



## Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

and

## Action In Montgomery



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[www.aim-iaf.org](http://www.aim-iaf.org)

**Action In Montgomery (AIM)** is an inter-faith, citizen-based, non-partisan social justice organization dedicated to advancing the quality of life in Montgomery County, Maryland. AIM, like its sister organizations, is part of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) organized by Saul Alinsky. Cedar Lane is one of the congregations that founded AIM in 1999.

**AIM's mission** is to build a broad base of power so that citizens can influence the institutions that affect their lives. AIM engages congregation leaders in developing an agenda around issues that directly impact their lives, *e.g.*, public schools, housing, youth, transportation and pedestrian safety. The membership of AIM believes that democracy is not merely voting, but actively engaging in the public arena to meet the challenges in our communities.

## **From Individual Relationships to Social Change: Cedar Lane, AIM and Social Justice in Montgomery County**

### **From where does AIM draw its political strength?**

AIM and the IAF's approximately 55 other affiliates have their roots and strength in individual relationships built on shared values, faith and vision. Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development, Philadelphia Interfaith Action and Washington Interfaith Network are three other IAF affiliates. BUILD, PIA, WIN and now AIM have established a broad base of citizens' political power that bring about social change.

### **How do Cedar Laners benefit from AIM?**

Cedar Lane, as a vibrant part of the Unitarian Universalist movement, is rooted in the search for truth, democracy and social justice. Our membership in AIM supports the relationships among our congregants that keep us spiritually healthy and focused on our shared values, faith and vision. Interpersonal relationships within our congregation, such as religious education for children and continuing education for adults, are our spiritual power base; Cedar Lane's accomplishments as a congregation are possible because our individual connections give strength to our committees and task forces. AIM and the other IAF organizations operate on that same principle.

### **What has AIM's political power achieved locally?**

AIM was established in 1999 and has initiated improvements in funding for affordable housing, for services to senior citizens and individuals who are disabled and for higher quality public schools. AIM's track record proves that its process is effective. AIM offers you inter-generational, inter-racial, inter-faith volunteer activity well worth the expenditure of your time. Much social justice work remains for AIM congregations to do. Through a regular cycle of leadership training, organizing and assemblies, AIM members discuss local problems and select issues for action.

## **Action In Montgomery's Successes**

In order to develop our issue campaigns, AIM leaders hold individual meetings with congregation leaders, followed by small-group house meetings among congregation members and neighbors. Through the issues developed in the house meetings, AIM congregations, which represent over 20,000 Montgomery County residents, determine which social issues are the most critical to address in order to improve quality of life in the county.

In the past five years, AIM has achieved the following successes with issues that surfaced during house meetings:

- Reform of the Call 'N Ride taxi service program for seniors and the disabled
- Almost one billion dollars to finance years of neglected public school construction needs
- Dedicated, annual funding for the Housing Initiative Fund (2.5% of the property tax)
- Accelerated expansion of all-day kindergarten in the county schools
- \$835,000 for escorted senior transportation.

**Practicing democracy and building political power in our community: It’s all about relationships!**

With 27 member congregations, AIM is continuing to increase its base, among congregations whose membership represents the diversity of Montgomery County. That effort means constantly broadening and deepening connections within each member congregation and across congregations. AIM “core team” members at Cedar Lane meet with other Cedar Laners, to get to know other church members. These individual meetings entail only a commitment of a half- to hour-long meeting to make connections. Individual meetings lead to small group meetings, also called house meetings, where people raise issues of concern. Those meetings lead to the setting of AIM’s agenda of issues to be addressed county-wide. There are approximately 10 Cedar Laners committed to this effort who hope that this introduction to AIM will encourage you to join us. For more information about AIM, call Marilyn Hathaway, Nancy Janssen, Margaret Levchenko, Helen Strang or Debbie Trent (all of whose phone numbers are in the church directory).

—*The AIM Team at Cedar Lane*

## **Action In Montgomery**

### **Member Congregations**

Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church	Wheaton
Bethesda Presbyterian Church	Bethesda
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church	Bethesda
Christ Lutheran Church	Bethesda
Christian Baptist Church	Silver Spring
Church of the Resurrection Catholic Parish	Burtonsville
Colesville United Methodist Church	Silver Spring
Damascus United Methodist Church	Damascus
Episcopal Church of the Ascension	Silver Spring
Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration	Silver Spring
Good Hope Union United Methodist Church	Silver Spring
Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church	Rockville
Kehilat Shalom	Montgomery Village
Mill Creek Parish United Methodist Church	Derwood
Oak Grove A.M.E.-Zion Church	Olney
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church	Bethesda
Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Parish	Potomac
St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Parish	Wheaton
St. Jude’s A.M.E Church	Germantown
St. Luke’s Lutheran Church	Derwood
St. Mark Presbyterian Church	Bethesda
St. Paul’s Catholic Parish	Damascus
St. Rose of Lima Catholic Parish	Gaithersburg
Sligo Seventh-Day Adventist Church	Takoma Park
Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockville	Rockville
Westmoreland United Church of Christ	Bethesda
Woodside United Methodist Church	Silver Spring

**AIM is part of...**  
**The Industrial Areas Foundation**

The following is excerpted from: <[www.industrialareasfoundation.org](http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org)>.

The leaders and organizers of the Industrial Areas Foundation build organizations whose primary purpose is power - the ability to act - and whose chief product is social change. They continue to practice what the Founding Fathers preached: the ongoing attempt to make life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness everyday realities for more and more Americans.

The IAF is non-ideological and strictly non-partisan, but proudly, publicly and persistently political. The IAF builds a political base within society's rich and complex third sector - the sector of voluntary institutions that includes religious congregations, labor locals, homeowner groups, recovery groups, parent associations, settlement houses, immigrant societies, schools, seminaries and others. And then the leaders use that network to compete at times, to confront at times, and to cooperate at times with leaders in the public and private sectors.

The IAF develops organizations that use power - organized people and organized money - in effective ways. The secret to the IAF's success lies in its commitment to identify, recruit, train and develop leaders in every corner of every community where the IAF works. The IAF is indeed a radical organization in this specific sense: the network believes in the potential of the vast majority of people to grow and develop as leaders, to be full members of the body politic, to speak and act with others on their own behalf. And the IAF does indeed use a radical tactic: the face-to-face, one-to-one individual meeting whose purpose is to initiate a public relationship and to re-knit the frayed social fabric.

The living reality of the IAF is overwhelmingly present in the 55 IAF affiliates functioning in 21 states, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany

Regional gatherings of those local groups - IAF East in the northeast corridor and Southwest IAF in the American southwest - also meet, plan, and take action.

The National IAF conducts 10-day intensive training sessions and sets standards for the approximately 150 professional organizers working in the network.