



The UU FaithAction NJ
Economic Justice Task Force (EJTF)
Annual Report - April 12, 2018.

Because this group is reforming itself as we speak, I don't have much in the way of a conventional Annual Report to deliver. I think our main achievement this year is the fact that we're back and committed to action.

Legal Advocacy Signature Legislation

As part of Gary Nissenbaum's Legal Advocacy Project, the EJTF endorsed and supported "signature legislation" that would improve the conditions of some of our most vulnerable citizens - children whose poverty puts them in the category of free-and-reduced-lunch. These kids from families at or near the poverty line are sometimes subject to humiliating and damaging actions by public employees who are simply following the rules from flawed and cruel laws.

Although this might not be on everyone's list of the most pressing or comprehensive issue for us, it's a simple and effective way to improve lives and support compassionate and moral government, and may offer a relatively easy victory. I hope you'll all join me in finding ways to support this legislation, writing your representatives and bringing this issue the attention it deserves.

Initiatives and Issues

While it has been tricky bringing EJTF back together, we seem to have achieved "critical mass" and we're already moving ahead. With Rob's guidance, we've reached out to and joined two significant efforts, the **2018 Poor People's Campaign** (through its NJ branch - the NJ Prophetic Agenda) and the **Time To Care Coalition**.

The **PPC** is organizing a "season of sustained moral direct action" for 6 weeks starting May 18, bringing together religious and cultural groups to finish work left undone after MLK's death 50 years ago. We envision that our participation will involve individuals learning and applying methods of civil disobedience through their trainings, facilitating partnerships between our own congregations and other faith groups, marching, lobbying, and hopefully working directly with some of those we hope to help.

One example of an effort we have joined is advocating for policies that insure "restoration" and "reparations" come from ANY marijuana legalization that is adopted in New Jersey, as it is being done in California (but NOT in Colorado, which is creating a new class of wealthy entrepreneurs and offering lower taxes while ignoring the decades of exploitative and destructive "prohibition").

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The **Time To Care Coalition** is a non-profit effort focused on passing humane and necessary legislation so that members of the working poor can get the time that wealthier workers usually get at will. We are joining with them to provide a moral challenge that will assure everyone the afforded dignity and compassion they deserve. Helping them might involve some road trips to Trenton, outreach to legislators, events of public witness, and, again, we hope to join with those who need our assistance. In recent encouraging news, TTC successfully lobbied the NJ Senate to pass its NJ Earned Sick and Safe Days Act, granting 5 sick days/year for most full-time employees, expected to be signed by the Governor very soon!

Having had our first Zoom teleconference earlier this month, we have a core group of people who are committed to making the Economic Justice Task Force as effective as possible. It's always tough generating energy and spirit when people are so far away from each other but I do hope every member can find at least one partner in your congregation so you might, for instance, go to coffee sometimes to think up new ideas. Or, perhaps, approach someone outside of our usual crowd. We do the most when we stretch ourselves to imagine lives different from our own.

Working Together

Whatever happens, I'd like us to try an experiment this year to see if all of us would try some new way of bringing life to what we do. Let's play around!

What can YOU bring energy and ideas to this year?

Please go to this link and [fill out a "Google Form"](#) which is just a simple questionnaire so we can know more about you and explore new ways to collaborate.

(I come to this group from work in nonprofits, local government, and statewide advocacy and 30 years of communications. I'm looking forward to improving our visibility and vitality. Anyone else interested in working with me, whether producing some videos or any other materials for EJTF or UUFA, let me know.)

Whether it's in bringing in new members to make our movement stronger, experimenting with new types of gatherings to bring people together as a team, or finding a partner in another congregation or group. Let's try something new!

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