

2021

Committee for Social Justice Annual Report

Members of the Committee for Social Justice: Michael Schley, Chair; Lori Edwards, Vice Chair; Katie Hirscher; John Fisher; Harry Hurd; Julie Cazin; Judy Ice and Jessica Brueggeman on the steering committee and an additional 25 people on the general committee.

Meeting Time: 7pm, first Monday of each month as needed.

Mission Statement: As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called both individually and collectively to fearlessly apply our faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression. We are called to act on our beliefs and work to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate injustice.

In 2021 the committee undertook the following activities:

- **Website** - Launched a committee website at sapc-justice.org providing announcements, sign-up forms for upcoming meetings, recordings of previous presentations and useful resources.
- **Presentations** - Offered presentations open to all church members and guests on criminal justice, education reforms, gun violence and what the Bible says about social justice. Guest speakers included Wake County District Attorney Lorin Freeman, Rev. Suzanne Miller from Pastors for NC Children and former State Education Superintendent June Atkinson.
- **Connections** - Surveyed Raleigh churches engaged in social justice to identify opportunities for partnership.
- **Reorganization** - Reorganized the committee, going forward with three issue groups: Education, Gun Violence Prevention and Matthew 25 Exploration. The Matthew 25 initiative is the PCUSA vision for addressing racism, systemic poverty and the needs of those outside our walls. The Criminal Justice issue group was deactivated for the time being.
- **Classes** - Held a three-week class titled "I'm not a racist but..." and a six-week follow-up class on the "Arc of Justice" podcast. Classes were offered virtually and had 30 people participating in each.
- **Education Reform** - Proposed a motion to Session for Saint Andrews to undertake advocacy in support of the Leandro case, the NC Supreme court case requiring the legislature to fund critical education reforms. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Advocacy** - The Education Issue group worked with Pastors for NC Children on a letter-writing campaign to legislators and a prayer vigil in downtown Raleigh to support the Leandro case.
- **JoyFest** - Organized a presentation by Rev. Suzanne Miller, Executive Director of Pastors for NC Children on education reforms as part of JoyFest.
- **Prayers** - The Gun Violence Prevention issue group distributed prayer cards before worship, remembering individuals in North Carolina who died in the previous 30 days from gun violence.
- **Matthew 25** - The committee's Mathew 25 Exploration group surveyed Matthew 25 churches in the area. In partnership with Davie Street Presbyterian, the committee also arranged for a presentation by Rev. Diane Moffett, head of PCUSA Missions Agency to be held on February 7, 2022 at 7pm.

Goals for 2022:

- Participate in the church's discernment process to consider becoming a Matthew 25 church.
- Continue offering educational programs for Saint Andrews members on issues of societal injustice as inspired by our faith.
- Undertake advocacy initiatives where needed and bear witness to justice in our world.
- Continue research and action in the focus areas of education, gun violence, racism and poverty.