

Minutes
Cedar Lane Social Justice Council Meeting
Thursday, December 6

Present: Connie Nissley, Karen Lerner, Deborah Vollmer, Sandy Shaw, Tillman Neuner, Kay Scott, Helen Strang, Marge Dimond, Betsy Devlin-Foltz, Mike Benefiel, Heather Janules, Molly Hauck.

1. Opening

Mike Benefiel opened the meeting and lit three chalices for the 3rd night of Hanukkah. Members then shared memories of the late Jane Lawton, state delegate, honoring her leadership in our community.

2. Communication and Priorities

Betsy Devlin-Foltz gave an update on the “Lounge Lizards” table at which members are handing out a brochure and handing out a short survey to members of the congregation to determine who is interested in SJ different issues. This information will be shared with relevant task forces and others in the congregation. Heather is exploring whether the survey could be distributed one Sunday in the Order of Service so more people receive it. The website has been updated and task force leaders were urged to check the information about their groups and send updates to Betsy betsy@devlin-foltz.com or directly to Robin Larkin, webminister robinlarkin@comcast.net.

She also shared a document summarizing an SJC leadership meeting on priorities and activities for the year. The committee agreed to come back to a discussion on how to identify and support sources of leadership and energy on peace/anti-war activities in the congregation.

3. Mission Statement

The committee adopted the attached mission statement. Thanks to Helen Strang, Pat Karlsen, Mike Benefiel, Heather Janules, Connie Nissley, and others who have worked on this since the SJC retreat in the fall.

4. Action in Montgomery (AIM)

Report on Park & Planning Hearing of Dec. 6. The hearing addressed the proposed development of the Falkland Chase apartments—AIM has engaged in serious soul searching on this question. The developer is proposing to take down the apartment building, which would displace the current tenants, and replace it with a new, green building of 1000 units including 182 to replace current affordable housing units and an additional 100 more. AIM decided to support the development. The hearing at MCC Park and Planning was to determine whether three sections of the building could be declared historic, which would prevent this. [The Planning Board voted 4-1 to recommend declaring the property historic. The recommendation now goes to the County Council and the County Executive.]

5. UUSJ Workshop December 1, 2007

Helen Strang reported that Reverend Sinkford opened the workshop at the UU church of Silver Spring. He said that UUs have spent too much time arguing about what we believe. He urged UUs to focus on our public presence, and work on building effective partnerships even if we don't agree on everything.

6. Treasurer's Report

Connie Nissley provided a copy of the 2007-08 Working Budget report and noted that we have spent well over ½ of our budget on office expenses. The council discussed the likelihood that the bulk of this was related to the Green-In but that the new coding system makes it impossible to know more specifically. She agreed to ask the office staff if we can separate out task forces for copying. In the meantime, the ETF task force was commended for its frugality. Approximately half of the funds budgeted for the Green-In were used and the task force is still raising money through the sale of LED lights in the lounge. \$200 of the remaining funds will be transferred to the office expenses line item to offset cost of Green-In related copying.

7. LGBT Task Force Report

Marge Dimond indicated that the task force is preparing for advocacy work during the Maryland General Session and will be working closely with Equality Maryland on priorities, which are likely to include Marriage Equality and TransGender Law (defeated last year).

The Forum on January 6. The presenter is Dan Furmansky, Executive Director of Equality Maryland and the topic is: After the Courts: Moving Forward LGBT Equality in Maryland.

Civil Marriage is a Civil Right sign has been stolen twice from the front of the church. LGBT Task Force will use the Lounge Lizards table to engage people for Lobby Day and is hoping to send a larger group this year and engage others in post card writing etc. The task force is interested in ideas for how to get more people there. Some suggestions included helping with transportation, involving senior high youth.

LGBT community has requested family-friendly social activities. They are exploring something in concert with RE in the spring.

8. Board of Trustees Liaison Report

Karen Lerner, liaison to the Board of Trustees, indicated that the board had recently figured out that 192 groups meet at the church putting enormous burdens on the staff. It takes time and sometimes conflicts with other priorities. The church has decided not to schedule events for any new outside groups for now.

A new administrative assistant, Chaula Butterworth, has been hired.

The board has agreed to sponsor Kristin Grassel for her ministerial fellowship and to budget funds for a ministerial intern next year. There will not be a board led service in 2008.

9. Ministerial Liaison Report

Heather Janules is hoping to get more members interested in Denominational Affairs and is proposing that people whose registration fee is paid to attend General Assembly will

agree to serve for a year on the Denominational Affairs committee. This year's committee is involved in study action on Peace building (see below). Heather, Mike, and Pat Karlsen will be attending a meeting for the Journey towards Wholeness, a UUA initiative to support multicultural community building. Heather is planning a Day of Service in the spring in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of Cedar Lane's building. The first meeting of the task force will take place after the New Year.

10. Peace Action Montgomery, McCaw and Related Activities

Deborah Vollmer noted that Peace Action is lobbying members of Congress and will be a sponsoring candidates' forum for 8th and 4th District, tentatively scheduled for Jan 27 from 2-4 pm in County Council building. (In a subsequent email Deborah requested that SJC decide whether to sign on as a sponsor for this event.)

McCaw didn't meet in Nov or Dec will meet again in Jan.

Daoud Nassar is speaking in various places in the area. He is a Palestinian whose family purchased land in early 1900s for which he has documentation. He is currently surrounded by settlers and is fighting the Israeli legal system, but is engaged in peaceful dialogue with them. Deborah would like to publicize the Tent of Nations in the lounge. Do we need internal dialogue before doing this? Deborah circulated an email about this after the meeting.

11. Reviving the Legislative Task Force

Molly Hauck was former co-chair, with Rich Madaleno until he got elected. The task force focused on letter writing campaigns on various state issues. SJC discussed whether to use the Lounge Lizards table for advocacy efforts for issues identified by the UU Legislative Ministry MD, for example, which is focusing on Marriage Equality, Global Warming, Health Care for All.

12. Congregational Study Action

Mike Benefiel distributed a survey on Peace making as part of CLUUC's participation in UUA's study action. He also reminded members of the UUSC Drumbeat for Darfur events December 8-10, including a meeting with Senator Cardin's office.

Mission Statement of the Social Justice Council, 2007–2008

As members of the Social Justice Council (SJC) of Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, our mission is to affirm and promote the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism and to honor the legacy of Cedar Lane's leadership in work for social justice in the wider community, by encouraging members of the congregation to partner with us in translating our commitment into action.

Our decisions for 2007–2008 reflect the expressed priorities of the congregation and concentrate on the following issues:

- Strengthening the social safety net for those in need,
- Environmental sustainability,
- Human and civil rights for all, especially as they affect aspects of identity and enable us to celebrate diversity, and
- Peace in areas of conflict, particularly those affected by American military and foreign policy toward Iraq and the entire Middle East.

Working on these issues involves the members of the SJC and the congregation in educating, advocating, organizing, and spending resources of time and money. We do this work through these task forces and activities:

- Environmental Task Force
- Global Task Force
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Task Force
- Action in Montgomery
- Beacon House
- Bethesda House (men's shelter)
- Community-based Shelter
- Martha's Table
- McCRAW (Montgomery County Coalition for Alternatives to War) and Peace Action Montgomery
- Interfaith Works (formerly Community Ministry of Montgomery County)
- Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee