

SOCIAL JUSTICE Annual Report



Social Justice permeates all programming at the UU Church of Bloomington – [worship](#), [religious education](#), fellowship, and special groups like [Chalice Circles](#) and the [choir](#). Social Justice Task Forces are formed when a number of people wish to work together around a specific social justice area.

Our congregation is very active in many areas of social justice. All have worked hard, in new ways – leadership in some has changed. Thanks to Barb Backler for her leadership of RISE. She recruited her replacement Jenny Vessels who is actively leading the task force. The year began when the SJ Circle and Rev Connie met to look at the year and plan on SJ Activities. Hunger and Homelessness task forces piloted combining and decided they were better as separate task forces. All task forces spread their work and message throughout their SJ month in many ways, most noticeably actively participating in Community Hour after each Sunday service.

Green Sanctuary Task Force



The [Green Sanctuary Task Force](#) (GSTF) promotes mindful, Earth centered living, working to educate and motivate individuals and institutions to take positive steps toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the understanding that it is our moral imperative to care for the Earth. To this end the GSTF has been active at various levels in the congregation and the wider community. Contact: Marcia Veldman

Energy Report/Energy Star rating

In 2015 UUCB signed on to Interfaith Power and Light's Paris Pledge. This pledge commits us to working towards a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050. While we have already met our interim goal of a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, the harder steps are ahead.

To add to the challenge, in August of 2022 we signed an accelerated version of the pledge, committing to be carbon neutral by 2040, not because we have a specific plan, but because it is what needs to be done to avert catastrophic climate change.

Following are some highlights of how we are moving in the direction of net zero by 2040:

- o From Mid-May 2022 to Mid-May 2023 about \$3,520 was saved due to solar energy production, for a total of \$53,000 saved since May of 2013.
- o Held a sprint fundraiser to repair/replace solar inverters, raising nearly \$7,000 to make the updates and get the arrays fully functional again.
- o Despite the fact that almost half our solar panels were not delivering power from June through December 2023, the past fiscal year of electricity from grid plus natural gas (converted to BTUs) was about 44% of the 2010 usage, before most building upgrades were made and the renewable energy installations.
- o Our goal is to replace natural gas with electricity throughout the building.
 - Six HVAC zones (of nine original) use natural gas heat, to be replaced with heat pumps as funds allow.
 - Two of our water heaters currently run on electricity (including one on-demand). Two gas units will be replaced with electric as funds allow.
- o Our church received EnergyStar® Certification for buildings of worship for the ninth time, with a score of 92 (on a scale of 100) in October 2023.

Social Justice Month Engagement

April is the GSTF's Social Justice Month. To engage people and highlight our work, the GSTF held an Earth Fair. Representatives from several local nonprofit environmental organizations in addition to our members shared information on solar energy, advocacy and ways we can prioritize electrification at home with help from the Inflation Reduction Act.

Implementing Task of the Month

Task of the Month is a GSTF program to help individuals and households take one action each month. Tasks were selected based on their potential for significant energy savings. Most suggestions are for improving homes or changing habits to reduce our carbon footprints, but advocacy is also an important way we can make a difference. The UU community is encouraged to do whatever works for them!

Hosted a Vegetarian/Vegan Potluck

As a way to build community and raise awareness of the connections between climate change and what we eat, the GSTF hosted a vegetarian/vegan potluck in February during Fellowship hour.

Spring and Fall Clothing Swap

Spring and fall clothing swaps were held, working to reduce the purchases of new clothing which contribute to climate change.

Sponsored and Hosted a Faith in Place Virtual Keynote

Faith in Place (which combines three state interfaith environmental (IPL) groups, including Indiana) held an event for Green Teams in the region. The GSTF sponsored the event and hosted the keynote, "Bridging the Divide: Intersectionality in Environmentalism," by Leah Thomas.

GSTF Members Active in Other Environmental Groups

GSTF members are active with Citizens' Climate Lobby, Earth Care Bloomington, Faith in Place, Artists for Environmental Restoration, Center for Sustainable Living, and Sycamore Land Trust.

Habitat for Humanity Task Force



The [Habitat for Humanity Task Force](#) strives to educate the congregation about housing needs of Monroe County, including the purpose and accomplishments of Habitat for Humanity and other related housing groups. The congregation can contribute in many ways to help provide decent affordable housing in Monroe County.
Contact: Barb Berggoetz

The Habitat Task Force during 2023-24 focused on getting more UU congregants to participate in Habitat builds and other volunteer duties that support Habitat for Humanity in Monroe County, as well as raising money for the local chapter to use for housing construction costs and other needs. We continued to sponsor a UU & Friends Women Build+ team and increased our outreach and awareness activities in our designated month of May. We also tried harder to recruit new members to the task force, with some success.

Habitat Task Force members are: Barb Berggoetz, chair, Kathleen Chmelewski, Christine Banister, Mary Blizzard, Kathy Sideli, Brian and Pearl Springfield, Dian Robbins, Jenny Vessels, Sandy Davoren, Dick Stumpner, Licia Weber, Jackie Hall, and new members Jon Smith and Michael Darnel. Several other UUsers have voiced an interest in participating in builds and fundraisers. The task force usually meets at 11:15 a.m. on the first Sunday of most months. We sometimes met on different Sundays for the first half of 2024 because we got off schedule.

Objectives/funds: Educate the congregation about local housing needs, including the purpose and accomplishments of Habitat for Humanity of Monroe County and other housing-related groups; support Habitat by providing volunteers, food and raising money for builds and its needs, including equipment.

As of May 2023, we had \$11,730 in our Habitat account. Our May UU account showed \$10,638, but it didn't include revenue from the Italian Feast and after-service light lunch, both in May).

During the 2023-24 year, the task force's activities included:

- **Contributions to 2023 and 2024 Habitat Women+ Build:** Our 2023 team of 35 UU women and friends raised nearly \$20,000 – a record amount for our team -- and was led by co-chairs Barb Berggoetz and Christine Banister. The money was raised by individual builders, donated by UU members sponsoring builders, and earned through fundraisers.

The task force also voted to contribute \$1,500 to be a sponsor of the Women+ Build. This year, we are sponsoring a 35-member Women+ Build team on Sept. 4, the first day of the build. Recruiting begins in earnest in June.

- **IU football parking:** We supplied four task force members to oversee parking and collect fees at the UU lot for an IU football games in late November. Other task forces supplied members to collect fees. We each earned \$1,470 in 2023.
- **More Than Houses event:** About 10 task force members and other UU supporters attended Habitat's annual fundraising event at Switchyard Park in 2023 for the community in November. Attendees donated to support Habitat's operating expenses.
- **Autumn Abundance lunch:** We hosted a lunch for UU congregants after an October service, with a take-home option, of a variety of casseroles, vegetarian dishes, salads and breads. We made \$1,410.
- **UU Holiday Bazaar:** We participated in the UU Holiday Bazaar again by offering handmade crafts and other items donated by individual task force members and other UUs in December 2023. We offered soup and cookies-in-a-jar, jewelry, bird seed feeders, three themed gift baskets, handcrafted holiday cards and other décor. We earned \$1,400, a record for this fundraiser.
- **Major donation to Habitat for Humanity:** In February, the task force voted to make a \$10,000 donation to Habitat later this fall to help sponsor a build. We will recruit UU congregants to volunteer on this house for a Saturday group build day. We have earned and saved those funds over about 2 ½ years.
- **UU Parents' Habitat Build:** We supported an initiative of the UU parents' group and led by Christine Banister to sponsor a parents' build with two other faith communities on March 2. The task force paid \$300 for lunch from Jimmy John's for about 25-30 parents and children, some of whom had free child care at UU during the build time. Children also came to the build site over lunch, and all builders and youth got a tour of Habitat's Osage Place neighborhood. Other parents made bird houses with the youth.
- **Eclipse glasses sales:** Thanks to a donation of 250 eclipse glasses from UU member Marcia Hart, we sold glasses for \$2 each after five services in February and March. We earned \$387 and donated about 70 unsold glasses to WonderLab for reuse/recycling.
- **Social Justice moment/activities during May 5 service:** Task force chair Barb Berggoetz spoke about events in our SJ month in May and upcoming builds and members Kathy Sideli and Dick Stumpner spoke about what volunteering for Habitat means to them. Member Mary Blizzard read a HFH children's book about youth helping friends create good housing, and the choir sang "Home Sweet Home" at our request.
- **Italian Feast lunch:** We made spaghetti sauces and lasagna, salads and desserts to sell after the May 5 service and for people to take home. Numerous Habitat supporters outside of the task force donated food and helped in the kitchen. We earned \$1,015.
- **Habitat tabling in May:** We hosted an information table after May services to help educate people about Habitat's activities and encourage people to sign up for a UU build day June 29 and the Women+ Build team day on Sept. 4 and to join our task force.
- **Aldo Leopold outdoor benches:** We are trying a new fundraiser this year to take orders for handmade wooden benches, named for famous U.S. environmentalist Aldo Leopold. Orders for benches, made by Dick Stumpner, will be taken throughout the summer.
- **Volunteer call-out meeting:** For the first time, we conducted a special call-out meeting after the May 19 service for people who want to learn about building and volunteering for Habitat in other ways. Three Habitat for Humanity representatives gave a PowerPoint presentation and answered questions. We focused on getting people to sign up for June 29 build day and the Sept. 4 Women+ Build team day.

- **UU 25% Sunday Plate Fund:** Our proposal nominating Habitat for Humanity was among the top three groups for the third year chosen for a congregational vote on June 9. We proposed the funds be used for energy-savings and safety initiatives for Osage Place houses in 2024-25. The funds would pay for solar panel installation, energy monitor systems and installation and required radon exposure testing in Habitat homes. (The vote has not occurred as of this writing.)

The Hunger Task Force



The Hunger Task Force engages in projects to reduce hunger in our community.

Contacts: Dee Morris & Lynn Struve

The **Hunger Task Force** meets 10 times per year and has moved our meeting to Fellowship Hall at UUCB. The meeting is listed on the calendar through

12/2024.

Our members include: Jackie Hall, Rev. Grant, Dee Morris-chair, Lynn Struve co-chair, Mary Blizzard, Judy Kelly, Barb Berggoetz, Cecelia Murphy, Sandy Davoren, Dennis Davoren-new, Iris Kiesling, Mary Goetze and Amy Money-new.

Our actives as a Task Force:

- Community Kitchen: we support 2 shifts of 11:30-1:30 and 3:30-6:60 twice monthly.
- Little Free Pantry-we place food in the Little Free Pantry (LFP) daily, with over 500 pounds of food provided per month.
- Monroe County United Ministries (MCUM) -food is collected and donated as holiday food baskets for families in need with donations from our congregation.
- Shalom-each Friday the chief and cook provide a hot breakfast from our food donations, 52 meals per year.
- Holiday Bazaar-we sell knitted, quilted and crocheted items to raise money to support our tasks.
- IU Parking- October 2023.
- Kroger Food Cards-Through the Caring Committee, we give Kroger Food Cards to the congregants in need, when requested.
- KAP-Kids with Absent Parents-food is provided to families in need when requested.
- November- we worked with an RE class to fill baggies of snack foods, given to Shalom.
- Extra Garden Produce-the congregation brings extra garden produce to the church where it is donated to the Community Kitchen.
- Bloomington Fire Department developed a QR sticker which lists recourses of assistance to those in need. The stickers are placed on many of the food products that are placed in the LFP.
- We had a dog food drive in late winter and donated 140 pounds of dog food to Shalom.
- Stephanie Kimball and RE donated 145 cans of food to the LFP.
- Bloomingfoods and Fresh Time food cards are sold to the congregants. The 5% we earn from each sale is used to provide food to Shalom and the LFP.
- Our task force and various members support other task forces and their projects throughout the year.

Homelessness Task Force



The **Homelessness Task Force** works with agencies to provide services/support to homeless people, to develop strategies dealing with issues related to homelessness including hunger and unemployment, and to end homelessness.

Contacts: Alan Backler and Jason Michálek

In 2023, the Homelessness Task Force worked jointly with the Hunger Task Force on the following activities:

- Published an article in UUCB “Prologue”.
- Coordinated volunteers working regularly at Shalom
- Conducted on-going clothing and food drives for Shalom
- Organized a benefit concert for Shalom

In 2024, The Homelessness Task Force decided mutually to separate from the Hunger Task Force and are currently planning for the coming year. We are considering involvement with one of the following major programs:

- Working with Shalom (Beacon) as they plan and construct their new facility on W. 3rd Street.
- Working with Jana Pereau on her project to build and operate housing for the formerly homeless on a property on W. 8th. Street.
- Working with Guy Loftman and the poverty abolitionists on programs such as Eviction Prevention.

We will also engage in other programs and welcome participation in our ongoing efforts. Please contact us for more information: Alan Backler < abackler@aol.com > or Jason Michálek < michalja@mail.gvsu.edu >

Hope for Prisoners Task Force



The [Hope for Prisoners Task Force](#) (HFPTF) works on projects based on recognizing the humanity of those in prison and their families. The goal of this task force is to serve and advocate for individuals during incarceration and their return to this community, and also their families and support systems with a major effort to support KAP, Kids with Absent Parents.

Contacts: Deb Fish and Mary Goetze

HFPTF has continued to connect with approximately 20 incarcerated persons via either the GTL prison email system or through written letters. Money has been put on their accounts that allows them to purchase news feeds, podcasts, music and hygiene products through their tablets. We continue to maintain connections to groups outside of UUCB like: New Leaf New Life, NAACP, Amethyst House (men and women), Abolition Coalition, and Care Not Cages. Monitoring of progress on a new local jail is still a focus.

HFPTF received a Social Justice Grant of \$1,000 in addition to our task force funds to be used to put on an art exhibit displaying the works of three incarcerated persons. With the help of Resilience Theatre, “Songs of a Caged Bird” opened at the Backspace Gallery at Bonne Fete on the Square for the month of June with a poetry reading and reception on Friday June 10th. In the fall, selected poems were read by Bill and Glenda Breeden and Debbie Fish. This was recorded for future reference.

KAP continues to serve 20 children from 10 households offering two gatherings each month.

International Outreach Task Force (IOTF)



The [International Outreach Task Force](#) (IOTF) aims to expand and improve cross-cultural and international understanding through hands-on involvement with projects fulfilling local needs in developing countries.

Contact: Claire Robertson

The next Kenya trip will be in 2025, on our usual 2 year schedule. It is mainly full at this point with a lively group.

Regarding bake sale fundraising, we have been cooperating with Charlotte Appel, who has taken over responsibility for the after church food mandate—this works out very well when we provide desserts for various meals supplied by the Board or Task Forces. We provided a chili lunch in February successfully. Christine Banister, Kevin and Carolyn Craig have been very helpful as consultants, cooks, or substitute organizers on occasion and we have a wonderful group of contributing bakers.

Regarding general fundraising, we decided, in consultation with their leaders, that the main need Spurgeon's School in Kibera, Nairobi, has is a steady flow of new US charitable funding, to be divided into 2 streams, one for infrastructure and one for daily needs. Accordingly, Ed and I are in the process of setting up a separate endowment fund through the Minneapolis Foundation to provide improved funding mainly for infrastructure, while we continue to fundraise through UUCB for daily needs. This is a result partly of reduced by half funding for it from a UK charity, and expensive requirements from the Kenyan government for the school to remain accredited—they must now have a chemistry lab and a computer lab, and a proper roof plus a third story under it for their main building. The trustees of the RISE-Kibera Fund are drawn mainly from church members who have visited Kenya with us and seen the great needs for themselves.

Submitted by Claire Robertson

Just Peace Task Force



The [Just Peace Task Force](#) works to promote peace and justice in the world, recognizing the essential role of grassroots organizing in creating a consensus for a new foreign and military policy. Contact: David Keppel

The Just Peace Task Force has been concerned with the war in Gaza. We were shocked by Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 but immediately worried that a military response by Israel would be a disaster for Gaza's civilian Palestinian population. The war has been devastating: one of the most brutal and dehumanizing spectacles in decades and destructive to our fragile sense of shared humanity.

The Just Peace Task Force collaborated with other local groups, including Citizens for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel and Bloomington Peace Action Coalition, to host a program "Windows on Palestinian Life," held at the Church on February 4, 2024. At the end of that program, many of us resolved to work together for a cease-fire resolution in the Bloomington City Council, as groups across the nation were doing.

Our campaign for a cease-fire resolution involved a great deal of grassroots organizing. We carried petitions to the Farmers' Market and circulated it online. After intense conversations with members of the City Council, we succeeded. On April 3rd, the Bloomington Common Council unanimously passed a resolution calling for massive humanitarian aid and a cessation of hostilities in Gaza. Mayor Kerry Thomson announced she would not sign this or any resolution beyond Bloomington (a pocket veto), but on May 1st, the Council unanimously reaffirmed the resolution.

The war and our work remain. The fall will see elections for the U.S. Senate and House, and we plan to ask candidates to take a stand. We will also work with Back from the Brink, a grassroots campaign to control and then to eliminate global nuclear arsenals. We hope more congregants will join us!

Submitted by David Keppel, Taskforce Co-Chair with Rev. Bill Breeden

Racial Justice Task Force



The [Racial Justice Task Force](#) works to dismantle racism in ourselves and our institutions through education and action. Contact: Ruth Aydt

The task force meets every-other-month to educate ourselves about current events and concerns, plan activities, and make spending decisions. The interests and availability of members determine the scope of activities. The mailing list, with 104 members, is an information hub for announcements about racial justice issues and events beyond UUCB. Funds this year came from football parking and the UUCB annual allocation.

Highlights this year:

- In support of Resilience Productions, *whose mission is to educate, enlighten and engage the public regarding the many unknown and un-celebrated contributions of African Americans to our country's history*, provided and served refreshments for their Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 performances at the Monroe County History Center, and sponsored

their Spring 2024 5-50 Club fundraiser. The task force is honored to continue as the organizational home for Resilience Productions.

- Offered an Adult RE session as part of the [Bloomington Multi-Faith Alliance Faith for Racial Equity \(BMA-F4RE\) group](#)'s "Poverty, By America" Book Read. *"Black and Hispanic Americans are twice as likely to be poor, compared to white Americans, owing not only to the country's racial legacies but also to present-day discrimination."* [p22]
- Hosted a free screening of the documentary "Reviving the West Baden Colored Church -A Labor of Love", followed by a Q&A. The task force provided pizza after the event, which was held in Fellowship Hall and attended by UUs and others from the Bloomington community. Prompted by this event, the task force made donations to Elizabeth Mitchell in gratitude for her participation in the Q&A, and to the West Baden Church in support of their ongoing presence in Southern Indiana.
- Donated to the IU First Nations Center, recognizing that our football parking receipts come from land originally inhabited by Indigenous people.
- Donated to the Monroe County African American Cultural Sites project, to support increased awareness of the contributions of African Americans in our community.
- Donated to the Banneker Community Center, for the purchase of books highlighting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) authors and characters.

Report submitted by Ruth Aydt, Chair of the Racial Justice Task Force.

Rainbow Rights Task Force



The [Rainbow Rights Task Force](#) seeks to revive, document, and advance the knowledge, concerns, and rights of the LGBTQIA+ individuals, communities, and causes. Building upon our congregations commitment to the 8th principle's journeying to dismantle racism and other oppressions, this task force acknowledges the spectrum of identities that reside beneath the systematic injustices experienced by marginalized persons, and we commit ourselves to journey in advocating for spiritual wholeness in relation to gender and sexuality.

Our three core values are:

1. **Creating** safe spaces to explore and listen about querying identities
2. **Sharing** alliances that connect us to other spaces
3. **Branching** into the community to promote collective action

Ongoing Work:

- **Queer visibility:** In 2023/24, Rainbow Right began to expand our projects to create more visibility for a range of gender and sexual identities in order to live out our congregational designation of being welcoming. In terms of community representation beyond our church walls, we're in the process of replacing our banner flag that we display in view of the bypass to show the community that we're welcoming to queer-identifying folx. The old flag has faded, which gives us an opportunity to update the representation of identities to include elements of the recent progress flags—especially since Building Community must always be responsible to the ever-changing and expansive solidarity with folx of varying and intersecting identities

- **How we're "Welcoming" to queer folk:** As a precursor to a video project highlighting experiences of the variety of sexual and gender identities within and around our church community, we published a set of anecdotal accounts in a *Perspectives* article in February sharing anecdotal accounts from several members who identify in the category of "women who love women." This demonstrated how we must account for the ways that lived experiences exceed the labels that make people visible, but those labels can also help people understand themselves and be understood by others. As that project transitions from written form to videography, we welcome any interested participants to contact us at RainbowRights@uubloomington.org to inquire about the project and potentially contribute accounts of understanding and expressing gender and sexual identities.
- **Developing community:** As community links continue to be made, we've been working with Protect Our People (POP) and Bloomington Aces and Allies to create community and facilitate social justice responses to the struggles of people who identify on the spectra of trans and asexuality.
- **Legislative Action:** Last year we participated in letter writing to convince state representatives to oppose anti-trans legislation. This year, I (Jason) joined the Stonewall Democrats of South Central Indiana—first as a steering committee member and now as the vice president—in order to further advocate for candidates and policies that are supportive of people who have and love people with LGBTQIA+ identities.

Outreach/Fundraising:

- **Bloomington Pride and Spencer Pride:** Holding tables at local pride festivals, we continue to talk with other organizations and community members about how we can be Building Community through interdependent webs of connection and collective action in various communities.
- **Gay Men's Fellowship Dinners:** Several of our church members have been regularly attending the monthly dinners held for men who identify as gay or bisexual to form community in a pitch-in style gathering coordinated by Doug McKinney. If you have questions or would like to attend, feel welcome to email RainbowRights@uubloomington.org for more information.
- **Football parking:** In coordination with IOTF, we facilitated football parking that welcomed football attendees into the space of our lot while also generating proceeds.

Refugee and Immigration Support and Education (RISE) Task Force



The Refugee and Immigrant Support and Education (RISE) Task Force welcomes people from other countries and reaches out to support folks new to our community and form friendships. Contact: Jenny Vessels

The UUCB RISE task force has three types of support for immigrants in the Bloomington area: education of community members on immigrant issues, direct support of immigrant families (financial, transportation, assistance navigating county, state, and federal aid agencies), and support of The Refugee Support Network. RSN is a 501c3 organization that is dedicated to the acclimation of asylum seekers and refugees who fled violence in their countries by helping them get a new start in Bloomington.

The task force is committed to educating others on what it is like to live the life of a refugee. By reading books by and about refugees one can begin to experience the challenges and

frustrations. We maintain a collection of books on immigrant experiences and share the books at coffee hour in 2023 and will do that again in 2024.

By becoming friends with refugees one can understand a little better what it's like to be a refugee. We had the privilege of welcoming the Fakherduin family to Bloomington in December of 2021. Based on the level of independence the family now exhibits, the Task Force members have been reducing the level of support from that which was provided in 2022. The level of support needed is expected to continue to decline with exceptions in the event the family experiences a crisis. The reduced support needed for the Fakherduin family gave the task force members confidence to begin providing some support to two Syrian families who are new to the U.S. this year.

In 2023, several members of the RISE task force worked closely with the Fakherduin family. Deb Fish helped the family navigate the school system and took every opportunity to find extra help for the boys such as enrolling Razwan in preschool and finding funding for this experience, signing up the older boys, Hussain and Hassan, for after school extra support in learning English, alerting the family about kindergarten round up, and attending teacher conferences with Mohammad, the Fakherduin dad. She was also very helpful in getting Shabnam, the mother of the family and the children to many doctors' and dentists' appointments along with Pete from RSN. Finally, she helps Mohammad with endless paperwork for government and school and health documents. Mary Blizzard helped Shabnam get to Mother Hubbard's Cupboard every week, championed Hussain's passion for soccer by getting him into soccer leagues and taking him to many practices and games and has created lots of publicity materials and our guidebook for volunteers. Now Mary is helping Shabnam find opportunities for employment such as cleaning houses. Several others have helped with transportation, reading to the boys or listening to them read, taking them swimming or to some fun activity. First Marcia Hart met with Shabnam almost daily to work on her English. Then Christine Linnemeier met with Shabnam twice a week to help Shabnam. A new member, Benjamin Ale Ebrahim, was helpful in supporting Mohammad with his efforts in taking classes at I.U. in business. Ben teaches in the Kelley School of Business and was able to connect Mohammad with a professor who has become an advocate for Mohammad. Nancy Judge, a relatively new member, helped Shabnam prepare for the driver's test. She came from Afghanistan maybe 30 years ago, but can still speak Dari, so she could help teach the driver's handbook to Shabnam in her language.

Other helpers in 2023: McGuire, Richard and Christine Linnemeier, Marcia Hart, Heather Glass, Jenny Vessels, Diane Legomsky, Mary Goetze, Dave Emmert, Sidney Meyer, Judy Kelly, Michael Johnson, Dinorah Sapp and daughter, Olivia Sapp and Sylvia McNair.

Recently a small group of RISE volunteers met with Shabnam and Mohammad and talked about what our relationship will look like now that they have made some big steps toward independence. First of all, Shabnam now has a driver's license and she is determined to sign up for classes at Broadview Center to learn to read and write English as well as improve her speaking. They expressed their gratitude for all that RISE has done for them. Mohammad mentioned that he and Shabnam had talked for two hours the night before about how much RISE had helped them out. Mohammad articulated that they certainly want to continue being good friends, but they would only contact us in case of emergencies. This was the first family our church has served so intensely for years, and we feel very good about it and feel like we

have established a friendship that will last for a long time. It will be fun to watch the entire family grow and become contributing members of the community. They are already reaching out to new Afghan immigrants and trying to help them find things they need and helping them feel comfortable in Bloomington.

RISE is expanding our support to other families. Debbie Fish is now working with two new families from Syria. She has helped them enroll in school and taken them to medical appointments. She celebrated Eid al-Fitr with them. Best of all, she connected the two fathers with Steve Pollitt who has taken them under his wing, since they were professional painters in Syria. Steve has arranged for them to help paint several rooms at our church and he even loaned them a car. Now he is helping them find more jobs. Hopefully, church members will notify Steve if they need painters. We'll be providing lots of transportation this summer to camps and summer school and doctors' appointments, for both the Fahkerduin and the Zaiter families.

On May 19th RISE sponsored a program at the UU Church at 3 p.m. Christie Popp, a local immigration lawyer spoke about the "Wreck of the Asylum System." Sylvia McNair supported her good friends from China and Afghanistan and helped them tell their stories of escaping their countries of origin and describing their journeys to the U.S. and what the challenges were once they got here. Steve Pollitt's group, Cloud 7, performed. Sylvia closed the program with a reading of a poem, God Bless America - All of You. In 2023 RISE members created a guidebook that will help volunteers know how to support refugees and immigrants. An updated version was made available at the May 19th event.

We applied for and received the fall grant from the Social Justice Funds Committee. The \$1000 grant was given to RSN to help pay for dental bills and expenses for surgery. It seems like many refugees come here with a great need for dental work, including root canals, repairs on root canals and other oral surgery besides cleanings that take several visits and filling cavities. Often this work has to be done in Indianapolis at the Dental School, because there don't seem to be dentists in Bloomington who take Medicaid. Unfortunately, the state limits Medicaid funding, so people have to go without care. There are also 3 women from Colombia with very difficult medical problems that need different surgeries. The Healthnet social worker is working with RSN to find help, but it will be expensive. These women were working at their jobs in pain every day, and the conditions seemed to be getting worse.

The right to health was recognized as a human right in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Since then, other international human rights treaties have recognized or referred to the right to health or to elements of it, such as the right to medical care. No one anywhere, citizen or refugee, should be denied health care and a chance to live a healthy life. \$1000 did not cover all of the expenses, but it certainly helped.

Barb Backler stepped down as chair of RISE and Jenny Vessels took on leadership responsibilities. Jenny has established a monthly meeting of RISE. She took the lead on organizing the presentation by Christie Popp on May 19, and is a regular RSN volunteer. She is getting lots of mentoring from Mary Blizzard, Debbie Fish, Barb Backler, and Diane Legomsky.

Reproductive Justice Task Force



The [Reproductive Justice Task Force](#) (RJTF) mobilizes around the concept of reproductive justice as “the right to bodily autonomy, to have children or not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.” (SisterSong.org) We educate, advocate, and connect within the church and with outside community partners to support and advance reproductive justice for all. Contacts: Nan McKinley and Cindy Lonnberg

Ongoing Work

- **Legislative liaison:** A member monitors relevant bills during legislative sessions and reports out to the task force with “action items” (e.g. phone calls, letters, testimony, committee watch/observation, rallies, etc).

- **City/County Council** - supportive presence and public comments @ meetings for Planned Parenthood (PP) and All-Options Pregnancy Resource Center (AOPRC) grant submissions.

- **All Options Pregnancy Resource Center:**

We promote volunteering such as peer counselors and Talkline support, and with

- o Virtual diaper drive at the UU

- o Annual Hoosier Abortion Fund drive at the UU

- o promote the Practical Support Network-provides rides and other support to women seeking abortions

- **UU 4th Trimester Team-** trains volunteers who provide up to 1 yr postpartum support to members and friends of the UU community

- **Monitor the implementation and work of the state’s Maternal Mortality Review Committee,**

mandated by 2018’s Public Law 48.

- We are for the second year, **monitoring and informing task force members of trans issues** and gender-affirming health care legislation as it evolves in the statehouse. This affects trans youth and the school system.

We sponsored a talk for the congregation and larger community with a presentation by Kristen Jozkowski, PhD, ***Complexity in Abortion Attitudes: Stats and Stories, on Sunday March 24th from 12 to 1:30 in the Meeting Room.*** Dr Jozkowski is the William L Yarber Endowed Professor of Sexual Health, School of Public Health at IU and is a Principal Investigator on the Abortion Attitudes Project. Q & A started before we could get to the presentation with enthusiastic participation, and we ran 30 min over! We never got to the lecture and the slides can be found attached here, to the video link:<https://vimeo.com/921208403>

Our funds are generated from:

Football parking; February Siding With Love bake sale; Annual UUCB \$300 grant to the task forces.

Donations we made this year:

- **Hoosier Abortion Fund** fundraiser - donation of \$2000 by the task force plus donations by UU’s brings our total to \$2325 as of late May. The event is still ongoing through May.

- **All Options (AO) Diaper Program** - Our Diaper Drive is in October w/donations by the congregation and friends to the AO website specifying diapers. Diapers and related products may also be dropped off at All Options. We donated \$244 from tabling during coffee hour the month of October.

- \$1,000 to the general fund of All Options, Bloomington

- **UU Our Whole Lives** program- our support wasn’t needed this year, but we are assisting in exploring offering of OWL to our larger community.

- **Middle Way House-** we donated a large box of menstrual products to residents which a friend of the task force donated, using their free OTC allowance on their insurance.

— Ending balance is \$1204.72 —

Submitted by: Nan McKinley & Cindy Lonnberg, Co-chairs

Social Justice Funds Committee (SJFC)

Fall SJ Grants Campaign

In October 2023, SJFC sought grant applications for funding consideration by the church's SJ grants fund. The following grant was recommended and awarded:

RISE Helping RSN. \$1000 is given for dental work and surgeries for refugee families in Monroe County. This grant was submitted by Barb Backler.

Spring 25% Plate Fund Campaign

In March 2024, SJFC sought nominations for non-profit agencies to be the recipient of 25% of undesignated Sunday Plate funds for July 2024-June 2025. SJFC selected these three to present to the congregation for a vote at the June 2024 congregational meeting. SJFC is using multiple avenues to educate the congregation about these agencies including tabling a display between services throughout May.

- Habitat for Humanity of Monroe County: To support Osage Place neighborhood home construction and long-term energy sustainability, specifically solar panel installation and labor costs, energy monitoring system installation costs, and radon exposure testing. Nominated by Barb Beregoetz
- Special Olympics Indiana Monroe County: to give those with Special Needs the ability to participate in the Special Olympics. Nominated by Cindy Brandes
- CJAM The Community Justice and Mediation Center – to support the Landlord-Tenant Mediation Program, to provide opportunities for advanced mediation training, to develop a new volunteer program, to support volunteer outreach and recruitment efforts. Nominated by Mary Mahern

Funds Committee: Denise Ogren, Steve Mascari, Sarah Kopper, Sandy Davoren, Scott Sanders

Advisor: Jackie Hall