



September 2021 Social Justice update to Beth Adam members

It has been three years since the Social Justice “project” began at Congregation Beth Adam. The work of the Social Action/Social Justice committee moved forward without interruption even with adjustments necessitated by the pandemic. Members of our two social justice teams: Climate Change and Separation of Church and State, continued to stay focused. In the past year and a half, the committee has turned its full attention to the core purposes of its work: education and advocacy.

The Climate Change Team provided many opportunities for Beth Adam members and the wider community to uncover deeper understanding of climate change issues. The team arranged to have two experts speak to Sunday adult education: Carli Trott, U.C. Professor of Social Psychology and Jane Harf, executive director of Green Energy Ohio. The team hosted zoom movie nights and discussions; notably David Attenborough’s ‘A Life on Our Planet’, as well as two reading group discussions: ‘We Are the Weather’ and ‘The Overstory’, both New York Times bestsellers about two very different aspects of Climate Change.

In an effort to build bridges to a wider community, members of the Climate team have become active in Green Umbrella’s “Faith Communities Go Green”. This is an initiative where people from a broad range of religious backgrounds work to promote environmental action and education. As advocates, the Climate team focused its efforts on strongly supporting the repeal of Ohio House bill 6 (HB 6 - often called the “nuclear power bailout bill”). Members of the team submitted video and written testimony to State legislative hearings on the repeal in addition to making dozens of calls to our State Reps. A final note: in July, after serving two years, David Klebanow stepped down as the team leader (thank you for all your work David!). The team elected Anne Cooper as the new leader of the team – thank you Anne!

Jean Feinberg is at the helm of the Separation of Church and State team. The team’s primary education project over the last 12 months was researching and developing a 45 minute presentation entitled ‘Separation of Church and State: Vital in 1787, Vital Now’. The presentation details the origins, history and contemporary importance of the Separation of Church and State. It was presented to the congregation last spring and has since been presented as an Olli class (85 attendees) which generated a vibrant discussion. The talk is now available on Beth Adam’s website. The team looks forward to presenting this to other community groups in the coming year.

The team was fortunate to have two speakers addressing Church – State issues this past year: Rachel Laser, the executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. And Andrew Seidel, author of ‘The Founding Myth: Why Christian Nationalism is Un-American’. The team hosted reading group discussions on Katherine Stewart’s ‘The Good News Club’: The Religious Right’s Stealth Assault on America’s Children’ and James McBride’s bestseller, ‘The Color of Water – A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother’ (who was born Jewish).

In the new congregational year you will see continuing social justice programming. Please mark your calendars for these upcoming events – all on zoom. Links will be available from Melissa:

- Wednesday, September 22nd, the Climate team sponsors a reading group discussion of the book ‘Hope Matters’
- Sunday, October 10th, Church/State team presents nationally prominent author Katherine Stewart at adult education.
- Wednesday, November 10th, Climate team leads a discussion of the movie ‘The Story of Plastic’.
- Sunday, November 21st, the Climate team presents speaker Colleen McSwiggin from the Cincinnati Recycling and Reuse Hub.
- Sunday, December 12th, at adult education, Church/State team will present ‘Separation of Church and State: Vital in 1787, Vital Now’.

As you can see, Beth Adam has made a long term commitment to social justice. The work can be daunting, slow moving and like everything else, made more complicated by the pandemic. However, it also allows our congregation to reinforce our vision and values among our own community, and just as important, to express our vision and values to the wider world.

Michael Goldman, chair, Social Action/Social Justice Committee

Rabbi Robert Barr

p.s. If you are interested in the work of Beth Adam’s Social Justice committee, don’t be shy; the Teams would absolutely benefit from your time and talent. If you have questions or would like further information please contact:

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