

UUJEC Economic Justice Spotlight

Conejo Valley UU Fellowship, Newbury Park, CA

Pamela Lopez, Outreach Director for CVUUF shares the work and mission of the congregation:

Tell us about the economic justice work in your congregation.

Conejo Valley UU Fellowship's Mission Statement is: Our mission is to nurture spiritually courageous people who transform the world through justice and compassion. As part of living our faith we have a strong commitment to economic justice. We have hosted monthly meetings addressing the issue of escalating inequality. The meetings are attended by both members of CVUUF and the outside community.



We are strong advocates for the \$15/hour minimum wage. In doing so, members of our support staff (child care, maintenance, etc.) have gotten the benefit in a salary increase reflecting this. We



Photo by
Edgard
Franks

had over 200 people sign petitions to increase the minimum wage in California. Through the advocacy of our escalating inequality group, we have enrolled the congregation into endorsing the Farm Workers Bill of Rights for farm workers in Ventura County. Members of our congregation have been lobbying our county supervisors to advocate for fair treatment of farm workers. Additionally, meetings are being scheduled with growers to have the complete story for effective advocacy.

We had an ongoing, intensive six-month long study group of Thomas Piketty's Capital in the 21st Century. CVUUF Escalating Inequality group co-sponsored and participated in Ventura Stories Feb. 20th event focusing on minimum wage, low-income housing, Farm Workers Bill of Rights and early childhood education.

Community Forums (our ongoing speakers' series) have recently included the following discussions:

- Guest speaker David Korten;
- Chuck Collins discussing his book "99 to 1: How Wealth Inequality is Wrecking Our Country";
- "What is TPP? To Protect the People and Our Planet";
- "Capitalism and Climate Change - the Politics of Global Warming";
- "The Importance of Early Childhood Education - The First Five Years";

- David Cobb - Founder, Move to Amend - taking the money out of politics;
- Screening and discussion of "Inequality for All".

How is the leadership of your congregation involved in your economic justice work?

The CVUUF Board called for a vote on the endorsement of the Farm Workers Bill of Rights. Sermons on economic justice have included (in the past twelve months): "What Affects One Affects Us All" service on inequality "Our Work on this Planet" (\$15/hr minimum wage): "First in the Country" Rev. Hines & Maricela Morales, local community organizer, (Farmworkers Bill of Rights); "Transforming the World Through Justice and Compassion" (general activism including economic justice) Ventura Stories event coordinated by Escalating Inequality chair, Michael Teasdale, Board Trustee, Matthew Weisman; Council Outreach Director, Pamela Lopez. Special collections include: Social Justice Fund for Ventura County, MICOP - Support for indigenous youth, MANNA/FOOD SHARE - Local Food Bank.



Ventura Stories Event. Photo Provided by UUJEC



Board and Council leadership are involved in: Escalating Inequality Study Group, Feeding Hands (monthly meal for homeless neighbors), advocating for minimum wage and Farm Workers Bill of Rights, special community education events, reproductive Justice - with equal access to reproductive care - there is greater access to economic independence.

CVUUF Community Forum, Photo from CVUUF Facebook page.

How have you made economic justice activity a sustainable part of your congregational life?

There is an ongoing monthly scheduled meeting exploring the issue of economic justice. It is generally attended by at least ten people each meeting. Projects regularly are created there. The Feeding Hands program (providing 100-120 dinners to those neighbors less fortunate) has been

ongoing monthly for at least fifteen years. Several special collections are dedicated to economic justice work each year.

What results or changes have you noticed because of your activity?

The congregation has become more aware of the economic injustices faced by our community. Our endorsement of the Farm Workers Bill of Rights was unanimous. County Supervisors have indicated



CVUUF Members meeting with the Social Justice Fund of Ventura County. Photo provided by Michael Teasdale

they will not bring it up in session. We have scheduled lobbying meetings to encourage public conversations on the issues presented in the Bill of Rights and congregational members have attended open hearings on the issues of farmworkers. Members of our congregation got over 200 people to sign petitions to the CA Legislature to raise the minimum wage. It helped prod the state in their efforts.

Article developed in collaboration between UUJEC Administrator Rachel Bennett Steury and CVUUF Outreach Director Pamela Lopez. To reach CVUUF, please contact Pamela at outreachdirector@cvuuf.org.

Additional Resources:

CVUUF Social Justice webpage: <https://cvuuf.org/justice/social-action/>

CVUUF Community Forum webpage: <https://cvuuf.org/justice/community-forum/>

CVUUF Twitter Page <https://twitter.com/uuconejo>

CVUUF Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CVUUF>

Farmworker Bill of Rights Report:

<http://www.nwuujn.org/view/article/57a0eeca0cf25f2d92e34b31/?topic=51cbfc62f702fc2ba812591d>

Social Justice Fund of Ventura County: <http://www.socialjusticefundvc.org/>

CVUUF Event Notices:

[http://www.thecamarilloacorn.com/news/2016-02-](http://www.thecamarilloacorn.com/news/2016-02-12/Community/Workshop%20looks%20at%20local%20economic%20issues.html)

[12/Community/Workshop looks at local economic issues.html](http://www.thecamarilloacorn.com/news/2016-02-12/Community/Workshop looks at local economic issues.html)

<http://conejovalley.happeningmag.com/event/capitalism-climate-change-forum-newbury-park/>

<http://www.wherevent.com/detail/Cvuuf-Community-Forum-TPP-To-Protect-People-and-the-Planet-or-Corporate-Profits>