UUCR’s congregational participation in Social Action and Social Justice is a reflection of several Unitarian Universalist principles. Those principles include the inherent worth and dignity of every person, compassion in human relations, the right of conscience, and the use of the democratic process. Our work in the areas of social action and justice agrees with teachings from other religions that impel us to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves.

The committee’s subgroups, projects, and activities are open to all UUCR members and friends. Social action is generally considered to be organized acts of charity and kindness, while social justice is advocacy for change to improve the human condition. To provide monetary support, contribute to the Charity of the Month special collections for specific social action and justice projects. For more active participation, our unique location in the capital area provides us with opportunities to show up and live our faith out loud. Recently we’ve been part of the Women’s March, Climate March, Poor People’s Campaign, reproductive rights and health care demonstrations, pro-immigrant and DACA vigils, and anti-gun lobby vigils.

**Racial Justice Committee** (Nonnie Mullin)

In light of the congregation’s decision to focus on the issue of racial justice, the Racial Justice Subcommittee of the Social Action/Social Justice Committee became its own freestanding committee in 2021. This committee encourages discussions of our hopes and dreams for the role that UUCR can play in advancing racial justice in the greater Reston Community, and also represents UUCR at VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement). VOICE is a non-partisan coalition of more than 50 faith organizations standing up for equal opportunity in our communities, respect for all, tolerance, and peaceful change.

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**SOACT/JUST PROJECT and PROGRAM PROJECT LEADERS**

**Alternative Gift Market** (Denise Kirwan) A yearly charity event held in the sanctuary on the first Saturday of December, from 10 AM – 2 PM, the AGM enables holiday shoppers to donate in the name of a loved one to more than 30 charitable organizations and to advance the well being of people who are less fortunate, both locally and internationally. Tangible gifts at fair trade prices are also available. Volunteers greet visitors, staff booths, act as cashiers, and help with publicity.

[https://uureston.org/agm](https://uureston.org/agm)
**Congregational Action Network** (Caroline & Steve Ewart) It is our role as a spiritual, faith-based community to love all of our neighbors. The inherent worth and dignity of all humans is recognized at UUCR, and we stand in solidarity with our immigrant community and provide support to congregations who offer sanctuary to those who fear injustice, violence, or fear for their safety. [https://faithinaction.org/federation/congregation-action-network/](https://faithinaction.org/federation/congregation-action-network/)

**Cornerstones Partnership** (Liaison: Judith Polizzotti) Our Cornerstones’ liaison represents UUCR on the Cornerstones’ Board of Directors, thereby giving us a voice in this prominent local nonprofit organization. Cornerstones promotes self-sufficiency by providing support and advocacy for people in our area who are in need of food, shelter, affordable housing, and other human services. UUCR also participates in Cornerstones’ four annual gift drives: Back-to-School, Thanksgiving Food Drive, Winter Coat Drive, and Gifts for Kids.

**Green Sanctuary** (Jackie Grogan) For more than 10 years, UUCR has been an accredited Green Sanctuary congregation, one of 254 affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association. We support one another as we strive to embody environmentally just principles and improve the condition of our planet, and hold a watershed cleanup each spring in connection with Earth Day.

**LGBTQ Task Force** (Kristen Grifka) UUCR was recently recertified as a Welcoming Congregation, offering a safe place for all people, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning. The Task Force’s goal is to assure we are welcoming to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and to reach out to the local LGBTQ community. Volunteers help organize educational seminars and provide a supporting presence at local area rallies and events.

**Hypothermia Prevention** (Pat Berg) During the winter months, UUCR partners with Cornerstones and Fairfax County to prepare and serve dinner to the homeless once a week at the North County Hypothermia Prevention Program (NCHP) Center. Training for this project takes place in early December at UUCR, and volunteers work in teams to plan, prepare, and serve meals to dozens of homeless adults.

**Jennifer Mitchell Memorial Scholarship Fund** (Terry Mitchell) Established in 1990, this scholarship fund is for graduating high school seniors with a solid record of achievement despite economic, family, linguistic, or other difficulties which would have impeded less dedicated and determined students. Donations are gratefully received throughout the year and scholarships are awarded each spring.

**UU the Vote** (Tim Norton) UUCR volunteers work on nonpartisan efforts to increase voter participation and remove unfair practices that suppress voting, often focusing on communities of color who have been special targets of unjust laws. We partner with other UU congregations and groups and with national voting rights organizations.
Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Immigrant Subcommittee (RASI) (Caroline Ewart and Steve Ewart) UUCR supports international families and children who, after fleeing persecution, wish to start a new life in the United States. We provide funding, food, clothing, transportation, and other essentials to welcome and help families acclimate to Northern Virginia. Members also provide pro bono legal advice and other support to our immigrant neighbors seeking legal asylum.

Special Collections Coordination (Denise Kirwan and Terry Grogan) Each month throughout the year, the Social Action and Justice Committee designates a special charity to receive congregational donations. On the second Sunday of each month, all cash from the collection plate is also donated to the charity of the month.

The Closet of the Greater Herndon Area (Jane Anthony) This nonprofit thrift shop in the heart of historic downtown Herndon was founded in 1974 by a few local churches to sell used clothing at nominal prices. The Closet is supported entirely by sales and the community in the form of donations, purchases, and volunteers. Each quarter, UUCR is assigned twelve 2-hour volunteer shifts to help at checkout, organize shelves, work at the boutique desk or the fitting room, and learn how to price items.

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (Terry Grogan) UUSJ’s mission is to mobilize and amplify the voice of Unitarian Universalists in the National Capital Region (NCR) and around the nation as we seek to change the world through acts of love and justice. Current issue priorities are democracy and voting rights; climate change and the environment; immigration justice; and economic inequality. You can take part in advocacy and witness opportunities to bring critical social justice issues to the attention of federal policy-makers by joining UUSJ at http://uusj.net.

Would you like to volunteer? Diverse volunteer roles are available for all of these projects and more. Simply contact the person leading the activity you are interested in for more details on how you can help. We are especially interested in recruiting future leaders for these projects and programs, to be able to rotate leadership among active volunteers every two or three years. Newcomers are always welcome. If you would like to participate in SoActJust, or have questions about related projects/programs or activities, email SAJChairs@uureston.org.