

First Unitarian of Des Moines Affirmed Justice Groups

Application Packet

The Social Justice Council is here to support your good work. We support Affirmed Justice Group with technical assistance; assistance in opening doors to access church resources such as space, communications and promotion; and financial support for your social justice projects. The congregation will make an annual commitment to affirm and support your group at the annual Martin Luther king Jr. service. This affirmation packet is key to starting this relationship.

This packet contains the complete application materials for application of Affirmed Justice Groups. Only one representative of your group needs to complete the application, but we encourage all members of your group to carefully review the application, especially the covenant. All members of the group are expected to uphold the covenant and our UU Principles. To maintain good communication and the congregation's commitment to social justice, all Affirmed Justice Groups will apply for reaffirmation annually.

Please contact Kris Bein (lesbein@gmail.com) or Sally Boeckholt (salgal23@yahoo.com) or any member of the Social Justice Council if you have questions about the application or need assistance completing the application. Thanks in advance and we applaud your efforts to make our world a better place.

Submit completed application packet to the Church Office or to Kris Bein (lesbein@gmail.com) no later than December 11, 2011.

The completed application packet must include:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Application | |
| Annual Budget Request | |
| Member list (at least 4 members) | |

Affirmed Justice Groups at First Unitarian of Des Moines

Affirmation Process & Eligibility

- Initial application will include written application (forms available at <http://ucdsm.org/social-justice> or the church office), oral presentation, and proposed budget for the next fiscal year. A member of the applying group will make a presentation to the congregation at the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. service. The presentation should be no more than five minutes. The application and budget will be submitted to the Social Justice Council (SJC) five weeks prior to the service. The SJC will make the application and budget available to congregants as requested.
- The SJC will review the budget, report, and adherence to the Affirmed Justice Group Covenant to determine eligibility for affirmation. The SJC will submit a slate of applicants to the congregation for affirmation. The SJC will notify all applicants of their decision two weeks prior to the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. service.
- Congregation will affirm each applicant as an Affirmed Justice Group and enter into a covenant with the Affirmed Justice Group.

Annual Re-Affirmation Process & Eligibility

- Ongoing affirmation will include budget, report on activities and membership, and an oral presentation. A member of the Affirmed Justice Group will make a brief presentation highlighting the Affirmed Justice Group's activities of the past year and goals for the future to the congregation at the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. service. The presentation should be no more than five minutes. The budget will be submitted to SJC five weeks prior to the service. The SJC will make the budget and report on activities and membership available to congregants as requested.
- The SJC will review the budget, report, and adherence to the Affirmed Justice Group Covenant to determine eligibility for re-affirmation. The SJC will submit a slate of Affirmed Justice Groups to the congregation for re-affirmation. The SJC will notify all Affirmed Justice Groups of their decision two weeks prior to the Martin Luther King, Jr. service.
- Congregation will re-affirm Affirmed Justice Groups at the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. service and re-affirm the Affirmed Justice Group covenant.

Affirmed Justice Groups at First Unitarian of Des Moines

Covenant

Affirmation by the congregation creates a covenant with the Affirmed Justice Group. The congregation enacts the covenant through the Social Justice Council (SJC).

- **Affirmed Justice Groups will covenant to:**
 - The Affirmed Justice Group will name one member to join the SJC, and may name a proxy. Join the SJC and actively participate in monthly SJC meetings. The SJC is the organizing voice of the church's justice work. Missing four SJC meetings in one year (beginning at the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. service) will result in loss of Affirmed Justice Group status. The SJC meets the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30.
 - Maintain a membership of at least four active participants. If Affirmed Justice Group membership drops below four, the Affirmed Justice Group will present a plan to increase membership to the SJC for approval. The SJC must approve the plan for the group to maintain Affirmed Justice Group status.
 - Have an Affirmed Justice Group member present the Affirmed Justice Group goals for the future and activities towards goals of the past year at social justice annual meeting. Missing the Martin Luther King, Jr. service will result in loss of Affirmed Justice Group status.
 - Submit a report on Affirmed Justice Group membership, goals, and activities to the SJC for approval five weeks prior to the Martin Luther King, Jr. service.
 - Submit annual budgets to SJC for approval six weeks prior to the Martin Luther King, Jr. service. SJC will consider all submitted funding requests and fill requests based on available funds. Affirmed Justice Groups are also eligible to apply for SJC special project funds.
 - Spend church funds responsibly and honestly. Misappropriation of church funds will result in loss of Affirmed Justice Group status. The church office will monitor fund usage based on the Affirmed Justice Group's approved budget.
 - Honor First Unitarian's ends statements.
- **The SJC will covenant to:**
 - Fully support the Affirmed Justice Group by providing any technical assistance or guidance requested by the Affirmed Justice Group. Guidance and technical assistance may include issues such as budgeting, writing goal statements, activity planning, or recruiting new members.
 - Assist the Affirmed Justice Group in accessing church resources, such as communications, meeting space, or information. Affirmed Justice Groups are invited to submit all publicity and announcements to the SJC, who will ensure the publicity is shared through all available channels. The SJC will help Affirmed Justice Groups access meeting space and equipment.
 - Act as a conduit between the congregation and the Affirmed Justice Group, drawing together like-minded individuals, connecting Affirmed Justice Groups to other ministries of the church, and holding the Affirmed Justice Group covenant for the church.
 - Honor First Unitarian's ends statements.

Affirmed Justice Groups at First Unitarian of Des Moines

Application for Affirmed Justice Group

1. Contact person or coordinator of the group:
Phone: _____ E-mail: _____
2. Name of proposed Affirmed Justice Group:
3. Members of proposed Affirmed Justice Group (no fewer than four):
4. Describe the mission or purpose of the proposed Affirmed Justice Group.
5. How is the mission or purpose grounded in the Unitarian Universalist Principles? What specific principle(s) does it address? (See attached for UU Principles.)
6. Describe the goals for the Affirmed Justice Group in the next year. Goals should be specific, measurable, and achievable.
7. Describe the activities of the Affirmed Justice Group in the next year and how the activities will support the goals. Consider the UUA's *Five Main Approaches to Taking Action*—Service, Education, Witness, Advocacy, and Community Organizing—in the activities. (See attached for definitions of the *Five Approaches*.)

Affirmed Justice Groups at First Unitarian of Des Moines
Annual Budget Request

| Description | Amount |
|-------------|--------|
|-------------|--------|

\$

Total Request \$

SJC USE ONLY

Approved amount: _____

SJC Vote: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Our Unitarian Universalist Principles

- 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; and
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Creating a Balanced Social Justice Program*

Five Main Approaches to Taking Action

Offering participants a variety of ways to be involved is key in maintaining a successful social justice program. And of course, all approaches to social justice should include an orientation of healing divisions, dismantling institutional oppression, and acting with accountability.

The five types of social justice action are:

SERVICE: The purpose of social service is to meet the needs of persons in distress.

Examples: collecting money, donating food or clothing, tutoring, sheltering the homeless, homes for senior citizens, programs for senior citizens, child care programs, food programs, youth clubs, scouts, hospitals.

Strengths: It is doing something in the present. Hungry people are fed, homeless people are housed. When done in an accountable way to homeless communities, such programs are done in partnership with those being served and some of the homeless themselves act as co-leaders of the project.

Challenges: Relieving the symptoms does not always solve the problem over time and often has little impact on public policy. Providing information on anti-poverty legislation and opportunities for activism in combination with service can bridge this gap.

EDUCATION: The purpose of social education is to educate people about the importance of a social issue. The goal is to inform people about the aspects of the issues and also interpret the issue within the context of liberal religious values.

Examples: Public meetings, workshops, resolutions, drama, public forums, worship services and sermons.

Strengths: People's consciousness is raised. When done accountably, those most impacted by the issue have a voice.

Challenges: Talking about a problem may become a substitute for doing something about it. Providing advocacy action steps as part of education and having form letters and postcards available at the event, can help overcome this.

WITNESS: The purpose of social witness is to make public by word or deed the convictions of an individual or organization regarding a particular issue.

Examples: Participating in demonstrations, vigils, and marches, writing letters to the editor, passing resolutions, communicating to the wider community through press releases and/or press conferences, organizing petition campaigns, changing our lifestyles.

Strengths: People in the community know where we stand on a given issue. At its best, our witness involves partnering with others in the community, especially those most affected.

Challenges: It may be tempting to believe that speaking out in itself will solve the problem. Gaining media attention that emphasizes solutions as well as highlighting the problem can create momentum.

ADVOCACY: The purpose of advocacy is to work through the legislative process to impact public policy.

Examples: Visiting elected representatives in a delegation, writing letters to elected officials, giving testimony at public hearings.

Strengths: Public policy is, to some extent, affected. Policy makers can be particularly moved by testimonials from people experiencing hardship and oppression from current policies.

Challenges: Taking stands on controversial issues can split a congregation. A careful process should be used.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: The purpose of community organizing is to participate in the process by which decisions are made in places of power. The focus is on the power of institutional structures and how that power is used for good or evil. This approach is based on the recognition that individuals have little power to change their situations without the empowerment of groups who know how to organize and influence power.

Examples: Developing a strong organization, influencing policy and decision-makers and holding them accountable, empowering people so they can achieve self-determination.

Strengths: Oppressive systems are transformed. Accountability is established. Partnerships are formed across lines of race, class, gender identity, and faith and new relationships are transforming for congregational members.

Challenges: Working in coalitions can be difficult and time consuming. Patience is required. Acceptance or tolerance of other religious beliefs and language can be challenging for Unitarian Universalists. This approach may involve more political struggle than many members of a congregation feel comfortable with.

It is important to remember these five approaches when structuring social justice programs. In fact, these five approaches to doing social justice ministry do not exist in isolation from one another. Rather, they are complementary.

Ideally, we would have programs in our congregations on specific issues which would include all five approaches and are done in a way that heal divisions and are accountable to marginalized and oppressed communities.

*Reprinted from *Social Justice Empowerment Program Handbook* by the Unitarian Universalist Association (2008).