

Congregational Discernment & Engagement Program

a three-part series for congregations looking to build or reform their social justice program

The purpose of this program is for members and leaders of a congregation to assess the quality of their social justice program, develop a vision for the future based on our values, and design a plan to achieve the vision.

This three-part process involves education, discernment, reflection, strategy development and planning. Participants leave with tools they need to help facilitate healthy, integrated social justice programs in their congregation. Congregational leaders leave with a defined vision, a clear direction, a supportive and engaged congregation, and a structure to build and implement the plan to get there.

This program is fully customizable and can be focused to address the needs of any congregation. The cost of this program is \$1,500; covenanting congregations receive a \$100 discount. Please contact Evan Junker at 916.441.0018 x101 or evan@uujmca.org for more information or to discuss this opportunity and how it may support your congregation.



Objectives

While each congregation's needs differ, the following are key components that are assessed, with the main objective being to end the program with an engaged congregation that appreciates the importance of an healthy, accountable social justice ministry as an integral part of congregational life and the beginnings of a plan to get there. Main components of the program are:

- Reflect and discuss how to help make your social justice program more spiritually grounded in Unitarian Universalist values.
- Develop a vision of your congregation's potential to be a social justice ally in your community.
- Discuss and assess the current status of your congregation's social justice program.
- Look at the various components of social justice work.
- Discover and plan how to integrate social justice into the larger life of your congregation including worship, religious education, and adult programming.
- Investigate how your congregation can be most effective in social justice work.
- Increase the number of people involved in the social justice program.
- Celebrate your congregation's social justice history.

Timeline

The program is planned for three ninety minute to two hours workshops that are spaced one to two months apart to allow for work and feedback time in between. It is strongly recommended that the first workshop be done immediately following a worship service or another time that would increase the number of participants.

This is an interactive program. Much of the work is done in small groups lead by the minister, board members or social justice leaders.

The first session incorporates a look at the congregations history around social justice, allowing time to

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celebrate the congregations successes and identify areas for improvement. We look at UU values, UU justice history and models of engagement. We explore what it means to be an effective ally in right relationship. This workshop will:

- Define systemic change and why UUs engage in efforts to create transformative social justice
- Look at the congregation's social justice identity, and celebrate the congregation's historical engagement in social justice work
- Look at components that make a balanced social justice program
- Investigate how social justice will integrate into a healthy congregational life
- Look at key components to a grounded social justice program – values-based, accountable, right relationship
- Acting in Accountability and Right Relationship within the Community
- Social Justice as a Congregation-wide ministry
- Social Justice integration, Gilbert model primer
- Begin visioning the congregations future in social justice

In the second session participants consider critical issues for the congregation which, if properly addressed, will lead to a more effective social justice program. The facilitators use a variety of methods to help people discuss these issues. At the end of this session, participants develop a plan for implementing the recommendations that come out of this process. We discuss and practice democratic methods for choosing issues to form task groups around. At the end of the workshop participants develop an action plan. This session will:

- Explore issues identified in session one
- Discuss core values of the congregations social justice program
- Develop draft social justice vision
- Brainstorm congregational resources and assets, potential community partners and justice opportunities
- Begin congregational issue feedback and launch survey
- Determine democratic process for selecting issues

The third session brings it home by having the leadership team present the results of the feedback and evaluations for possible engagements. They make recommendations and set up the process for selection and planning. This session sets the stage for the planning and implementation of the new model:

- Present congregational feedback results of issue
- Report on top issues along with potential engagement opportunities for each
- Begin process of issue selection
- Define Next Steps: Governance, Social Justice Team, Congregational Life Integration, Planning Social Justice as a Congregation-wide ministry
- Social Justice integration, Gilbert model primer for Engagement, Defining of Partners for Each Issue and Right Relationship Policy, Timeline for Evaluation

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