justin would like to partner with others on this. The basic Praxis model includes Prepare, Act, and Reflect, and developing questions that will help us grow as individuals and as a community. Justin shared an example. The Council working group on Spiritual Reflection will create a toolkit for team leads to use with volunteers. He would like to pilot something in the next year. Marjorie added that it will be important to make sure volunteers who are doing the work as individuals (instead in a group) connect with others who are doing similar work, such as preparing tax returns or conducting mock interviews at EMERGE.

Communications: Taylor gave an update on communications. It was suggested that posting the communications guidelines for team leads on the web site would be very helpful. Joan mentioned the importance of telling our Faithful Action story as a way to inspire and engage congregants. She also mentioned that she's been talking to other congregations about how they do this work. Alan asked how can someone in the congregation share an idea they have and determine how to fit it into faithful action work. Cindy shared that there's a tension – a balance between wanting a focus and having scattered activities. Matt mentioned the Faithful Action Fair in October was intended to help the partners recruit volunteers. Joan discussed that we want to be inclusive of ground-up suggestions but not lose focus in the context of many smaller activities. Joan gave the example of 15 Now (the campaign to place the \$15 minimum wage on the November ballot in Minneapolis) - how the request came to Justin, was tied to racial justice efforts and the desire of congregants to do something, and ultimately connected to our faithful action advocacy work.

Advocacy: Joan reviewed the work of the advocacy workgroup since January (the last meeting was scheduled for later in the week). Our focus has been to work with community partners engaged in advocacy -- Twin Cities Habitat and Beacon Interfaith (both part of the Homes for All statewide Coalition) and the Environmental team. A graduate intern from the Humphrey School helped us integrate advocacy more into our reflection/praxis work, and addressed the

importance of one-to-one relationship building for all advocacy work. More congregants are interested in direct service and are less inclined to do advocacy work (typically 10% are interested in advocacy). Joan mentioned that we will focus our work to make sure individuals have opportunities to be involved, but that we need to do a better job educating them about the need for advocacy. Joan shared the Baby in the River metaphor (from MUUSJA) and showed two maps -- all First Universalist members by zip code and First Universalist members who signed a housing advocacy post card that was sent to legislators.

Council membership 2016-2017: The council will be expanded next year. Joan passed around an “interest” sign-up sheet. Justin shared that next year the function of the group will look different so there’s more work with the working groups – it’s where the real stuff is happening.

Faithful Action “Fair”: Joan discussed the need to decide if we want to hold a fair next year. Matt and Joan P. organized the fair last year in October as a way to kick-off the work of the Council. Matt said that we can improve the format of the fair based on last year’s experience, and asked for suggestions. The group discussed whether to hold the fair, and if so, which partners should be invited. Karen R. asked how to get people who are interested but not ready to commit could learn more first and then get involved. Karen K. also shared that it might be a good idea to provide structure to the dialogue and work with the partners on this. Deb talked about how great it could be to integrate advocacy into the fair. The group discussed that a table format/set-up is a barrier to conversation. The group decided that it would be more effective to move away from one big fair and instead highlight the partners one at a time in the social hall. Karen K. also made the point to make sure the first partner doesn’t get all the volunteers.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Attending: Current Council members: Justin, Taylor, Joan, Marjorie, Matt, Cindy, Deb, Joy (for Stan)

Prospects/visitors: Karen R, Karen K, June, Alan, Joy, Meg, Stef, Ingrid, Bianca