

50 YEARS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

Seeing Needs/Finding Solutions

Organizations we founded or helped found

1963. Our first Community Service Project was an Information Center for Seniors comparing available facilities in 22 licensed nursing homes to fill the void later corrected by the establishment of the Baltimore County Department of Aging.

1965. With no public kindergartens available, we founded the Towson Community Tutorial Program providing background enrichment for children entering first grade. The project later became a Head Start Program which is ongoing.

1969. A member worked with an addict to found "Man Alive," the first methadone treatment program for drug addicts in Maryland. It is still operating as a private, non-profit organization.

Another member founded LEGICUUM (Legislative Committee of Unitarian Universalists of Maryland) which continued until 1998. It's purpose was to inform and stimulate action on social issues which affect our lives through public awareness and activity at the state level.

1985. We joined thirteen other local churches to establish the Assistance Center of Towson Churches (ACTC) to provide food for the hungry, help for the homeless, and other needs such as assistance with utility turnoffs, eviction prevention, help in purchasing necessary prescriptions, and referrals to other needed services.

2004. We joined four other churches in founding Sarah's Hope Homeless Shelter for women and children. This program was taken over by Baltimore County and is currently operating as the Eastern Emergency Shelter which we continue to support with financial and volunteer resources.

Other programs which we started or helped start include:

1963. Greater Baltimore Memorial Society.

1965. Baltimore County Community Action Agency.

1969. Legislative Committee of Unitarian Universalists of Maryland.

1970. Pastoral Counseling Center

1973. Black and White Action within UUA

1974. Baltimore County Fair Housing Council affiliated with Baltimore Neighborhoods

1979 United Seniors Of Maryland volunteer coalition advocating for legislation on behalf of

the senior citizens of Maryland

1987. Baltimore County Communities for the Homeless.

1999. Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice.

Areas of Concern and Action

Life in Baltimore City and County was very different in 1960 than it is in 2010. Housing was segregated by race and religion. Public Schools had only been integrated for 5 years. Negroes (the term used) could not try on clothes in department stores nor could they eat in most restaurants. Sit ins were held with participants arrested and jailed for trespassing. The public accommodations law failed to pass the legislature. When it finally did pass, it exempted Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore. (The Federal Civil Rights law of 1964 desegregated public places.)

Letters to Governor Tawes appeared in our weekly newsletter in support of those doing the sit ins. Our Board voted to contact Governor Tawes and the six delegates from Baltimore County in favor of legislation abolishing racial discrimination in places of public accommodations. After our members learned that Negroes could not eat at the restaurant at Hecht's department store in Northwood, several of the members cut up their charge cards and mailed them back.

This climate, plus our personal interests, shaped our responses to social action. Two of our members had children who were hemophiliacs, so one of the first things we did was establish a Blood Assurance Program with the Red Cross. In return for our meeting a specific quota of donated pints, the blood used by the hospitals for our members and their families would be at no cost to them. Two members had retarded children so we went door to door collecting money for the Baltimore Association of Retarded Citizens. The wife of one of our two members who were gerontologists told us there was no coordination of information about nursing homes and the facilities they offered. (The Baltimore County Department of Aging didn't come into being until 1978.) Thus the first social responsibility project became the assembling of that information.

The other projects we have undertaken over our 50 history are listed here in rather broad categories.

Anti-discrimination

In 1960 we sent money to a fund at the First Unitarian Church of New Orleans for parents who lost their jobs because their children were attending integrated schools and some of their members facing prosecution because they had joined the sit-ins. On July 4, 1963 our minister joined leaders of other denominations to be arrested for participating in a sit-in at Gwynn Oak Amusement Park which did not admit African Americans. He also led a small group of church members to the Martin Luther King March on Washington.

In 1967 the Towson and Lutherville, Timonium, Cockeysville Fair Housing Councils affiliated with BNI (Baltimore Neighborhoods Inc.) were started. They consolidated in 1974 as the

Baltimore County Fair Housing Council to work for a fair and open housing market and to combat prejudice. Our minister served as President and several members served on the Board. Some members also served as testers for BNI. First a Black couple would inquire about an available apartment and be told it was no longer available. Later that day a White couple would ask about the same apartment and be told it was available. This led to several law suits.

From 1966-1971 we worked closely with Douglas Memorial Church, a Black congregation located in Baltimore City. In addition to pulpit exchanges we worked with their Women's Auxiliary to set up four joint groups: aid to a family or individual, psychological effects of prejudice, drama, bridge or bowling, we held a joint sleepover at Cap Alcor in Monkton and a family picnic and swim at Douglass's Camp Farthest Out.

We also joined Project Equality in which churches pledged to use their purchasing power to only buy from companies which practiced fair employment.

Our Board directed that \$5,000 be deposited in the Black owned Advance Savings and Loan bank. One of our White members took a job with a Black realtor. Later in 1977 our Board directed that part of our savings (\$20,000) be moved to the Baltimore Federal Savings and Loan which had the best record of investing in home loans for lower income people in Baltimore City.

In 1973 our minister spearheaded a drive within the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) ministers called BAWA (Black and White Action) asking that ministers of different races work together rather than separately.

We also belonged to the Towson Lay Committee for Inter-Racial Affairs and the Clergyman's Inter-Faith Committee for Human Rights. And we joined in marches in Baltimore City-one of which was headed by a very young Dick Gregory -for Fair Housing and Jobs.

Our Board passed two other relevant resolutions in 1967. One was to inform local draft boards that the religious training our young men received might legitimately lead them to seek conscientious objector status. The other was in support of family and sex education in the Baltimore County Public Schools.

In 1970 our minister contacted his State Senator about removing gender from Baltimore County Marriage licenses. A bill was entered and it was passed. In 1996 we had a table at the Gay Pride Festival and have continued to do so yearly. We set up a Welcoming/ Interweave Committee and became a Welcoming Congregation the next year. We lobbied our legislators and held a rally in Annapolis in support of bills preventing discrimination in housing and employment based on sexual orientation. We also hold regular meetings of the Baltimore County PFLAG (Parents of LGBT-Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders as well as children, grandparents, friends and straight allies) and the Rainbow Alliance for teenagers and other young people.

Outreach to low income residents and the homeless

Having a government run community action agency was voted down by the county residents. So in 1965 one of our members was one of the signers which created a private, non-profit: the

Baltimore County Community Action Agency. The first director was one of our members. He was given a free office in the building we rented at 406 West Pennsylvania Avenue in Towson.. Although the name of the agency has changed first to the Human Resources Development Agency and later to the Community Assistance Network or C.A.N., the mission remains the same: to help low income Baltimore County residents achieve self sufficiency.

When the voters turned down the Urban Renewal Federal money, five members of TUUC formed a joint committee with five representatives of East Towson churches for fact finding, education, and political activity leading to the elimination of blight (slums) from Towson. Residents were urged to form an improvement association. Since public kindergartens did not begin in Baltimore County until 1969 there was concern among our members about the East Towson children whose parents were unable to afford a private school experience. In 1966 when a member's son was killed in a plane crash, she used the money donated in his memory to begin what eventually became a Head Start program in Baltimore County. Initially the Board consisted of six of our members. Later the by-laws were changed so that there were an equal percentage of East Tiwson and TUUC members. At present the Board no longer exists.

Later we supported and were deeply involved with the Stadium School in Baltimore City, often hosting a group from the charter school at our services and raising money to send groups of their students to a camp in New Hampshire for a week. Additionally we collected jump ropes and clothes for an inner city elementary school at which one of our members was the principal and put on a World of Work Fair for several years at which our members talked to the children about their jobs. Three of our members volunteered to tutor in math and reading at Halstead Elementary in the Hillendale area of Baltimore County. Currently two of our members volunteer weekly with others from the First Unitarian Church of Baltimore at the Banner Neighborhoods After School Project in the Patterson Park area of Baltimore City.

Our interest in improving lives of our older citizens continued. In 1976 we formed TUUH (Towson Unitarian Universalist Housing) to sponsor sheltered housing for the elderly. We raised \$10,000 hoping to get a grant from the federal government so we could rehabilitate a Towson apartment complex for this use. We did not receive the grant. After realizing we could not find an affordable alternative, we gave the group which did get the grant, the money to furnish the communal living area at Timothy House.

In 1982 and 1983 our third settled minister founded three affordable housing organizations including one with tax exempt status. Very few churches were interested in joining with us and these groups soon disappeared.

Starting in 1985 and still continuing is the quarterly donation of prepared food to Our Daily Bread. A joint project with the First Unitarian Church of Baltimore, we provide casseroles quarterly on any month that has a fifth Saturday.

In 1985 we served on the enabling committee which established the Assistance Center of Towson Churches. Before it was set up, people needing food or financial help would call or visit the area churches requesting help. Many of our members continue to volunteer there on a weekly basis. Originally consisting of 14 congregations, membership now includes 48 churches.

Baltimore County Communities for the Homeless began in 1987. Members included county employees and volunteers who worked with the homeless and others who were interested in getting rid of the homeless problem. They met in our church for years with several of our members taking leadership positions. As part of this group we provided a week's worth of food for the Essex shelter. Our Youth Religious Exploration students have been making lasagna casseroles for the shelter for many years.

Since there was only very limited housing for homeless men we worked with other churches and Baltimore County to establish a shelter which was open when the weather was bitter and cold from November 15 to April 15.. Originally located at St. Charles Borromeo in Pikesville, it eventually moved to an empty store in the triangle between York and Dulaney Roads in Towson and later to a Board of Education building on Allegheny Avenue. Churches took turns providing dinner and volunteers (many of whom brought their children). They served the food, chatted with the homeless men and spent the night assisting the paid staff.

In 2000 we were one of the first churches to support Health care for All. We also made sure our investments were socially responsible.

We were one of the five churches which started Sarah's Hope in 2004. This was, a Homeless Shelter for women and families located in Rosedale behind Franklin Square Hospital. It often served over 100 people. Our volunteers taught classes, operated a biweekly therapeutic preschool program, answered the telephone and supervised the clothes washing as well as providing and serving lunch once a month.

After the Baltimore County Department of Community Conservation took over the shelter and changed its name to the Eastside Family Shelter, we continued to provide a meal once a month. From 2005-2010 our children made items for this shelter, planned parties and visited providing entertainment, activities, and snacks.

We also contributed money to the Unitarian Universalist Housing Assistance Corporation which makes low interest loans for homebuyers and participated in the rebuilding of six homes for Habitat for Humanity as well as several inner city homes for Light Street Housing.

Educating Ourselves

Forums were held regularly to acquaint our members with different social issues such as Beyond War, South Africa divestment, Central America, teen age pregnancy, Planned Parenthood, tort reform, hunger and homelessness, Israel Palestine peace, elder concerns, the draft, Middle East, support group for men. prison reform. Courses were also offered as part of Adult RE. They ranged from economics to writing a spiritual biography.

Marches/Lobbying

We participated in many marches both in Washington, DC and locally. Some were for peace in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. One peace march in Baltimore City was held totally in the rain. Other marches mostly in DC were March for Choice, the 75th anniversary of women's rights,

Mobilization for Women's Lives, Protesting aid to the Nicaraguan contras, Stand for Children, the Million Mom's March for Gun Control, the silent march of boxes of women's shoes protesting gun violence, for peace in Vietnam, and a walk against AIDS. Yearly marches starting in 2003 were held to attend Baltimore County Council meetings in support of the homeless and a memorial to the homeless who had died.. We lobbied for a public accommodations law, for outlawing corporal punishment in Maryland Schools, Medicaid funding for abortion, cutting off funds to the Vietnam War, health care, Gay Rights and the repeal of the death penalty. and against the bombing in Indo-China, calling a Constitutional Convention which could overturn Roe vs. Wade which legalized abortion, and cuts in research on mental retardation. Many members wrote letters in support of a National Peace Academy.

While not all members were in support of the lobbying, especially where the Vietnam War was concerned, some members boycotted Gallo Wines in support of the United farm Workers. Others boycotted Nestle, International telephone and Telegraph, and J.P. Stevens.

Environment

We recycled newspapers and cans; held clean up parties on our own property, at Loch Raven reservoir and Marshy Point Nature Center. People brought their own coffee cups, a dishwasher was donated, and we stopped using Styrofoam cups in 2008. We served green coffee weekly and sold pounds of it once a month. In 2009 after making various energy improvements, we were accredited as a Green Sanctuary by the Unitarian Universalist Association. . Some members had signs in a public place supporting the Copenhagen climate summit and protesting the running of electricity from coal fired plants through West Virginia into Maryland. We also held an ethical eating course.

Other Donations and Volunteering

For many years we have used the offering from the Christmas Eve services for social action projects: specifically to fight hunger and homelessness. Additionally in 2006 we began using 25% of the undesignated cash collected in the weekly offering for social action programs. Due to budget constraints the amount was changed to 15% in 2008 which continues today.

In U.S.

1960 Clothing Drive for children of migrant workers in Pennsylvania. RE children collected for

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Emergency Fund.

1964 Food and clothing sent to Mississippi after 20 churches were fire bombed

1968 Volunteers with the Baltimore County Department of Social Services. Supplies collected for the YMCA Druid Hill Halfway House.

1973-5 Support provided to The Community Residence Center –a half way house in Baltimore City for male ex-offenders which was accepted and supported in its neighborhood. We made yearly donations individually and as a church. Our young people held back sales

1975 The congregation voted to designate half of the annual interest on the remaining Building Fund to community social action groups. We also became a member of the Maryland Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights with one of our members being responsible for bringing legislative and other concerns to our attention.

1977. Support provided for Manna House (food, health and housing services) in Baltimore.

1978 Ten mile CROP Walk against hunger. Green Circle Program carried out in local elementary schools with the cooperation of their guidance counselors. Puppets were used to help children understand their own needs as well as those of others. Volunteers at the Chimes School and the Peoples Free Medical Clinic.

1979 United Seniors of Maryland – a volunteer coalition advocating for legislation on behalf of

the senior citizens of Maryland was formed by one of our members

1985 Jump ropes, toys, hats, mittens, and socks collected for elementary school # 34 in Baltimore City where one of our members was the Principal.

1986 Toy collection held for ACTC (Assistance center of Towson Churches) Christmas shop

1988 Donations given for a chance to ride in a hot air balloon to benefit the community action agency (now C.A.N. –Community Assistance Network).

1989 One month designated by ACTC as ours to provide food for the emergency food bags Daffodills sold for the American Camcer Society. Workathon rebuilding homes in Baltimore City. Half of the money collected went to El Salvador; the other half was for low cost housing in Baltimore.

1995 Marylanders Against Hand Gun Abuse, Volunteers tutor in jails. Two of our members volunteered as mentors for the Moving to Opportunity program of C.A.N.

1996. Volunteers at Parkville Middle School and for Kids Voting. A \$1,000 grant received from the UUA to purchase a computer for the Maryland Education Coalition

1997 dry milk collection begun for C.A.N. Volunteers at the Maryland Food Bank and Garden Harvest (where fresh food was given to the homeless). Help with the WIC (Women, Infants, Children) program. Start of five years collecting teddy bears for homeless children. Members helped rebuild burned churches.

2000 Concert with proceeds given to Habitat for Humanity and Light Street Housing, Back to School donations for the Baltimore County Department of Social Services

2004 Support of the Bea Gaddy Foundation (Homeless)

2005 Donations given to the UU Church in New Orleans after the Katrina Hurricane

2006 Volunteer and financial support of Earl's Place a facility for men fighting addiction-still ongoing

2008 Money given in response to the shooting inside a UU Church in Knoxville, TN. A, collection of sheets for the Baltimore County Men's Shelter was also held.

Our religious exploration children were involved in many of the above activities. However the philosophy behind the projects has shifted over the past years. The Youth Religious Exploration ministry now (since 2005) encourages fewer projects but ones that last longer so that children learn more about the targeted population or need. For example, children did a four-week unit one year on Habitat for Humanity instead of three different one-time projects. We also encouraged getting into the community when possible. We have added visits to homeless shelters and trips to Habitat for Humanity worksites to our traditional Sunday morning at TUUC projects, our annual carwash and making tins of lasagna to help feed the hungry. A yearly car wash was held from 2005-9. The students then voted on how to spend the money they raised. The following groups were supported (different groups were funded for different years) Assistance Center of Towson Churches, Sarah's Hope, Earl's Place, World Wildlife Fund, Maryland Fuel Fund, and Donor's Choose (supports teachers at schools with low funding).

They also made, decorated and sold bowls for the Empty Bowls Hunger Project in 2004, 2006, and 2008. Letters were written for Amnesty International in 2005, cards were made for siblings of seriously ill children (Smile Project) in 2007, cards and letters were written for Holiday Mail for Heroes in 2008, They also advocated for fair housing laws in 2010.

Soccer balls were collected for Iraqi children in 2007 as well as needed items for the Maryland branch of the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 2008 plus items for Earl's Place, They also donated goods and money to Habitat for Humanity and took lunch to the site workers in 2010.

Donations fo other countries

1968 Money collected for a hospital in Biafra. Support of UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service Committee). still ongoing

1997 Honduras Relief Drive

2001 Donations for India relief

2004 Fundraising for RAWA (Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women) as well as for victims of the tsunami

2009 Donations to Haiti after the devastating hurricane

Yearly collections were held for UUSC (UU Service Committee) through Guest at Your Table boxes and the sale of memberships