



UUJEC Summer Newsletter 2020

Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community

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Celebrating Labor

Labor Day is coming soon — Monday, September 7, 2020. Will you have a Service honoring it?

Congress and President Cleveland designated it as a federal — a day meant to honor and support labor after 250,000 workers in 27 states joined forces with the Pullman Company workers who were striking because their wages had been cut, but their rent in company-owned housing was not. It's widely reported that congress wanted workers to celebrate in September to deter them from celebrating that radically-inspired holiday on May 1.

What is your Congregation doing to celebrate the Day or even the concept — at a time when union membership has been drastically cut (starting with President Reagan's union busting in the 80's) at a time when millions of workers are unemployed because of the COV-ID Virus, and millions are being pushed to poverty; at a time when so many of us are realizing for the first time how very much we all, depend upon our nation's labor?

What is your Congregation doing to celebrate the Day or even the concept when the Interfaith Worker Justice, the Poor People's Campaign (www.poorpeoplescampaign.org) and the Southern Workers Assembly (southernworker.org) are national resources ready to help UU congregations celebrate and support labor?

And do your Coffee Hours use Equal Exchange Products, and your Services

resound with hymns such as # 109 (often known as Bread and Roses), #305 (De Colores, identified with farm workers) and #169 (We Shall Overcome) that are found in our gray "Singing the Living Tradition" hymnal?

Please speak to your congregation about the need for economic justice during and after the pandemic. Use songs and stories to celebrate today's working people and to call attention to their experiences and their concerns. In the United States, the major holidays are exploited by capitalism. It's possible to liberate and reshape holidays like Labor Day. Even a small fellowship, with limited resources, can send a holiday message that will do some good.

(submitted by Judith Deutsch)

THE PANDEMIC: A RELIGIOUS RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION:

A response to the General Assembly report by President Susan Frederick-Gray. Our UUA president has expressed the association's concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a major tragedy for all humanity. Thousands have died and are dying. The pandemic has exposed major problems in health care.

THEREFORE, we urge all people to

- . Become advocates for health equity and safety,
- . Liberate people from the oppression that causes unnecessary suffering and death;

Work for adequate funding for national, state, and local public-health programs;

. Urge national leaders to provide adequate support for international agencies such as the World Health Organization ;

. Advocate for a national, publicly funded, comprehensive program of universal medical care. During the pandemic, assure that all people can access adequate medical care;

. Advocate for an economic recovery program prioritizing help to the poor and marginalized, to create sustainable/and resilient communities, with justice for all;

. Call upon Congress and the President of the United States to establish the American Thanksgiving Day as a multicultural holiday that celebrates health and wellness, healing, and environmental protection; and

. Support congregation-based programs to promote health and safety, reduce health disparities, and ensure access to quality health care for all.

The Pandemic: A Religious Response

An Action of Immediate Witness
Submitted at GA by UUJEC

Although the UUA decided to not do AIWs

INTRODUCTION:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a tragedy, an unnatural disaster. Thousands have died and are dying. Millions suffer needlessly due to government incompetence, indifference, and ruthlessness. The pandemic has exposed severe shortcomings in the US health system, laying bare inequities in our society. The Administration's response isn't just, equitable, or compassionate.

We affirm, again, that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. No one is expendable. We need a moral response to this moral crisis; we need to love and care for one another.

WHEREAS

- Federal responses to COVID-19 value profits over people (reminiscent of Social Darwinism). Human beings are expendable and even surplus in our profit-oriented economic/political systems, which were designed to protect slavery and promote genocide.
- The Administration has used the crisis to exacerbate international, racial, and cultural tensions and to further tighten our borders,
- To gain political and economic advantage, leaders routinely undermine public health with advice and actions that are often contradictory, untested, and dangerous,
- Losing a job often means losing access to health insurance. Workers who remain employed may still lack adequate protection, compensation, and representation.
- Diseases that affect one nation threaten the health of every other.
- The economic costs fall most heavily on the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly communities of color and indigenous peoples. Assistance efforts have shortchanged many Americans and been used to funnel resources and tax benefits to the rich.

THEREFORE, we urge Unitarian Universalists and all Americans to

- Become advocates for health equity,
- Work together to reduce inequities that make people more vulnerable to disease,
- Support our national public-health system by advocating for consistent funding and encouraging the administration to enable the Public Health Service to work as designed,
- Urge national leaders to provide adequate support for the World Health Organization and allied organizations,

- Advocate for a national, publicly funded, and comprehensive program of universal medical care and public health, insulated from political pressures, with resources for our immediate needs and for long-range planning with local and state governments for Medicare for all,
- Advocate for an economic recovery program that prioritizes helping the poor and marginalized who have suffered most from the pandemic, and shifts our economy towards a sustainable future, and
- Study within and across congregations to increase our understanding of what makes for good health and recommend congregation-based programs to promote individual and community health, reduce health disparities, and ensure access to quality healthcare for all.

SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTATION:

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

We need to better understand the forces that shape personal and public health. The project begun in response to this Action of Immediate Witness will consider the following questions:

- How can people in different age groups, and people with different abilities, needs, and traditions, help one another? How do we encourage wellness through programs for mutual aid, family ministry, and life-long learning?
- How can we create resilient, sustainable, and accessible communities and congregations, with equity and compassion for all?
- We propose the immediate development of communication systems to discuss such questions as, “What are congregations doing to promote economic and social justice during the pandemic and beyond? What’s

needed? How can Unitarian Universalists encourage healing, community safety, and health equity for all people?”

The pandemic brings us a new appreciation of the religious principles and purposes that form the foundation of our Unitarian Universalist Association. All of the points matter; all of the points are connected. We will continue to promote healthcare and other human rights.

With these thoughts in mind, we prepare for the future.

Outside Resources:

Kennedy & Jayapal “Medicare Crisis Program Act” (H.R. 6674) will expand Medicare and Medicaid eligibility during the COVID-19 crisis to the unemployed and cap out-of-pocket costs. As a step toward reliable universal health care that is not dependent on employment. Equity components: Targets those most in need, sets the stage for a far more cost-effective permanent universal coverage.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6674>

Know our Board

Cindy Piester

Unitarian Universalist Church of
Ventura, CA

Guided by Gandhi’s teachings, Cindy has been a peace and justice event organizer, and an alternative media cable access television producer and host. In 2011 she directed/produced a no-budget 2011 documentary on US committed atrocities. This contributed to the Center for Constitutional Rights seeking a Thematic Hearing request with the Inter-American



Commission on Human Rights. After the death of her husband, John, a Vietnam Veteran, Cindy focused on addressing the existential threat of Climate Disruption. She is interested in mobilizing efforts towards reducing the trillion-dollar military budget negatively impacting the economics of our communities and contributing to climate change.

Book Review

The Green New Deal & Beyond:



Ending the Climate Emergency While We Still Can

By Stan Cox (2020)

Stan Cox has studied the economics behind our escalating climate catastrophes and concluded that the world simply can't keep growing

its GDP. That is, the global growth in GDP has been tied very tightly to the growth of fossil fuel energy for the past century and a half. A Green New Deal will be essential to wean us off fossil fuels in an equitable way but clean energy is in no position to replicate, let alone expand, the power and versatility of fossil fuels. The backdrop is that "a 2° C hotter world would clearly be catastrophic" (p xxix).

Cox calculates that conventional carbon taxes simply won't do the job. So he concludes that "eradicating emissions will require a statutory limit on all fuel extraction, one that lowers quickly year by year, along with a system to guarantee material sufficiency for all people and excess for none" This will mean an "economy that operates on less, not more, energy, and does not depend on over-exploitation of the earth's ecosystems" (p xxiv). He expects that all this will require "fair share rationing of energy" (p xxvi), as was done in World War II.

Cox proceeds to give a hopeful historical overview of the original New Deal, the measures taken in WW II, and the later Limits-

to-Growth studies. Then he brings us up-to-date through 40 years of energy crises and political backsliding. Then, like most climate scientists and the IPCC itself, he misses important studies of fossil fuel reserves. Namely, the world is rapidly running through its reserves of cheap fossil fuels, especially the most versatile and valuable fuel - oil. The world peak for production of conventional oil was in 2006. Fracking expanded US production for about a decade but is now heading into decline and has never achieved a positive cash flow.

That is, fracked oil has been heavily subsidized by Wall Street. It is even possible that the world peak for all oil was in November, 2018. Coal and natural gas still have significant reserves but even maintenance of our current global economy will be difficult, maybe not even possible, with the decline of oil over the coming decades. Thus some of the economic contraction that Cox sees as necessary will happen anyway, though not without a lot of turmoil. And in the worst case, wars over the remaining resources will bring it all crashing down. Cox's planned contraction could avoid much of the turmoil.

To replace GDP, Cox suggests Jason Hickel's "Sustainable Development Index" (p 85). And he proclaims that "I am hopeful the both democracy grief and climate grief can be transformed into an insurgent force capable of ridding us of their common source" (p 100). For an example how to navigate the "off-ramp ahead" he cites the 107 page "Climate Mobilization Victory Plan" (p 103).

Stan Cox's final word sums up the formidable tasks ahead: "We must block all pro-corporate cost-benefit analyses, nuclear enthusiasts' peril-plagued prescriptions, ecomodernists' siren songs, and Silicon Valley's relentless technocratic boosterism... Expansion of the human economy is going to end, one way or another"(p 122).

(Submitted by Dick Burkhardt)