

Volunteers of the Month – BLM on Farmington at Woodland

For seven consecutive Monday afternoons, dozens of friends and members of Immanuel Congregational Church have been spending an hour on the corner of their property at Farmington Avenue and Woodland Street showing their support for the Black Lives Matter Movement.

In truly exemplary fashion, all have worn masks and for the most part, maintained the suggested six feet of separation.

Also for the most part, they have gotten honks of solidarity from the passing traffic, a reminder that while there is still much work to do, it seems that there are many willing to take up that work.



Many of those who have shown up have been part of Immanuel's Social Justice effort for many years, and one could say they have made it their life's work. Former Hartford City Council member Jim Boucher was hardly recognizable in baseball cap, sunglasses and facemask until he spoke. Jim is a longtime member of ICC and a tireless proponent of social justice in many forms. Along with Elaine Roberts, and next to him in the photo is Majority Leader Matt Ritter, also a dedicated champion of justice.

Many of the others present though less well known are just as committed to bringing about the necessary change. As they have been for years.

In fact, all of Asylum Hill has been committed to this idea from its founding with the creation of the School for the Deaf, through Stowe and Twain right up to the present with their namesake organizations, ICC, Hartbeat Ensemble, and many others.

What seems different this time is an awakening, an effort to be "woke", a commitment to understand the history of racism and how central it is to our existence in every aspect of our lives, and then a commitment to root it out and establish real justice.

One part of that effort has been led by Hartbeat Ensemble's Geoffrey Simmons jr. who began creating an "affinity space for Greater Hartford-area BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)" A few weeks later he helped create a corresponding Zoom space for self-identified white people called "Breaking White Silence"

The third of this series just concluded last week. They have been 90 minutes each where those of us who have experienced life as white can explore what it's been like for those who have not. It's been an education, and a process to understand the vastness and depth of the problem and that none of us are truly free until all of us are free.

For anyone wishing to join the "Breaking White Silence" group email rhoda.cerritelli@hartbeatensemble.org For those wanting more information on the BIPOC group email BIPOC@hartbeatensemble.org

