

Proposal for the Creation of a Justice Task Force 2022

Whereas the Psalmist sings forth that:

The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.
Psalm 33:5 and

I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted. And justice for the poor.
Psalms 140:12

Whereas the Prophets proclaim:

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. Isaiah 1:17 and

God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you; but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

And Whereas Jesus:

Commanded all to love God with our whole hearts and our neighbors as ourselves.
Matthew 22:37-40 and

Reminded us that “whatever we do to the least” we do to Jesus,

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge lovingly and humbly establishes a Justice Task Force (JTF). The JTF will undertake a twelve-month calling to establish a vital, sustainable, and congregation-engaging process to live into the Church Mission Statement “to represent God’s love, Jesus, here in the Berkshires and the world” specifically as it relates to issues of justice. The charge is to:

- Establish and promote structures through which issues of justice can be brought to and engaged by the congregation.
 - This includes systems for people to bring issues for exploration, making connections to community and governmental agencies, implementing opportunities for education and conversation to happen within the church and community, and similar opportunities for witness and advocacy to take place beyond the church where and as needed.
 - The process recognizes that many issues will be complicated, and that people of good faith may reach different understandings about the issues and the response our calling demands. The JTF is encouraged to utilize a “constructive dialogue” and discernment approach (similar to our approach in the Berkshire Conversation Project) to welcome people in and to honor our tradition to “listen for the Spirit” remembering that it often speaks through unlikely voices.
- Engage the issue of land acknowledgment. Use that experience to develop frameworks for how to explore and respond to other issues.
 - The JTF can choose to subsequently engage other issues at their discretion.
- Recommend to the Board of Mission and Action and the Church Council an ongoing, sustainable structure for engaging issues of justice as a congregation.

To be effective and nimble, the formal JTF will be a small group (5-6) given a clear expectation to regularly share information and seek input from the larger congregation and community. Members of the JTF need not be formal members of the church. Suggestions for JTF members or those who wish to serve should contact the Board of Mission and Action who will suggest a slate to the Church Council for approval. The Board of Mission and Action will support the JTF as needed. At the conclusion of the year, the JTF will present its findings and make its recommendations to an open meeting of the Church Council to determine next steps.

Additional resources that discuss Justice and Land Acknowledgements:

Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians

<https://www.mohican.com/>

Williams College Land Acknowledgement

<https://diversity.williams.edu/>

**First Church Williamstown
"Not in Our County Action Group"**

<https://firstchurchwilliamstown.org/>

Laurel Hill Association

<https://laurelhillassociation.org/2020/10/12/indigenous-peoples-day/>

Edith Warton The Mount

<https://www.edithwharton.org/about/land-acknowledgement/>

UCC Justice Covenant information:

https://www.ucc.org/just_world_covenants/

Jacobs Pillow

<https://www.jacobs-pillow.org/a-commitment-from-jacobs-pillow/>