

Social Justice Ministry PROPOSAL to the Congregation May 1, 2011.

There are SO many social justice issues in our world that need attention and multiple ways in which UUCM could move together to impact some of them. Building on input from the congregation at the 2009 Social Justice Empowerment Workshop, the 2011 Social Justice "conversation" and survey and the *UUA Social Justice Statements Document*, this proposal is offered to affirm our social justice priorities and to build a common vision for action. The Social Justice Ministry (SJM) seeks endorsement for our areas of focus from the UUCM congregation.

UU GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Though all of the UU Principles will guide our Social Justice work, the following Principles, in particular, guide both our focus for action and the reasons these actions are important.

- 1st Principle: *The inherent worth and dignity of every person*
- 2nd Principle: *Justice, equity and compassion in human relations*
- 5th Principle: *The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large*
- 6th Principle: *The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all*
- 7th Principle: *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*

FOCUS AREAS

These four focus areas are our social justice priorities for action and will frame our work together until such time as the congregation chooses to modify them. The SJM will provide opportunities for the congregation to participate in volunteer, educational, stewardship or advocacy activities that are centered in these focus areas.

1. **Volunteer and stewardship activities to support those in need.**

UUCM maintains a commitment to social justice initiatives serving individuals in need within the geographic area of our church and those addressing broader social justice issues impacting sub-groups of our community and society as a whole. In particular, UUCM will continue to support the following activities:

- Support to Interfaith Outreach and Community Partners (IOCP) initiatives such as their food shelf, sleep out for the homeless, and Adopt-a-Neighborhood
- Support for Habitat for Humanity, Project Homeless Connect, Guest At Your Table and Standing on the Side of Love
- Emerging issues identified by the UUA or UUSC or the UUCM church community

2. **Full equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered persons.**

UUCM maintains a commitment to work towards full equality and civil rights for LGBT individuals and to ensure that same-sex couples and their families have equal rights and protections under Minnesota and Federal laws.

3. **A Healthy and Healing Environment.** UUCM maintains a commitment to promote reverence for our earth, to preserve and protect it, and to take proactive actions to remedy harms our society has already imposed upon the planet.

4. **Universal Healthcare for All.** UUCM maintains a commitment to work towards universal access to affordable, quality, accessible, full service health care for all the people of the United States.

*Vision Statements for the focus areas as well as
Proposed Activities and Strategies are available for review.*

VISION STATEMENTS FOR UUCM SOCIAL JUSTICE FOCUS AREAS

1. **Volunteer and stewardship activities to support those in need.**

We envision a UUCM congregation that embraces social justice work as an important part of a spiritual life and dedicates a portion of its resources of time and money to social service, social witness, social education, and social action to improve the conditions of others.

2. **LGBT Focus Area.** We envision a world of equality where:

- All people are equally valued and respected under the law and in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities.
- All members of the LGBT community and their families have equal rights and protections under Minnesota and Federal laws.
- All LGBT individuals, and youth in particular, are free of bullying and discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

3. **The Environment Focus Area.** We envision a society that:

- Takes actions to preserve and protect our natural resources including water, air, soils, native plants and wildlife and works to clean up and restore our ecosystems.
- Reduces our impacts on climate change and global warming.
- Increases our use of clean and renewable sources of energy and encourages innovation in the development of new sources of clean and sustainable energy.
- Reduces our use of non-renewable energy sources and eliminates our use of energy sources that contribute to pollution, global warming, climate change, and harmful impacts on the environment.
- Promotes sustainable food production and increases our use of sustainable, locally produced foods and products that are free of pesticides, hormones and antibiotics.
- Protects ecosystems and life forms that sustain our interdependent web of life.
- Provides supports to emerging nations to establish positive environmental practices.
- Fosters the adoption of earth friendly practices by our children and future generations.

4. **Healthcare Focus Area.** We envision a society that:

- Ensures that everyone has equal access to affordable universal health.
- Establishes a healthcare system that includes preventive medicine, mental health and behavioral health services, reproductive health services, emphasis on positive health practices and healthy lifestyles, and freedom of choice for all.
- Will experience improved quality of life and fewer illnesses and deaths because of equal access to health care and healthier lifestyles.

SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES

UUCM will utilize a combination of strategies to work towards Social Justice.

1. UUCM will continue to offer supports to address social justice needs in our local and world community through **volunteer efforts and financial contributions**.
2. UUCM will leverage our social justice work by **working with community partners**, when possible, such as IOCP and St. Edwards Episcopal Church.
3. UUCM will work to support and enhance the social justice **work initiated by our UU partners**: the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA), the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), the Prairie Star District and the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA).
4. **The Social Justice Ministry will provide:**
 - Information and education for UUCM members about the priority focus areas
 - Opportunities for UUCM members to volunteer in UUCM-sponsored SJ work
 - Opportunities for UUCM members to advocate for positive change in our priority focus areas
5. **We encourage our church members** independently and as part of our congregation to work towards change through lifestyle changes, social action, political action, and advocacy and to take the following steps in our priority areas of focus:

LGBT:

- Become informed about civil rights issues and laws that negatively impact lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals and changes to laws that will move towards equality for all.
- Become informed about the prevalence and impact of bullying in the LGBT community, in particular of LGBT youth.
- Actively work to build a community that speaks up and out to stop bullying and empowers all youth to do the same.
- Support changes to Minnesota and Federal laws that will ensure that LGBT individuals, same-sex couples, and their families have equal rights and protections.

The ENVIRONMENT:

- Become informed about the various threats to our environment and positive actions that can be taken to protect, preserve and repair our planet.
- Adopt environmentally responsible practices at home and in the church.
- Work for environmental justice, environmental stewardship, biodiversity and ecosystem protection, and environmental restoration.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE:

- Become informed about and active advocates for universal health care.
- Learn about health care access and reform issues including the benefits of a single payer health care system.
- Support adoption of State and Federal legislation to establish and fund a comprehensive and affordable system of universal health care for all citizens.