

Justice and Mission Report

Illinois South Conference October 2020 Annual Meeting

Members:

Kay Ahaus, Convener Margie Lindhorst, Secretary

Rev. Richard Ellerbrake, Rev. Sam Foskey, Rev. Tim Darmour-Paul, Rev. Jerry Bennett, Barb Bray.

Rev. Shana Johnson, Conference Minister

As convener of our wonderful committee, it is my privilege and an honor to work with such dedicated, brilliant and active Christians. Thank you all for your participation. Thank you, Shana, for your able counsel.

The Justice and Mission Team met several times in person prior to our March shelter in place order due to COVID 19. We met again in June via Zoom.

Our Efforts included the following:

We discussed the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) that will be considered in the October veto session of the Illinois Legislature. The bill numbers are HB 2607 and SB 1485. We placed several articles in the Weekly Word pertaining to or in tangent with our focus on this important proposal. It would move our communities toward cleaner energy, provide job training and support for families of those being trained in renewable energy industries by placing job training stations in communities most in need of environmental justice assistance.

Margie Lindhorst created a display for Day of Discipleship with information on the CEJA and solar energy for churches. A brochure from National UCC Environmental Department featured the solar installation at Church of the Good Shepherd, Carbondale. Many of our churches would be eligible for solar energy panels if CEJA passed. Individuals, schools, businesses and churches in southern Illinois who depend on municipal and coops for electricity, are severely limited in the amount of clean energy they may produce. Passage of CEJA would solve that problem.

Jerry Bennett organized a rally in Highland at the Conference Office front lawn to support the Black Lives Matter movement and to lift up the need for a systematic change to our prevalent racism in the US. Led by Conference Minister, Shana Johnson, fifteen of us discussed our role in bringing about a more just and peaceful world. Music that underscored the message and ringing of a bell in memory of those lost to police brutality christened the memorial service. Canned goods and money donations were collected and given to the Highland Area Ministerial Services food pantry.

At Richard Ellerbrake's urging, we discussed the need for our country to move to a system of health care that covers all our citizens. Richard provided a white paper on this subject and distributed it to our committee and at the Highland rally.

Our committee suggested a Conference wide book discussion on "White Fragility" by Robin Diangelo. That discussion held, in four session on Zoom, was ably led by Conference Minister Shana Johnson. Some 50 participants took part, sharing their real life experiences and their commitments to make deep changes in their Christian daily life and to actively work to end racism. Our team was thrilled to have such great participation Conference wide.

Through several articles in Weekly connection, the Team discussed opportunities and limitations for congregations in dealing with legislative and political issues, as well as various ways Illinois voters can participate in the November election.

Rev. Norma Patterson called us to focus on the need of each child to be able to access the internet in this time of education through distance instruction. To meet this need, **Illinois Senate Bill 3998** was introduced. Pastor Norma recently submitted this important information to us. Here is her report as of September 5, 2020.

ACCESS TO BROADBAND CAMPAIGN

#ConnectMe

Senate Bill 3998 was introduced to the Illinois state Legislature on May 22, 2020 by Senator Antonio Munoz and supported by Senator Andy Manar in support of public broadband in the state of Illinois. Public Broadband would do the following:

- Ensure and provide affordable BB access to all Illinoisans
- Becomes a right—not a privilege, like electricity, water, sewer, and telephone services
- Provides essential access for education, employment, and other opportunities (zoom worship, meetings, trainings for churches)
- K-12 schools have better capacity for online learning thereby better equipping students for workforce in the 21st Century

Report completed September 7, 2020