

Social Justice Meeting

January 25, 2021

Attendance: Pastor Amy, Frank Hairston, Josh Case, Jen Case, Barb Hanniford, Loralea Allen, Donna Hess

1. New year, new goals - Josh

We are looking to move from a church that cares about social justice to a church that lives social justice. We've done the book studies and workshops. Now our education needs to change the world, at least our part of the world: Kent, Portage county. Pastor Amy adds that we have done a lot of work indeed, but there are still folks in the church that may have missed out on some of our offerings, and we need to make sure we are not leaving people behind. We can start this year by asking some questions: What else can we be doing? We need to do our homework, but also center people of color. How can we, as a church, engage with the community? Donna adds that we need to internalize the message, asking what can I do to become an ally and an anti-racist? How do I better listen to Black voices? We need to be bringing Black voices into the church. This is probably the first step before writing letters, attending meetings, organizing, etc.

Barb adds that when folks ask how they can address racism in personal conversations or during educational offerings, we can encourage them to join our ministry and work with us. We can work to be more organized and let people know what's going on and how they can join.

We brainstorm about Black History Month, also realizing that it is also Lent and that we are in an ongoing learning process that doesn't focus on just one month of the year. Jen's anti-racism book study is starting "400 Souls", which is Black history written by Black authors. Barb will make an invitation video to play during church in order to invite people and to encourage them that this is the work of the church and very much connected to our relationship with God. There has been and will continue to be push back (ie. Why are we still talking about this???), but this is part of our work, to keep urging and encouraging each other toward social justice.

2. How do we become an anti-racist church?

We spend some time talking about how churches were involved in the civil rights movement and how that might translate to our times. How do we as a church, an entity back and partner with Black Lives Matter, Poor People's Campaign, groups that work against gerrymandering, voter suppression. Where are racist policies happening? We need to go there and stop them.

Pastor Amy states that we as a church need to commit to becoming an anti-racist church. This invitation should come from us, but we need the buy-in from council. This is stated just like ADA, ONA, WISE. We bring it before the council and council brings it to congregation. Rev. Dr. Velda Love, minister of Racial Reconciliation in UCC Cleveland office, could meet with us to start a process to becoming an anti-racist congregation. We will try to meet with her sooner rather than later. Amy will get in touch with her. Frank suggests having her speak to the church as well.

3. Updates

Frank says NAACP coming out with coloring book. KIFA had a repeat of the movie discussion on the Children's Movement. He suggests that we do something like that with UYF.

Jen says that Sunny is coming to lead New Jim Crow as the next installment of the book study, but maybe it make more sense, in light of our conversation, to make in a more general topic like teaching Kingian principles. We may get more people to attend, and it may be more timely for our church.

Barb is posting Black History blurbs in email updates and will continue to do so.

Future meeting TBD.