

Community Companion

Quaker House:
3960 Winding Way, Cincinnati, OH 45229-1950
(513) 861-4353
www.communityfriendsmeeting.org



Volume 19, Issue 3 March, 2013

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Submissions for the April newsletter due by:
Monday, March 25, 2013 to Jean Crocker-Lakness

Calendar

All events and meetings take place at the Meeting House unless otherwise noted.

**Singing 9:45 am, Meeting for Worship 10 am
Second Hour or Carry in Potluck @ 11:40 am**

- March 1 Peace Church Youth Group: see page 6
March 3 Carry in Meal after Meeting for Worship: FUN Committee appreciates and encourages locally grown food when possible.
March 9 Peace Church Gathering at the Harriet Beecher Stowe House, 10:00-12:00, see page 5
March 10 Second hour: Meeting for worship with attention to business
March 14 Tender Mercies
March 14 Thurs. 7:00-8:30 A Course in Quakerism- : *Other Issues & Diversity among Friends* presented by Paul Buckley and held at Cincinnati Friends Meeting. See page 7
March 17 Second Hour: "The Quaker Bolivia Connection" presented by Ken Bordwell
March 20 Wednesday, 6:00-8:00 Nuts and Bolts of Legal Planning as we Age. See page 7
March 24 Second Hour: "The Meaning of Ministry in the Quaker Tradition" presented by Rhonda Pfalzgraff-Carlson and Paul Buckley on behalf of Ministry and Counsel
March 30 4:00 to 7:30- Chia party, pot-luck dinner from followed by Easter Egg dying see page 4
March 31 Second Hour: Easter Sunday--Easter Egg Hunt

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Third Query from OVYM Book of Discipline, 1978: Social Relations; Universal Love

Are love and unity fostered among you? Do you manifest a forgiving spirit and a care for the reputation of others? If differences threaten harmony among your members, is prompt action taken in a spirit of meekness and love? Do you visit one another frequently? Do you keep in touch with inactive and distant members?

Summary of Minutes from the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business**Second month, tenth day, 2013**

[Note: These minutes have had personal names removed. The official version is in the files at the meetinghouse.]

Present: 16 including the presiding clerk and recording clerk.

1. The clerk raised the question of whether names should be included in the minutes that appear in the newsletter. A wide-ranging discussion followed. Among the points raised:
 - Some names, e.g., people taken into membership or those married under the care of the meeting, may be necessary.
 - Friends General Conference may in the not-too-distant future offer meetings the option to store things in a secure cloud-based location.
 - We could also make part of our website secure.
 - It is also an option to remove names from the minutes as they appear in the newsletter and on our website, while sending a copy by email to meeting members and attenders. It was suggested that the recording clerk could do this. **Approved**
 - The newsletter editor would still have the option of printing a summary of business meeting minutes without including names. The recording clerk will inform the newsletter editor of this decision. **Approved**
 - An ad hoc committee consisting of Eric Wolff, David Pfaltzgraff-Carlson, Frank Huss, John Sniegocki, and Sarah Hoffmann was established to consider how to deal with the electronic storage of personal private information. **Approved**
 -
2. The Friends in Unity with Nature Committee has recommended that the meeting take out an ad in the *2013 Central Ohio River Valley Eat Local and Sustainable Food Guide*. The cost would be \$250.

In discussion, it was noted that the meeting budget allocates \$70 for advertising to pay for our listing in *Friends Journal*.

The Cannon Fund is a potential alternate funding source for this ad.

The FUN Fund could also be used. It currently has a balance of \$904.

It was the sense of the meeting that although we are very supportive of CORV, we are not prepared to purchase an ad in the food guide.

The request is sent back to the FUN Committee to determine next steps.
3. Stewardship Committee has recommended that we formally twice per year, in June and December, to maintain our tax standing as a corporation. **Approved**
4. Ministry & Counsel Committee brought forward a traveling minute for Rachel Ernst. Rachel has met with a clearness committee established by M&C and the committee will name a group of individuals to provide ongoing support for her as she feels the need.
5. Ministry & Counsel Committee recommends the marriage of Rachel Ernst and Brad Stahlhut be taken under the care of Community Friends Meeting. A Marriage Committee, including some Friends from Clear Creek Meeting in Richmond, Indiana, is being assembled. The wedding is intended to take place in Richmond in June 2013. **Approved**
6. Treasurer's Report
 - The current bank balance is 12% of the total annual budget – above the target of 10%
 - It was noted that we did not make gas or electric payments since we currently have a credit on our bill.
 - The report was accepted.

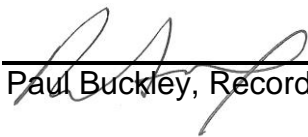
Summary of Minutes from the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Second month, tenth day, 2013, continued

7. Committee Reports

- House and Grounds Committee
 - o Plumbing repairs have been completed – they were more difficult than anticipated.
 - o A list of anticipated major expenses has been compiled for long-term planning.
 - o Our gas and electric bills were nearly \$5000 less in 2012 than they had been in 2008. The savings are largely attributed to tightening the house.
 - o Consideration of photovoltaic electric generation is ongoing.
- Religious Development Committee
 - o The teens have requested that their future activities include more spiritual content.
- Adult Education Committee
 - o Second hours have been scheduled into April. Requests to schedule future second hour presentations should go to Eileen.
 - o Foundations of Quakerism classes are planned for March and April.
- Friends in Unity with Nature Committee
 - o The next outdoor workday is scheduled for Saturday, February 23rd 10am-2pm.
 - o Plans are underway for a spring plant sale.
- Community Committee
 - o An Easter party, probably on the Saturday before Easter, is in the works.
- Stewardship Committee
 - o Our corporate status has been renewed.
 - o The committee feels that the work required to get 501©3 status is too burdensome.
 - o Kroger cards will need to be renewed in April. The committee will help.
- Ministry & Counsel Committee
 - o Much of the committee's last meeting was spent considering the meaning of ministry. As a result, they are sponsoring two second hour presentations:
March 24: Living in Gospel Order: The Meeting as a Covenant Community
April 21: The Meaning of Ministry in Community Friends Meeting
- Nominating Committee
 - o The committee has encountered more than the usual amount of difficulty in carrying out their work.
- Ad Hoc Committee on Aging
 - o The committee will provide the program at the Quarterly Meeting in Louisville, next Saturday.
 - o They have been awarded two small grants from the Friends Foundation for the Aging.

8. Miami Quarterly Meeting will meet next Saturday at the Louisville Friends Meetinghouse.

9. A 25-minute DVD on care for the aging, produced by Friends Services for the Aging and featuring scenes at Quaker Heights, is now in the library.



Paul Buckley, Recording Clerk

April Book Discussion Group at Community Friends Meeting on Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

Community Friends Meeting is hosting a book discussion group facilitated by Howard Tolley, retired U.C. professor of St. John's Unitarian Church. Dates are Thursday evenings of April 4, 18, 25, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Suggested donation is \$5/session. The group is open to Friends from all three Quaker Meetings, as well as anyone from the larger peace church community. It will meet at Community Friends Meeting House, 3960 Winding Way, Cincinnati, OH 45229-1750 (near the Xavier University campus). To join the book group, please contact Eileen Bagus of the Adult Education Committee at bagus.eileen@gmail.com or 513-891-8780.

Both our Meeting and members of the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati (MARCC, on which we have devoted representation) have shown considerable interest in topics such as prison ministry and community police relations/fairness in sentencing/racial justice. This energy makes Alexander's stirring book timely. Reviewers write:

Once in a great while a book comes along that changes the way we see the world and helps to fuel a nationwide social movement. *The New Jim Crow* is such a book. Praised by Harvard Law Professor Lani Guinier as "brave and bold," this book directly challenges the notion that the election of Barack Obama signals a new era of colorblindness. With dazzling candor, legal scholar Michelle Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." By targeting black men through the War on Drugs and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status—even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness....

From the Community Committee:

The [Chia party](#) has been scheduled for Saturday March 30th from 4:00 to 5:30. There will be a pot-luck dinner from 5:30 to 6:30 followed by Easter Egg dying beginning at 6:30.

Chia seeds are a high protein, high nutrition natural food ingredient that can take the place of eggs. Community Committee has worked with Pam Richards to plan a hands on cooking with chia seeds party. The egg dying will be with natural products such as onion skins.

FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE, submitted by Marjorie McKelvey Isaacs
NEED FOR EVERYONE AT COMMUNITY FRIENDS

Most volunteer work is a free choice made for personal fulfillment. Committee work is for an inner circle, and leadership positions are prestigious rewards.

In a Quaker Meeting, committees are essential to survival and success, and leadership is shared. The Inner Light guarantees that everyone's effort will be appreciated. . .and needed. The Light also creates an atmosphere of loving acceptance where people can try out new activities and skills without pressure to do them well the first time. Whether you are an attender or a member of Community Friends, your serving on one or more committees makes an important contribution.

Committee work is a key part of sharing in the life of Community Friends. When Nominating Committee asks for your help, please discern with us what you can do. There is a place for everyone here in the work of Community Friends.

Here is a poem that recently came to me during Meeting for Worship. It expresses some of what your participation means to our community.

You Are Chosen

We need your hands joined with others in the work.
We need your arms weaving the embrace of community.
We need your feet, walking side by side
On the path we share
With open eyes and hearts.

There is no paid gardener, teacher, planner
cook, but there is our work together,
No administrator, only your gift
for visioning, writing, organizing.
No minister, but our shared ministry
No chosen director except God.

Peace Church Gathering (NOTE: No brunch this time!)

Saturday, March 9, 2013, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Harriet Beecher Stowe House
2950 Gilbert Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45206

Space is limited: We can accommodate 25 people in all.

Reservations first-come, first-served.

We would like to have at least one rep from each of the 7 congregations participate.

RSVP: Linda Coppock, (513) 321-3696 or email: l.c@fuse.net

Program:

We are unable to serve brunch in this historic building.

§ 10-11 Meeting to discuss the HIP Workshop and any announcements

§ 11-12 Tour of the house

About the house: The Harriet Beecher Stowe House is operated as an historical and cultural site, focusing on Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin. The site also includes a look into the family, friends, and colleagues of the Beecher-Stowe family, Lane Seminary, and the abolitionist, rights and Underground Railroad movements in which these historical figures participated in the

1830's to 1860's, as well as African-American history related to these movements. Learn more at: <http://stowehousecincy.org/>

Host: Linda Coppock, Eastern Hills Friends Meeting

Cost: Freewill offering to help cover the rent



Peace Church Youth Group

The first meeting was great on Feb. 1, and all youth from the 7 peace churches were welcome to participate

Next Peace Church Youth Group Friday, March 1, 2013, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Location is: **Cincinnati Friends Meeting, 8075 Keller Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45243, (513) 791-0788**

<http://www.cincinnati-friends.org/>

RSVP to Cincinnati Friends (so we can best estimate for preparing supper)

Facilitators: Sarah Marie Dotter and Chloe Hockley, Brethren Volunteers, will facilitate the gathering, and they will bring youth from the Cincinnati Church of the Brethren. Sarah Marie and Chloe are currently employed by Cincinnati Church of the Brethren for children's and youth ministry. So they have had background checks and training for working with youth. Here is a brief bio about them:



Chloe Hockley (L) & Sarah Marie Dotter (R) are currently serving in Walnut Hills with the Brethren Volunteer Service. Both of them work for the Cincinnati Church of the Brethren, in the Children's and Youth Ministry, an outreach to neighborhood children. Sarah Marie is from Wyomissing, Pennsylvania. In addition to her work at CCOB, Sarah Marie also volunteers weekly at Mercy Neighborhood Ministries. Sarah Marie studied politics at Juniata College, and she plans to attend seminary. Chloe is from Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, and she provides tutoring in the public schools, in addition to her work at CCOB. Chloe studied elementary education at Messiah College and plans to seek employment as a teacher when her BVS year ends.

Report from Mary Kay Rehard:

The Help Increase the Peace (HIP) Workshop was a great success!!

We trained 23 youths and had **no attrition** over the 3 days! The youth really blended and coalesced into a strong community. By Saturday evening, they were asking, "Will we get to see each other again?" By Monday and the closing ceremony, they were affirming each other's gifts, and saying, "I'm in! I want to train others!"

We want to work with their energy and momentum, and find ways to use their new skills as facilitators... ASAP. We are eager for them to share their skills on upcoming Thursday nights with the Avondale Youth Council. And we hope the Peace Churches will find ways to make use of them, in your youth programs.

We are especially grateful to James "JT" Taylor and Darren Bunton, of the Indianapolis Peace Learning Center, for their expert, humorous, kind, and clever facilitation of the whole event... The kids were totally absorbed and thoroughly enjoyed their leadership!

Special thanks to the Avondale Youth Council and ACDC, the Avondale Comprehensive Development Corporation, for partnering with the Peace Churches for this initial training! April Cummings-Perry was an excellent member of the organizing team! The space worked out great!

A HUGE shout out to Mary Ann Kokegne, our food genius, who fed everyone! She enlisted the help of volunteers and stores to donate food. Three different congregations brought a hot lunch meal for 40 people, on each of the 3 days, with no kitchen facilities--no small feat! Cincinnati Friends wins for the most ingenious portable, propane stoves to heat their meal on site! All the food volunteers were most appreciated by the kids, who were very well fed and happy!

Thanks also, to BRIDGES for a Just Community, for providing funding for the T-shirts! We hope to partner with them in future, to offer more trainings in the area.

And thanks to each of you, for **your congregations' contributions of funding, food, volunteer hours, and prayers**, that helped make everything run so smoothly. It took many, many hands and hearts to bring this event together! We are so grateful that the churches and meetings felt that this was important, and made it possible for so many youth to participate!

We would like each congregation will have a copy of the HIP facilitator's manual, so that kids and interested adults might get involved as we continue to expand the Cincinnati HIP program in coming months.

We hope to offer more trainings (Basic, 1-day HIP workshops) in coming months and years, making use of our newly-trained group of youth facilitators, in conjunction with adult helpers. We want HIP to grow in Cincinnati, and JT & Darren and willing to support us to make that happen. Please let us know if you'd like us to work with your youth group or other group! We will need adults to help the youths with logistics, supplies, and transportation.

QUAKERISM: A Course with Paul Buckley ONLY 1 CLASS LEFT!

Cincinnati Friends Meeting is pleased to offer to all Friends in Cincinnati and to anyone interested in finding out more about Friends a course with Paul Buckley.

Paul Buckley of Community Friends Meeting is a Quaker author and Adjunct Instructor in Quaker Studies at Earlham School of Religion. He is well-known among Friends for his book *21st Century Penn* and his works on Elias Hicks. This course will meet Thursday evenings (7:00-8:30). Each session contains "stand-alone" material, so if you miss a session or two, you can still attend at any time. Requested donation: \$5 per session or \$45 if pre-paid. (Scholarships available.) Cincinnati Friends Meeting wants to pay Paul for his valuable time in preparing and presenting these sessions. If you have questions, please contact Donne Hayden 513-207-5353 or cfmpublicfriend@gmail.com

March 14: Other Issues & Diversity among Friends

- a) In what ways do issues of Christianity, doctrine, method of worship, women's roles, sexuality, etc. vary among the different branches of Friends?
 - a) On what significant issues do all Friends agree?
 - b) Is there a common core – some set of shared characteristics, beliefs, or values – that unites the branches of the Religious Society of Friends?
 - c) *Do these things matter to you? Do you think it makes any difference in the grand scheme of things?*
-

From the Ad Hoc Committee on Aging: Nuts and Bolts of Legal Planning as We Age.

Query: Have I made provisions for the settlement of all outward affairs so that others may not be burdened and so that I may be freed to live fully in the Truth:

Our next event will be on Wednesday evening, March 20 beginning at 6:00 with a light supper that will be catered by Venice on Vine. It is being paid for by the grant which we received from the Friends Foundation for the Aging. Please RSVP by Friday, March 8 to Deborah Jordan djordan@fuse.net or Eugenia Mills 513-874-3328 so we will be sure to have enough food.

The program beginning at 6:30 will be provided by Leanne Montgomery, and Elder Law and Estate Planning Attorney (and Quaker) and will discuss the Nuts and Bolts of Legal Planning as we Age.

- What are advance directives and how can they help me and my loved ones?
- What about long term care planning?
- Why do I need an estate plan? I really don't have many assets?

The committee has started to assemble materials and resources on Aging for the Library. This will include many books thanks to the generous grant from the Friends Foundations for the Aging. Resource packets were distributed at their second hour presentation on February 24. There will be a copy of this packet in the library for reference for those who were not able to attend the second hour. The Ad Hoc Committee on Aging: Eugenia Mills, Jean Crocker-Lakness, Deborah Jordan and Sarah Hoffmann (not available at time of photo) photo by Eugenia Mills



Materials in the packet include:

- Guidance at the Time of Death (to be completed by individuals and kept by the Meeting)
- Quaker Aging Resources pamphlets (other pamphlets are available in the library)
 - Being Present with Ill Friends
 - End of Life Decisions and the Testimonies
 - Slow Medicine
 - Role of the Meeting in Care for Aging Friends and Others
 - Spiritual Care and Dementia
- Reading Lists, favorite books
- Description of Friends Memorial Meetings
- Memorial Meeting Preparation checklist (two 2-sided pages)
- Living Near the End of Life: Queries for the Elderly by Brigitte Alexander, Friends Journal, Oct. 2009
- Green Burial and Other Options
- Creating your own ethical Will
- OVYM Book of Discipline on “Death”
- *Ways to be Wise* by Tom Atlee, <http://www.co-intelligence.org>
- List of Resources in the library and other resources such as websites
- *Positive Aging Newsletter*, the Taos Institute

The Taos Institute is pleased to offer an electronic newsletter, Positive Aging. The newsletter brings to light resources—from scientific research on aging, gerontology practices, and daily life—that contribute to an appreciation of the aging process. Challenging the longstanding view of aging as decline, the newsletter provides resources for understanding aging as an unprecedented period of human development.

<http://www.taosinstitute.net/positive-aging-newsletter>.

Books purchased for the Library:

- Andrews, Elsie Marion, *Facing and Fulfilling the Later Years*, Pendle Hill pamphlet 157, 1968, Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA
- Arrien, Angeles: *Second Half of Life*
- Atchley, Robert, *Spirituality and Aging*, 2009, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD
- Byock, Ira *The Four Things That Matter Most, A Book About Living*, 2004 Free Press, New York, NY
- Capossela, Cappy and Warnock, Sheila, *Share the Care: How to Organize a Group to Care for Someone who is Seriously ill*, 2nd edition, 2004
- Carson, Lillian, *The Essential Grandparent, A Guide to Making a Difference*, 1996, Health Communications, Deerfield, Florida.
- Dass, Ram, *Still Here, Embracing, Aging, Changing, and Dying*, 2000, Riverhead Books NY.
- Griffin, Emily: *Green Leaves for Later Years*
- Harris, Mark, *Grave Matters: A journey through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial*, 2007
- McIver, Lucy Screechfield: *A Song of Death, Our Spiritual Birth: A Quaker Way of Dying*, Pendle Hill pamphlet 340, 1998
- Morrison, Mary C., *Without Nightfall Upon the Spirit*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 311, 1993, Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA.
- Richmond, Lewis: *Aging as a Spiritual Practice*
- Roszak, Theodore. *The Making of An Elder Culture, Reflections on the Future of America's Most Audacious Generation*, 2009, New Society Publishers, BC, Canada.
- Sadler, William, *The Third Age, 6 Principles of Growth and Renewal After Forty*, 2000, DeCapo Press, USA
- Schachter Shalomi, Zalman and Miller, Ronald S.: *From Ageing to Sage-ing, A Profound New Vision of Growing Older*.
- Scott-Maxwell, Florida, *The Measure of My Days*, 1968, Penguin Books, New York, NY

Books purchased for the Library, continued

- Thomas, William H., *What are Old People For? How Elders Will Save the World*, 2007, VanderWyk and Burnham, Acton, MA
- Vining, Elizabeth Gray: *Being seventy : the measure of a year*
- Yungblut, John, *On Hallowing One's Diminishments*, Pendle Hill pamphlet 292, 1990, Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA

Multigenerational Reading: Franklin, Kristine L., Illustrated by Terea Shaffer, *The Old, Old Man and the Very Little Boy*, 1992, Atheneum, New York

Resources in library

- Quaker Aging Resources pamphlets
 - Downsizing
 - Grief
 - Vigiling
 - Housing Options in Retirement
 - Generational Relationships: Advices and Queries
 - Adaptive Advices
 - Anxiety and Change
 - Celebrating Lives and Life Stories
 - Autonomy, Interdependence, and Interrelationship
 - Continuity and Coping
 - Meaningful Retirement
 - Co-Housing and Intentional Communities for Older Adults
 - Hospice
- Conversation Starter Kit: helping people talk about their wishes for end-of-life care
- Foxfield preserve.org (nature preserve cemetery),
- Quaker plots at Spring Grove Cemetery (info in library or ask one of the Trustees)
- Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Cincinnati (a non-profit, volunteer-run, educational organizations of area residents dedicated to helping our neighbors PREPARE funeral and memorial arrangements that are dignified, meaningful and affordable) www.FCAGC.org
- Quaker Heights Care Community information <http://www.quakerheights.org>

Other Resources:

- COA: Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio: website www.help4seniors.org for answers on aging and resources. (513) 721-1025
- If you wish to remain in your own home, home health care and other support can help. See www.cms.hhs.gov/pace and www.aarp.org/relationships/family (resources include Housing Choices, Home Design, and, under Caregiving, Finding Help.) Homes can also be designed or retrofitted to suit your needs as you age. See Design for Aging, www.aia.org/dfa.
- Vizzard, Audrey Riker: The Ethical Will: A loving legacy; American Nurse Today Vol. 7, No. 9 pp. 16 & 18. www.AmericanNurseToday.com
- Pro Seniors: www.proseniors.org Helping Older Ohioans with legal and Long Term Care Problems

Websites:

- Conscious Aging <http://consciousaging.com/>
- Northeast Forum on Spirituality and Aging, <http://nefosa.org>
- Gray Panthers. www.GrayPanthers.org
- Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE) www.sageusa.org
- The Legacy Project. www.legacyproject.org
- Quaker Aging Resources: www.Quakeragingresources.org
- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Care and Aging Program: <http://www.pym.org/our-work/aging-and-older-adults>
- New York Yearly Meeting: <http://nyym.org/index.php?q=aging>

Criminal Justice and Prison Reform

2005 Statement of Conscience

Background: This Statement of Conscience of the Unitarian Universalist Association builds upon more than a dozen social witness statements on criminal justice adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association between 1961 and 2002. In June 2003, the General Assembly of the UUA selected “Criminal Justice and Prison Reform” as the issue suggested to congregations for two years of study, action, and reflection. The Commission on Social Witness (CSW) received initial reports from congregations and districts in March 2004. In June 2004, the CSW held a workshop on this issue at General Assembly. An initial draft Statement of Conscience was distributed to all congregations and districts for their reflection and feedback in October 2004. At its March 2005 meeting, the CSW prepared a revised draft that was included in the final agenda book for the June 2005 General Assembly. A mini-assembly was held on Friday, June 24, at 8:00 a.m. to receive proposed amendments. The CSW met later in the day to consider all amendments and to prepare the revised draft Statement of Conscience that was debated by the General Assembly during its Saturday morning plenary, and then received the two-thirds vote required for adoption. There is an Addendum to this Statement of Conscience that provides additional background on these issues. Further information and the texts of other UUA Statements of Conscience can be found at the [CSW website](#).

As Unitarian Universalists, we are committed to affirming the inherent goodness and worth of each of us. As Americans, we take pride in our constitutional promise of liberty, equality, and justice for all, including those who have violated the law. Yet the incarceration rate in the United States is five- to tenfold that of other nations, even those without such a constitutional promise. Our corrections system is increasingly rife with inequitable sentencing, longer terms of detention, racial and ethnic profiling, and deplorable jail and prison conditions and treatment. The magnitude of injustice and inequity in this system stands in stark contrast to the values that our nation—and our faith—proclaim. We are compelled to witness this dissonance between what America proclaims for criminal justice and what America practices. We offer an alternative moral vision of a justice system that operates in harmonious accord with our values as a community of faith. This vision includes the presumption of innocence, fair judicial proceedings, the merciful restoration of those who have broken the law, the renunciation of torture and other abusive practices, and a fundamental commitment to the dignity and humane treatment of everyone in our society, including prisoners.

The Current Crisis

In 2004, the United States incarcerated 2.2 million people in its prisons and jails. Among industrialized nations, the United States incarcerates the largest percentage of its population. There are also stark disparities in the racial composition of our nation's prisons, as African Americans account for fully half of the prison population and comprise only thirteen percent of the total population. Costs of imprisonment have increased due to state legislatures criminalizing an increasing number of activities, mandatory incarceration, and mandatory minimum sentencing. In response to these increased costs as well as lobbying by industry groups, state legislatures have increasingly privatized prisons, introducing profitability into the already conflicted structure of prison funding. Post-9/11 public fears have intensified the perceived need for retributive policies and have undermined those that are redemptive, rehabilitative, and restorative. Elected leaders and their constituents commonly conspire in this politics of fear.

Although Americans take great pride in the freedoms we espouse, the American prison system violates basic human rights in many ways. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United States endorsed in 1948, states in Article 5, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” American correctional practice often subjects inmates to abusive treatment, such as torture and rape, and neglects basic human needs such as health care and nutrition. Some suspects are detained without charge, legal counsel, or access to family. While indigent defendants have exactly the same rights to competent counsel as non-indigent defendants, in many states indigent defendants are not provided equality of representation.

The American penchant for retribution squanders opportunities for redemption, rehabilitation, and restoration of the individual offender. Failures in the criminal justice system have created a disenfranchised, stigmatized class who are predominantly from lower-income backgrounds, poorly educated, or from racial and ethnic minorities. The punishment for crime is often simply separation from society, and the sentence one serves is the punishment. In our penal system, punishment often continues even after those convicted have completed their sentence. They are often stripped of voting rights, denied social services, and barred from many professions. If convicted of a drug crime, they become ineligible for federal student loans to attend college. Our criminal justice system makes it exceedingly difficult for anyone to reintegrate into society. People returning to their communities find that they lack opportunity, skills, and social services to fully function in society and hold down jobs, maintain families, or participate in their communities. Therefore, an unacceptable percentage of those released from our prisons and jails recidivate.

Not all prisoners who enter the system leave. One of the most shameful aspects of our current criminal justice system is the death penalty. Many countries have abandoned the practice of capital punishment. Studies fail to demonstrate that the death penalty actually deters crime. While the United States Supreme Court has ruled against the execution of juvenile offenders, the death penalty is still legal in the United States. Experience shows that judges and juries wrongly convict defendants. Given the number of death row inmates released on account of innocence, it is highly likely that we have executed innocent people and will do so again in the future unless we abolish the death penalty.

Toward a New Corrections Philosophy

The first two Principles of Unitarian Universalism address the inherent worth and dignity of every person and justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. Consistent with these fundamental principles, a new corrections policy must place a primary emphasis on community alternatives.

Community alternatives should be developed in the context of redemptive, rehabilitative, and restorative justice. Redemptive justice recognizes justice as relational. Its purpose is to restore wholeness and rightness in the social order and in the disposition of the offender, not to exact revenge. Rehabilitative justice is a process of education, socialization, and empowerment of the person to the status whereby she or he may be able to contribute constructively and appreciably to society. Restorative justice is a process whereby the offender can reconcile with the victim through appropriate restitution, community service, and healing measures.

A greatly expanded emphasis on community alternatives will provide substantial cost savings. These savings may and should be in community support services such as literacy education, vocational training, drug addiction treatment, viable employment, and affordable housing. The benefits of these services are in the quality of life for the offending person, the victim, the families of the offender and victim, and the increased safety and security of the community.

Separation from society may well be an appropriate punishment for many crimes, but society's responsibility does not end there. A corrections system driven by compassionate justice would prepare offenders for successful reentry into society. An overwhelming majority of those who are incarcerated return to their communities, yet only a small percentage receive meaningful rehabilitative programming while in prison. In the reformed system, they will receive substantial rehabilitative services, including mental health treatment, educational programs, and vocational training during incarceration and employment and transitional housing once released. Redemption, rehabilitation, and restoration are not only humanely forgiving of those who have fallen off the main societal track; they are more effective and less costly in addressing the criminal justice needs of our whole society.

A Call to Unitarian Universalists

Appalled by the gross injustices in our current criminal justice system, we the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association commit ourselves to working in our communities to reform the criminal justice and correctional systems and effect justice for both victims and violators. We act in the spirit that we are indeed our sisters' and our brothers' keepers. Love is our governing principle in all human relationships. Therefore, that we may speak with one voice in unity, though not uniformity, we commit ourselves, our congregations, and our Association to these congregational actions and advocacy goals.

Congregational Actions

- *Form a study group within the congregation to learn about the local jail and state prison system, its budget, recidivism rates, rehabilitation programs (inside and outside the facilities), and opportunities for volunteers.*
- *Network and collaborate with existing community outreach programs and advocacy groups for prisoners and their families.*
- *Establish Unitarian Universalist prison ministries and encourage volunteers from the congregation to go into prisons and get involved with and/or begin peer-counseling and mentoring programs.*
- *Address re-entry issues by engaging in supportive work with formerly incarcerated individuals to reduce recidivism and increase success in the probation and parole system.*
- *Reach out and support congregational members who are personally affected by the criminal justice system.*

Advocacy Goals

- *Legislation that strengthens gun control, ends the so-called “War on Drugs,” disallows mandatory minimum sentencing, provides for fair, equitable, anti-racist sentencing, and abolishes the death penalty.*
- *Reforms of the judicial system to establish drug courts that prescribe treatment rather than imprisonment, provide affordable and competent counsel for all defendants, and empower citizen review boards.*
- *Effective alternatives to incarceration such as arbitration, restorative justice programs, community service, in-house arrest, and mental health and substance abuse treatment.*
- *Dismantling of the for-profit prison industry.*
- *A publicly funded and managed system of correctional facilities accredited by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care and by the American Correctional Association, ensuring that children and youth in custody are separated from adults in the penal system, providing appropriate facilities and services for prisoners with mental health and other health concerns, addressing the unique medical and psychological needs of female prisoners, stopping prisoner rape, and abolishing cruel detention and interrogation methods and the use of isolation for prolonged periods of time.*
- *Termination of the relocation of prisoners out-of-state or out-of-country.*
- *Support for families and family life by assigning prisoners to facilities near their homes, by providing facilities that are conducive to comfortable family visits, by maintaining parental rights as appropriate, and by allowing prison mothers to raise their infants.*
- *Universal access to rehabilitation, education, and job training programs and restorative and recovery programs for non-religious as well as for religious prisoners.*
- *A probation and parole system empowered and enabled to correct the excesses of past mandatory sentencing requirements, provide compassionate reprieves for the terminally ill and aged, support former prisoners as they reenter society, and allow for individual evaluation of technical parole violations.*
- *Elimination of post-prison restrictions on civil rights and civil liberties, including voting rights.*

Through ongoing congregational education, advocacy, and action, we can make good on our Unitarian Universalist heritage and our American promise to be both compassionate and just to all in our society.

Through our diligence and perseverance in realizing this promise, we can live the core values of our country and extend the values of our faith to the benefit of others.

Source: uua.org