Faith in Action

# UUCR Initiatives

## Social Justice Committee

Steve Eckstrand and Mary Hoferek

The mission of the Social Justice Committee (SJC) is to lead and engage the congregation on social justice concerns, providing tangible ways to live our Unitarian Universalist principles in the community and the world, financially supporting social justice and human services groups, working in coalition with partner organizations, and encouraging congregational exploration and action on emerging issues. The SJC coordinates the work of the congregation’s social justice groups as well as the congregation’s support for partner social justice and human services organizations.

Members of the Committee: The following UUCR members met regularly during the past year: Ethel Gilbert (Secretary), Dolores Barnes, Patrice Davis, Jack Taylor, Sean McCarthy, Chris Mennone (Lay Minister), Kirk Freeman (Ministerial Intern), and Mary Hoferek and Steve Eckstrand (co-Chairs). Other members attended when relevant.

Lastly, the Committee submitted our proposed charter and procedures to the Board. We feel the new charter provides the structure to incorporate and acknowledge both small and large efforts. There are currently over 20 social justice efforts within our congregation. We acknowledge that all are contributing to social justice within our community and are valuable endeavors.

In an effort to inform the congregation about social justice activities, a bulletin board in founders hall is being used by task groups.

## Share the Plate (STP) Program

Sean McCarthy

Mission: This Subcommittee of the Social Justice Committee makes periodic recommendations to the Social Justice Committee (which must approve and consult with the Minister) for charities to be designated to share the Sunday collection plate with UUCR. Any member or friend of UUCR and the Minister may nominate a charity. The Subcommittee recommends charities as STP recipients based on a number of criteria, including their impact on and ties to the Rockville and/or Montgomery County communities, the involvement of UUCR members as volunteers, and the financial needs and stewardship of the organizations.

Subcommittee members in FY22: Sean McCarthy (Chair), Steve Eckstrand, Lisa Reed, Carolyn Randall, and Viki Betancourt.

In 2020, the Social Justice Committee changed the way the congregation supports non-UU human services and social justice organizations. Beginning with the FY 2020-21 budget the Committee directed the congregation’s support for these charities through the Share the Plate program rather than the SJC budget (which is part of UUCR overall budget). This change reduced the SJC budget which is funded by the congregation’s pledges and gifts. It also allowed members of UUCR to express their desired level of support for charitable organizations formerly supported in the SJC budget (e.g., Manna, Beacon House, Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless, Interfaith Works, Community Reach of Montgomery) by contributing directly to them through Share the Plate.

For next year (July ‘22 through June ‘23) the Social Justice Committee is recommending that one of the UU affiliated organizations, Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (“UUSJ”), also be funded by Share the Plate contributions rather than through the SJC budget. This will further reduce SJC’s budget and enable the congregation to engage directly with and support that group to the extent it wants.

The SJC is also recommending that the congregation establish a “Social Justice Emergency Needs Fund” to be funded from STP donations. If approved, the funds collected in this new Fund would be available for rapid disbursement for community emergencies upon unanimous agreement of the Senior Minister and the Chair or Co-Chairs of the Social Justice Committee. The Social Justice Emergency Needs Fund would be in addition to and not replace the Minister’s discretionary fund. The latter is expected to have more limited funding and will continue to be administered on a confidential basis at the discretion of the Minister.

Since the Spring of 2020 we have been designating charities to be STP recipients for periods of one to four weeks rather than for two-months as previously was done. These shorter giving periods allow the STP program to select more recipients each year, to modulate the expected total contributions for each charity to fit our goal for addressing their needs, and to reduce “donor fatigue” by limiting the number of consecutive weeks the congregation is asked to give to a specific charity.

In the current fiscal year (FY22) from July, 2021 through March, 2022 the congregation collected $33,523 via Share the Plate. At this rate of giving we estimate that about $44,700 will be collected via STP for FY22 ending June 30, 2022. In the prior fiscal year (FY21) from July, 2020 through June, 2021 the congregation collected $48,538.51 via Share the Plate.

Share the Plate collections are assisting the following organizations in FY22:

* Rockville Help
* Rockville Emergency Assistance Plan (REAP) of Community Reach of Montgomery
* Rebuilding Together Montgomery County
* Just Neighbors
* Community Bridges
* TraRon Center
* La Clinica del Pueblo
* Direct Support for Immigrants
* Rainbow Youth Alliance
* Community Reach of Montgomery (CRM)
* Community Soup Kitchen of Gaithersburg
* UUCR Project for Afghan Refugee Assistance
* Interfaith Works
* Minister’s Discretionary Fund
* Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless
* Beacon House
* Manna Food Center
* CRM Kaseman Clinic
* Food Project at Public Justice
* Sante Total
* So What Else
* The Poor Peoples Campaign

## Special Effort for Afghan families

### Afghan Relief

An unexpected effort for the UUCR Social Justice Committee occurred when over 100,000 Afghan allies were evacuated during the month of August. What started as a vision of a short-term effort has turned into a project that may last all year.

### Gift Boxes

Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA) was designated as a lead agency to help Afghan families who were evacuated. They posted a request for gift boxes to help newly arrived families establish apartments. In less than 10 days UUCR members and some friends assembled and delivered twenty-six gift boxes (5 linens, 8 kitchen, 9 cleaning and 4 pots and pans). In addition, UUCR donated diapers and school supplies. Over 30 UUCR members contributed to the effort.

### Giant cards

LSSNCA also asked for Giant gift cards to help the families get food. We collected and delivered over $900 in Giant gift cards to LSSNCA.

### STP collection

In the fall, UUCR dedicated our STP collection for Afghan relief. We collected $2,906. That allowed us to pay the rent ($1,902) for April 2022 for the first family to settle in Rockville. The rest of the collection was paid to LSSNCA to honor our early commitment to them.

### NNIA

Early in the 2022 year, UUCR was asked if we could sponsor a family for a year. We decided that the cost was too high for our congregation. Soon after that decision, however, we heard about New Neighbors Interfaith Alliance (NNIA). NNIA is an alliance of 16 communities of faith that are joined together by an effort to help immigrant families. UUCR Social Justice Committee was excited by this opportunity and voted unanimously to join the alliance.

As part of the NNIA work, a team of our members helped move furniture into an apartment for the first Afghan family. Our members also donated household goods, lamps, $250 of Giant food cards, sewing kits, and toddler car seats.

A second Afghan family was settled soon after and then a third family came. UUCR participated in all three furniture moves. UUCR also donated $250 in Giant gift cards to Afghan family #2.

Tentative plans are underway for Afghan 4 and Afghan 5.

# Task/Action/Work Groups

## Racial Justice Working Group

Mission: Leads the congregation to study and learn together to create opportunities for personal and systemic transformation toward racial justice.

Members: Ethel Gilbert, Jay Karow, Stephanie Kreps, Marie Reed, Nancy Spencer, Rev. Rebekah Savage, Kirk Freeman (Intern Minister).

This year, given COVID, we focused on a few principal activities:

Coming to the Table (CTTT): The mission of Coming to the Table (CTTT) is to provide a “safe” environment in which to discuss racism in America and explore personal beliefs and practices. The CTTT format facilitates deep, respectful conversation with the ultimate goal to heal past and present social wrongs inflicted by systemic racism; thus, affording the opportunity to move forward towards a more egalitarian society. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month. Topics that have been discussed in the past include “Impact of White Supremacy in Government”; “’A Drop in the Bucket’ -– the Derek Chauvin verdict”; “Keeping the Peace in the Face of White Supremacy”; “The Arrest of Henry Louis Gates”; “What does "Black Lives Matter" really mean to you and what can you do to make a difference” and “White people Verbally Assaulting People of Color” to mention only a few.

In addition, we

* Encouraged UUCR members to participate in a Remembrance Weekend, honoring the two men who were lynched in Rockville in the last decades of the 19th C. On Sept 26, 2021, the MoCoLMP (Montgomery County Lynching Memorial Project) and the Montgomery County Remembrance and Reconciliation Commission, hosted a Pilgrimage Walk and Soil Collection Ceremony to memorialize two young Black men who were lynched in Rockville: Mr. John Diggs-Dorsey in 1880 and Mr. Sidney Randolph in 1896. Montgomery History also offered a symposium on the Rockville lynchings. Several members of UUCR participated in this moving weekend, which was organized in alignment with the Equal Justice Initiative’s efforts to help make our country aware of our history of racial terror.
* Facilitated two book discussions of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*by Isabel Wilkerson
* Provided an opportunity to participate in a virtual screening of the award-winning documentary, *Lynching Postcards: "Token of a Great Day”* includinga conversation with the film's director, Christine Turner.  This was followed by a UUCR discussion led by Rev. Rebekah and Intern Kirk Freeman.
* Played a role in a series of three discussions of the book *My Grandmother’s Hands* by Resmaa Menakem. The sessions were facilitated by Susan Luff.
* Offered a tour of the Josiah Henson home and museum as an Action Auction Event.
* Publicized and maintained a Racial Justice Events Calendar for UUCR and outside community events related to Racial Justice such as Beloved Conversations, Jubilee, Race and #RealTalk, UU the Vote, UUA / CERG New Day Rising, MoCo Lynching Project, 8th Principle Learning Community meetings led by Paula Cole Jones. We also provide a resource list of books and videos.

## Poor People’s Campaign

Patrice Davis/Kirk Freeman

The tentative plan is to support the JUNE 18th POOR PEOPLE’S AND LOW-WAGE WORKERS’ ASSEMBLY AND MORAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON AND TO THE POLLS! It is an in person and virtual event. We hope to have at least 100 people who will agree to attend either the in-person event or at a watch party at UUCR.

We are also exploring the feasibility to help people get from UUCR to the metro on the day of the event.

If we can get enough interest and volunteers, we will have a family activism day. This is planned for Saturday June 11th,the week before the PPC March. UUCR will host an event open to the public. The current plan is to make signs, learn protest songs, picnic, and engage our children and youth in activism. This would include a children's March on the property of UUCR. It will get information out about own activist activities, in addition to the PPC.

## LGBTQ+ Task Group & Rainbow Youth Alliance

Contacts: Stephanie Kreps (RYA); Vacant (LGBTQ+ TG)

LGBTQ+ Task Group’s mission is to support the rights and concerns of LGBTQ+ people in our congregation and in the wider community, and to foster awareness of such concerns among UUCR congregants and friends. The social justice committee is considering a proposal to support Trans Maryland with a donation of $500.

Rainbow Youth Alliance (RYA) is UUCR's program of outreach and support for LGBTQ+ youth. Stephanie Kreps remains as cofounder and outreach coordinator for RYA and Secretary of the RYA's Advisory Council.

## Environmental Action Group

Rotating Chair

2021 - 2022 Environmental Action Group Annual Report

**Mission:** To raise awareness, improve our congregation’s natural environment and encourage sustainability practices for present and future generations.

We seek to do this by a) working with members and the congregation to reduce our negative impact on the Earth as individuals and as a collective and b) by partnering with environmental organizations to combat the impacts of climate change, protect the Chesapeake Bay, reach 100% clean, renewable energy and eliminate waste in Montgomery County.

**Names of group members**: Connie Bertka, Annette Emery, Joshuah Emery, Larissa Johnson, Jon Landenburger, and Norman Rave comprise the planning group. Carla Miller is the liaison to Children and Youth Programs. We have more than 40 UUCR members on our e-mailing list.

**Major Accomplishments** (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)

**Monthly Meetings:** We met via Zoom until September 2021, unfortunately people found that they no longer had the energy to participate in online meetings. We will try to reconvene in the next fiscal year.

**MCFACS:** Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (MCFACS) unites people of faith to help solve the climate emergency that is disrupting and threatening life on Earth. One member of our group attends the monthly meetings to receive information about what is happening around the County.

**Fall into Nature**: To bring some color and fun to the campus, we decorated a bulletin board to highlight UUCR members while they spent time outside – it was called “Fall into Nature.” (see image)

**UU Kids for a Livable Planet:** Created postcards so that UUCR kids could send elected officials’ postcards in support of the [Environmental Human Rights Amendment.](https://mdehr.org/) On Sunday, March 19, 2022: We gathered for a family dinner night, which will be an opportunity to RE-connect, and will also be the culmination of the project. Larissa Johnson will invite the children and youth to decorate and send postcards to our legislators. Family Faith Formation will be ordering pizzas, a veggie tray, and drinks, and some of UUCR's lovely and generous elders will support the effort by contributing sides and desserts. Example of the postcard below.



**Capital Area Solar Co-op:**  The second round of the [Capital Area Solar Co-Op](https://mygreenmontgomery.org/2022/back-by-popular-demand-round-2-of-the-capitalareasolarcoop/) launched on April 1, 2022 and we will be promoting this group and hope that congregation members will go solar as part of this program.

**Stream Clean Up:** The Trash Free Potomac Stream Clean Up occurred at Croydon Creek Nature Center, 852 Avery Rd, Rockville, MD 20851 on Saturday, April 9, 2022 from 10:00 am - 12:00 pm.

## Immigration Action Group

Steve Eckstrand and Gail Schmitt

During the past year the Immigration Action Group (IAG) has supported the efforts of Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice and the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland.

The IAG has participated in three of UUSJ’s action alerts and letter writing campaigns urging Congress to:

* Provide pathways to citizenship for certain groups of undocumented immigrants by passing the Dream Act, the SECURE Act, and the Farm Workforce Modernization Act
* End the misuse of Title 42 and restore access to asylum
* Provide pathways to citizenship in the Build Back Better Bill

Individual IAG members and the UUCR Social Justice Committee signed on to a joint UUSC-UUSJ letter to President Biden asking his administration end the misuse of Title 42 and restore access to asylum.

The IAG members have contacted their legislators to support the three immigrants’ rights bills that the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland deemed priority bills in the 2022 legislative session:

* **Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program**: This bill would establish an Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program administered by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation to provide access to legal representation.
* **Access to Health Care**: The proposed bill would remove immigration status as a barrier to health care insurance coverage through the Affordable Care Act.
* **Healthy Babies Equity Act**: This bill will provide medical assistance via Medicaid to undocumented immigrant mothers and babies for pre-natal and post-partum care.

The IAG is also jointly sponsoring a seminar on April 24 entitled "**Racial Inequities in U.S. Immigration Laws**" with the Racial Justice Working Group.

This presentation will review the history of US immigration laws with a focus in particular on three historical eras:  Overt Racist Immigration Laws (1790 - 1941), Reform (1942-1965), and Covert Racist Immigration Laws (1965 to present).   The presentation will cover both the disparate treatment of immigrants of color from white (largely European) immigrants, and the long-term consequences such treatment has had on how immigrants of color can legalize their status in the US.  The presentation also decodes seemingly "facially neutral" laws which have had an outsized impact on immigrants of color.

## UUtheVote

Emily Untermyer

UUCR The Vote, first launched in January 2020, continued to be active during the 2021-22 fiscal year.Through a partnership with the national UU The Vote and the Center for Common Ground, UUCR The Vote provided a meaningful way for congregants to promote democratic values and engage in nonpartisan get-out-the-vote efforts.

2021-2022 activities focused on states with voter suppression histories and used voter lists and scripts provided by the Center for Common Ground’s Reclaim Our Vote (ROV) campaigns. The efforts informed marginalized people about issues at stake in the elections and how to obtain more information about voting in their specific counties.

In calendar-year 2021, congregants engaged in both the primary and general elections in Virginia, with 33 congregants writing ROV postcards to 5,035 Virginia residents. The efforts continued in the 2022 primary election season. By May 2022, 42 congregants had written ROV postcards to 4,300 Texas, Alabama and Georgia residents. UUCR The Vote efforts will continue throughout the 2022 primary elections and general election.

## Hunger

Dolores Barnes

The Hunger Relief Task Force (HTF) strives to help alleviate hunger in our community so that all people have access to safe, sufficient, and healthy food.

HTF continued our ongoing **Manna Food Center** collection and delivery. With Covid-19 protocols still in place, our collection bucket continues to be outside of the main sanctuary as well as a second bucket outside of the courtyard entrance, for those attending services in-person. From July 2021-December 2021, a once a month Manna food drive was coordinated with our shared space church, Capital Rivers, while they were still affiliated with our building. Financial support to Manna continued through Share the Plate (STP) donations.

HTF continued support of the **Gaithersburg Soup Kitchen**, located in Epworth United Methodist Church. Early 2021 saw our continuation of donations to the daily brown bag lunch program, and continued financial support for the Food Distribution Program’s weekend distribution of food packages to over 300 enrolled families. Resumption of hot meal service and participation from UUCR (third Monday of every month through May) started again in October, 2021. Meals are served following the County Health Department and Epworth’s Covid-19 Committee’s strict guidelines. Financial support provided to the GSK as a Share the Plate recipient.

HTF volunteers continued answering intake calls and delivering emergency food to neighbors in need through **Rockville Help, Inc**. Financial assistance to clients (help with payment for prescriptions, rent, utilities, etc.,) was provided to RH as a Share the Plate recipient.

The UUCR congregation collected and delivered another record number (34) complete Thanksgiving Baskets and $2,200.00 (88 - $25.00) worth of Giant grocery gift cards to **Community Reach of Montgomery County’s Holiday Giving Program,** in November, 2021. CR distributed 20 of our baskets to their clients, and the rest were delivered, per CR’s request, to Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Rockville, for their weekly food distribution program.

Our congregation is planning to support an Interfaith women’s shelter with breakfast and dinner for a week during the month of May.

## Arts Connect

Sarah Jebian

This event has been deferred until next year.

## Habitat for Humanity

Karen Pittleman

Last summer UUCR was able to return to western MD to work with Garrett County Habitat for Humanity (HFH). (COVID 19 forced us to cancel our plans to work on houses in 2020). 2021 was the twelfth year that UUCR members travelled to Garrett County MD to spend a week building houses with HFH. This year, 14 UUCR members worked on the final house in Hopeland Village, a community of homes built entirely by volunteers and designed to provide safe and affordable housing in western MD. UUCR’s participation allows HFH to complete significant projects on the houses and this year our group installed siding and soffits on all but one side of the last house. Additionally, each house gets an exterior shed and our group built the shed for this house. While working side by side, participants get to know each other better, as well as getting to know members of the local community, future HFH homeowners, and the HFH Board.

## Rebuilding Together Montgomery County

Karen Pittleman

In the winter of 2020, UUCR was approached by Rebuilding Together Montgomery County (RTMC) to participate in their annual National Building Days in April. We put together a team of 20+ people but, due to COVID, the event was cancelled for 2020 and again in 2021. However, we have a team of 23 UUCR members and friends who will be participating in National Building Days – Apr 30 and May 1, 2022. This annual event is designed to bring volunteer groups together to provide critical home repairs for vulnerable homeowners across Montgomery County. We will be working on a home in Takoma Park, eliminating health and safety hazards and performing necessary repairs for this family of seven to continue to live safely in their home.

## Mitten Tree for Christmas 2021

The Social Justice Committee partnered with Family Faith Formation to continue the Mitten Tree. Since we didn’t have a pine tree inside that we could use, the tree in the circle near the sanctuary and a nearby bush were decorated with the congregation contributions.

# Special Interests

## Aging in Place

After a hiatus due to the pandemic, committee member Mary Hoferek continued to advocate with the State government to expand the use of the Medicaid waiver program to enable more seniors to receive home health services. This program has been expanding significantly in Montgomery County. While approximately 3,000 Montgomery County residents and 12,000 Marylanders are supported in their homes, over 21,000 Marylanders are on the wait list. Many die before receiving the services of the Waiver program. Mary published a letter to the editor in the Washington Post that advocated for the Waiver program.

## So, What Else

Carolyn Randall

As part of delivering food for the So What Else food bank, I was present at the aftermath of a horrendous fire that burned a townhouse in Gaithersburg to the ground, and was described by a fireman there as the worst fire he had ever seen.  I talked with the family and immediately called So What Else for help; by that evening they had delivered six huge bags of clothing and lots of food to their temporary living quarters.  They continued to deliver food and clothing for the three weeks they were in this housing.  After hearing that the insurance company wasn’t doing much to find them housing, I worked with the family to find a house large enough for six adults and a toddler, and then reached out to UUCR members as well as websites for free furniture; in 10 days we were able to furnish a five bedroom house with lovely furniture, even a pool/ping pong table for the finished basement.  So What Else then asked if there was furniture that could be available for people collecting food at Lakeforest Mall food bank, and we were able to deliver 9 couches and many tables and chairs, which were given away in three days to grateful clients.  In addition, some of the surplus furniture collected went to one of the Afghan families UUCR supported in their move to an apartment.

## Housing

Mary Caroline Colletti

No action this year.

## Haiti Medical Mission

Barbara Weis, MD, MPHTM, Executive Director, Sante Total

UUCR members have provided key support to Sante Total, a non-profit organization that works in Jacsonville, Haiti.

Santa Total, which means “Total Health” in Haitian Kreyol, aims to provide sustainable healthcare to rural communities in the central plateau region of Haiti. We believe you can only improve health through eradicating the disease of poverty. The Sante Total approach considers the entire person – physical health, well-being, education, and employment, to be essential to health and quality of life.

To understand the challenges of working in Haiti, I will turn to our Haitian coordinator, Gabriel Thelus, who said, “Haiti is still struggling to survive the most difficult political, national, and social issues we have encountered; living in Haiti is harder than ever, and believe me, it was hard before! Due to the political situation, we have had to close the school several times, and they closed the church for a long time. We are supposed to have elections, but we have no clue if they will do it. The COVID vaccine is provided for free in the Pignon hospital, but the people of Haiti do not want to take it because they think you will die from the vaccine. The big hospitals have cases and many people have died there. COVID vaccination education is the next step.
It has been difficult for patients with chronic illness, and medication is expensive. Several of our diabetic patients died because they had to choose between spending money on their insulin or buying food for their children; and of course, they chose to put food on the table for their children.

It is dangerous to go to banks to get the money required to finish the clinic, because people who are seen leaving banks are often robbed. There is still a violence in the country and kidnappings in Port-au-Prince. This makes it difficult to buy supplies to finish the clinic.. We try hard to keep going. This is our priority. It’s not going to be forever. Right now it is dark, but I know we can expect light for another day.”

Despite the pandemic and the difficult political situation, Sante Total has continued to work in Haiti this year. Here is an update of our projects:

* **Clinic construction** is almost complete! We are
	+ Continuing to work on the cinder block fence around the clinic, painting, and interior doors - goal to finish before the rainy season in June.
	+ Supporting the community through WhatsApp virtual medicine and by providing financial support for people who need help with hospital bills and medication costs.
	+ Planning to install a solar panel system; in the meantime, we have a portable generator to provide electricity. We are waiting to complete this step because solar panels will be a target for theft and need to be guarded.
	+ Working on a grant to provide clinic furniture and equipment
	+ Meeting with the board of Jacsonville to finalize the details of running the clinic (staffing, computer system, etc.)
* **St. Rose of Lima School:** St. Rose of Lima School has started again in Jacsonville, and it is vital for the local community
	+ Only 10 children showed up to the first day of school as a result of families lacking the money to send them to school.
	+ Sante Total donated funds to help with school fees, and now the school has 156 children attending, with 10 teachers, a principal, and a consultant, who helps choose teachers and adapt the state education program.
	+ The school has hired buses to give the students experiences that were traditionally unavailable to them, such as traveling to see a river or a sugar cane mill.
	+ Three staff members assist the principal with managing expenses, helping with school meals and hygiene for the children, and ensuring that school supplies are available.
	+ All teachers have attended a teacher’s school and obtained their teaching certificates.
	+ Cooks, watchmen, and gatekeepers help ensure the safety and security of the school. Issues of violence remain and occasionally the school must close if there is a nearby threat.
* **School Lunch Program:** This program has become even more vital given
current food insecurity secondary to COVID and the political situation in Haiti.
	+ We spend $8,500 per year to support the daily school lunch program - this is often the only nutritious meal a child gets during the day.
	+ We obtained a $450 grant again this year from the St. Thomas of Villanova Parish for this program.
* **4. Sustainable Agriculture Program**
	+ Unfortunately, many of our trees died because they lacked enough fertilizer/nitrogen
	+ We are hoping that Mackensen, the agricultural student, will do some research so we can replace the trees that died and keep them healthier this time.
	+ However, there are still many trees that are all providing fruit, including oranges, mangoes, and cherries.
* **5.Project for Seniors and the Handicapped**
	+ Many seniors in Jacsonville do not have access to enough food due to several reasons including economic hardship and the fact that their children have moved away to find employment, leaving them alone to cultivate their fields by hand
	+ This project allowed us to hold weekly meetings for over 40 seniors and distribute food to supplement their meager stores.
	+ A plot of land has been purchased to start building a Senior Center.
	+ The seniors recently had a New Year’s party which was attended by over 400 people
* **6.Educational Support: We are spending over $20, 000 a year to support students from Jacsonville.** This money covers the tuition, room and board of several students: a pharmacy student, one managerial student, a nursing and medical student, as well as an agricultural student.

In addition to ongoing projects, we are working on future projects:

Future Projects: We need your help for these!

* **Medical clinic furniture and supplies**: The clinic building is almostfinished, but we need additional money to buy medical exam tables andexpensive equipment. We also need smaller items such asotoscopes, desks, and chairs.
* **Mobile Dental Clinic:** We are exploring the idea of writing a grant as a partner of the local Rotary Club to provide a mobile dental clinic which could provide weekly dental clinics at our site, as well as other clinics and schools in the area.
	+ While the projects listed above may seem to have little in common, they all address Sante Total’s mission statement that health is not just the absence of disease, but a state of physical health, well-being, improved education, and employment.  Our projects are all proposed by the inhabitants of Jacsonville and are directed by the board of the community. The board of Sante Total thanks UUCR for its continued support of our efforts in Haiti.  It truly makes a difference!

## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Jack Taylor

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) is a statewide advocacy network of Unitarian Universalists. We work to educate, mobilize, and coordinate UUs on specific issues before the Maryland General Assembly. Working in coalition with established state and national organizations, we as UUs model a reverence for the interdependent web of all existence which fosters justice, health and equity in society. Jack Taylor of UUCR is a member of the board of directors and treasurer. On January 23, we held our annual legislative kickoff virtually. Legislative priorities include criminal justice reform, climate change, immigration, and health care. Last year (2021) the focus was on legislation for police accountability. In 2022 the focus is on climate change. Extensive details of UULM MD current legislative priorities can be found at the website http://www.uulmmd.org

## Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

Sean McCarthy

UUSJ promotes Unitarian Universalist values through education, witnessing, and advocacy on social justice issues with the federal government, including Congress. UUSJ is supported by individual UU’s, friends, and UU congregations throughout the country. UUSJ was originally formed in 2000 by UU congregations in the Washington and Baltimore area. UUCR is a Member Congregation.

In July, 2021 UUSJ reorganized from a regionally based organization to an organization with national membership and with revised By-laws, policies and statements of values, vision, and mission. UUSJ better defined its moral owners and elected a new eleven member, national Board of Trustees. The new UUSJ Board and its officers are no longer appointed by member congregations anywhere and are now accountable to the moral owners of UUSJ nationally. That is, UUSJ is accountable to individual UU’s, UU congregations, marginalized communities, and representatives of marginalized communities. UUSJ member congregation have “Liaisons” to UUSJ instead of membership on the Board. Sean McCarthy served as UUCR’s Liaison in FY22. The new Board also adopted a new schedule of dues for member congregations based on a small percentage of each congregation’s annual revenue. The new dues schedule is makes it possible for smaller UU churches to join UUSJ without a disproportionate dues burden. The new schedule does not significantly change UUCR’s annual dues, but any event under UUSJ’s policies the dues are only “aspirational” (i.e., a goal).

In the past year UUSJ continued to promote Unitarian Universalist values in four priority areas: Immigration, Economic Justice, Environment and Climate Justice, and Defending Democracy. Due to the pandemic this fiscal year the Advocacy Corps of UUSJ (volunteers lobbying Congress on a regular basis) scheduled their meetings with Congressional staff every other month virtually via “Zoom, usually on one of the four issue areas.

In addition, the Immigration Action Team and some of the other issue Action Teams held virtual meetings throughout the year with the staff of members and Committees relevant to their issues. Meeting virtually has permitted UUSJ to include UU’s from areas far outside the DC region in meetings with their Congresspersons and Senators staffs. This has also stimulated support for and some memberships in UUSJ from UU congregations around the country and enabled UUSJ to obtain meetings with more Members of Congress and have greater influence.

The Immigration Action Team (IAT) of UUSJ continued its high level of activity during the year. The IAT coordinated Congressional meetings and letter writing campaigns with a larger number of faith-based and other allies. The IAT drafted its own letters and co- signed many letters of other advocacy groups to President Biden, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Justice Department. The IAT continued to support comprehensive immigration reform and asked for faster progress in rolling back the many draconian regulations imposed by the prior administration to prevent most foreigners, especially those from poorer countries or those with predominantly non-White or non-Christian populations, from immigrating to the USA.

The IAT focused particularly on removing barriers to those seeking asylum. These include barriers imposed by health emergency regulations imposed under Title 42. Other policies require asylum seekers at the southern US border to remain in Mexico in dangerous conditions for months, while their cases are pending in the US. The IAT also worked with a coalition of faith based organizations to urge Congress to reduce spending on border enforcement and detention, while increasing resources for humane alternatives to detention and community resettlement programs.

Steve Eckstrand of UUCR was particularly active as one of the Co-Convenors of the IAT.

## Lay Ministry

Chris Mennone

In my ongoing capacity as the Lay Minister member/contact for the Social Justice Committee I joined in the summer of 2020 during the world-wide pandemic caused by COVID-19.  Everyone had a challenging time in serving especially those of us who are not willing to risk infection during the Covid-19 time. The use of Zoom has been an excellent bridge to avoid contact. My function has been to liaise between the SJC and the Lay Minister Council. My single biggest activity (2020 & 2021) was to support the Thanksgiving and Christmas Basket programs to provide food during these Holiday periods. I intend to support the cause in 2022 as well.

Several committees including the SJC have taken this opportunity to re-write Mission Statements and Charters, and to modify or formalize policies and procedures.  This was done at the request of the UUCR Board. As a result, the SJC has been given the opportunity to codify best practices and clearly state objectives, procedures and policies. While not yet reviewed and approved by the UUCR Board, the committee acts as per the new written guidelines.  This process continues.

There are clear limitations on the extent UUCR can become involved in Social Justice activities with a medium size congregation and a very limited budget. The income from the Share-The-Plate program has supplemented the budget and allowed the SJC to become more supportive of local Montgomery County community in terms of supporting efforts to bring true Social Justice to all citizens. The Committee is constantly looking to solicit requests for underserved groups to strive for Social Justice.

# UUCR Social Justice Committee – Report Conclusion

Despite the extraordinary challenges of a worldwide pandemic, many social justice activities occurred. When faced with the extraordinary influx of Afghan families, UUCR members stepped up to provide gift baskets, Giant cards, a month’s rent, a donation to LSSNCA, hands on furniture set up and assorted donations. In addition, our usual committees continued to meet, but adapted to a virtual environment. Collections of food, mittens, gift cards, recycle materials etc. continued outside of the buildings rather than inside. The Share-The-Plate program continued to be strong and enabled our congregation to provide monetary support to many of our local organizations who were severely impacted by the pandemic and struggled to care for our most vulnerable. Advocacy for voter registration, racial justice, immigration, housing, and the waiver program continued. While much remains to be done, much was accomplished.