

End 1: Care for and connect with one another within our shared covenant, even when it is uncomfortable.

Community Events and Learning Opportunities

We held many community-building events for all ages: children and youth coffeehouse, chili and games night, Halloween bash, pageant service and family potluck, and the multigenerational conservation expedition (MCE), Columbus Day, Men's Advance, Women's Weekend Memorial Day at Bergfried, Women's (spring) retreat. Youth had a camp-out at Bergfried and fall lock-in in Kirkwood. The Board's linkage event in November and Transylvania evening in February. Women's Weekend at Todd Hall, Madrigal.

We helped build healthy relationship skills through covenant-building sessions for youth, children and parents. Our middle schoolers have classes in "Making Connections".

We cared for one another when we celebrate milestones, such as memorials, child dedications and bridging.

Covenant Groups

Facilitators, trained and supervised by the Covenant Group Development Team, identified and helped groups sort out issues as they arose, within the covenantal framework. Facilitators also helped us care for members by referring pastoral needs to the Minister of Pastoral Care four times this year. At this time, we have 18 functioning covenant groups with an average membership of 9. That equates to about 162 members, almost 1/3 of our total membership.

Pastoral Care Associates

PCAs offered caring assistance in situations that were extremely uncomfortable for both the PCA and the Eliot member being cared for. This year, for example, PCAs helped people with Parkinsons struggling to talk, making difficult choices about nursing homes, grief and loss and more. PCAs also support one another in this work by "offering one another perspectives, support, suggestions and some cheerleading at least once a month as we walk with our fellow Eliot members." (Karen Gender, PCA co-chair)

Membership

Rev. Jim writes: "Often new members come to Eliot Chapel after having experienced a traumatic and painful separation from a previous faith community.

The team is keenly aware of this reality and offers a sincere and hospitable welcome”. This year, we did this by:

- hosting two wine and cheese gatherings, inviting members of the board, staff and others to meet and network with new people
- meeting with people for the monthly book signing
- four “Intro to Our Faith” classes, co-led with a new(ish) member, Idolina Hernandez

Bergfried Process

Our most direct and challenging opportunity this year to “care for and connect with one another, even when it’s uncomfortable”. In seven sessions, we hosted 178 people in “courageous conversations”. There were challenges: there was some lobbying by members which was difficult to counter. It was also easier for most members to express personal preferences than to think of the church as a whole fulfilling its mission. (However, learning how to think in terms of the whole and in terms of mission are learning goals for us. We can do this in covenant groups and leadership development, for example.) But overall, I found the process was very healthy, productive and respectful.

ourEliot

OurEliot was a weekly presence in coffee hour and available on line for members. Not many take advantage of it, but its presence and staffing offer care for members.

Social Justice

Conversation and action around issues of race will by its nature make people uncomfortable. Some have met this challenge by personally confronting their own biases, and some have expressed a sense of alienation. Our all-read discussions have helped many either embrace this emphasis, or at least work through some of their difficulties with it - and still feel part of the community. Many activities like the Women’s march helped people bond across generations.

End 2 Achieve greater spiritual maturity.

Children, Youth and Families

Scott Stewart writes, “Difficult to pinpoint to specific sessions or events but we’ve certainly observed that active and regular participation in RE activities creates this.” Several Eliot youth attended both General Assembly and leadership school this summer. One mother reported that when her son returned from leadership

school, he was more mature, confident and outspoken in his convictions. “Who is that kid?”

Pastoral Care, Covenant Group and Membership gatherings all create a safe environment for members to process important life events in their spiritual journeys and to the opportunity to learn from them. PCAs also report maturing in their active practice of compassion for people who are lonely, grieving, or struggling. Pastoral care describes their work as “holding space for others as they meet life challenges.”

Bergfried and 222 Processes

See End #1. The congregation as a whole is building spiritual maturity in tempering their own needs and desires to serve the larger group. I definitely witnessed courageous and mature conversation in some of the groups during the Bergfried process.

End 3 Deepen our UU Identity

Our preschool and younger elementary classes focus on introduction to Unitarian Universalism and church community. Elementary classes had a “7 UU Principles” unit. Jr. Highers took field trips to other UU churches and did UU-focused activities in class. Children fourth grade and up attended some services at Eliot with their classes. We stressed attendance at Bread Sunday, Christmas Eve, RE Sunday, Flower Communion and Youth Sunday to learn about our “high holidays.”

Five youth and about a dozen adult members attended General Assembly 2016. Five youth attended leadership school (summer 2016).

Social justice is continually increasing their support for and use of resources from regional, national and international UU organizations (UUA, UUSC, and Mid-America region). For example, “Living the Pledge” (to launch in March) was brought to Eliot by our youth and two members of the SJA steering committee from General Assembly.

In worship, I am adding historic UU figures to help build identity.

Intro to Our Faith gives an overview to newcomers about Unitarian Universalism. Participants reflect and share on how they experience the seven principles in their lives, and how they reflect their personal values. Newcomers learn about living within Eliot’s covenant, the democratic process in our congregation, what we teach

our children in religious education, and the meaning of common symbols like the flaming chalice.

End #4 Nurture Leadership and service in all.

Children, Youth and Families

Eliot's program for youth emphasizes leadership and service opportunities. Youth consistently participate in leading worship, teaching younger children, and social justice actions, as well as leading programs for their own peers. In the past 3-4 years, we have consistently sent youth to general assembly, leadership school and chaplaincy training. Scott Stewart was interviewed in "Blue Boat Home", a UUA youth website, for the number of Eliot youth recognized as Luminary Leaders – 10 as of January 2017. I wept with joy during the youth service, as they told their stories and about the role that Eliot Chapel has played in their lives.

Ten new RE teachers and one new OWL teacher were trained this year.

Adult Leadership Development

An impressive team led by David Cox wrote a white paper outlining leadership development goals and actions for Eliot Chapel. Mike Antoine is currently assembling a leadership development team to develop their recommendations.

Bergfried

The Multigenerational Conservation Expedition (MCE, an event initiated and partly led by youth) last spring involved 80 children, youth and adults doing service at Bergfried. This was a great experience of sharing service across generations, and has cultivated a broader volunteer base for doing service on the property. The Development-Stewardship team has added new members who are taking on responsibilities for events at Bergfried.

Pastoral Care, Covenant Groups and Membership

All three areas have gained new leadership and increased their volunteer pool. The Pastoral Care and the Covenant Group Development teams have held training for their volunteers in listening, facilitation and setting healthy boundaries.

Social Justice

The "Living the Pledge" (LTP) program had 16 participants in their most recent training for facilitating conversations about race. Participants will help lead LTP sessions for the wider congregation and will be better equipped to lead "all-read" groups.

Social Justice is also sponsoring the Rev. Scott Aaseng to lead a workshop February 11 to engage people interested in social justice in connecting their passion to the social justice work at Eliot. We are currently experiencing some leadership burn-out in this area, and this workshop is designed, in part, to help cultivate new leaders and formulate a multi-year plan.

End #5 Create a more just society, further dismantle racism and improve the environment.

Social Justice

Eliot hosted three events organized by members of the wider community:

1. A second Mother 2 Mother event, where black mothers shared their experiences in the school system.
2. A New Year's Day march to protest anti-Muslim and immigrant harassment.
3. A networking and organizing event following the women's march.

We were also asked by the assistant superintendent of Kirkwood schools to host a community-wide conversation on race. **These requests came from the wider community because of our higher profile in social and racial justice.**

In addition to the planned activities, we have been increased our expectation and capacity to respond to national events, including the election of Donald Trump and the threat to UU social justice values from his administration. We held a well-attended vigil the night after the election. Thirty-eight people from Eliot chartered a bus to the Women's March on Washington and were featured on St. Louis Public Radio, and about 80 of us marched in the St. Louis march.

Our work with the Kirkwood Chief of Police has born fruit: the KPD has implemented some of our suggestions in their new body camera policy, as well as comprehensive anti-bias training for officers.

See End #4

See also Appendix: Social Justice Action Plan 2016-2017. All of these plans have active groups working on them, except one: the Olive Chapel partnership has become inactive since the Rev. Anthony McPherson was moved to a congregation in Webster Groves.

APPENDIX

Social Justice Action Plan: 2016-2017 8/17/16

This plan flows from Eliot Chapel's statements of vision, mission and ends:

Vision

Creating a just world through vibrant, beloved community.

Mission

Bound by courageous love, growing in spirit, and inspiring compassionate action.

Ends

The people of Eliot Unitarian Chapel of all ages and all walks of life will:

- Care for and connect with one another within our shared covenant, even when it is uncomfortable;
- Achieve greater spiritual community;
- Deepen our Unitarian Universalist identity;
- Nurture leadership and service in all;
- Create a more just society, further dismantle racism, and improve the environment.

We aim to make a positive difference within, among, and beyond ourselves.

Mission:

The Social Justice Program will inspire and equip individuals and the congregation to work effectively for justice both locally and beyond. We will continue to be challenged by the teachings of Martin Luther King's vision of the beloved community:

"In the beloved community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
"Birth of a New Nation"
1957

Goals:

1. We will promote racial justice, equity and compassion for all, we will work to dismantle systems within institutions and society that marginalize and oppress in our community.
2. We will be responsive to other justice issues, such as LGBTQ and refugee resettlement as additional leadership and resources are available and as urgent matters arise the SJA participants can impact.
3. We will develop a long range, multi-year plan for social justice at Eliot.

Definitions:

Social Justice: Transformational and sustainable change in institutions and society through four methods:

1. Advocacy: Working through legislative processes to impact public policy
2. Education: Educating ourselves and others about issues
3. Service: Providing support for persons and communities in need
4. Witness: Making our convictions public by words and deeds

Guiding Principles:

In order to build a meaningful, effective and sustainable Social Justice Program, we will use these principles as we plan, implement and evaluate our work.

1. Program recognizes that the beloved community is about bringing justice to the world; that justice is how love looks in the world; and that we must be the change, both individually and corporately, we want to see in the world.
2. Program will rely on the seven Unitarian Universalist principles to guide decisions and provide background for positions. UU's support:
 - The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
 - Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
 - Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
 - A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
 - The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
 - The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
 - Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
3. Programs will incorporate time for reflection on activities. Reflection should focus on SJA goals including
 - How does our activity serve the Chapel mission and ends?
 - How does our activity affect the spiritual development of participants?
 - How does our activity impact systems that maintain oppression?
 - If our activity is service-oriented, what related witness, advocacy, and education components could be implemented (same for other methods)?
 - How does this reflection alter our understanding and subsequent action?
4. Program will work to integrate social justice in the life of the church, with youth involvement particularly encouraged.
5. Program will educate congregants to think and act systemically.
6. Program will honor that recovery from racism, or any oppression, is a developmental process, and we will meet congregants where they are and assist them in progressing forward.
7. Program will communicate effectively and openly with the congregation, being sensitive to the many ways people receive information.

8. Program will establish a participant recruitment program, including a new participant mentoring component.
9. Program will foster racial equity in board and organizational decision making.
10. Program will be respectful of opposing views on an issue, but will not be paralyzed by them in making decisions.
11. Program will involve the four methods of advocacy, education, service and witness, with the weight of each being determined by the particular issue being addressed and the human resources needed to act.
12. Program will be accountable to the communities we are trying to help. Recognizing the power of alliance, we will actively build relationships with faith based efforts and with key community players who share our commitment to systemic change. We will utilize Forward Ferguson as one blueprint for action.
13. Program will focus on action in the broader community and growth and action within the Eliot community. The balance may shift depending on the specific issue being addressed.
14. Program will increasingly involve more people at deeper levels, with development of future leaders as a priority.
15. Program will be financially sustainable.

Areas of Work

RACIAL JUSTICE FOCUS

Kirkwood and Kirkwood School District

Advocacy

- Kirkwood Policing Committee
- Achievement Gap in Kirkwood Schools

Service

- Robinson School
- Meacham Park Neighborhood Improvement Association
- Kirk Care Food Bank
- Fillmore Park

Witness

- Vigil for Hope and Healing
- Olive Chapel AME Partnership

Metropolitan St. Louis

Advocacy

- Metropolitan Congregations United (MCU) School to Prison Pipeline metropolitan agenda (School Resource Officers, Policing, Juvenile Justice)
- Forward Through Ferguson Policy Agenda

Education

- MCU United Traveling Pipeline Forum
- MCU Workshops and Conferences
- Toxic Stress Workshops (2)
- Close the Gap in Education Forum
- Pledge to End Racism

Service

- Room at the Inn

Witness

- MCU Demonstrations

State of Missouri

Advocacy

- MCU Policy Agenda (Fair and Impartial Policing Act, Court Reform, Juvenile Justice Reform)
- Social Justice Policy Agenda (Voting Rights, Homelessness, Food Insecurity, Jobs, Education, Health/Mental Health)
- MCU - Missouri Right to Vote Campaign

Education

- Forum on Poverty
- 2017 Legislative Workshop

National

Service

- Voter Registration
- Get Out the Vote
- Fair Trade

LGBTQ FOCUS

Metropolitan St. Louis

Witness

- Pride Activities

State of Missouri

Advocacy

- PROMO Policy Agenda

REFUGEE FOCUS

Metropolitan St. Louis

Service

- International Institute (II) Refugee Support Activities
- In-gatherings for Refugees

OVERARCHING STRATEGIES

- Focused All Reads
- Leadership Development and Training
- Social Justice in Action Circles
- Media Communications

- Long Range Strategic Plan for Social Justice in Action