

MINUTES OF FIRST ANNIVERSARY  
**INTER-FAITH SOCIAL JUSTICE & ECO-ACTION MEETING AT CBI**  
**NOVEMBER 4, 2015**

**Congregations & faith communities represented:**

Unitarian Universalist Societies of Greenfield, Amherst, and Northampton  
Friends Meetings from Northampton & Mt Toby  
St. John's Episcopal Church, Northampton & Episcopal Diocese of W. Mass  
Sister Elizabeth Anne Seton Parish  
First Churches,  
Edwards Church  
Beit Ahavah  
Congregation B'nai Israel  
First Baptist Church, Amherst  
South Congregational Church, Amherst  
Haydenville Congregational  
As well as Havurah & Sangha members

Facilitator: Georganne Greene from UU Greenfield

We sang "The Tide is Rising...And So Are We," accompanied by David Seidenberg on guitar.  
We then did introductions all around and recalled:

**What we have done in the past year:**

**Community Forum on the Papal Encyclical** (First Churches)

**Watch Parties** for the Pope's address to Congress (Catholic churches in Amherst & Northampton)

**Candle Vigil** in solidarity with Pope's visit & events in Washington DC- (First Churches)

**Community Sing**, church choirs in Northampton the Sunday after Pope Francis's visit

**Parking Day** – Northampton -- Four downtown parking spaces made mini-parks for a day to draw attention to how people need places to park, rest, mingle and to point out the negative effects of automobile traffic.

**Interfaith Harvest and Social Justice Farm Festival** at CBI Abundance Farm

**Songs & Soups for Syria** – Fundraiser at First Churches, Soups for Syria at CBI Harvest Festival and Village Church in Cummington

**Climate Sermons** from numerous pulpits in October

**BIG RESULT:** People from different faith groups meet more regularly, know each other better, are used to working together and calling on each other

**What issues concern people in your congregation or group? What's strong, new and/or coming up? What has energy? (See events calendar below as well)**

The topics listed below include individual concerns as well as those that involve one or more congregations. Where a multi-faith group or a larger organization was mentioned as a resource, a link is included as well.

Syrian Refugee Resettlement – UCC Congregations, CBI  
Economic Inequality and Corporate Greed  
Black Lives Matter Workshops in partnership with Chicopee congregation  
W Mass SURJ (“Showing Up for Racial Justice”) [www.showingupforracialjustice.org/about](http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/about)  
Conversations & Study Groups on the Papal Encyclical, St John’s and others  
Interfaith Eco-Action, Climate Change, and Pipeline Resistance, UU’s, UCC’s, Friends etc.  
Faith Community Green Fair  
Al Gore’s Climate Reality Project <https://www.climateRealityproject.org/>  
Divesting from Fossil Fuels – UU Amherst  
Fair Living Wage for Restaurant & Service Workers CBI <http://www.bendthearc.us/>  
Food Justice - CBI, First Churches  
Voting rights,  
End Mandatory Minimum Sentencing, Criminal Justice Reform  
Gun Violence  
Haiti Relief and Economic Development, First churches & others  
Tax Equity – Campaign to bring progressive taxation to Mass, CBI <http://raiseupma.org/>  
Opioid Use, Addictions and Deaths, raising this issue and helping local families, congregations, and communities

The group then nominated four priority areas:  
ECO-ACTION (Climate change, environment, justice)  
FOOD JUSTICE  
SYRIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT  
ECONOMIC JUSTICE

At this point some folks had to leave, the others broke up into two of the sub-groups that were highest priority for most attendees:

**Syrian Refugee Resettlement:**

Since the successful Songs for Syria event, many people are wondering what else they can do. Diane Palladino said that on January 9 CBI will present a workshop and panel discussion on the nuts and bolts of sponsoring refugees.(See calendar). Some congregations have had previous experience sponsoring refugee families from the Bosnian conflict and other places, but the Federal government’s commitment to fund services and living accommodations for refugees have greatly diminished since that time. Ascentria Care (formerly Lutheran Social Services of New England) with offices in Westfield and Jewish Family Services based in Springfield are the two organizations with the most expertise and track record on refugee re-settlement. People are asked to sound out their faith communities to see if there is interest in becoming involved in an

interfaith effort to sponsor families. Contacts for this undertaking include Douglas Renick at Haydenville CC [renick.rinehart@comcast.net](mailto:renick.rinehart@comcast.net) and Diane Palladino at CBI: [diane\\_p@me.com](mailto:diane_p@me.com)

### **ECO-ACTION**

Karen Ribeiro, Darren Port, and Marilyn Castriotta have been trained to lead sessions of the Climate Reality Project, a seminar/workshop initiative accompanied by a slide show created and delivered internationally by Al Gore. They are committed to spread the word and educate more people through presentations of this work. They are looking for houses of worship or other suitable venues on both sides of the river where they could offer the program and draw a good-sized audience. <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/>

You can reach them directly to help or suggest locations:

Karen from First Baptist in Amherst [Karen@innerfortune.com](mailto:Karen@innerfortune.com),

Darren from CBI [greeninspiresnews@gmail.com](mailto:greeninspiresnews@gmail.com),

Marilyn from Prayground [castriotta@aol.com](mailto:castriotta@aol.com)

Margaret Bullitt-Jonas alerted the group to a Legislative Action Day being held Tuesday, Nov. 10 at the statehouse sponsored by the Mass Interfaith Coalition for Climate Action. Contact is [InterfaithClimateCoalition@gmail.com](mailto:InterfaithClimateCoalition@gmail.com) There will be meetings with legislators to press them on policies relating to five specific priorities: raising the cap on net metering, expanding community solar, making subsidized energy efficiency programs more accessible, fixing existing natural gas leaks, and rejecting rate-payer funding for new natural gas pipelines. Margaret also said that corporate interests are seeking to weaken rules governing conservation easements to make way for installation of the pipeline. This is one of the issues that will be taken up on the Action Day at the statehouse in a joint legislative committee public hearing. See Calendar entry below for more details.

Susan Rice from the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst talked about her congregation's recent unanimous vote to oppose the controversial proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline.. She encouraged other faith communities to follow their lead and also consider divesting Fossil Fuels from their endowment portfolios.

## DRAFT CALENDAR of EVENTS

**Tuesday, Nov 10, 10:00-1:00**

**State House, Boston**

### **Climate Legislative Action Day**

Sponsored by the recently formed **Massachusetts Interfaith Coalition for Climate Action**. Rally from 10-11:00 at the second floor grand staircase of the State House followed by meetings in legislators' offices 11:00-1:00. Rally speakers will include Rev. Fred Small and Western Mass's Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas.

To learn about **Mass Interfaith Coalition for Climate Action**,

<http://tbewellesley.org/Climate>,

<http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/>

**SAME DAY!!!**

### **Public Hearing on Kinder Morgan's Sandisfield Land Bill – H.3690**

**11:00 Gardner Auditorium**, Joint Committee on State Admin & Regulatory Oversight (SARO) co-chaired by Rep. Peter V. Kokot of Northampton

<http://www.sandisfieldtaxpayers.org/#!article-97/xo4k5>

**Wednesday, Nov. 17, 5:30 PM, Haydenville Congregational Church**

### **Soups for Syria Supper**

Valley Syrian Relief Group will present a light dinner with soups made from recipes in *Soups for Syria* and an update on the situation in Syria. The *Soups* cookbook includes recipes contributed by international top chefs and was produced locally. It will also be sold as a fundraiser.

**Sunday, Nov. 29,**

### **Eve of UN Paris Int'l Climate Summit**

**Candlelight Vigil,**

**Grace Church, Amherst, 6-7PM**

**March & Rally**

**Northampton**

*More information coming on these events!*

**Saturday, Jan. 9, 1:00 PM**

**Congregation B'nai Israel**

### **Info Session on Sponsoring Refugee Families**

Panel discussion on the nuts and bolts of sponsoring refugees.

Representatives from Ascentria Care Alliance in Westfield (formerly Lutheran Social Services of New England) and Jewish Family Services of Western Mass based in Springfield, the two organizations that have the most expertise and longest track record on refugee re-settlement in our region. The Center for New Americans in Northampton may also participate.