

Bending the Arc: a Social Justice Quarterly July-September 2017

From the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis, CA



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Looking Back: Recent social justice activities in the second quarter of 2017



- June 4, at its annual membership meeting, the congregation endorsed the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) and UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service Committee) **Declaration of Conscience**. The declaration begins:

At this extraordinary time in our nation's history, we are called to affirm our profound commitment to the fundamental principles of justice, equity and compassion, to truth and core values of American society.

You can read it in full and sign it as an individual at www.uua.org. When you reach the home page, enter "Declaration of Conscience" in the search box. Or Google: "UUA Declaration of Conscience."

- **The Yolo Interfaith Alliance for Climate Justice** was awarded one of the 2017 Environmental Recognition Awards by the City of Davis, according to *The Davis Enterprise* of April 14. The article quotes Lynne Nittler (UUCD) of the Alliance, "Our mission is to inspire the community to work together to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, become educated on climate issues and speak out for climate justice." The alliance represents at least 10 faith groups in Yolo County and is open to all interested persons. <https://www.cooldavis.org/take-action/in-the-community/yolo-interfaith-alliance-for-climate-justice/>
- April 23, the **Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter of Davis** celebrated the end of its 10th season with a barbecue at the Davis Community Church. UUCD has been a host in this program for the past 5 years. Before that, many people in our congregation volunteered for the IRWS when it was at the Davis Lutheran Church, a smaller congregation which welcomed our help. Lindsay Weston, who coordinated UUCD's hosting last year, and several other volunteers attended the picnic, where Julie Harlow, one of the founders and mainstays of the IRWS, was thanked for her 10 years of service.
- April 26, **Yolo Interfaith Immigration Network (YIIN)** held its 5th Annual Fundraiser/Dinner. Ramon Urbano, recently a UUCD board member and presently YIIN chair, reported that about 350 people, including some 30 from UUCD, attended. "The fundraising success demonstrates the interest and support of the community on immigration issues, which is YIIN's mission," Ramon said. Other YIIN activities include supporting making Woodland a sanctuary city and donating backpacks and school supplies to all migrant centers in Yolo County.
- April 29, Don and Julie Saylor joined 200,000 other people, including a well-bannered and well-signed UU contingent, at the **People's Climate March** in Washington, D. C. Others from our congregation marched in Sacramento. Marches took place in over 300 cities.
- **Sales of our "Love Your Neighbor" signs were hot!** Only a few signs, out of 450 ordered, remain. Inquire at the social justice table after church services if you are interested. If you missed *The Sacramento Bee's* recent article on the social values yard sign trend, in which our former intern and sign-designer Laura Thompson is quoted, check it out: <http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article157508819.html>.
- May 5-6, the **Pacific Central District Annual Assembly was held at Mt. Diablo UU Church**. Two of the ten UUCD members who attended gave us a summary: Steve Burns, as outgoing president of the District Board after five years of service, chaired the business meeting. About 150 people attended from the region. In addition to the UUA Candidate Forum, there was worship and workshops on "Love Resisting," "Restorative Strategies for Difficult Times" and "The Blessings and Opportunities of Community Building in Turbulent Times". Friday was a Staff Development day and in the evening was a showing of the documentary "13th", followed by discussion. The programming (workshops, worship, etc.) was arranged and coordinated by regional staff. Marty West gives us this picture of being there: District Assembly is a wonderful opportunity to meet interesting UUs from other congregations, and this one was especially so because we could meet and hear from the three women running for President of the national UUA. All three, Susan Frederick-Gray, Allison Miller, and Jeanne Pupke, have excellent credentials and discussed their strong commitment to social justice concerns. Fredrick-Gray (who was later elected President at General Assembly at the end of June) had substantial experience with immigration issues as the UU minister in Phoenix, AZ. She was one of the main organizers of the Phoenix General Assembly in 2012 and the protest there against Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio.
- May 15, **UUCD hosted UU Justice Ministry of California's (UUJMCA) Sacramento Area Regional Justice Training**. Katia Hansen of UU Refugee and Immigrant Services and Education (UURISE) gave two presentations on sanctuary, providing insights into why it has reappeared as an issue, the different forms it can take, and how congregations can reach decisions about it. These presentations were especially useful in light of our own sanctuary discernment process. PDFs of Katia's slides are available from Robin Datel or Stefan Harvey. Dr. Isabel Call, an economist and UU seminarian, brought facts about economic inequality to life with her Theatre of the Oppressed. Northern California union organizers explained their support for a \$15 minimum wage. Evan Junker of UUJMCA gave a legislative briefing. Attendees included not only members of our own congregation, but also UUs from the Bay Area and the valley-foothills-mountains region.
- May 21, UUCD's **Uniting for Racial Justice** tabled and helped staff **Davis Pride 2017**, a run/walk for equality and a LGBTQIA/straight ally community festival organized by the Davis Phoenix Coalition.

- May 25, intern and Campus Minister Elizabeth Assenza, Steve Burns, Stefan Harvey, and Robin Datel of our congregation joined the California Immigrant Policy Center for **Immigrant Day 2017**. For over 20 years, the California immigrant rights movement has convened immigrants and advocates at the state capitol for an annual day of action. Participants heard remarks from champions of immigrant rights and then headed out in small groups to meet with legislators regarding relevant bills. The UU Justice Ministry of California was represented, as were numerous UU congregations from around the state. Immigrant Day always takes place in mid-May; if you have not participated, plan to do so next year. It provides a good demonstration of coalition building between those directly affected by public policies and their various allies, including faith groups. Participants have a chance to learn ahead of time about the pending legislation they will be advocating; this year, it was SB29 “Dignity not Detention,” SB54 “The California Values Act,” and SB6 “Legal Services for Immigrants.” These bills have been passed by the Senate and are being considered by the Assembly. Activists also advocated for immigrant-supportive items in the state’s budget.



- Supporters of SB54, “**The California Values Act,**” have also asked Governor Jerry Brown to support it; so far he has not taken a position. The purpose of this legislation is to separate local law enforcement from federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) efforts, in order to protect public health and safety. An interfaith group, organized by the National Council of Jewish Women—California, with representatives from the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim faiths met with two members of the governor’s staff on June 21. Robin Datel from our Social Justice Coordinating Committee provided a Unitarian

Universalist voice (see her prepared statement below, which at the meeting had to be summarized into a 1-minute sound bite). In addition to faith leaders and immigrant advocates, three people directly affected by current national immigration policies and procedures spoke powerfully about their experiences. A press conference followed, and was attended by print and TV media. You can still call Governor Brown’s office to voice your support of SB54, as other members of our congregation have done. The number is 916-445-2841.

Statement prepared for Governor’s Office meeting on SB54, 6/21/17

Hello, my name is Robin Datel and I am co-chair of the Social Justice Coordinating Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis.

Unitarians and Universalists have long histories of working to create a more just society. They have provided leadership in movements to abolish slavery, reform prisons, revolutionize mental health treatment, and secure the civil rights of People of Color, women, and LGBTQIA persons. Currently our national body, the Unitarian Universalist Association, is working hard to help congregations act on behalf of immigrants and refugees.

This history of activism is rooted in the core principles of Unitarian Universalism, which include affirming and promoting “the inherent worth and dignity of every person” and “justice, equity and compassion in human relations.” Among the roots that nourish current UU practices are “Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God’s love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.”

We support SB54, the California Values Act, because it draws a clear line between national immigration law enforcement and local policing. This line is an important signal to those who are undocumented (and their families and friends) that they can go to a police station, school, library, hospital, courthouse or other public venue without fear that local public safety officers are part of the national detention and deportation pipeline. This makes our neighborhoods and communities both safer and more just. It also preserves our public resources for expenditure on items aligned with our values, such as real and humane solutions to our failed national immigration policy.

- May 20, Robin Datel led ten people on an **Oak Park Walking Tour** emphasizing the area's black geographies and histories. This outing was one of a number of 2016 auction items sponsored by the Social Justice Coordinating Committee. The next time that Robin led her tour (in June for the Oak Park Business Association), one of the participants was Sacramento Police Captain Jim Beezley. He was recently at a press conference with Senate Pro Tem Kevin de Leon and LAPD Chief Charlie Beck, endorsing SB54, the California Values Act. Serendipity!
- May 28, the Davis congregation participated in the **White Supremacy Teach-in**, a nationwide response by 590 UU congregations to concerns regarding racism and white privilege in our denomination (and specifically in UUA hiring decisions). Resources were made available by Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU) and Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM). Campus and Intern Minister Elizabeth Assenza led the worship service, aided by worship associates Barbara Clutter, Leann Friedman, and Sharon Hale. That same day, a workshop on parenting and racial justice was held, sponsored by UUCD's Uniting for Racial Justice and by Whites United for Racial Justice and organized by UUCD's Jennifer Higley-Chapman.
- In May, we completed our second year of participating in **Beloved Conversations** with members of the UU Society of Sacramento. Beloved Conversations explores personal and social dimensions of racism and white privilege over a period of several months in a small group setting. The curriculum was developed by the Fahs Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological Seminary. Leadership on the UUCD side was provided by Elizabeth Assenza and Barbara Clutter. The July 23 worship service will feature thoughts and feelings from this year's and last year's participants.
- June 1, Rev. Beth Banks and many UUCD members were among the hundreds of Davisites who attended the **Interfaith Iftar Dinner**. This feast to break the daily Ramadan fast was held at the Davis Senior Center. An informative program about Islam and Ramadan preceded a delicious meal prepared and served by members of the area Muslim community. Don Saylor, UUCD member and Yolo County Supervisor, was among the speakers.
- June 4, at the worship service three quilts made by members of the church's **Quilting Bee** were blessed and given to boys living at **Progress Ranch**. Over the years the church's quilters have made 35 quilts for the ranch boys. In the last couple months the group also gave eight small quilts and several pillowcases to Quilts for Kids at the UCD Medical Center.
- June 9, **Sacred Earth**, an evening of song, word, and action honoring and celebrating earth, air, fire and water, raised \$650 toward a second water feature to help the woodland creatures on our grounds survive our long, hot summers! Eighty-five people enjoyed the inspiring, uplifting, beautiful event created by Laura Sandage & 6 conspiring women, including church member Lorraine Visher. Watch for excerpts at Cool Davis events, and plan on attending Sacred Earth 2 next Spring!
- June 25, several members of UUCD joined a gathering of 50 at a **Standing Rock Prayer Vigil** at Central Park in solidarity with those who stood up against social injustice and environmental racism. Participants enjoyed the food, speakers, prayer, an update on divestment (including the city of Davis decision to divest from its bank to a local bank), and several victory dances and songs.

Looking Forward: How YOU can help bend the arc in the third quarter of 2017



Donate to our “crowdfunding” Faithify Campaign. The last day to donate is July 15! We are close to our “stretch” goal of \$8,500. Funds will provide scholarships for undocumented students at UC Davis, through their support and advocacy organization SPEAK (Scholars Promoting Education Awareness and Knowledge). This campaign has grown out of our relationship with the UCD AB540 and Undocumented Student Center (<http://undocumented.ucdavis.edu/>). There is national interest in this collaboration; Rev. Banks spoke about it at General Assembly. To donate, go to <http://tinyurl.com/Faithify17>.

Take a next step after signing the Declaration of Conscience. Go to <https://www.uua.org/lovesresists>. This webpage is jointly sponsored by the UUA and UUSC and helps you translate the values expressed in the Declaration of Conscience into action. One method used is a monthly “Conscience Call.” In these conference calls, participants typically hear a presentation and then break into small groups for discussion. July’s call is on the 14th. Details, and how to sign up to receive LoveResists reminders each month, are on the webpage.

Join Faithful Friends/Amigos Fieles on Saturday, July 22 as they resume their visits to immigrants detained at Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center. There are so many waiting for a visit! Address: 12500 Bruceville Rd. Elk Grove, CA 95757. Time: registration begins at 6:00 P.M. Please contact the Faithful Friends Program Coordinator for more information and to let her know you will be there: Susan Lange, susanlange.uu@gmail.com, home 916 686-1206, cell 650 291-4603.

Participate in Yolo Interfaith Alliance for Climate Justice events, which explore how to live sustainably in our own communities and how we can address larger needs together.

July 30, attend *Laudato Si Celebration* with prayer, garden blessing, refreshments and screening of Leonardo DiCaprio’s film *Before the Flood* on Sunday, July 30, 2:30-5:30 pm, St. James Catholic Church.

August, date TBA, watch Al Gore’s documentary, *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*, with discussion afterward.

September 17 and 24, watch *From the Ashes*, a National Geographic film by Bloomberg Philanthropics, on the future of coal. Davis Methodist Church.

Help Lynne Nittler plan talks this fall by Kathryn Phillips, Executive Director of the CA Sierra Club, on how to make a difference with legislators and what legislation to watch, and Post-Carbon Institute Fellow Richard Heinberg on “Our Renewable Future.” Visit www.postcarboninstitute.org for great webinars and information, including 300 Years of Fossil Fuels in 300 Seconds.

Put March 10, 2018 on your calendar as the date for the Sixth Annual Interfaith Climate Conference. Theme: trees in an era of climate change.

Watch for announcements about taking UndocuAlly training. The training is a prerequisite for working with undocumented students. About 15 members of our congregation have taken the training thus far. It is offered on campus each quarter by the UC Davis AB540 and Undocumented Student Center; we are hoping to cosponsor an off-campus session with another church.

Volunteer to set up and serve at Davis Community Meals on the second Tuesday of the month. Upcoming dates are August 8 and September 12. Contact Kathy Boyajian, katboy@gmail.com.

Help put food on many tables in Yolo County by harvesting vegetables and learning about work on a local small farm on Saturdays August 12 and September 9, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Location: **FARM Davis**, just outside Davis at 25450 County Road 95. This activity is designed for all ages and is a joint effort of UUCD's RE and the Social Justice Coordinating Committee. Don't forget your water, sunscreen, and a hat.

Join the UU Justice Ministry of California (UJMCA) for this year's Walking the Walk annual justice and advocacy training, August 12-16 at Camp Benneville Pines in the San Bernardino Mountains. For information and registration, visit: <http://uujmca.org/training-education/walking-the-walk/>. Fliers are available at the information table in the social hall.

Get ready for the meetings scheduled with our Sanctuary Discernment Team. Liz King, Paul Wilson, Beth Banks, Stefan Harvey, Pat Moore Pickett, and Kathy Robertson are leading us in a process that will clarify how our congregation will engage with the "New Sanctuary Movement." They have scheduled several open Sunday meetings over the next few months: 11:45-1:15 on Aug 13 and 1:00-2:30 on Sept 17, Oct 15, and Oct 29. The first three are for discussion and last is anticipated to be a congregational meeting where a vote on a recommended course of action may be taken. In the meantime, there are a number of resources you may wish to explore. The UUA, the UU Service Committee, the UU College of Social Justice and UURISE have published background fact sheets, toolkits, and webinars. The resources are posted on the College of Social Justice's website at <http://uucsj.org/tools-for-sanctuary-solidarity/>. Also talk with the discernment team members about your questions, concerns, and suggestions.

Register for our Border Trip. You can sign up through September 1 for our Mexico-U.S. border trip November 7-12. (These dates can include your travel time to Tucson if you are flying.) For information about the trip and the registration form, go to <http://uucsj.org/journeys/borderlinks/>. We have sent an announcement about the trip to nearby UU congregations, inviting their members to participate. We need a minimum of ten people in order for the trip to occur, and we do not yet have quite that many from our own congregation. If you have not considered participating, please do so. We believe you will be inspired.

Join the Quilting Bee on second Saturdays from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m., starting September 9. New members are welcomed to sew at the monthly gathering or to take projects to sew at home. We have projects that everyone works on as well as projects that one person does alone. We have challenging tasks and easy tasks. It is a great place to learn or teach. Contact Julie Saylor for more information. sayjulie@gmail.com

Take our Adult Religious Education Course on Immigration Justice, led by Rev. Beth Banks, four-part series designed for UUs to learn about the history and contemporary issues of immigration in the United States. Sessions are based on the book, *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal* by Aviva Chomsky, and the BBC World Service radio documentary, "The Missing Migrants." Interactive discussion & clips from the radio documentary. 7-9pm, Wednesdays, Sept. 13 & 27; Oct. 11 & 25, UU Library. Please make attendance a priority. ☺ There will be communication before the first class, so please sign up in Social Hall or office@uudavis.org ☺ Order *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal* by Aviva Chomsky at local bookstores, Beacon Press, or Amazon. ☺ Open to all community members, this class is highly recommended for those who will be traveling on the Nov. 7-12 Border Trip. ☺ Then join the congregational conversation (8/13, 9/17 & 10/15) as the Sanctuary Discernment Team explores how we might be allies for undocumented people in Yolo County.

Your Leadership is Needed. We continue to look for:

- A contributing writer for UUCD's *Bending the Arc*
- Policy coordinators (develop an advocacy agenda: petition signing, letter writing, public testimony and witness) for one quarter or more – mentoring available. One way to begin is to visit the UU Justice Ministry of California website: <http://uujmca.org/>.
- Two (2) at-large member positions on the Social Justice Coordinating Committee
- Interested in finding out about any of these opportunities or about anything in this publication? Contact Robin Datel, rddd@dcn.davis.ca.us, or Stefan Harvey, stefh2002@yahoo.com.

Written and edited by Elli Norris and Robin Datel.