



Annual Report -- Fall 2020 through June 2021 of the Faith in Action Committee [FiA] (formerly Social Action Committee)

The Faith in Action Committee provides information and inspiration and support for a broad range of issues comprising Social Justice work.

SOCIAL ACTION SHARED OFFERINGS

This committee receives proposals for the Social Action Shared Offerings, or SASOs, occasions on which the congregation can learn about local, regional, national and international organizations doing important work related to social justice. We provide information about the organization and then collect a Sunday offering (about 6 times a year) which is then sent to the chosen organization. Between November 2020 and May 2021, we donated to:

- The Child Advocacy Program for St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties
- Reachout of St. Lawrence County
- Musicians without Borders (an international group working for peace)
- The Bonus Bucks program with GardenShare
- The Poor People's Campaign

The total amount donated was \$ 4,300. This represents a significant contribution to the church's social justice work. We invite everyone to participate in this by proposing organizations to receive a SASO.

Our Holiday Offering to the Church and Community Program is the only repeating SASO. The 2020 donation was \$2,340.

RSG SOCIAL ACTION AWARD

Faith in Action also solicits nominations annually for The Rachel Somers Grant Social Justice Award. In 2020 we recognized Eileen Raymond for her long-standing commitment to social justice work in our church and well beyond. No award was made in 2021, due to the pandemic.

SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

This is a funded opportunity to create a 2-day conference around a particular concern. Normally this happens every other year, and the focus for the event arises from members of our congregation. Due to the pandemic, we did not host one in 2021. In Sept. 2019, the theme was "Justice for All: Community Conversations on Crime and Imprisonment in the North Country." Eileen Raymond served as convenor. Topics and leadership for the conference can come from

anyone in our congregation, and proposals are currently invited; the committee typically provides logistical support.

We were proud when our conference keynote speaker, Dwayne Betts, was awarded a MacArthur “genius” grant in September 2021.

SOCIAL ACTION CIRCLES AND THEMES

Faith in Action has been increasingly decentralizing our work; in 2019-20 we fostered Social Action circles, which were quite active until the pandemic. In January 2021 we hosted well-attended discussions, using the “breakout groups” after Sunday services, around specific concerns, including: **Climate Action, Police Reform, Anti-racism, Healthcare, and Housing.**

In Fall of 2020, we connected with **UU the Vote** to support “get out the vote” efforts ahead of the November election. Over 20 of us were involved with the work of sending postcards to Georgia and North Carolina and making phone calls to citizens in the South.

In response to NYS’s requirement that each community address concerns about **police reforms** (a Black Lives Matters concern), we sent representatives to the village/town and county open meetings asking for input on proposed reforms. We believe that Canton produced a strong list of reforms and are proud to have helped with this work. (We also have church members playing key roles in village and town government.)

CLIMATE CONCERN & GREEN SANCTUARY

FiA works with the Environmental Concerns committee and other groups beyond our church to provide information and support activism.

Representatives attended a webinar, “Spring for Change!” organized by the UU Ministry for the Earth and UU Green Sanctuary in April 2021. Criteria for qualification as a Green Sanctuary 2030 have been enriched. Our aim is to re-accredit our standing with UUA. Here is the website for this initiative: <https://www.uua.org/environment/green-sanctuary>

Together with North Country 350 Alliance we showed, using zoom, two compelling videos on climate change in March and April. About thirty people from across our community watched the videos together on zoom and then had discussion. The videos were “Kiss the Ground” and “The Age of Consequences” and both are recommended.

One local initiative we support is led by our Sue Powers, who is the PI on a grant to Clarkson and the village of Potsdam to create a “Climate Smart Community Task Force.”

We continue to disseminate information on other social justice activities, including the local Poor People’s Campaign, Campus Kitchens, and the Friends of Humaira (local initiative on behalf of an Afghanistani refugee).

DECENTERED LEADERSHIP

Our intention is to distribute initiative and leadership on social justice work across many fronts and many people, and to work as we are able with local groups and with UUA groups, in particular the newly formed New York UU Justice <nyuuj@uumin.org>.

As long as we are in partial shut-down during the pandemic, please send your information and your questions regarding social justice work to Pat Alden and Art Freeheart.