SOCIAL ACTION & JUSTICE COMMITTEE (SoActJust)

Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston

UUCR’s congregational participation in Social Action and Social Justice reflects 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.

Volunteers are always needed to support these critical efforts. Newcomers are always welcome. Contact the program lead noted below or committee chair Tim Norton to learn more: SAJChair@UUReston.org.

SoActJust Projects, Programs and Leaders

**Racial Justice Subcommittee** (Tim Norton, sajchair@uureston.org, temporary lead)
In light of the congregation’s decision to focus on the issue of racial justice, the Racial Justice Subcommittee moved from being a taskforce to a freestanding subcommittee. This subcommittee focuses on creating and facilitating opportunities for education and action towards dismantling systemic racism both in the greater Reston community and our nation at large.

**Alternative Gift Market** (Denise Kirwan, agmchair@uureston.org) 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. Learn more: https://uureston.org/agm.

**Cornerstones Partnership** (Liaison: Judith Polizzotti, judithpolizzotti@gmail.com) Our Cornerstones’ liaison represents UUCR on the Cornerstones Board of Directors, 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 need 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. Further information is available online: www.cornerstonesva.org.

**Green Sanctuary** (Susan Forth, jackietg@gmail.com) 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. Green Sanctuary holds a watershed cleanup each spring in connection with Earth Day.
LGBTQ+ Task Force (Debra Stover, deb.stoverstudio@gmail.com) 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 Program (Greg Ratta, rattagreg@gmail.com) During the winter months, UUCR partners with Cornerstones and Fairfax County to prepare and serve dinner to the unsheltered one day per week. Volunteers simply signup to prepare parts of the dinner for a particular night, then drop off at the North County Human Services Building. Training for this project takes place in November at UUCR, and volunteers work in teams to plan, prepare, and deliver meals to dozens of homeless adults. New volunteers are welcome and it’s a great way to make an immediate positive contribution to our most vulnerable population.

Jennifer Mitchell Memorial Scholarship Fund (Terry Mitchell, tmitch1@verizon.net) 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.

Democracy Action Team (Rod Paolini, Ruth Grubb, Dora Anderson, Terry Grogan, Tim Norton, sajchair@uureston.org) For the 2024 general election, the Democracy Action Team is working on efforts to get out the vote by postcarding, phone banking and text banking with the www.centerforcommonground.org/ and other ways to get out the vote. We are also registering voters with the League of Women Voters, https://www.lwv.org/. There are also opportunities to write letters to elected officials about issues that relate to UU values.

Refugee, Asylum Seeker, and Immigrant Subcommittee (RASI) (Steve Ewart, scewart@verizon.net) The RASI Subcommittee provides support to sustain displaced people identified as “Refugees” by the United Nations High Commission of Refugees. RASI provides funding, food, clothing, transportation, and other essentials to welcome and help families acclimate to Northern Virginia. Members also provide pro bono legal advice and support to our immigrant neighbors seeking legal asylum. In April 2023, RASI-supported mother and her children were sworn in as citizens of the United States. The RASI Subcommittee has expanded to assist three Central American families with essential support and pro bono legal services before the Immigration Court. In June 2023, one Central American mother and her child were granted asylum and are on their path toward permanent residence and United States citizenship.

Special Collections Coordination (Terry Grogan, terrymgrogan@gmail.com) 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, janeanthony@me.com) 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 volunteer shifts to help at checkout, organize shelves, work at the boutique desk, and learn how to price items. We would love your involvement. Contact Jane Anthony to regularly receive updates and volunteer opportunities. Learn more about The Closet at http://theclosetofgreaterherndon.org/.

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (Terry Grogan, terrymgrogan@gmail.com) 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. Our activities focus on changing national policy in consistency with UU values, by meetings with Congressional and Administration offices, inviting UU congregations around the country to present their views. 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.

VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement) (Timothy Norton, sajchair@uureston.org; temporary contact) Built on the principles of Community Organizing VOICE is a nonpartisan coalition of over 50 faith communities (Christians, Jews, Moslems, UUs) and civic organizations in Northern Virginia working together to build power in middle and low-income communities. VOICE organizes in Prince William, Fairfax, and Arlington counties as well as the City of Alexandria uniting people across lines of race, class, religion, political party, and geography to act on key issues such as youth mental health and need for more affordable housing in our community. Further information at wwwVOICEva.org.

Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) (Dora Anderson, dorama33@gmail.com) VICPP, together with faith leaders, congregations, and volunteers from across VA advocates for a variety of social justice issues, including Economic Justice, Criminal Justice Reform, Health Equity, Housing, Immigration, and Environmental Justice. Founded in 1982, VICPP has a long history of engaging people of faith to make Virginia a better place and a more just place for everyone.

Would you like to volunteer?

The success of our Social Action and Justice efforts lies with volunteers who graciously share their time, compassion, and skills to support this vital work.

Diverse volunteer roles are available for all 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 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 SAJChair@uureston.org.