

Notes from First Parish Social Justice Empowerment Workshop

8-March-2008

Facilitators: Art McDonald, Charlie Zoeller

Welcome! This Workshop's for YoUU!

Social Justice – some one-word associations:

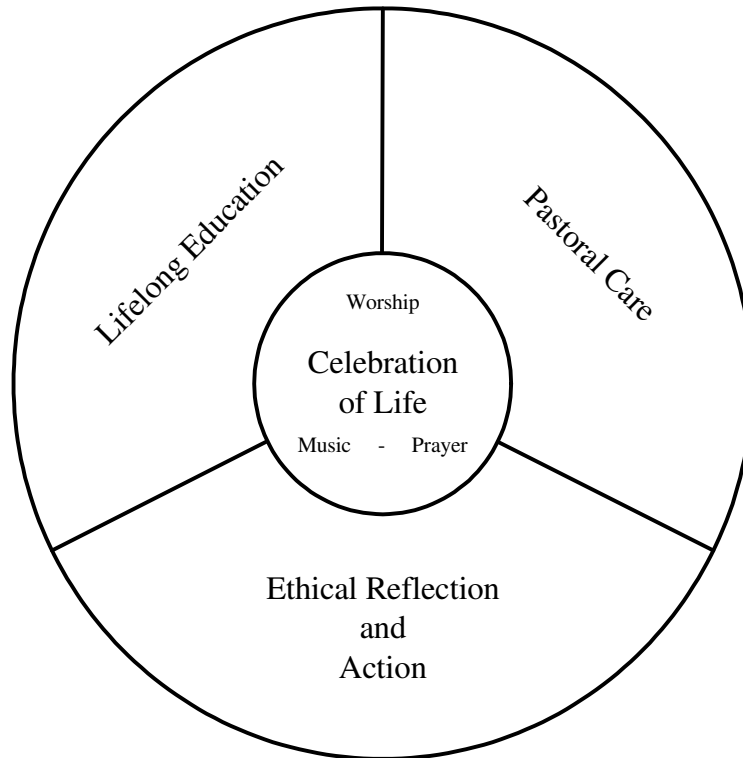
Commitment	Bringing world out of absurd	Involving people
Reaching out	Awareness	Reducing conflict
Helping others	Empathy	Preparing for the future
Sharing with the world	Justice, equality for all	Sacrifice
Effecting change	Understanding & support	Creating peace
Teaching others to fish	Giving back	
Supporting peace	Making world better	

The day's agenda:

8:30 – 9:00	Coffee / registration
9:00 – 10:30	Worship Introductions Goals UUA Theological / spiritual grounding What we like / where we can improve Guiding principles: Grounding, Fit, Opportunity, Accountability
10:30 – 10:45	Break
10:45 – 12:15	5 Types of Social Justice Afternoon groups: structure – action/issues Social Change Cycle
12:15 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 1:15	Decide on groups
1:15 – 2:30	Small Group Work
2:30 – 2:45	Break
2:45 – 3:30	Reports, next steps, evaluation

This approach to social justice planning can be depicted thus:

Gilbert's Wheel



Oduyoye: “The energy by which one lives and which links one’s worldview to one’s lifestyle”
 OR –
 “Let your life be a prayer for peace.”

Where do we believe First Parish is doing or has done well in our social justice effort, and how would we like to improve?

Doing Well	Type	Hope to Improve
Habitat for Humanity <i>teams</i>	S	Spiritual grounding
Welcoming Congregation & Diversity Days		More people involved (First Parish members)
Support for Canton Food Pantry	S	Greater visibility, awareness at First Parish
Arlington St. church Friday eve suppers		Intergenerational activities
Organizing to support ... projects in need / seasonal	S	Raise / improve our public “identity” as UUs
OWL / sexuality program	E	Local impact / connection
Letters: war protest, Equal Marriage Amdmt	A	Collect / post our Social Justice history
Signs / met with officials (EMA)		Connect with African-American community
Forum, party	E	Environmental work (engages youth)
Physician member’s work in Haiti	S	Work w/ other groups, coalitions and/or UU or other faith communities
Jason & Demarco Concert; mentioned on TV		Sustaining work
CoffeeHouse		Re-evaluate

Types of work: S(ervice), A(dvocacy), E(ducation), W(itness)

Guiding characteristics we'd like social justice work at FPUU to possess:

- Involve children and youth
- Be known “beyond the yellow doors” (both witness and sustain)
- Something the entire congregation can be proud of
- Congregation is engaged and supportive – we sustain awareness
- We've developed a clear focus
- **Have outlets for engagement of different ages, interests, skills**
- UU's just want to have fun! Parties – auctions - music

The GFAO Model:

When we consider an issue for our social justice program, we should look at it from these four perspectives:

Grounding

- Does the issue / activity express our UUness?

Accountability

- Are we acting on our commitment to those that society at large has marginalized?

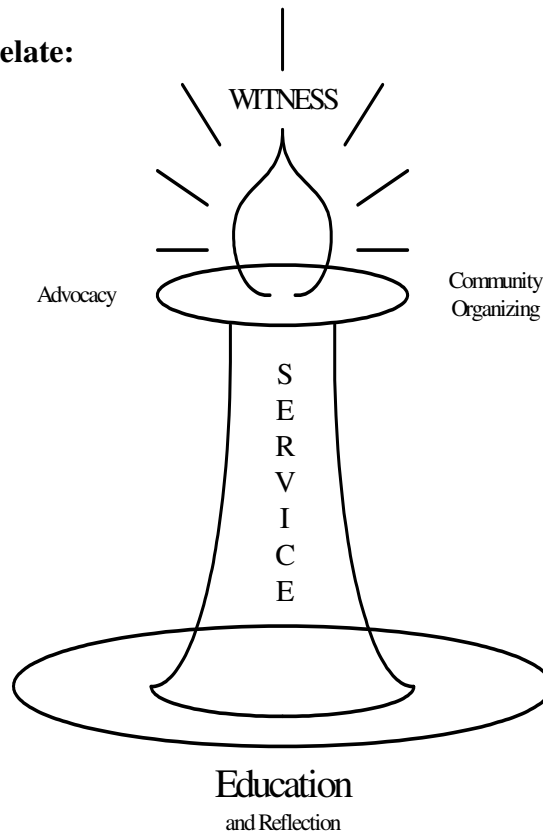
Fit

- Do we have leaders who are ready to work on the issue?
- Are resources available to work on the issue? (local resources outside congregation, or UUA resources)
- Is the issue one for which we as a congregation have a passion?

Opportunity

- Is this a current hot topic?
- Can we form coalitions to enhance our effectiveness?

How the types of activities relate:



Potential Issues – Initial Brainstorming

- Ending war – advocating for peace
- Environmental sustainability, and activism
- Countering violence against women and dating violence
- Eliminating hunger and homelessness – esp. locally
- Elderly
- Countering racism / oppression; diversity
- Economic justice
- Accessibility
- Gay rights
- Healthcare

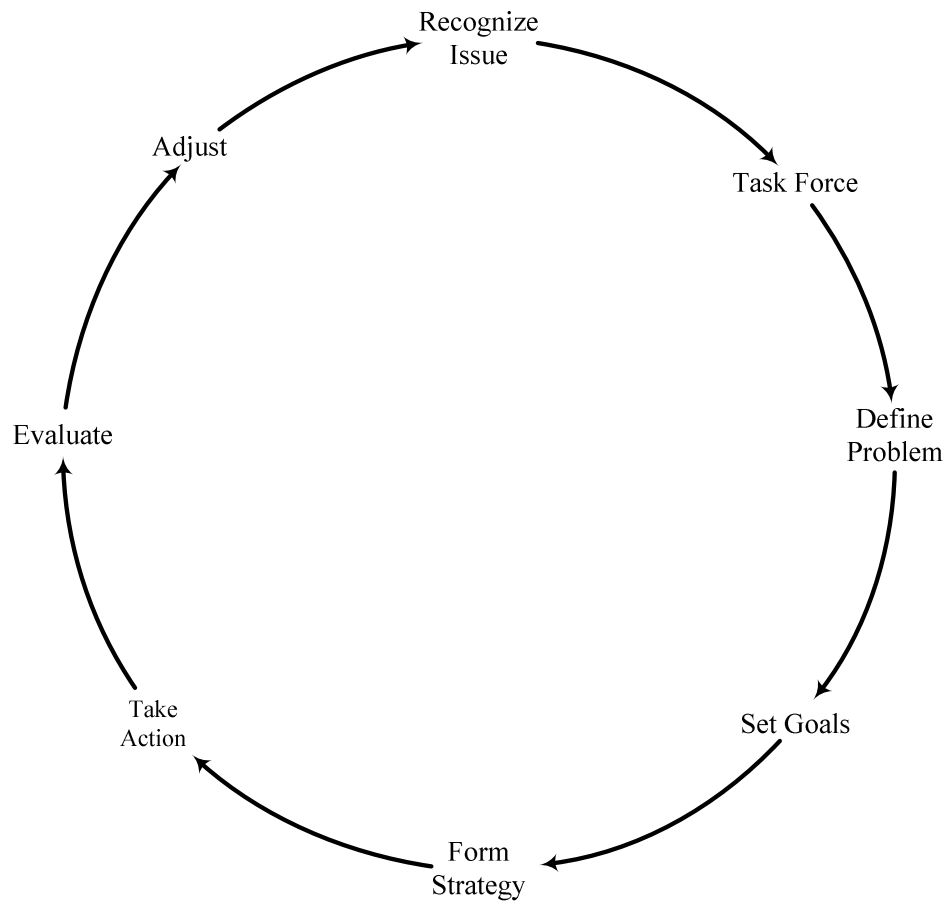
Issues: Consolidate and Vote

Economic justice – Hunger/Homelessness - Healthcare	8
Anti-oppression – diversity – racism – gay rights – violence against women	12
Peace – ending war	6
Environment	14
Elderly	1
Accessibility	1

Issue Action Groups – Key Points to Develop

- Goal
- Objectives
- Strategies
- Resources:
People – allies – Fit & opportunity – accountable
- Interrelated Aspects (see our chalice, above):
Service
Education
Advocacy
Witness
Community Organizing
- Intergenerational opportunities – children, families
- Congregational pride and involvement
- Community connections and awareness

The Social Change Cycle



Report – Environmental Action Task Group

Goal: To improve environment

One-year goals:

1. Greening of First Parish
2. Community outreach
Education – Forum, web site
Cleaning project
Support local Earth Day

Resources:

- Neponset River Valley Association
- Audubon Society
- Local colleges
- Dishes / dishwasher
- UU Mass Action Network
- UUA Curriculum

Budget needs: (a) publicity (flyers, Canton Citizen), (b) curricula

Miscellaneous: “UU Support the Environment” t-shirts

Next Steps:

- Meet w/ Diane re: Earth Day
- After service get-together for those interested

Report – Anti-Oppression Task Group

Selected focus: countering domestic violence

1. **Goal Statement:** To raise awareness within FPUU and Canton on domestic violence, and on methods of dealing with it effectively
2. **Objectives:**
 - a. Domestic violence service (awareness) – May?
 - b. Obtain domestic violence curriculum for R.E.
 - c. Incorporate domestic violence curriculum in R.E. program
 - d. Hold Domestic Violence Forum at FPUU Canton, open to all – October ?
3. **Theme:** LET PEACE BEGIN WITH ME
4. RE Director, Minister, and Task Force
5. Budgeted approx \$1000: Speaker, advertisements, quilt mat
6. Subject sensitivity to children
7. See #4 & RE Committee
8. Jane Doe, CPD, Dept. of Education
9. Select committee members, set first meeting date; develop agenda & action items, set due dates

Report: Central Social Justice team job description group

Name of group: Social Justice Core Team

Makeup of group: 3 members, staggered 3-year terms

Purpose: To nurture and guide the process by which First Parish engages in social justice work

- (1) To ensure that First Parish pursues activities on an appropriate set of social justice issues, including annual/seasonal giving traditions.
 - Convene periodic congregational meetings to brainstorm and choose issue(s), identify leader(s), and form task force(s)
 - Serve as resource to the Task Forces as needed.
 - Receive and review proposals for prospective projects; recommend that any project be brought to the Parish Committee's attention where it may have financial impact or could be perceived as controversial.
- (2) To facilitate communications within First Parish on social justice activities in progress
 - Ensure that Task Forces inform the Parish Committee, the RE committee, and the congregation of social justice activities
- (3) To encourage congregational generosity in support of social justice activities.
- (4) To inform task forces of other activities and resources outside First Parish.
 - Examples: UUA, UU Mass Action Network, local organizations and/or coalitions.
- (5) To ensure that task forces adequately publicize First Parish social justice activities.
 - Assist as necessary in preparing press releases, flyers, lawn signs, or announcements.
- (6) To lead periodic assessment of First Parish social justice activities.

Next Steps:

Recruit Core Team members

Overall Next Steps from Workshop

What	Who	When
Report to congregation	Charlie Z, Ruth G.	Service 9-Mar
Type notes	Laurie / Brian	16-Mar
Newsletter communication	Laurie / Brian	23-Mar
Complete core team writeup & brainstorm members	Laurie / Diane / Brian	Email decision
Recruit Core Team members	Laurie / Brian	Mid-April
Ask Mary, Barbara to convene groups to discuss interest in Task Forces – groups to review 8-Mar notes to decide interest	Laurie (BC) Brian (MC)	Meeting 30-Mar
Post Signup Sheet		9-Mar