

Chair/Contact: Heather Ivone, Pat Gallivan
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Action

- A. **Partnership with other UUs in programs such as Jericho Road Project**
prepared by Elise Henricks (tonyelise@EarthLink.net)

Time frame or steps, if Applicable: **Starting this year**

Priority Rating 1 Based on action's potential to help achieve the vision.
Scale: 1 = highest priority, greatest potential

1 This action furthers the mission and work of our committee and the mission and vision of the church in the following ways.

Please, explain these in terms of your committee's work and mission as they support the vision and mission of the church, keeping mind specifically:

- Carry our gifts and message into the world
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- Empower people to create loving, fulfilling relationships

Programs in which we collaborate with other UUs, such as Jericho Road Project, fulfill the goal statement of the creation of relationships outside of our own community. This provides an opportunity to see how other churches govern, do service, and share their wealth of all types. The Jericho Road Project provides a means to collaborate with the UU Urban Ministry in Roxbury, as well as other churches including Brookline and FP Boston. In addition, it provides a chance to work with other nonprofit agencies in capacity-building, by using the professional skills and talents of our parishioners.

We could expand this to more frequent collaboration with other UUs in groups such as UU Mass Action, the Standing on the Side of Love Campaign, and other regional or national UU organizations.

2 This action will contribute to the church's institutional health in the following ways.

Use as much detail as possible, including numbers, such as targets and estimates. For example, number of people reached, number of hits to a web posting, number of members completing a training and committing to an action, dollars raised, lay work hours on something ...

Start with the following basic contributions, but add those not listed.

- Generate new energy or tap existing energy
- Create new fundraising opportunities or help use financial resources more efficiently
- Attract new members or deepen the experience of existing members

We have already committed time and funds to the initial startup of the Jericho Road Project, and plan to continue to devote resources of volunteer time as the project moves forward this year. We would like to tap into the initial enthusiasm and continue to support ongoing involvement, which we predict will grow as the program becomes more established. This is expected to deepen understanding and broaden volunteer

opportunities for members who may have felt unable to contribute to previous social action opportunities, by using professional skills. We hope to target at least 6-8 volunteers/ year, which while a small number of individuals, has the potential to build strong interpersonal relationships with nonprofits in Roxbury as well as the UUUM and other volunteer churches.

Other collaborations with UU organizations are yet to be determined, but could have similar potential.

3 This action will draw on the following resources.

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This action will draw on financial resources, as we have committed to an initial individual donation goal of \$7000, of which \$6000 has been raised. We hope for ongoing financial support of the program, as well as support in the form of time for those volunteering with nonprofits and on the steering committee for JRP. We will also need a group of FPM "cheerleaders" who can be links to the larger program.

Development of relationships with other UU organizations will require further personal time in the form of leadership to make connections, as well as financial resources for memberships or contributions to appeals, or travel to meetings. We already do send parishioners to a fair number of district conferences and trainings, but making these even more accessible to the FP community at large might promote a deeper and broader involvement.

B. Collaboration with Louis D Brown Peace Institute

prepared by Elise Henricks (tonyelise@EarthLink.net)

Time frame or steps, if Applicable: **Already a program in existence x 3 years, we propose to expand our involvement**

Priority Rating 2

Based on action's potential to help achieve the vision.
Scale: 1 = highest priority, greatest potential

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This collaboration specifically works toward crossing boundaries that exist between communities based on race, income disparity, religious affiliation, and lived experience. Through this collaboration, we join in advocacy and witness, two of the expressed goals of the SAC, to move outside the walls of our church and into a neighboring community. The Walk for Peace can literally bring people out of their comfort zones, into

a place they may never consider going otherwise. However, doing so in the company of others, many of whom have a different lived experience, brings a fuller sense of shared humanity.

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The Walk thus far has drawn 30-90 people each year. Those who attend report an invigorated sense of belonging to our own FPM community, as well as a sense of increased connection with the larger community. We envision a future commitment of FP to make the Walk into "what we do" as a parish on Mother's Day. This would involve strong advance preparation, encouraging all who are willing and able to attend. We see volunteers who would assist those who have mobility challenges. We see the choir collaborating with other local churches to inspire the attendees at the start. We see 200 FPer, adults and children, wearing FP Tshirts, walking with each other, but also listening compassionately to the stories of those who march for lost loved ones. We see those who have remained at church heartily welcoming the walkers back, and a short service around a theme consonant with the walk.

We have raised >\$1k for previous Walks, so we feel confident that more could be raised at future events. The fundraising website, which allows for networking, would be a great way to have FPer reach out to friends and family about what we are doing, and to attract potential new members drawn to seeing a community making such an intentional commitment to this issue.

This collaboration would not have to exist solely on the day of the Walk. There are multiple opportunities for volunteers, fundraising, legislative advocacy, and general issue support which are ongoing and could lead to even deeper connection between our church community and the broader community.

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This action builds upon resources we have already invested. It requires time to organize walkers, organize collaboration with other church choirs. It would take openness to collaboration, and some letting go of fear and preconceived notions.

C. Provide opportunities for direct service activities

prepared by Pat Gallivan (plgallivan@verizon.net)

Time frame or steps, If Applicable **Long-standing FP SAC programs to which we are committed**Priority Rating 2 Based on action's potential to help achieve the vision.
Scale: 1 = highest priority, greatest potential**1 This action furthers the mission and work of our committee and the mission and vision of the church in the following ways.***Please, explain these in terms of your committee's work and mission as they support the vision and mission of the church, keeping mind specifically:*

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We are part of a larger community and working with refugees, shelter residents, and families in need providing important direct services. This helps bring First Parish's message into the world.

Neighboring community residents, as well as our Milton neighbors, who benefit from the volunteer services provided by FP members will see that they are not alone in dealing with their challenges and that we will walk with them on their journey.

FP members, including younger members, will benefit from the experience of giving their time and resources to help those in need growing in compassion and understanding.

FP should strive to be seen as a deeply involved congregation taking the lead in identifying needs in Milton and neighboring communities and organizing members to address these needs. In this way we will be carrying our physical and spiritual gifts outside the walls of the church.

In the SAC Mission Statement, one of the main goals is to engage and support the congregation in living out its covenant in the broader community. One of the ways Social Action does this is by providing opportunities for FP members to participate in direct service activities in neighboring communities including the Milton Interfaith Refugee Assistance program, Fr. Bill's Shelter, and the Milton Food Pantry.

These projects provide gateway opportunities for FP youth, teens, and families to learn more about individuals and communities in need and to provide a way for them to help address the challenges faced by these populations.

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Social Action Committee

Some people in search of a religious home come to FP because of a belief that UU principals encourage participation in providing direct community services to those in need. The service projects that SAC is involved with give members and potential members a way to accomplish this goal. Each year, we have returning volunteers working on these projects as well as new members trying it out for the first time. The MIFRA project has been going on for several years under the leadership of two FP members who have reached out to the larger church community for assistance from time to time. Thousands of shelter meals have been served at Fr. Bill’s Shelter by dozens of FP children, teens and adults. As service opportunities increase, so does the number of FP members willing to join the cause and help out. In these ways, SAC is helping to create a sense of compassion in FP and transcending barriers that keep people apart.

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Some of the direct services, such as our work at Fr. Bill’s Shelter, requires funding from the FP Annual Budget. Buying food to serve 150 guests six to eight times per year costs \$1500. to \$2000. per year. This pretty much exhausts the SAC budget for the year, leaving very little funding for other program needs. Some FP members do not request reimbursement for purchasing the food and this helps stretch the budget a bit. The annual Chocolate Auction has also provided funds to carry out some SAC activities in some years. FP members have enthusiastically supported Fr. Bills, MIFRA and the Milton Food Pantry and we have had a great number of committed volunteers over the past several years. If we are to continue to provide these services, as well as possibly getting involved in new community programs, we will need to involve additional church members in these efforts.

D. Obtain Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) membership

prepared by Heather Ivone (boston_heather@yahoo.com)

Time frame or steps, If Applicable

Membership usually takes a year for a congregation to go through the discernment process. SAC is taking this year to learn more about the organization, what we call “dating GBIO”.

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Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) provides congregations with the opportunity to join with others who are called to live out their faith through political action, political here meaning action for the

"care of the common." Membership in GBIO would provide FP Milton members with opportunities to engage with members of other local religious organizations on issues that are committed to creating change on shared issues of concern.

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GBIO membership could potentially be a very invigorating process for FP Milton. Another church in South Boston of our size has 40-50 people attending GBIO events regularly. While this number may not be our target goal, it is exciting to imagine that GBIO membership could inspire 25+ FP Milton congregants regularly engaging together and with other religious communities on issues of local and state political importance. This would be tangible evidence of us taking "bold action."

Membership in GBIO also present us with the opportunity to access professional organizers who could help us with local issues on which we wish to take political action, providing us with the opportunity to learn and grow in our ability to transform our values into action.

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Membership requires a financial commitment of 1% of a church's operating budget with a \$250 minimum and \$10K maximum. It also requires at least 3 delegates from each church for the annual delegate assembly.

In addition to these tangible resources, there will also be the need for the FP Milton congregants to engage with each other in a process of identifying what issue(s) we would like to engage on with GBIO. This would require us to go through an organizing cycle together in which we are able to share our stories, identify issues and decide on actions. This process requires a commitment from the congregants to be present with each other in discord, as it is to be expected there will be difference in opinion on what issues we should pursue. While the goal is to find an issue that is meaningful and aligns with the entire congregations values, realistically we may not find an issue that all members believe is the most important issue for us to tackle. GBIO membership will challenge us to be in community together on action even while we have disagreements over what political action to take or even the idea that we should take political action as a community.

E. Utilize technology and social media to increase engagement with SAC activities

prepared by Heather Ivone (boston_heather@yahoo.com)

Social Action Committee

Time frame or steps, If Applicable

Pilot googlegroups site already built. Plan to launch pilot this year.Priority Rating 2Based on action's potential to help achieve the vision.
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FP Milton is engaged in a variety of social action work through many avenues. SAC believes part of its purpose is to be a central point of information for the congregation as well as for others outside the congregation to understand how FP Milton participation on social action issues is grounded in our Unitarian Universalist faith, educational materials on the initiatives with which we engage and to provide those interested in becoming involved with a mechanism for indicating their interest and connecting with various projects/activities that are underway.

To that end, we have developed a pilot SAC googlespace, groupspaces.com/FPMiltonSAC, which contains information about our SAC mission/purpose, educational materials and service opportunities and allows interested people to join the group and self-identify social action areas of interest. This site can link to other FP Milton sites such as our web page, the weekly link and the FP Milton Facebook page so that information is dispersed with minimal duplication of effort.

In the future, there is the opportunity to leverage this site for additional functionality such the ability to make fundraising contributions through the site, purchase Handcrafting Justice items or enable service project managers to add their own events and recruit participants.

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The primary goal of the current pilot site is to improve communication of activities and provide a central repository for educational materials. We need to start advertising it through the Weekly Link before we can begin assessing if the site is effective on this front.

The second goal of the site is to increase participation on social action project, not only for members of the congregation but for prospective members. We occasionally receive requests from new attendees or local

area residents interested in our SAC programming and wanting to become involved. We have not historically had a SAC mailing list or database to capture this information and engage effectively with people. The hope is that this site will provide a clear channel of communication between SAC and those interested in our activities, creating a Social Action community beyond the committee members, and potentially beyond the membership of FP Milton. This could be a very positive “first contact” between FP Milton and potential future members who share our social action values but are not yet ready to engage with FP Milton in the traditional manner of attending worship services or participating in our religious education curriculum.

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The site requires the ongoing commitment of at least one committee member, the site manager, to keep the content relevant and up-to-date. It also requires that SAC be empowered by the Parish Committee (which we believe we already are) to create/disseminate information about FP Milton’s social action mission. The current Google groupspace subscription that is being used is free, so there is no cost. That said, to expand to the full vision of the potential of the site, we would need to pay a subscription fee of \$19.99/month. This would provide us with Payment integration for fundraising and hosting a “store”, 10GB of file space for educational materials, the ability of members to add their own events rather than only the site manager and Google Analytics to be able to measure site traffic.

F. Change SAC role to an oversight committee

prepared by Heather Ivone (boston_heather@yahoo.com)

Time frame or steps, If Applicable **Potentially requires governance shift**

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SAC feels that the current perception is that the committee itself is the group that does social action work on behalf of the congregation. In order for the entire congregation to “take bold action”, there needs to be a shift in the shared understanding of the purpose of the committee, changing it from the group who takes action on behalf of FP Milton to the group who provides the governance and oversight to ensure that action that is taken in the name of FP Milton aligns with our church covenant and mission.

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If FP Milton Social Action work is going to be limited to the efforts that the committee is able to make, then the committee itself becomes the bottleneck to FP Milton's impact in the larger community. We envision a model in which anyone who feels a calling and passion for a Social Action project can be a project manager for that on behalf of FP Milton, with SAC providing resources to that person such as an evaluation of the candidate project as appropriate for FP Milton with our subsequent endorsement and access to SAC mailing lists for event recruiting/advertising. We would provide a reporting mechanism for the project managers to share the experience of their event, but the project managers would not be required to be committee members nor attend committee meetings. We already have an example of this model working effectively with Jeff Stoodt and his fundraising concert that was done two years ago for Louis D. Brown Peace Institute. We believe that our engagement model with Jeff on that project could be the basis on which we build a full-scale structure. If we made this change, the goal would be to have at least 3 projects run by non-SAC project managers the first year.

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To accomplish this, first there would need to be an agreement among the FP Milton congregation that changing the role of SAC in this way is appropriate and also an understanding of the increasing expectation on the entire community for taking ownership of Social Action initiatives. No longer would approaching a SAC member with a pamphlet and saying "this is a really worthy cause. You should do something with this" be a sufficient level of Social Action participation. In this new model, SAC would be approached with "I think that this is a really important issue and I'd like to generate interest in FP Milton about it. Can you help me find others who want to engage on this topic?"

To support the project managers in identifying members interested in their event and recruit participants and/or funding, the technology initiative that SAC is pursuing also becomes an accelerating resource. The \$19.99/month Google Groupsites site would provide fundraising capabilities, member databases for mailing lists and the ability for project managers to add and manage their own events. This initiative can be accomplished without investing in technology, but it becomes significantly more manual and time-intensive to do without it.