

UUC Social Justice Steering Committee 2025-26 Annual Report

Prepared June 2026 by Walter Hatch

Membership/Leadership

The committee convened in September 2025, partnering with a new Associate Minister for Community Engagement, Rev. Victoria Poling. Members included Walter Hatch and Ian Mosher (co-chairs), as well as Rebecca Hendrickson, Paula Nurius, Catherine Ruha, Jason Vaughn and Sarah Walker. Midway through the church year, Ian stepped down as co-chair and Catherine stepped up. We also added two new members: Emily Joseph and Lisa Stuebing.

Ongoing Activities

One of SJSC's ongoing duties is coordinating special offering plates (on the second Sunday of each month) for social justice organizations. The committee spent considerable time in 2025-26 revising the application process. We agreed on two major changes: 1) emphasizing that we would honor close partnerships between active church teams nominating an organization for a second Sunday plate and the actual organization receiving the offering; and 2) requiring applicant groups to inquire about non-financial ways congregants might contribute to the recipient organization through, for example, volunteer service or activism.

As it engaged in its review of the application process, the committee patched together a schedule for second Sunday plates during the church year. It later convened a subcommittee to review applications for the 2026-27 church year.

The committee also spent much of the year reviewing its charter, which had not been updated since 2017. After several months of discernment over our mission and goals, we created a subcommittee that proposed a new charter. Review of that work is likely to continue into the fall.

New Initiatives

Perhaps the most ambitious undertaking in this church year was the Social Justice Revival, held in October 2025. We had previously consulted with social justice teams, some of whom had expressed a desire for congregation-wide action on shared causes. The church's

service work and activism had been, we heard, carried out in “silos.” The revival, which followed a potluck, brought together congregants with a variety of ideas for church-wide action. Their ideas were discussed in small groups and then the larger gathering, and then were subjected to a kind of rank choice voting.

Three ideas rose to the top: 1) mutual aid that would benefit everyone in the church, but especially those struggling with mobility challenges; 2) a service program to store and distribute goods needed by lower-income households with kids attending nearby Nathan Eckstein Middle School; and 3) a set of advocacy and activist efforts to advance social justice in our larger community.

The mutual aid idea resulted in an exploratory program of ridesharing to connect congregants needing a way to get to church, especially to worship services, with congregants willing to offer a way to get there. Ian Mosher recruited Leah Evison and Jane Howard to coordinate this pilot project.

The Eckstein project, led by Emily Joseph, is nearing fruition. Shelving will soon be built in Channing to store durable goods, from laundry and toiletry items to canned or packaged foods, for Eckstein families. We imagine that, beginning in the fall, those families will come to the church once a month to pick up needed goods from moveable carts we bring out to the downstairs entry.

We have acted sporadically on the third idea for advocacy and activism. In collaboration with the Acting for Racial Justice Team, we have participated in vigils along 35th Ave NE, singing songs for justice, between services on several Sundays. We have lobbied the City Council for measures to advance the mayor’s plan to expand shelter capacity for the homeless in Seattle, and are preparing to lobby with the Church Council of Greater Seattle for a budget that is a “moral document.”

Outside the three initiatives associated with our Social Justice Revival, the committee has promoted a few other efforts. For example, we collaborated with “Hand in Hand,” an organization representing domestic workers, on a teach-in about how congregants might respect the rights of home health care assistants, nannies, house cleaners and others we employ, and establish “sanctuary homes” for those domestic workers who might be immigrants.