

Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

January 2022

Report on "End 1.3.3 – Live out our commitment to promoting social justice causes, especially racial justice and gender equity" and its impact on limitations policies.

Generally we continue to make progress towards this end. We are involved in several important social justice causes which include supporting Beardsley School, Mercy Learning Center, CT Against Gun Violence, CIRI (especially apartment setups for refugees) and some associated causes such as KIVA Microfinancing, Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, United with Kenya and the Domestic Violence Task Force.

By far, we are focused on two existing and one emerging causes: Racial Justice, Gender Equity and Climate Justice. Through the Racial Justice Council we are developing a multifaceted approach to anti-racism. The Council is comprised of individuals who are working on various projects; police accountability, homelessness, state wide advocacy and somewhat in parallel the Women's Group BLM Team is educating the congregation on racism and how we can affect change. This Sunday is an example of their work.

The Gender Equity Team has presented several powerful community wide workshops and we are working directly with the Triangle Center in Norwalk on gender equity issues. One direct outcome of this work is a proposal to remodel our restroom to be truly gender inclusive. While no decisions have been made (and will require your approval as the Board) we have place holders in a longer range building plan to make those changes.

Climate Justice is emerging as a project. Our Intern Minister Kim Warman is working with several congregants towards establishing a team to work on this issue. She is working throughout this year with our Youth Group on the theological basis for climate justice work. This has had a positive impact on the rationale and planning for the Youth Group Alaska Trip in April.

Of concern to me is how we are going to manage the transition from a paid Social Justice Director to an all-volunteer leadership team. I intend to call the leads for all these projects together into a Social Justice Council on January 27th. David Vita is working with groups already towards a transition.

Impact of Limitations Policies on this End

There is very little impact on this End from our Limitations. There are several which may have an impact.

3.2.1 Requires me to insure confidentiality of members giving. This is not sufficiently defined or necessarily possible. While the staff treats the amount of giving carefully, there are occasions where it is necessary for people outside our Stewardship Committee to know what someone is giving especially if we want to ask an interested person for a donation. This requires refinement in my opinion.

3.5 I may need to deviate from priorities if needs arise. The most recent example is staffing for Technology. While I have removed the Social Justice Director Position, I have had to hire David half time as our Tech Manager. This isn't necessarily in keeping with your stated priorities.

3.8.1 Prohibits me from changing my own compensation. However, since I set the staff salaries (in keeping with overall people costs) how can I have a cost of living adjustment? My plan is to include a small percentage COLA for all staff people in the next fiscal year. I would like to include myself in that.

3.9.7 This end may impede my ability to speak to the Board's Ends in public. As I read this limitation policy, I am limited to only speak to those issues which the congregation as a whole has endorsed. Currently those are issues surrounding women's rights and racial justice. What if I want to speak out against a polluter on behalf of the church? Or in favor of abortion rights? I think this limitation needs revisiting.

We are making progress. That said, this is a year of great change in social justice work and there will be bumps in the road.

Respectfully Submitted, Rev. Dr. John Morehouse