

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

ANNUAL REPORT SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

2015 — 2016

- GOALS ACHIEVED
- PLATE PARTNERS
- MINISTRY TEAMS

In 2015-2016, the Social Justice Council fulfilled the following goals:

- Refined our understanding of the model we will follow to achieve the “end statement” articulated by the Board: A passion for social justice – where Social Justice guides and informs all aspects of BUUF’s congregational life as we work towards a more just, peaceful, compassionate, and equitable congregation, community and world.
- Codified that model into a set of steps, including a form to complete, that invites congregants to create and sustain justice ministries
- Tested and introduced the steps and form to the congregation in a “Social Justice Summit” in February 2016 where over 40 BUUF participants articulated their personal social justice priorities and then, with invited community partners, shared lunch and attended 3 roundtable discussions
- Revised the form based on feedback from the summit, and published on the new web page:
<http://boiseuu.org/justice/social-justice-ministry/>
- Helped to create a job description for a part time social justice coordinator position
- Continued to promote the congregation’s involvement in selecting the Plate Partners by managing the nomination and selection process
- Oversaw the increase of 20% Plate Partner donations from previous fiscal year (35% increase if we include the special emergency appeal for UUSC Refugee Crisis Fund); \$17,492 and \$19,622 respectively
- Recruited Melissa Chambers to create and donate art pieces that are visually striking for promoting the program via social media
- To some success (see below), encouraged congregants to extend their support of our Partners beyond the congregation’s financial support
- Coordinated with Children’s R.E. to help inform their Social Justice Sundays
- Monitored the creation of two new ministries, and the activities of the following ministries, service groups, and initiatives, whose reports are consolidated below



Part of our UU social justice history, Rev. Dana McLean Greeley marches for civil rights in Selma and Montgomery, AL 1965

Review of the Plate Partner Program (and affiliated ministries) for the 2015 - 2016 program year

September 2015--fund for the BUUF Neighborly Dinners

- \$953, which is lower than historical average because one week's offering went to a special appeal for UUSC-UUA Refugee Crisis Fund (\$2130)
- Neighborly Dinners began in June 2016 and will end in September 2016. We have hosted 12 homeless folks, and a few of our church neighbors, and spent approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the funds
- The team will evaluate the program for next year. Our theory is that we might benefit from joining with a collection of churches to schedule church suppers regularly for low income/homeless Boiseans. This would be modeled after an alliance of churches on the Boise Bench.
- R.E. Director, Emmie Schlobohm, contributed a Story for All Ages to reinforce our Plate Partner focus

October 2015--BUUF Pay It Forward Fund

- \$1999
- The Congregational Care Team disburses these funds
- R.E. children created displays for the north and south entryways, and created a video of children telling stories of "paying it forward" which appeared on our Facebook site; Story for All Ages

October 2015--Crop Walk

- Led by Wanda Jennings, BUUF donated \$1226; 25% went to the Idaho Food Bank, the rest was designated to the UUSC to help end hunger worldwide.
- Approximately 5 BUUFers walked that day, which was also the date for the memorial service for Gary Erickson



Artwork for Interfaith Sanctuary, by Melissa Chambers

November 2015--Boise Mobile Farmers Market

- \$1650 + an original art piece
- We began our practice of giving Melissa Chambers' artwork during this month
- We continue to staff the EBT stands at the two farmers markets (approximately 160 hours and 172 hours each)
- Market administrators report that the demand for EBT purchase tokens is increasing year to year
- The Garden City site for the Mobile Market is their most popular site, however Garden City did not fund an EBT match
- A new BUUU friend has volunteered over 20 hours at this site, evidence that this is a good entry point for folks new to the Fellowship
- In addition, the Capitol City Market started their Food Forward initiative, which transports folks to the market from Whitney Community Center, and gives them \$10 tokens for purchases; BUUU volunteered an additional 18 hours to this program [Gary Wyke and Patty Nakaoki head these service teams]
- R.E. children created displays for the entryways, and created "table tents" with blessings and graces to be given out with the purchases at the mobile market sites; Story for All Ages
- Future opportunities for BUUU: we might lobby Garden City to provide matching funds

December 2015--ACLU Criminal Justice Reform Initiative

- \$973 + an original art piece by Melissa Chambers
- Rev. Sara and Debra Smith facilitated a series of 4 book talks using the UUA Common Read, Just Mercy, to educate the congregation about the problems with racial bias in the criminal justice system; approximately 40 attendees
- BUUU sponsored a showing of Gideon's Army along with the ACLU to inform the congregation of the state of the public defenders' system, in support of the ACLU lawsuit on this matter; approximately 25 attendees
- BUUU provides meeting space for the ACLU coalition for justice reform
- BUUU co-sponsored a public event in February: "The Human Side of the Criminal Justice System," where approximately 50 people attended to learn about the social costs of incarceration
- BUUU continues its support of the ACLU's new emphasis on writing legislation to provide a mental health exemption to the death penalty in Idaho; draft legislation has been crafted and it will be introduced into the legislature in the 2017 session
- R.E. children created entryway displays and created a video retelling the story of the difference between equality and equity; Story for All Ages

December Christmas Eve Collection to benefit the Donna Pendley Memorial at Whittier School

- \$742 (30% increase from prior year)

December collection to benefit Corpus Christi House "Twelve Items of Christmas"

- We met their special appeal by donating more than 100 pounds of necessary items: peanut butter, jelly, coffee/chocolate/tea, socks, gloves, hats, underwear, and sundries

January 2016--Boise Meszko Scholarship Fund

- \$2061 (30% increase) + art piece (which remains at BUUU)
- R.E. children created entryway displays; Story for All Ages

February 2016--Feed the Gap

- \$1658 + art piece
- Photographed the giving of the art and donation check to feature on social media
- R.E. children created entryway displays; Story for All Ages

January 2016--Idaho Food Bank

- 28 BUUFers participated in one of their backpack "builds," providing each child with enough food and snacks to sustain them over the weekend, when free and reduced school meals are unavailable

March 2016--Interfaith Sanctuary

- \$1729 + art piece
- BUUF continues to staff volunteers at the Sanctuary weekly; Rick Groff is the head of this dedicated ministry. He estimates 39 hours/year for administration; 416 volunteer hours donated by BUUFers
- Celebrated a 10 year relationship with a special reception held in their honor
- Donated 3 memorial bricks honoring Rick Groff, Elizabeth Greene, and Jeannette Ross for their vision and service to, and the establishment of, the Sanctuary
- R.E. children created entryway displays and decorated two playhouses for their children's program; Story for All Ages
- In January 2015, Jeannette Ross began leading the activities class for children staying at the Sanctuary. The class meets at Corpus Christi House every Thursday evening. She leads all ages in craft-making, storytelling, games, and play and provides a snack. This is an opportunity for volunteers to assist Jeannette and to create a sustaining ministry.
- In September 2016 Interfaith began construction on a new children's play area; our donations have helped fund this effort.
- The Sanctuary is implementing new programs to assist its population and have increased the number of case workers. There is an opportunity to grow this into a ministry that provides more assistance beyond the existing well-established service program.

April 2016--Women's and Children's Alliance

- \$1678 + art piece
- R.E. children created entryway displays and hosted a reception to meet the WCA representative; made two collection boxes to collect supplies; Story for All Ages
- Physical donations collected throughout the month of April included: Silverware sets, baby clothes, formula and diapers, gift cards for grocery stores



Membership and Social Justice Coordinator, Sarah Olson (left) and BUUF summer RE coordinator, Emily Emerson Paige (second from right), present an art piece by Melissa Chambers to the Women's and Children's Alliance, 2016

May 2016--Planned Parenthood of Idaho

- \$1711 + \$205 (proceeds from Pandora's Box Project) + art piece
- In February, BUUF members participated in lobby days at the statehouse and BUUF members and Rev. Sara showed up to testify and bear witness in support of Planned Parenthood
- Debra Smith coordinated a staged reading of a play she wrote with her daughter and other collaborators; all donations for beer and wine went to Planned Parenthood; approximately 50 people attended/participated. Participants included professional actors, BUUF members and high school acting students
- R.E. children created entryway displays and created posters for statehouse rallies; Story for All Ages



BUUF members with Rev. Sara at a Planned Parenthood rally

June 2016--Habitat for Humanity

- \$883 (20% decrease) + art piece
- Summer of 2015 build: 10 workers for 8 hours each
- Summer of 2016 build--so much volunteer support that an August build was unnecessary

July 2016--Boise Autism Moms

- \$971 + art piece

August 2017--Head Start of Idaho

- \$892 + art piece



Mine Field by Melissa Chambers for Planned Parenthood of Idaho, 2016

Additional Service Groups and Ministry Teams

StoryLink: headed by Wanda Jennings, this service group grew out of a 2014 Plate Partnership. Each month six volunteers donate approximately 5 hours each per to visit the prisons to support this program that connects incarcerated parents with their children via books. In addition, BUUF R.E. children collected approximately 75 books for the program.

BUUF Refugee Ministry report the following initiatives and plans [headed by Kelly McConnell]:

- Formed February 2016 to "To support and advocate for refugee issues in our community (and beyond) through connection with our community partners"
- Established connections with the International Rescue Committee, Family Medicine Health Clinics and Refugee Clinic of the Family Medicine Residency of Idaho (FMRI)
- Nominated the FMRI Refugee Clinic as one of the BUUF plate partners. In December, BUUF will share the month's offerings with the FMRI Refugee Clinic
- Initiated the BUUF 'Speak Out' process to combat federal anti-refugee legislation.
- Connected the Idaho Diaper Bank with the Family Medicine Health Clinics and Refugee Clinic of the Family Medicine Residency of Idaho, to provide free diapers to refugee families on an ongoing basis,

Fall projects being planned:

- Participating in the Fall Social Justice meeting to prepare for the 2017 legislative session.
- Support the resettlement of newly-arrived refugees in the Treasure Valley in partnership with the IRC by recruiting BUUF members as mentors and coordinating an Oct 1 mentor training with the IRC.
- September 27th Screening and Discussion of the Ken Burns documentary, Defying the Nazis, in conjunction with the Boston Bounders and the encouragement of the UUA
- Thanksgiving Dinner with Boise Refugee families, coordinated by Sue Philley
- Planning activities for the December plate offering with the FMRI Refugee Clinic targeting supplies for new families - diapers, baby clothes, blankets, etc.



Boiseans, including BUUF members, at a rally in support of Refugees in Idaho

Earth Care Ministry: This summer, Dr. Sarah Haynes called all those desiring to work on environmental issues, and created the Earth Care Ministry. Their immediate goals are:

- Support for the Idaho Sierra Club's initiative "Ready for 100%" program urging the Mayor and Council to transition from fossil fuel electrical energy generation to renewables by 2015.
- The establishment of a Boise area Interfaith Coalition for Climate Change promoting the urgent need to address the negative impacts of global and local Climate Change. The goals include a faith-based, grassroots advocacy group focused on public outreach, education, and promoting climate change legislation by city and state governmental agencies.
- This group is overwhelmingly enthusiastic about making a difference that the consensus was that if we don't actively pursue our goals and create tangible output every month there's no reason for our existence.
- A motion was made committing to meet as a group once a month with the addition of an active working group meeting every other week. The purpose of the working group is to produce tangible output 2 x per month.

Pride Fest 2016: This year was our most popular Pride Festival yet! Over 4000 people attended the rally, parade and festival. BUUF applied *Standing on the Side of Love* temporary tattoos to 200 people, and spoke with approximately 400 people about our church's welcoming congregation and progressive values. We had at least 15 volunteers (several BUUFers were also volunteering for various other organizations) and were able to strengthen our ties to several other organizations in attendance.

Finally, we continued our partnership with the **American Red Cross** by conducting two successful blood drives, meeting our donation goals both times.



(Left to right) Rev. Sara presenting an art piece by Melissa Chambers to Anne Glass from Feed the Gap; two Boise Pride attendees showing off their new *Standing on the Side of Love* tattoos; an art piece created for Habitat for Humanity by Melissa Chambers