

Process for Approval of Congregation-Wide Social Justice Programs

This policy seeks to establish a fair and open process for consideration of proposed congregation-wide social justice programs. Approval of proposed congregation-wide social justice programs is authorized only by a vote to approve at a congregational meeting called in accordance with the Bylaws.

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. Social justice is a vital part of the mission of our congregation. Because we are also committed to the use of the democratic process within our congregation, it is important that decisions on congregation-wide social justice programs be subject to democratic procedures. This policy sets forth the procedures by which the congregation may establish congregation-wide social justice programs, with the goal of having three active programs at any one time.

Initial Proposals for congregation-wide social justice programs will be submitted to the Social Justice Committee. The Committee will consider whether an Initial Proposal is consistent with the following criteria, which have been approved by the Board in consultation with the Minister:

- a. The program is consistent with UU principles, and UUCR's mission and vision.
- b. The program entails a multi-year commitment.
- c. The Initial Proposal includes a communication plan for informing the congregation about the program.
- d. The Initial Proposal identifies a suitable number of leaders and committed members willing to make a multi-year commitment.
- e. The program addresses at least several of the following facets of social justice: service, education, witness, advocacy, and community organizing.
- f. The program is multi-generational.
- g. The program is consistent with the UUA study/action model, including education, reflection, direct action, and policy/advocacy, to encourage broad congregational participation.

The submission, review, and selection procedure is as follows:

1. Soliciting Social Justice Initiatives from the Congregation. The Social Justice Committee will solicit social justice initiatives periodically by scheduling, with the approval of the Lay Ministry Council, a Social Justice Town Hall once or twice each year to brief the congregation on (a) the current social justice activities of the Committee and, in particular, the priority congregation-wide projects, and (b) the process by which members may propose new initiatives for the Committee to consider for congregation-wide social justice programs.

2. Submission of an Initial Proposal. Any congregation member or group may submit to the Social Justice Committee, at any time, an Initial Proposal for a congregation-wide social justice program, after discussing the Initial Proposal

with the Minister. The Committee will offer technical support to any member(s) wishing to submit a proposal. In order for a Final Proposal to be ready for a congregational vote at the Annual Meeting in May, the committee should receive the Initial Proposal by November or the first half of December.

3. Committee Review and Selection. The Social Justice Committee will review an Initial Proposal at the first regular Committee meeting (on the first Tuesday of the month) occurring at least 14 days after the Committee has received the proposal, allowing the Committee members time to thoroughly review the proposal, in consultation with the Minister, before voting on it. The Committee will determine by a majority vote of its members whether or not to forward the proposal for consideration by the congregation as a whole. The Committee chair shall advise the proposal's sponsor of the outcome of the vote.

4. Post-Selection Steps. If the Initial Proposal has been selected, the sponsor will begin drafting a Formal Proposal, meet with the Minister and Lay Ministry Council to seek input and feedback, and complete the Formal Proposal. Selection by the Social Justice Committee (a) makes the Initial Proposal a proposal of the Committee, (b) makes at least one of the sponsors a member of the Committee (if not already a member), and (c) commits the Committee to supporting the sponsor throughout the drafting, review, approval, and implementation processes.

5. Congregational Review. At least 90 days before a congregational meeting to consider the issue, the program sponsors will transmit the Formal Proposal, through the Social Justice Committee and the Board, to the congregation as a whole. Before or after transmitting the Formal Proposal to the congregation, the Board may choose to vote on whether to recommend the Formal Proposal to the congregation. During the 90-day period, the sponsor (or proposed leaders) will coordinate congregational study and discussion, such as E-Weekly and Quest articles, Sunday service announcements, and forums. The full range of opinions should be discussed and, if practical, publicized for congregational consideration.

6. Congregational Vote. The Board will schedule a congregational vote on the Formal Proposal for the next Annual Meeting or for another congregational meeting scheduled in accordance with UUCR's Bylaws. The meeting notice will include the full text of the Formal Proposal, as well as a link to the Formal Proposal and related materials on the UUCR website. Adoption of a congregation-wide social justice program requires a favorable vote of 75% of the members voting (excluding abstentions).

7. Financial and Contractual Commitments. Congregational approval of a congregation-wide social justice program does not commit any financial resources to the program or result in any contractual commitments to outside organizations. Such commitments may only be made in accordance with UUCR's Bylaws and any applicable Board policies.

8. Implementation. The program sponsors will regularly consult with the Minister during implementation of the program and will provide the Social Justice Committee and the Board with annual reports on the program.