

Creating a Social Justice Task Force

CREATING A SOCIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Thank you for your interest in forming a new Social Justice Task Force at First Unitarian Church. Please provide the following information to help the Executive Team understand your issues, goals, and proposed activities. This is not a bureaucratic hoop to jump through, but rather is intended to guide your core team through an important thought process about your purposes and intentions. If there's something you cannot understand or answer, let us help you think through these questions.

1. Date: November 29, 2016
2. Name of Task Force: Independent Living for Young Adults (ILYA)

3. Core Leadership of Task Force (minimum of five persons required)

Note: Anyone is welcome to make this commitment, including non-members of the church. Because of the need to have a fully engaged leadership team for each Task Force, persons who make a core commitment to this Task Force may not make a similar core commitment to another Task Force. This requirement does not preclude you from working on more than one issue or supporting another Task Force's work.

Name (type in the box)

Signature (print it out and use a pen)

Lois Morris	<i>Lois Morris</i>
Betty Wier	<i>Betty Wier</i>
Carolyn Gibson	<i>Carolyn Gibson</i>
Sue Wilson	<i>Sue Wilson</i>
Amy Barch	<i>Amy Barch</i>
Barbara Perry	
Barbara Crowell	

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4. **MISSION** Briefly describe the issue or issues that you seek to address through this Task Force. What do you see as your over-arching mission?

Supporting young people aging out of foster care in building successful independent lives.

5. **GOALS** Identify three or more specific goals or outcomes for your task force. Be specific. What change do you seek? In whose lives? Over what time period?

Prevent homelessness for young people aging out of foster care.

Reinforce the value of continued education with emotional and practical support.

Facilitate furnishing a first apartment according to the preferences of the young person.

Recognize and celebrate holidays, birthdays and milestones with the young person.

Promote a sense of self-worth by demonstrating interest and caring.

6. **ACTIONS** What specific actions will you take to achieve these outcomes? Your Task Force should try to employ at least three of the “Modes of Social Action” found at the end of this form. Give examples of your planned actions in each of the three (or more) modes.

Educate the congregation about the situations faced by young people aging out of foster care.

Raise funds and request specific donations that support the ILYA projects (Student Care Packages, Holiday Giving, One-time Supportive Grants, New Apartment Kits, Graduation Backpacks & Party and Educational Support (tutoring).

Partner with state-provided Independent Living Coordinators to identify young people needing assistance and facilitate providing the support needed and to identify unmet needs and explore our capability to address them.

Partner with outside organizations to avoid redundancy and gain efficiency and additional support for projects where appropriate/possible.

Advocate for this population with social service departments, state government and any individuals who may take action to assist with the development of successful independent lives for these young people.

Create boundary-crossing coalitions by encouraging personal (face-to-face when possible) contact with young person and ILYA team/volunteers & working with other groups/individuals to obtain support for projects.

Partner with Catholic Charities for furniture/household goods donations that allow “our” young people to “shop” for free at the CC Thrift Store.

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Partner with other churches/organizations to provide mutual support and exchange knowledge/ideas that support further services for this population.

7. UU VALUES How are your goals and actions derived from Unitarian Universalist values? Identify how your mission is related to UUA or UUSC priorities. You will find resources at the [UUA](#) and [UUSC](#) websites, and at the [UU College of Social Justice](#).

By addressing the practical and emotional needs of young people aging out of foster care.

We support the inherent worth and dignity of every person no matter their circumstances.

We support justice, build equity and demonstrate compassion in human relations by serving a disadvantaged population through our projects and the personal connections that develop from them.

We build acceptance of one another and encourage spiritual growth in our congregations by encouraging participation in any way that members and friends of First U feel called to join in.

We support the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation by providing leadership of the ILYA team that encourages autonomy within each project committee and seeks input/feedback from team members, church resources and external entities in guiding the direction, activities and growth of ILYA.

We demonstrate respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part by supporting young people who have been placed in a system (through no fault of their own) that can lessen their self-esteem, opportunities and threaten their ability to live successful independent lives.

8. SPIRITUAL PRACTICE How will your Task Force's work be grounded in spiritual or contemplative practices? What rituals or activities will you employ to encourage spiritual preparation and regular reflection as part of every meeting and action?

We encourage every team member and volunteer to contemplate the situation of the individuals we serve and respond to the needs they are most drawn to address.

As a team, we support each other through quarterly meetings and frequent one-on-one connections to be sure team members are supported not only in the services we provide but also on a personal basis.

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9. **CROSSING BOUNDARIES** Describe how your Task Force plans to create boundary-crossing coalitions across races, cultures, or religions.

See Mode "i" at the end of this form. What boundaries do you believe that you can cross in your work? What obstacles will you need to overcome?

We cross racial boundaries by serving a racially diverse population and by partnering with racially diverse people/organizations to accomplish our tasks.

We cross cultural boundaries by bringing the needs of underprivileged young people to the attention of middle-class supporters and work to get their emotional, physical and financial support

We cross religious boundaries by being sensitive and responsive to the various religious affiliations of the young people we serve; by reaching out to other churches to learn about their programs/projects and offer support and collaboration where possible; by partnering with other organizations (Catholic Charities) to combine resources/build processes that support all involved.

10. **COALITION BUILDING** How will you join forces to work with groups in the wider community already committed to your issue? Do you have

specific partners in mind at this time? What will you do to identify new community partners? To engage with them as partners and supporter.

We have partnered with Peoples Place 2 (Formerly NET) for many years and now are also working closely with Progressive Life to identify and support young people who are aging/aged out of foster care.

We also have a loose relationship with West End Neighborhood House (they have a very developed program so have not needed our support in recent years).

We have partnered with Catholic Charities to provide extensive opportunity for furniture/household item acquisition for our young people setting up their first apartments (and opportunities for church members and friends to donate items they are seeking to divest).

We have reached out to other local groups to identify opportunities to collaborate or provide support (most recently Central & First Presbyterian Church).

We are going to expand our network for seeking donors for New Apartment Kits to local schools and sororities to raise awareness of the need, give more individuals an opportunity to get involved in social justice and avoid donor fatigue at First U.

11. **RACIAL JUSTICE** The lens of racial justice should be consistently applied in examining issues and planning actions undertaken by your

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Task Force. What resources will you use to raise your racial consciousness and analyze your work through this lens? How will your task force work to fight racism?

See above

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APPENDIX**Modes of Social Action**

There are many modes of social action and each can provide a useful way to address an issue. One action or a combination can be valuable in different situations—and they are made more powerful when they are interwoven. A robust church social justice program will, at given times, employ a variety of these strategies:

- a. Education within the congregation
- b. Education beyond the congregation (e.g. public forums)
- c. Fundraising for justice organizations or causes
- d. Service (e.g. tutoring at a school, serving in a soup kitchen)
- e. Advocacy (petitions, letter writing, showing up at the legislature)
- f. Divestment from oppressive companies
- g. Public witness (silent vigils, hanging Black Lives Matter banners, open support for other groups and actions)
- h. Marches, protests, and demonstrations
- i. Boundary-crossing coalitions (interracial and/or interfaith)
- j. Symbolic civil disobedience
- k. Nonviolent disruption (e.g. physically blocking pipeline construction)