

MINUTES
Board of Social Justice & Action (SJA)
Sunday, September 9, 2018

Attendees: Melissa Herman, Nancy Lohman, Rebecca Unruh, Dick Staufenberger, Jerry Hartman, Sarah Engle, Cindy Sanders, Gloria Betts (by phone), and Paul Leistra.

1. **Prayer:** Rebecca led us in prayer.
2. **Approval of the August Minutes:** The August minutes were previously approved by e-mail.
3. **Treasurer's update:** Dick reported SJA has \$52,737 in its account, \$5,000 of which is earmarked for the Christmas offering for distribution in 2019. The Board moved to distribute \$2,500 from the McDowell Foundation to SJA, giving SJA a total of \$50,237 to distribute to grantees this fall.
4. **Westmoreland Mentors update:** Dick reported the first cohort of scholars started college, and the second cohort, now starting their senior year of high school, will attend orientation on Sept. 13. We discussed the importance of highlighting the program to the congregation and eventually fundraising, mindful that we want to do it in a way and at a time that doesn't conflict with solicitations for SJA grants or the Shaw Scholars.
5. **Gun Violence Task Force:** Nancy reported that the Task Force had its first meeting of 12-13 people and will meet the first Sunday of every month at 11:30am in the Parlor. The GVTF will participate in monthly inter-faith vigils the 14th of every month at NRA headquarters in Fairfax. Nancy and Kaeley will invite the congregation to carpool together from church to the 2pm, October 14 vigil.
 - a. **ACTION:** Nancy will provide more information as she receives it.
6. **Nominating Committee:** Dick agreed to serve again on the Nominating Committee. The rest of the Board will be responsible for thinking of names for the Committee to consider.
 - a. **ACTION:** Rebecca will find names from previous years and circulate.
7. **Summer meeting with Tim:** Cindy reported on the meeting she and Nancy had with Tim in June during which they discussed ways of deepening the congregation's engagement with grantees and promoting social justice. Tim is supportive of our initiative to highlight a different grantee each month in the newsletter and bulletin. He also suggested we consider including the blurbs an audio or video interview of leaders from that organization. Other ideas he suggested included partnering with a historically black church in the community and supporting their work for social justice.
8. **Strategic Planning / Vision for SJA:** As detailed more fully below, the significant planned activities for SJA for the upcoming year are: (1) grantmaking (fundraising from the Congregation; selecting, monitoring, and engaging with grantees); (2) engaging the Congregation with grantees through communications in newsletters and bulletins, coordinating the Children's collection with grantees' needs, and coordinating service activities; (3) supporting the Scholar/Mentorship program and expanding communications about it to the Congregation; and (4) further defining our work on preventing gun violence.
 - a. **Thoughtful and Impactful Grantmaking.** We will use the 4 criteria set forth in our [application](#) to review and award grants that support projects that: (1) go beyond meeting basic human needs to empower individuals and communities; (2) make a difference in the lives of individuals; (3) serve individuals living in the DC metropolitan community; (4) are undertaken by non-profit organizations of a size of scope whereby modest grants can be impactful. SJA will also consider financial accountability and transparency, and historical

support for organizations currently hosting Westmoreland Volunteer Corps members. We will consider hosting grantees Palm Sunday to raise awareness before the Easter offering.

- b. **Deepening Westmoreland Engagement with Grantees.** Every month, we will endeavor to highlight a grantee so that the congregation can learn more about the projects they are supporting and can get further involved through service and in-kind donations. We will do this by: (1) highlighting one grantee in the newsletter and weekly bulletins; (2) endeavoring to match the Children's Collection with the same organization; and (3) endeavoring to plan a service or political action activity related to that organization.

- i. **ACTION:** Cindy will talk to A Wider Circle about dates in December for a service project wrapping Christmas presents.

- c. **Coordinating with and Supporting (i) the Westmoreland Scholar and Mentorship Program and (ii) the Gun Violence Task Force.** We discussed the importance of continuing to have at least 1 liaison between SJA and these important projects under the SJA umbrella. For 2018: Dick (WSMP); Nancy (GVTF). For 2019: Sarah (WSMP); Paul (GVTF).

- d. **Launching February Service Month.** We support the proposal to host service projects at church Sundays in February.

- i. **ACTION:** Rebecca will offer SJA's support during the Sep. 29 session on service at the Westmoreland Retreat and will follow up with Tim to express SJA's desire to include one or more grantees as recipients of the service projects.

9. Other Themes for SJA:

- a. **Spiritual Dimension of SJA's Work.** We discussed the importance of reflecting upon the spiritual dimension of SJA's work beyond starting each meeting with a prayer. Possibilities discussed included dedicating an SJA meeting in January to reflection on this issue and inviting Tim and/or Kaeley to lead a discussion on these issues with us or the broader Westmoreland community.

- b. **Get Out the Vote.** We also discussed how political engagement can be an important social justice activity. Without supporting a particular party or candidate, SJA could play a role in encouraging civil engagement and voter registration.

- i. **ACTION:** Jerry will talk to Tim.

- #### 10. Planning for Grant Review.
- Grants are due October 8, 2018. Rebecca will receive the grants and upload them for review on Google Drive, and summarize each application on a spreadsheet to be distributed no later than October 10. Nancy will assign several applications to each Board member. At least two SJA members will be assigned to review each application and should be prepared to briefly describe the project during the October 14 meeting. Every member should review the spreadsheet and be prepared to opine on funding before the Nov. 11 meeting.

- a. **ACTION:** Sarah will put a blurb in the bulletin and newsletter announcing the upcoming SJA grant deadline and linking to the application. We will all review assigned applications and summary spreadsheet in advance of Oct. 14 meeting.

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, October 14 at 8:30 (Library)

ADDITIONAL 2018 MTGS: Nov. 11, Dec. 9.