

POLICY FOR CONGREGATIONAL ADVOCACY ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

On important social justice issues of the day, the Social Justice Committee (Committee) may seek congregational support and/or participation. This policy defines a fair and open process for consideration of resolutions concerning advocacy positions, statements, or actions. Advocacy in the name of the congregation on social justice issues is authorized only by a vote taken at a congregational meeting called in accordance with the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws.

An accelerated authorization process may occur when the Minister is moved to take prophetic action to confront powers and structures of oppression, hate or violence. The minister is called to lead the congregation in meeting the injustices and suffering of our time with compassion and the transforming power of love. At times bold action is required. This may be in support of a UUA Action of Immediate Witness or other immediate need. The accelerated authorization process for ministerial prophetic action will include support by the Lay Ministry Council and the Social Justice Committee and consultation with and approval by the Board of Trustees. The authorized action will be publicized to the congregation through congregation-wide communication to include email, UUCR E-Weekly, the website, and/or Quest.

The members of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville (UUCR) are committed to the principles of the inherent worth and dignity of every person and justice, equity and compassion in human relations. Advocacy on social justice issues is a vital part of the mission of our congregation. Because the members of UUCR are also committed to the use of the democratic process within our congregations, it is important that such decisions be developed using democratic procedures. The purpose of this policy is to define the procedures by which the congregation may take public positions, make statements or take actions on social justice issues. The SJ Committee Advocacy Policy adopted in 2006, and the Social Justice

Advocacy Guidelines and Background are companion documents that contain additional information.

1. Annually, the Committee will determine whether to support a resolution to be considered by the congregation as a whole. Sponsors seeking Congregational approval of a non-partisan position must submit a written proposal to the Committee Chair for action at an agreed upon regularly scheduled meeting. Exception: in the case of a matter with an urgent time frame that arises after the annual consideration time frame, the Social Justice Committee may by unanimous vote decide to add another item for congregational consideration. For example, if the Committee decides upon a resolution in January and the state advises in the following July that there will be ballot initiative on the November ballot, the committee may unanimously decide to follow the procedure below for another issue.

2. The proposal must be submitted at least 14 days in advance of the Social Justice Committee regularly scheduled monthly meeting so that it may be distributed along with the agenda for the meeting. On urgent matters like the exception above, the Committee may vote by email. The proposal will address: Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes; existing UUA resolutions including statements of immediate witness and study/action issues; UUCR mission and vision statement; costs and other relevant considerations.

3. The Committee will review issues solicited from the congregation to determine whether they will build the ethical integrity and moral identity of our congregation. Priority will be given to issues that relate to a UUA Study/Action Issue being pursued by the congregation. The Committee may determine not to support any of the issues from those submitted. If an issue is selected by a majority of the Committee, the sponsor of the issue will draft a formal resolution and plan for congregational consideration.

4. The SJ Committee Chair and the sponsor will meet with the minister to get input and to discuss the plan to include background papers, Quest articles, programs of education and advocacy. The minister must agree that

the action be pursued for it to proceed to the next step. After this, the Committee will meet with the Lay Ministry Council, and the Board of Trustees to discuss the resolution. The Board of Trustees must agree that the action be pursued for it to proceed to the next step.

5. The Committee then transmits the resolution to the Congregation as a whole at least 90 days before a congregational meeting to consider the issue. During the 90 day period, the Social Justice Committee works to coordinate congregational study and discussion, such as Quest articles, Sunday services and forums. The full range of opinions should be discussed and, if practical, publicized for congregational consideration. For issues of great urgency the 90 day period may be reduced to 60 days with the approval of the minister and the Board of Trustees.

6. The Board of Trustees schedules a vote on the resolution for the next Annual Meeting or a special meeting for the purpose of considering the social justice resolution in accordance with UUCR By-Laws. Before the vote, the meeting notice will include the text of the proposed resolution. Adoption of a Congregational Social Justice Advocacy Resolution should require a favorable vote of 75% of the members present and voting.

7. Implementation within the scope of the resolution or action voted by the Congregation may be undertaken without additional congregational vote. This does not preclude reconsideration of the issue by the Congregation at appropriate intervals.

8. Approved resolutions will be publicized in the newsletter and the Committee website. At the Board's discretion, a minority view may be prepared and published in Quest.

9. Approved resolutions represent the view of the Congregation and may be ascribed to the Congregation at large. Resolutions may be used in the media or used to advocate for action by legislators. Resolutions should indicate what the planned uses are.

10. The resolutions may direct the Congregation to join organizations, for example, the Washington Region Religious Campaign Against Torture. The Social Justice Committee will review the activities of the organization at least every two years to assure their positions remain in concert with ours. Resolutions may be used in the media or used to advocate for action by legislators.

11. In accord with UUCR's bylaws, no commitment of financial resources may be made without the approval of the Board of Trustees. The resolution may request funds from the Board to implement the actions approved by the Congregation. In keeping with our UU Principles, a Congregational social justice resolution does not bind any individual UUCR member to the position or devalue those members who oppose the position. Minority opinions foster the diversity we value and represent an opportunity for continued dialog among ourselves and the community at large.

Approved by the Board of Trustees March 2008; revised August 2015