**Beacon’s Public Stances, Part I: Immigration**

Allow me to remind readers that Beacon UU Congregation—by overwhelming majority votes of our membership—has selected three social justice issues on which to take a “public stance.” What that means is that *as a faith community* we have decided to focus on these issues:

1. ***Immigration,*** by supporting “families of undocumented immigrants” (approved 2013);
2. ***Non-violence***, in support of local efforts toward non-violence (approved 2016);
3. ***Living wage***, in support of efforts toward reform that provides a living wage for local workers (approved 2016).

Beginning today, and continuing over the next few weeks, I will summarize activity toward progress on each of these issues. You will notice that most of our work is in collaboration with partner groups, within our denomination as well as in the greater Flagstaff community.

**This week’s focus is on efforts in support on families of undocumented immigrants.**

* In 2014, with a Full Circle Trade and Thrift grant, we raised $14,500 for a variety of projects benefitting local undocumented immigrants and their families. Our collaborating partners were NAIC (No. AZ Interfaith Council) and the No. AZ Dream Fund.
* Through our consistent engagement with in NAIC, we have participated in numerous forums and informational meetings for Flagstaff’s immigrants, including sessions with local law enforcement, the Mexican Consulate and immigration lawyers.

Especially since November, tension within our Latino community—and across the country—is understandably high.

* This past fall and winter, Beacon folks donated items for immigrant mothers and their young children who faced long bus trips to locations around the country with little or no supplies. We delivered hundreds of pounds of those items at a UUJAZ (UU Justice Arizona) network event in the fall. Then, during their winter hiatus, Dorothy Rissel and Roseanne Fulcher, delivered more supplies to the bus station on a regular basis.
* In early April, 20 Beacon folks—8 of them our youth—participated in Justice District Assembly: Migrant and Borderlands Justice, an ambitious venture organized by our UU regional staff along with four southern Arizona UU Congregations and UUJAZ (UU Justice Arizona) network. Everyone I’ve talked to has expressed the power of their experiences that weekend, sharing that border issues have become more real for them.
* This Sunday’s service, including reflections on their border experiences, will be presented by our youth group, coordinated by our religious exploration director Sakenya McDonald.

We have been committed—and continue to be committed—to supporting families of undocumented immigrants in a variety of ways for the last almost four years!

**Beacon’s Public Stances, Part II: Living Wage**

As promised last week, this is Part Two of a series that both reviews and updates three social justice issues on which Beacon UU Congregation voted overwhelming to take a “public stance.” What that means is that *as a faith community* we have decided to focus on these issues:

1. ***Immigration,*** by supporting “families of undocumented immigrants” (approved 2013).
2. ***Non-violence***, in support of local efforts toward non-violence (approved 2016);
3. ***Living wage***, in support of efforts toward reform that provides a living wage for local workers (approved 2016).

Yes, I skipped to issue number 3 after reading a provocative article in last week’s local paper. Stay tuned for Part Three, which will be about non-violence (item 2 as listed above).

**Living Wage**

Early last summer (2016), when the Beacon congregation approved taking a public stance in support of efforts toward a living wage in our area, SJA thought that there would be specific actions we could take—as a congregation—to help make a living wage a reality here. After much research and deliberation about this complicated issue, we came to the conclusion that our best “action” was to provide the most accurate information possible about the two minimum wage citizen initiatives that were on the November ballot: Proposition 414 (the Flagstaff City initiative) and Proposition 206 (the Arizona State initiative). So that is what we did, creating a table that compared the two propositions, category by category.

In the election, Flagstaff city voters passed the Prop. 414 measure; the state minimum wage measure, Prop. 206 also passed. The City Council declined to accept a proposal of an organization calling itself Elevate Flagstaff (essentially the local Chamber of Commerce) to call a special election this May. The Elevate proposal, which would have basically gutted (my term) Prop. 414,  is—at this point—scheduled for the November, 2018, ballot. Then, in March, City Council voted to amend Prop. 414 (the local citizen initiative that passed last November), removing the requirement that Flagstaff’s minimum wage be $2 above the state minimum wage until 2021, and adjusting the timeline and start-up amount to this July and $10.50/eventually $12 respectively. It remains to be seen whether Bridging Flagstaff, yet another citizen group will come forward with its own initiative (AZ Daily Sun., 3/22/17).

The latest update: The lead AZ Daily Sun article (April 25) with the banner: “’Dark Money’ backs Elevate”, reported that Elevate Flagstaff’s political donations summary shows “most of its contributions coming from outside the city.” Elevate…” reported raising $26,135 from January 1 through March 31…$17,812 (was) in-kind donation” from a group that (succeeds another group) run by Phoenix political consultant Sean

Noble, (who is connected with) conservative billionaires and political donors Charles and David Koch.”

*For me, the question is whether it is appropriate for a city election. What do YOU think?*

*Roz Clark, SJA Journalist*