SOUTH COUNTY

SOCIAL JUSTICE COALITION

RHODE ISLAND

Organizing Group Meeting Notes
March 21, 2023

Attendees:

Nancy Richman, UUCSC Cathy Solomon, UUCSC Don Hermes, PDCC Joanne Haynes, PDCC
Sylvia Blanda, PDCC Mary Roda, PDCC Rabbi Ethan Adler, Congregation Beth David
Aimee Grause, Bahá'i Kathy Gibson, St. Augustine Episcopal
Craig Marciniak, St. Francis Catholic Church, St. Vincent DePaul

Objective of this organizing group: Develop an informal proposal, for the larger group to consider, of one or more scenarios of what we might become and initial ideas of how to achieve this.

1. **Wishes for the future of the group that Don brought together (went around the circle)**
   a. Joining forces will be more effective in addressing key SJ issues in the community; will need to identify and prioritize key issues
   b. Strength in numbers; diverse group supporting SJ issues; hope to focus on climate change and environmental issues
   c. Having different voices addressing these issues is a plus; What are the needs in the community? How can this group best focus their energy?
   d. We need educational programs to try to eradicate hate. Pick one goal, one project and everyone talk about and focus on it. How can we reach people full of hate?
   e. Key issues is ACEs – adverse childhood events
   f. We are all good at something, so if we come together, we can leverage each organization's strengths to get more done
   g. Agree with (f). Each congregation is working on SJ issues in some form. Figure out what others are doing; come together in partnership. Get to know each other.
   h. Focus in year one on a small scale – identify what each faith-based congregation is doing now and identify opportunities to help each other with current initiatives; build on each other's strengths (e.g. some are strong in racial justice, others with the environment…)

i. Start by identifying the most pressing SJ issues in South County through a survey to be sent to all churches and social service organizations.

2. Ideas for approaches

a. Form committees on a range of high priority issues
b. Provide information / workshops on issues – e.g., the new SK Electricity Program
c. Conduct a survey to identify each congregations' areas of current SJ work and opportunities to join forces
d. Become something like the Faith Alliance of the Domestic Violence Resource Center
e. Have a point person for communication of upcoming events, resources, need for help, information, etc.
f. Invite other faith-based congregations – especially those with BIPOC and immigrant congregants.
g. For now, keep the larger group to a faith-based group, rather than too quickly expanding to social service agencies, other activist groups, etc. Start small and build as we have leadership and a solid foundation.

3. NEXT STEPS

a. **EMAIL POINT PERSON -** Joanne Haynes agreed to "curate" emails to her into one weekly email to the large group distribution list (THANK YOU JOANNE)
b. **HOST A "FAITH FAIR(E)" –** where each congregation would have a table with information on it about their congregation. Perhaps the film committee could video this event to show to their congregations.
c. **RESOURCES –** The Rhode Island Foundation has funds available for community organizing. Sylvia Blanda will look into this. (THANK YOU SYLVIA)
d. **RECOMMENDATION –** Nancy Richman and Cathy Solomon are working with the U.S. Attorney's office to bring a workshop called, "United Against Hate" to South County. We recommend that the large group be a sponsor and help promote/market it. Date/time/location/agenda TBD. (More information to follow as it becomes available).
e. **REQUEST –** Please let Don know if you have any contacts for churches with Muslim, Indigenous, Black, Immigrant, Latino… congregants. Let's try to create a true coalition.
f. **LEADERSHIP –** Please consider if you would be willing to step into a leadership role for the continued building of this partnership / coalition. We will need a semi-permanent steering committee and leader to convene the meetings, create an agenda, and move the effort forward.

This effort is evolving. Clearly there is more to putting together a coalition than we can do in one meeting. The overall theme (mission?) seems to be to Stop Hate – in that everything we do should include

some aspect of showing the community that we are all human and we are all connected. Thanks to the organizing group for some great initial thoughts!

NEXT LARGE GROUP MEETING: APRIL 23, 6:00pm, at PDCC

Don will send email (THANK YOU DON)

Submitted by: Nancy Richman, convener of the "pre-steering committee organizing group"