



**NEWSLETTER**

**Congregations Doing Justice Together**

**Newsletter – November 2023**

### **Annual Meeting: Connecting Communities for Justice**

The 2023 annual meeting of Oregon UU Voices for Justice on October 14 marked a successful step toward rebuilding the organization after the hiatus caused by the COVID pandemic. It was delightful to welcome folks, both on Zoom and in person, to the meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene. We were pleased that 10 of our 21 Oregon congregations were represented. Next year, let's make it 21 of 21!

There were options for attending in person or via Zoom. The technology worked flawlessly, making it easy for all participants to hear the speakers and participate in the breakout sessions. Many thanks to our two AV technicians, Kat Johnson and Zepyur Burton.

Rev. Youngsun Ryu started us off with an invitation and welcome to connect. Beautiful gathering music, "Plowshare Prayer," by Spencer LaJoye, set the tone for the day. We can enjoy it again on YouTube. Anne Ruth Fraley accompanied us in singing "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In" in the morning and "You Got to Do When the Spirit Says Do" in the afternoon.

The morning session was devoted to two speakers, each followed by a question and answer period. They brought hopeful messages on the positive impacts of working together, no matter our divergent views on vital matters.

- Brenda Smith, from Harney County's High Desert Partnership, presented a slide program, "Fostering a Culture of Collaboration, the Harney County Way." Follow this link to learn more: [Home : High Desert Partnership](#)
- Rev. Alison Miller, senior minister at First Unitarian, Portland, offered a thoughtful talk on "Coming Together for Change." A very relevant point was considering how to harness the power of the 15 state action networks, of which Oregon UU Voices for Justice is one.

The afternoon breakout sessions produced much interaction and many ideas. We will include them all for you to see in a subsequent article. Oregon UU Voices for Justice has four campaigns: (1) Environmental Justice, (2) Deepening Democracy, (3) Economic Inequity, and (4) Human Rights. During three sequential breakout sessions, participants could learn about and engage more deeply with the campaigns. In each breakout room, the facilitator invited those present to introduce themselves, describe what they were working on relevant to that particular campaign, and offer suggestions for actions that Oregon UU Voices for Justice might take, particularly regarding legislation that would uphold our UU values. There was time in each session for discussion and exchange of ideas. Facilitators recorded names and contact information for participants, so there can be follow-up communications about further actions. We very much appreciate all the ideas generated at this get together.

## Report from the Annual Meeting Environmental Justice Group

We are making plans to restart the ORUUVfj Environmental Campaign. If you would like to be part of this effort and are not already on our email list, please contact [sueacraig@gmail.com](mailto:sueacraig@gmail.com). We meet monthly on Zoom. We can determine together how often we want to meet. We will work to help each other, perhaps to plan a webinar, and to decide Legislation we want to support (or not). Here is a link to the ideas and actions that emerged from our three breakout sessions:

<https://tinyurl.com/3t6fjx7x>

## Reestablishing the Environmental Justice Group Zoom meetings

For any and all who are working, or want to work on environmental justice issues, we will meet up on a Zoom meeting on Monday Jan. 8, at 7 pm. We will normally meet on the 1st Monday of the month, but of course not on Jan.1! Hope to see you all with lots of ideas on what we can do. Do you know of Legislation that is up for the coming session? Webinar ideas? Contact Sue Craig for Zoom link: [sueacraig@gmail.com](mailto:sueacraig@gmail.com)

## Report from the Annual Meeting Deepening Democracy Group

The Deepening Democracy breakout groups came up with a long list of legislation that ORUUV4f should support, including ranked choice voting, campaign finance reform, redistricting reform, publicly funded elections, and more. See the full list here: <https://tinyurl.com/49teyh48>

### Mission

Oregon UU Voices for Justice is a statewide liberal religious advocacy network that seeks to educate, organize, and mobilize UUs and their congregations to advocate for policies designed to build an Oregon that:

- Affirms the worth and dignity of every person.
- Promotes justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
- Supports religious freedom.
- Upholds the right of conscience and the democratic process.
- Recognizes and respects the interdependent web of all existence.

### Members of the Board

Sue Craig, UU Church in Eugene (chair)

Barbara Dow, Wy'East UU Fellowship, Portland (co-chair)

David Delk, First Unitarian Church, Portland and Wy'East UU Fellowship, Portland (treasurer)

Kathleen McKinney, UU Fellowship of McMinnville (secretary)

### Highlighting Our Congregations' Work

#### UU Fellowship of Central Oregon, Bend

For several years, through its social justice program, UUFCO in Bend has provided the residents of The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs reservation northwest of Madras with funds for much needed drinking water. Several UU congregations and other progressive churches in Oregon have joined UUFCO in this effort.

Thanks to the help of our Senate leaders, federal funding is currently available to replace and update the piping in the community of Warm Springs, where 90 percent of the reservation residents live and where water distribution problems are most serious. Also, federal funding has been provided for repairs to the current pump house. We hope those repairs will last until the new pump house has been completed. The estimate for completing the new pump house is 2 to 3 years and planning is now underway.

Meanwhile, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group, one of eight UUFCO social justice teams, continues to work with our partners to raise funds to purchase badly needed bottled water. We are grateful to all of those who have contributed to this literally life-saving effort.

If any other congregations or individual members would like to assist in this project, please contact John McKee at [jvmckee99@gmail.com](mailto:jvmckee99@gmail.com). He will be able to tell you how to contribute.

Kevin Fairham-Wheeler, First Unitarian Church, Portland  
Max Merrill, UU Fellowship of Central Oregon, Bend  
Jean Pierce, First U Church, Portland  
John Raymonda, Florence UU Fellowship

### **Current Board Activities**

Rebuilding personal congregational relationships, post-pandemic  
Endorsing a proposal for an Oregon public bank

### **2024 Oregon Legislative Information**

Check out this page for information on the 2024 Oregon legislative session and committees:  
<https://www.uuvoicesoregon.org/2024-legislative-info.html>

In addition, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, in conjunction with Oregon UU Voices for Justice, presented a webinar about their ongoing problems and efforts to remedy them.

Max Merrill  
UUFCO, Bend, Oregon

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