



Mary Devitt

Black Lives Matter to Wisconsin UU's: Greater Milwaukee Metro Area

Project Goal

To develop a collaborative social action network for Black Lives Matter with with active participation from the six UU congregations in the Greater Milwaukee Metro area, based on sustained and sustainable commitment, with at least 5 congregations involved in public witness, educational engagement, and significant participation (visible presence) in local racial justice efforts/organizations by September, 2017. Milestones on our way to success include:

- The presence of sustainable structures to hold the congregations together.
- Reports that individual congregations have participated in at least one or two witness events.
- Establishment of an RRN (Rapid Response Network?) to help with immediate needs around Racial justice.

Project Update

Successes

- 4 of 5 congregations in greater Milwaukee area actively participating; core collaboration planning group is developing into an open and effective team. 5th congregation will become more involved again when new Minister arrives in late August. He has already been contacted and indicated his involvement.
- Held 2 very successful Beyond the Banner Workshops and witness events attended by 100 people and 60 people respectively. Great newspaper coverage of first workshop.
- Held 2 other BLM collaboration events – a Banner Blessing and Witness at UUCW which had great publicity in local TV media; providing children's activities at the Dontre Day community event sponsored by the Coalition for Justice (which was unfortunately shortened by cool, rainy weather).
- Brought UU's to various partner sponsored BLM rallies, protests, and educational events. Anywhere from 10 – 25 UU's from various congregations at each event.
- Increased awareness of BLM2WUU's as partner organization with local grassroots justice organizations.
- Initial outreach to other denominations and ally groups to increase our effectiveness in local racial justice work.
- Added participation in actions around the police involved shooting of Jay Anderson on June 23rd to our activities.

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Challenges

- Involving members of the 5th congregation and the local UU fellowship.
- Ministerial changes at 2 of the congregations.
- The impact of local and national events on local efforts – need to remain flexible and responsive to changing situations.
- Realization after 2nd workshop that congregation members are more fearful and hesitant to go into unfamiliar city neighborhoods or to take action that was not initially anticipated.
- Resulting difficulty in getting larger numbers of members engaged in actions like rallies or protests.