

# Justice as a Family Value



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Jolinda Stephens, Director of Religious Education, First Unitarian Universalist Church, Columbus, OH

Rev. Mark Belletini, First UU Columbus, OH

Pat Kahn, Children and Families Program Director, UUA

Jessica York, Youth Programs Director, UUA

# Justice as a Family Value

## QUESTION

What message did you receive from your family about what is expected of you as a justice maker?

# **Justice as a Family Value**

**Why is this important?**

# Best Practices for Awakening & Strengthening the Urge To Do Justice

- Caught and Taught
- Include a balance of the five types of social action at every age
  - Service/charity
  - Education
  - Advocacy
  - Public witness
  - Community organizing
- Cycle of Education, Action, Reflection

# Best Practices: Caught

- Children can't catch what they don't experience. They judge our values by how we live our lives and how we run our congregation.
- Look at your daily life from your child's eyes. What do you think your children conclude about your values?
- Look at the parts of congregational life that the children and youth see. What do those parts tell them about the congregation's mission?

# Best Practices: Caught Example

## **Mission Statement of First UU Church**

### **We are here:**

- .To learn and practice true hospitality;
- .To revere the reasoning mind and the generous heart;
- .To claim our diversity as a source of our strength, and;
- .To relinquish the safety of our unexamined privilege for the freedom to engage in transforming justice.

# Best Practices: Caught Example

- To learn and practice true hospitality;
- To revere the reasoning mind and the generous heart;
- To claim our diversity as a source of our strength, and;
- To relinquish the safety of our unexamined privilege for the freedom to engage in transforming justice.

In what ways are we claiming our diversity? Or are we?

What do we do to invite and celebrate diversity?

- Interfaith work – BREAD, Unity Worship Services and actions, PeaceCamp, immigration work
- Campus ministry

Where are we struggling?

# Best Practices: Caught Example

## **Family Life Diversity – If it is one of your personal values, how do your children know it?**

- Family doctor, dentist, other professionals are diverse in ethnicity, physical ability or in other ways.
- The children and adults that the family regularly socializes with are diverse in class, ethnicity, physical ability or in other ways.
- The places that you frequent with your children for shopping, eating out and recreation have a diverse clientele
- You live in a diverse community and the school programs of your children are integrated, not just the school building.

# Best Practices: Caught Exercise

1. Name a value widely shared in your congregation.
2. What is the congregation doing to help children and youth experience that value?
3. What is the congregation doing to support families in living that value?

# Examples from Participants of Living a Value

- Host homeless shelter for two weeks with opportunities for kids to interact with those in shelter
- Studying food (everyone) for 2 years. Allowed congregation to go deep, to look at all the systemic aspects.
- Have a PT minister for community engagement who is African American. There is intentionally never a vanilla chancel
- Half of bathrooms are gender neutral
- Connect non-profits to professional volunteers

# Examples of Living a Value

- Serve hot breakfast to homeless. Youth participate.
- (3 examples from one congregation) They have a community garden. Kids Skyped the partner church. Participate in Green Sanctuary.

# Best Practices: Taught

- Talking about social action and justice making experiences across the generations is important.
- With fresh eyes, children and youth may make connections from their social action experiences that adults don't.
- Children and youth may be missing context or history to more fully understand an experience.
- It is important to be vulnerable and show it.
  - Children and youth need to understand that adults feel uncertain, awkward, confused and frustrated in doing this work.
  - Children also need to hear from adults the personal joy, excitement and satisfaction that rewards this work.

# Best Practices: Balance of all social action types

- Service work/charity
- Education
- Public witness
- Advocacy
- Community organizing

*It is easiest, particularly with young children, to concentrate on charity and service work but faith development requires a balance of all types.*



# Balance: Charity/Service Work

*Meets the needs of people who are struggling to meet their own needs*

- May take the form of providing resources, including funds, or of direct service, such as free medical care or tutoring
- When it allows you to get to know people who are struggling to survive in conditions that foster respect it can be powerfully transformative.
- Too often it fosters feelings of pity and superiority.

# Example of Service Fostering Respect



Youth and advisors (including a parent) from UU Church of Birmingham on a mission trip to New Orleans

# Examples from participants of Service Fostering Respect

- Twice a year to Tijuana to work with Esperanza International. Donate through renting hostel and work side by side with families building housing. Uses empowerment model.
- Work with community shelter to provide meal and overnight stay.
- House building trip to Mexico. Always say identify as people first.
- Children choose their own projects. Earned money to buy dog and cat food.

# Balance: Education

*Educating people about an issue - its importance, the facts surrounding it and value context*

- Supporting children and youth as educators of adults is powerful learning
  - Teaching what one learns is a powerful educational tool
  - Children and youth as teachers contributes to interaction among generations
  - It addresses the power imbalance within the congregation and leads to more respect for children and youth
- Easier to do on a Sunday morning than most types

# Education Example: SB 1070 with children



Drawn by 7, 8 & 9 year olds to educate adults. It says "Stop Arizona Immigration Law" and "You don't arrest Santa do you Arizona? Why do you arrest others?"

# Details of Drawing



Drawn by 7, 8 & 9 year olds to **educate** adults as they left the Worship Center. It says  
"You're under arrest. because you need your papers, immigrant."

# Details of Drawing



Drawn by 7, 8 & 9 year olds to **educate** adults as they left the Worship Center. The poor reindeer, innocent of Santa's illegal smuggling operation, is taken to animal detention, while Santa protests that he was just doing his job.

# Examples of Education



Father and son participating in UUA training in interfaith leadership

# Examples of Education from 1<sup>st</sup> UU Columbus

Justice Sunday formats often feature adult education as the major project of the workshop.

Some forms of education include: Posters, a “demonstration” just outside the sanctuary as the adults leave worship, a flash mob, skits during worship, whole worship services and adult RE classes led by youth.

# Examples of Education from 1st UU Columbus

This year, as we worked with the Harry Potter Alliance, the HPA chapter worked out the sessions on child slavery, bullying, homophobia, and sexual and racial stereotyping in their chapter meeting and then the children co-led the Justice Sunday workshops.

Two of our youth attended a planning statewide organizing session for DREAMers and planned an educational meeting for allies teamed with two DREAMers.

# Balance: Public Witness

*Publicize by actions and statements stands on issues; draw attention to injustice*

- More difficult to accomplish on Sunday mornings.
- Important to include youth and families with children in planning for public witness events so that there will be opportunities for witness for families that will be safe for young children and so that the children and youth have input into the types of issues .

# Harry Potter Group in Pride Parade



On the night before the parade all ages came together to make signs. Here's an Enlightened Hippogriff with the sign that proved to be the hit of the Parade.

# Harry Potter Group in Pride Parade



And here are two of our marchers in the shirts they designed and painted refreshing themselves after the long hot parade.

# Example: Public Witness



Family with young child in Martin Luther King Day rally.  
Also participate yearly in PRIDE Parade.

# Balance: Advocacy

*Working within the political process to impact laws and policy*

- Fairly easy to do during Sunday School - visits from elected officials, letters to editor and elected officials.
- This is another type of action that is best done as a multi-age project.
  - Perhaps separate forums on the issue by age
  - Come together to do planning and execution

# Examples of Advocacy

- Letters to our senators about the DREAM Act
- Remember the UUA or UUSC project to get postcards to the President about Darfur?
  - Educated children and youth in age cohorts.
  - Children and youth educated adults as a part of worship and gather signed postcards.
  - Children and youth gathered signed postcards at a shopping center - both public witness and education.
  - Cards were presented with others from across the country at the White House.

# Sit-in Support for DREAMers



Two youth traveled to Cincinnati last week to support DREAMer Marco Saavedra's sit in in Obama's campaign office. The next day the President signed an Executive Order giving DREAMers some protection from deportation and the right to work.

# Balance: Community Organizing

*Joining with a large group to hold government and other organizations with power accountable*

- CBCO's - Congregation Based Community Organizing - are the best example.
- Many ways to incorporate families and youth in CBCO's
  - Attend the large events where seats in chairs is what counts.
  - Have a family meeting before the initial issue meeting to determine what each member of the family thinks the most important issue is.
  - Visit youth groups, Campfire and other elementary groups to educate and gather interest.

# B.R.E.A.D. Meeting



May's Action Meeting of the interfaith community organizing non-profit. There is a nine month democratic process to identify and refine the issue for the year that will address a social issue. This final meeting brings the politicians who can bring about the change before several thousand people of faith and asks them to commit publicly to specific action steps. Attending this meeting is a family affair for many families. In this meeting, every body counts, no matter the age.

# Justice as a Family Value

## *Best Practice: Triad*

Make sure your social action activity includes all three

- Education: Children and youth, like adults, need to understand why injustice exists. Help them see the larger picture.
- Action: Provide something for all ages to actually do.
- Reflection: Ask the question, “How does what you’ve done changed you?” or “What will you do differently now after this action?” Processing the activity leads to greater understanding and faith development.

# Justice as a Family Value

*Best Practice: Talking to children*

## **Talking to children in the congregation**

- Volunteer to talk to religious education classes about your social justice passion

## **Talking to children at home**

- Talk to your own children and family members.
- Children need to hear things more than once.
- Parents may need help in talking to children. Provide resources, such as Families pages of UU World, forums, small group ministry for parents, that help parents find the right words.

**Justice as a Family Value**

**Ways to be an Ally**

# Ways to be an Ally to Families

- When you go back to your congregation, check the library, if it has one. Are there resources for families on the shelf? If not, speak to someone about including some and give them a copy of the resource list.

# Ways to be an Ally to Families

- Look through upcoming events or projects in your congregational newsletter. Ask the question “how can families (or people of all ages) be involved in this project?” and publicize the ways.

# Ways to be an Ally to Families

- The next time you are participating in a justice event, invite a few families from the congregation to join you. If you don't know any, consult with the religious educator for some suggestions. After the event, share your experiences with others and ask them to invite a family or two to the next event.

# Ways to be an Ally to Families

- Play “matchmaker” – ask the Social Justice group leadership to invite families to talk about ways they can be involved.

# Justice Work Always Takes Courage

*Support and encourage one another in the work*

- Involve your religious educator in planning for events to ensure appropriateness for all ages.
- Volunteer to help with children and youth programming to increase understanding within the justice committee of what justice issues matter to youth, children and families and to make participation an outgrowth of relationship.
- Families may feel that involving their children is risky. Help create safe ways to engage in social action. Provide opportunities for families to discuss their fears with religious professionals, organizers, and other families.
- Recognize that staff who support justice work for children and youth may be criticized. Be an ally. Speak up.

# Justice as a Family Value

## Multiple paths to engagement

Just like adults, families, children and youth need multiple paths to engagement. This allows for:

- Young people to match their interests and skills with the congregation's needs
- More diversity so the work does not become routine
- Children and youth to exercise freedom of choice, which they do not always have the opportunity to do
- The congregation to see that the young are capable in many ways

# Justice as a Family Value

Resources – see posted resource list



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# **Justice as a Family Value**

**thank you for  
supporting families**