

Social Justice Discernment & Engagement Program

a three-part series for congregations looking to build or reactivate their social justice program

This program is designed to help congregational members and leaders who wish to assess the quality of their social justice program, develop a vision for the future based on UU values and design a plan to achieve the vision.

This three-part process involves education, discernment, reflection, strategy development and planning. Participants leave with tools they need to help facilitate healthy, integrated social justice programs in their congregation. Congregational leaders leave with a defined vision, a clear direction, a supportive and engaged congregation, and a structure to build and implement the plan to get there.

This program is fully customizable and can be focused to address the specific needs of any congregation. Because the program is customized for each congregation, the cost of this service varies. Please contact Evan Junker at 530.312.9615 or evan@uujmca.org for more information or to discuss this opportunity and how it may support your congregation.



Objectives

While each congregation's needs differ, we have identified key components we believe are critical based on congregations with healthy and effective justice ministries. This process will help congregations identify healthy, accountable social justice ministries which can be integrated into congregational life as well as a preliminary plan to begin to build such ministries. The main components of the program are:

- Discussion on how to help make your social justice program more spiritually grounded in Unitarian Universalist values.
- Assessment of the current status of your congregation's social justice program, including key strengths within your current justice efforts, celebration of your congregation's social justice history, and opportunities to be a social justice ally in your community.
- Examination of the various components of social justice work.
- Planning towards how to integrate social justice into the larger life of your congregation including worship, religious education, and adult programming.
- Identification of strategic opportunities based on the strengths of your congregation and opportunities within the communities you serve.
- Strategy development for increasing the number of people involved in the social justice program.

Timeline

The program is planned for three 90-120 minute workshops spaced approximately one month apart to allow for work and feedback time in between. It is strongly recommended that the first workshop be done immediately following a worship service or other time that would generate a high turnout.

This is an interactive program. Much of the work is done in small groups lead by the minister, board members or social justice leaders.

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The first session incorporates a look at the congregation's history around social justice, allowing time to celebrate the congregation's successes and identify areas for improvement. We look at UU values, UU justice history and models of engagement. We explore what it means to be an effective ally in right relationship. This workshop will help your congregation:

- Define systemic change and why UUs engage in efforts to create transformative social justice;
- Look at the congregation's social justice identity and celebrate the congregation's historical engagement in social justice work;
- Examine the components of a balanced social justice program;
- Investigate how social justice will integrate into a healthy congregational life;
- Consider key components to a grounded social justice program including being values-based, accountable, and in right relationship;
- Reframe social justice activities as a congregation-wide ministry; and
- Begin to identify directions for the congregation's future in social justice

In the second session participants consider critical issues for the congregation which, if properly addressed, will lead to a more effective social justice program. Much of this work is done in small groups with sharing. We discuss and practice democratic methods for choosing issues to explore further. This session will:

- Explore issues identified in session one;
- Discuss core values of the congregation's social justice program;
- Develop draft social justice vision;
- Brainstorm congregational resources and assets, potential community partners and justice opportunities;
- Begin congregational issue feedback and launch survey; and
- Determine democratic process for selecting issues.

The third session brings it home by having the leadership team present the results of the feedback and evaluations for possible engagements. They make recommendations and set up the process for selection and planning. This session sets the stage for the planning and implementation of the new model:

- Analyze congregational feedback results;
- Report on top issues along with potential engagement opportunities for each;
- Begin process of issue selection;
- Define next steps including leadership and structure for social justice, and integration into congregational life; and
- Identify potential partners within a frame of right relationship and establishing a process for on-going evaluation.

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