



**Victor Crouch**

## **Building Sustainable Social Justice: UU Congregation of Atlanta**

### **Project Goal**

At the end of 18 months, the UUCA will have all social justice work aligned with the mission and vision of the church, grow the social justice programs to include up to 20% of the congregation with increased stability, deepen the maturity of the congregation in understanding and doing social justice work, and improve connection, communication (develop and test 2 tools for communicating with the congregation) and fundraising (raising 5% more than last year) capacities. We will also have a small group of people (3-6) who can respond to emergency advocacy, legislative or editorial needs.

### **Personal Reflection**

I have been excited about starting the UUSC program and implementing our project at UUCA since attending the retreat. I felt energized and connected to my peers. Becoming a Justice Building Innovator/Social Justice Coordinator was in part an extension of my desire to grow my spirituality through Social Justice “work.” Given demands upon my time and energy, there have been moments when I felt weary and spiritually disconnected under the work. Life has not taken a pause. It seems one tragedy has followed another. While the issue of race has been frequently discussed I’ve often felt burdened and saddened by the continual need to have these discussions. The work of this Social Justice project is not easy and the journey is not always straight. My personal growth moment appeared almost casually—like the rearranging of phrases in a sentence toward strengthening an expression. The work that I have undertaken is a journey; the difficult work has a spiritual component for me. I recognize now that the journey is characterized and punctuated by hard work that softens, frightens, and prepares me along the way. What I have experienced is both pain and transformative growth, which comes from leaning in and sitting with my discomfort rather than looking away. I have been able to reach out to others for support and pause as required in order to appreciate my own personal growth. I’ve become more contemplative.

### **Project Update**

Our project concerns supporting the maturation of UUCA’s Social Justice groups and increasing the congregation’s understanding and participation in social justice activities. The Social Justice Coordinators have created a survey, distributed that survey and have received 23 completed responses to date. This is a major accomplishment as it provides information to

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analyze, and gives each group an opportunity to self-assess, which will subsequently serve as the basis from which individual improvement plans will be created. The Social Justice Coordinators are currently in the process of working individually with each group. The survey itself serves as an initial organizing tool—used to orient each group toward assessing their current functioning, as well as, identifying information that can be shared among and between other Social Justice groups. Overall findings will be shared with each group. At this point, there has been an excellent response from all groups. Our accomplishment has been the creation of a survey tool and receipt of 23 completed surveys. Our analysis work and the work of groups creating their individual improvement plans is currently underway.