

SPEAKING OF JUSTICE

faith in action

Issue No. 001
September 2018

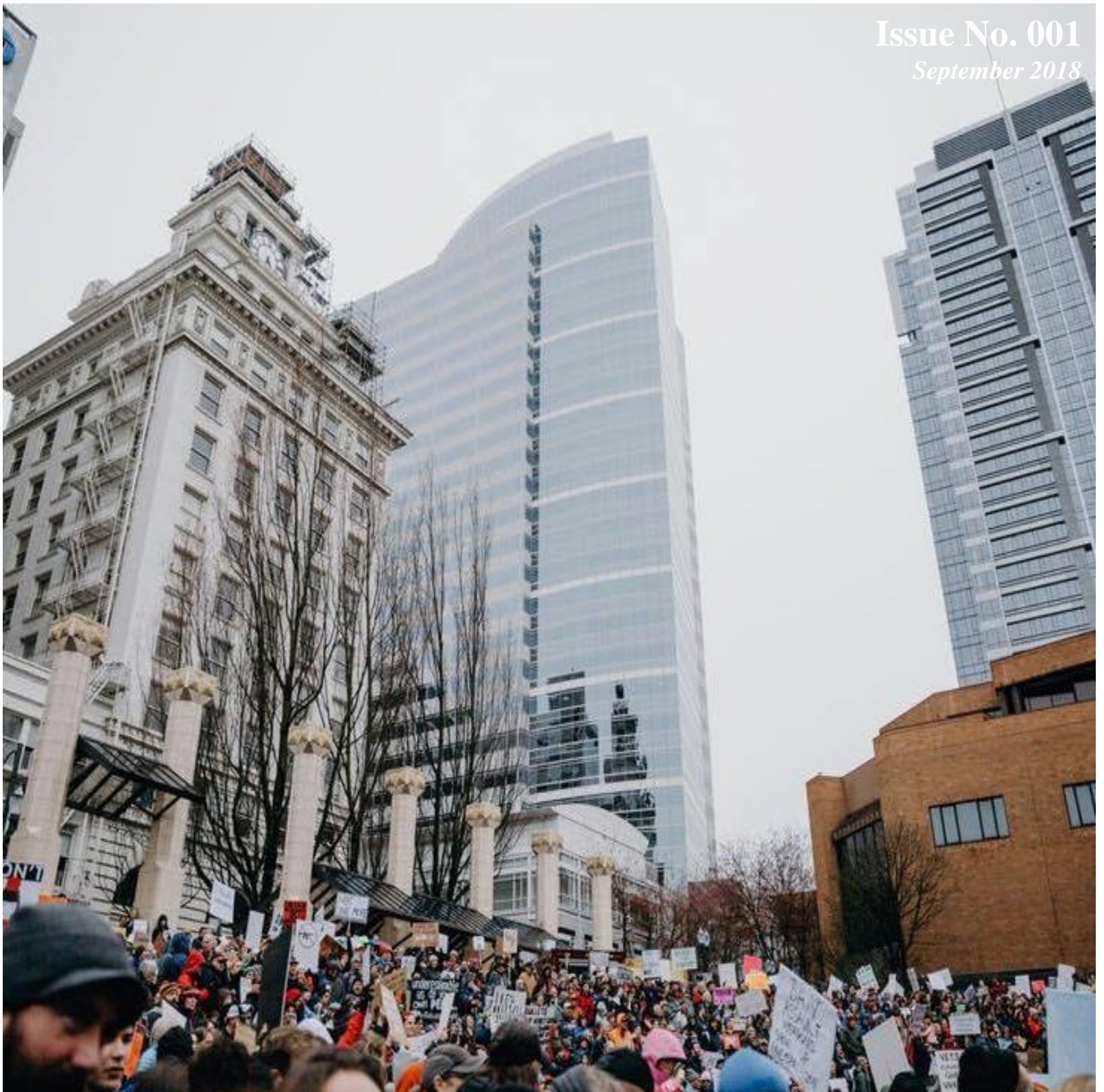


Photo by: Nikki Beezley

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Seattle, with a prominent snow-capped mountain (Mount Rainier) in the background. The city is densely packed with buildings, including several tall skyscrapers. The foreground shows a mix of modern glass buildings and older structures. The background features a large, snow-covered mountain peak under a clear sky. The overall scene is a panoramic view of an urban area nestled at the base of a major mountain range.

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST ISSUE!

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Dear First Unitarian Community,

We are excited to introduce you to Speaking of Justice: Faith in Action, a monthly newsletter brought to you by the First Unitarian Social Justice Program.

First Unitarian Portland's mission is "... to foster lifelong spiritual growth; and to act for social justice." In a time when planet-wide, the inherent worth and dignity of humans and all beings are being undermined, and justice and peace seem ever more distant from the reality we see around us, it is good for our hearts to join with others to create a community that we can call beloved, to support and challenge each other in this work.

Made up of eleven action groups and five service projects, First Unitarian's Social Justice Program strives to put faith into action. Each of our action groups are engaged with the wider community on specific issues, and provide avenues for members of the congregation to move spiritual beliefs to action. Our action groups offer education, opportunities for direct action, advocacy and service, and engagement with community partners.

We invite you to witness, support, and to join our efforts. To that end, we are launching "Speaking of Justice" where each month we will detail the fruits of our labors. We recognize the intersections of our various justice efforts within the root causes of oppression. In each of our upcoming monthly newsletters, we will highlight particularly noteworthy endeavors of one or another of our action groups, and we will provide a calendar of exciting upcoming events.

Seeking to bring about justice is sacred work. Our Social Justice Covenant calls on us to "be unsettled and alert in the world, consistently seeking justice while knowing our actions will be imperfect and the work ongoing." Please enjoy reading about our efforts, learning from our educational programs, supporting us in our actions, and finding your own paths to take part.

Sincerely,
The Speaking of Justice Team

Mindy Clark
Ethel Gullette
Alisa Joaquin
Jamie Marucha

Dana Buhl, *Director of Social Justice*
Nikki Beezley, *Program Assistant for Social Justice*

Faith Floods the Desert

Carrying Our Witness Home

Written by, Dana Buhl



Photos by: Dana Buhl

In early August, four of us from First Unitarian Portland joined [Faith Floods the Desert](#), an action of solidarity and witness in the Arizona borderlands. Coordinated through the UU Service Committee and the UU College of Social Justice, we joined 60 clergy and faith leaders from around the country to carry water into the desert for migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. It was an act of humanitarian aid and solidarity with the volunteer aid workers of [No More Deaths/No Más Muertes](#) who face federal charges for doing the exact same thing: placing vital water in [strategic points](#) in the desert with the hope that migrants walking north will find them. We pledged to join No More Deaths to fight the charges if we, too, were cited.

As important as leaving the 130 gallons of water in the desert was our witness to the intensifying assault on migrants who risk their lives to walk north through the desert to find work, reunite with family, flee untenable life situations at home. We experienced the effects of the intense summer heat in the vast, rugged landscape. We saw signs of foot travelers and signs of the U.S. government vehicles used to hunt them. We imagined what it might be like to risk one's life to traverse this harsh landscape. What life conditions must compel a person to make this treacherous journey?

Over the three days of our action, our hosts educated us on border history. We learned about the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on the Mexican economy and migration. In 1994, the same year NAFTA was ratified, the Border Patrol implemented "Prevention through Deterrence," a strategy to address the predicted flood of migrants traveling north as a result of NAFTA. That's when the walls and fences were built around urban, populated points of entry, forcing people into the rugged and remote desert. Enforcement strategies such as ["Chase and Scatter"](#) are used to separate and further terrorize migrants on their journey. Official PR campaigns teach the U.S. population that migrants are to be feared.

Given "Prevention through Deterrence," there is little incentive for Border Patrol to respond to calls for emergency assistance from injured or dying migrants, or from families who have lost contact with loved ones on the trek north. They have no incentive to search for or recover the thousands of human remains in the desert. [Border Patrol reported](#) 412 deaths along the U.S.-Mexico border in 2017, representing only the bodies with which they had direct contact. Estimates put the actual number of deaths at five to ten times as many. In the area around Ajo, Arizona, where we were based, 28 human remains were recovered in 2017, most of which are labeled "Desconocido" or "Unknown."



In 2005, given the numbers of people now forced to cross the border along these remote regions, and the shortage of immigration judges, the Border Patrol requested that migrants caught in the desert be turned over to the criminal justice system. Operation Streamline was established to criminally prosecute migrants rather than immediately deport them, as had been the system for years.

Operation Streamline is a “fast-track” procedure in which an apprehended migrant has 20-30 minutes with a criminal defense lawyer in the morning to learn about their rights and the intricacies of the U.S. criminal justice system. In the afternoon, they stand before a judge to plead guilty to charges of Illegal Entry or Illegal Re-Entry, the first a federal misdemeanor, the second a felony with mandatory prison time followed by deportation. If someone seeks asylum, they must first plead guilty, serve their sentence (most often in a privately owned prison), and then hope the judge’s note in their file will be honored when they are turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for deportation. However, now with a criminal record, their chances of asylum are radically reduced. This system of mass criminalization of individuals seeking refuge in the U.S. is often called “cimmigration.”

Federal courthouses in Del Rio, Laredo, Tucson, and soon, San Diego hold mass hearings where 70-85 people are prosecuted every day of the week. The numbers of criminal prosecutions under Operation Streamline has spiked under the Trump administration’s [Zero Tolerance policy](#).

As crimmigration intensifies under Trump, so has the attack on humanitarian aid workers who seek to help their human siblings. [Nine No More Deaths volunteers face federal charges](#) for answering the moral imperative of caring for our siblings walking through the desert..

Our action gave me a better understanding of the impact of inhumane U.S. immigration policies. I have more context for the Trump administration’s Zero Tolerance, with its ramped-up criminalization of migrants, caging of children,

egregious separation of families, arresting and turning away of asylum seekers, denial of humanitarian assistance and inhumane treatment. I better understand that Zero Tolerance did not emerge from the ethers, but rather is built on decades of policies and practices that demonize those who seek a better life for themselves and for their families.

On our journey, nothing hit home harder than the news of Saul Salazar, the father and grandfather who was found dead on the outskirts of Ajo the night before we arrived. Mr. Salazar had resided in the U.S. for 30 years, was recently deported, and was walking his way back to his family in Phoenix. Days earlier, a distress call was sent out to the volunteer search and rescue network who looked for him all night to discover he was dead.

Mr. Salazar’s death drove home the essential point of our witness. For every statistic about immigration, there are individuals, each with a story of their quest for survival. Our UU belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, our commitment to justice, equity and compassion, and our goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all compels us to keep working for immigrant and racial justice.

First Unitarian’s Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG) offers many opportunities to put our faith into action for our immigrant and refugee siblings. (See page 8 for how you can get involved.)





Testimony From First Unitarian Delegation to Faith Floods the Desert

We go to affirm that it is not a crime to seek a better life.

It is not a crime to walk across borders for asylum.
It is not a crime to aid our fellow human beings.

We go to resist the unjust laws that maintain walls of white supremacy
and nationalism and divide our human family.

We go to provide water for our siblings who are walking for their lives.

Our UU Principles carry us, and we carry each of you with us.
As a delegation from our faith-home, we know we are not alone.

Your love gives us strength for this action of witness, and we promise to carry that witness back home.

Many Thanks!

Many thanks to all who contributed socks for our delegation to Faith Floods the Desert. Helena Lee and Ann Zawaski spearheaded the sock drive, and Jeannie and Bob Leeper boxed them up to send to No More Deaths/No Más Muertes because there were too many for us to carry. **We received this note from Jim, a NMD volunteer:**

“[Several hundred] pairs of socks landed in Tucson ... What a wonderful surprise the boxes of socks are and with your first hand experience in the desert, you can see how important they are for people walking this difficult terrain. Thank you to you and your church community for your thoughtfulness and generosity. Some of the socks have already gone out to the desert and have been handed out. I’m making our monthly trip to Altar, Sonora, Mexico this Wednesday to a migrant shelter there and we will be bringing socks and other supplies there as well.”

Fiona’s Reflection

the desert is undeniably harsh. i stare north, across a parched and empty landscape to the distant mountains. i have been told there are more than 80 miles of rough terrain between here and any semblance of safety. after spending so short a time here and knowing that for many this is not the beginning and end of their journey, but rather the middle of it, it’s hard for me to imagine how anybody could survive this. we should never underestimate the incredible feats humans are capable of. neither should we forget the pointless cruelty that forced them to undertake such a feat in the first place.

~Fiona McDonald, First Unitarian delegate to Faith Floods the Desert.

Read Fiona’s full account on [Facebook](#).

The Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice

Written by: Douglas Brown

Congregants from First Unitarian Portland have been active in immigrant and refugee justice issues for many years. In 2016, the Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG) was formed out of the former UU Service Committee local action group. Though immigrants and refugees from many parts of the world, particularly migrants from our Southern border and Muslim countries, have been marginalized and criminalized for many years, the flagrant racism, xenophobia, and escalating persecution of immigrants and asylum-seekers as a core policy of the current administration has stirred many more of us into action. We have joined forces with other peoples of faith in acts of resistance in solidarity with the persecuted.

The Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s has re-emerged as the New Sanctuary Movement to address current conditions of migrant and refugee persecution. In Oregon, the organizational heart of this movement is the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIrJ), which was re-born in the Oregon Sanctuary Assembly of January 2017; the organization is now state-wide, including 140 faith-based groups. First Unitarian is a “Steward” Community of IMIrJ, and Wendy Rankin, the leader of First Unitarian’s IJAG serves on IMIrJ’s Board of Directors.

In the 1980s, the Sanctuary Movement functioned as a sort of “underground railway” for refugees, mostly from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Participating places of worship would provide actual physical shelter to people pursued by U.S. Immigration agents, which would generally respect religious institutions and not apprehend people in sanctuary. While there are some congregations nationally that continue to provide visible, public sanctuary, or more clandestine safe spaces, the focus and work of the New Sanctuary Movement has broadened considerably. Those of us active in First Unitarian’s Immigration and Justice Action Group have found common cause with IMIrJ’s vision of an immigrant-led movement for

resistance and change. We are currently working to defeat Ballot Measure 105, which would revoke Oregon’s decades old sanctuary law.


Under IMIrJ’s leadership, members of IJAG and First Church have joined forces with Gorge ICE Resistance to show up at the regional jail in The Dalles called NORCOR, which has contracted with ICE to imprison immigrants in miserable conditions for indefinite periods of time. This violation of Oregon’s sanctuary law has been met with daily protests for over a year organized by local community members and clergy, and IJAG and IMIrJ members have occasionally shown up as well.

IMIrJ and IJAG also participate in protests and worship services outside the Federal prison in Sheridan, where more recently immigrants have been jailed without explanation, or recognition of their rights, for the “crime” of seeking asylum.

Other vital pieces of the movements’ work include accompanying immigrants to ICE check-ins and deportation hearings, writing letters in support of apprehended immigrants, educating ourselves on white privilege and overcoming entrenched oppressive patterns in our own thinking and relating, and building bridges with other communities of faith in our ongoing work.

IJAG is currently working toward defeating Measure 105. (See November Ballot Measure Recommendations in this issue.) The main support for M105 is from Oregonians for Immigration Reform and the Federation of Immigration Reform, both of which have been labeled hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Take action with [Oregonians United Against Profiling: Donate here.](#) IJAG will have its first general meeting on Sunday, October 14 at 1:30 p.m.

The act of simply showing up is powerful. We welcome all who are interested to visit our table in Fuller Hall to obtain information about this work, and to Sign Up to Show Up.



**Excerpts from Home
by Warsan Shire**

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well

you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.
no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear
saying-
leave,
run away from me now
i dont know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here

Yes on Measure 102, Allow Municipal Bond Revenue to Fund Privately Owned Affordable Housing Initiative.

This referral by the legislature changes the OR Constitution to allow public money for affordable housing to be mixed with private money to expand the reach of public money. Oregon UU Voices for Justice and First U’s Committee on Hunger and Homelessness (COHHO) and Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG) recommend Vote YES.

No on Measure 103, Ban Tax on Groceries Initiative. This measure would prohibit taxes or fees on sale/distribution of groceries at the state or local level. This would prohibit the enactment of so-called soda taxes, which has been under consideration in Multnomah County for the past two years. Oregon UU Voices for Justice and First U’s Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG) recommends Vote NO.

NOVEMBER
BALLOT
RECOMMENDATIONS

No on Measure 104, Definition of Raising Revenue for Three-Fifths Vote Requirement.

This measure would enact a constitutional amendment requiring a three-fifths supermajority for legislation that raises revenue through changes in tax exemptions, credits and deductions, and fees. Submitted to halt fees on financial and real estate transactions and changes to a more progressive tax system. Rep Alyssa Keny-Guyer “This measure would hobble the ability of the state to raise money.” Oregon UU Voices for Justice and First Unitarian’s Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG) Recommends Vote NO.

No on Measure 105, Repeal Sanctuary State Law Initiative. This measure would repeal Oregon’s 30-year “sanctuary” law. This law has helped prevent racial profiling. As a “sanctuary state,” Oregon law enforcement can arrest and prosecute anyone who commits a crime and provide fingerprint data to Department of Homeland Security. Undocumented residents may be held and turned over to immigration officers if a warrant has been issued for their arrest. What local and state police are not able to do is stop, detain, or interrogate someone simply because the officer suspects they are undocumented. A NO vote on Measure 105 keeps local and state law enforcement dedicated to keeping our communities safe and free from fear. **First Oregon UU Voices for Justice and First Unitarian’s Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG), Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG) and Reverend Bill Sinkford Support a NO Vote on Measure 105.**

No on Measure 106, Ban Public Funds for Abortions. This measure enacts a constitutional amendment that would ban public funds from being spent on abortions in Oregon, except when medically necessary or required by federal law. (Currently no federal funds may be used for abortion.) Would lead to more limits on women’s rights, including access to state funded abortion for all state employees and those on the Oregon Health Plan. Oregon UU Voices for Justice, **First U's Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG) and Reverend Bill Sinkford support a NO Vote.**

Yes on Portland Measure 26-200, Honest Elections. If approved by Portland voters, Measure 26-200 would establish limits on political campaign contributions/expenditures and require that the top five true funders of political ads be disclosed on the ads themselves. Oregon has no enforced limits on political campaign contributions/expenditures, and no requirements for disclosure on political ads. Multnomah county voters approved these same limits and disclosure requirements on the ballot with almost 90% approval in 2016. Portland elections, however, are the most expensive elections in the region, and therefore are most in need of such limits. **First Unitarian’s Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG) urges a “Yes on 26-200” vote in November.**

Yes on Portland 26-201 Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Initiative 2018, This measure would establish a surcharge on major (very major) retailers with sales in Portland to fund clean energy projects, as well as establishing pathways for funding training programs for clean energy installers and those who have been left out of the Portland economic engine. First Unitarian Portland stands with the frontline communities, those most impacted by environmental injustice, to pass this initiative. “Through the Portland Clean Energy Fund, we will lift up a community-led vision that builds resilience and wealth in the face of climate change and federal inaction.” <https://www.portlandcleanenergyfund.com/> First Unitarian’s Community For Earth (CFE), **Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG), and Reverend Bill Sinkford Support a YES Vote.**

VOTE!

First Unitarian Asylee Respite Center Opens

Motivated by the belief that each person deserves dignity, respect and justice, a dynamic team of volunteers hopped into action to ready the First Unitarian Respite Center for asylum seekers released from Sheridan prison. In less than one week, congregants and community volunteers transformed the family day shelter into a short-term overnight respite center. A huge thanks to members of our Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG) for organizing as well as our Committee on Hunger and Homelessness (COHHO) and the 13 Salmon Advisory Committee for their years-long work to support the shelter.

Innovation Law Lab (ILL) is representing 80 of the 120 asylum seekers that were unjustly detained in Sheridan Prison. They secured positive decisions on 100% of credible fear interviews for these detainees and has been working for their immediate release. Our September plate offering will be shared with Innovation Law Lab to support this essential justice work.

ILL partnered with the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIrJ) and the Asian Pacific Action Network of Oregon (APANO) to create a rapid response network. Through our membership with IMIrJ, First Unitarian heard the call. Along with a church in North Valley, the Salem Sikh Temple Respite Center, and the Welcome Team that offers transport from Sheridan to the Respite Network, we are grateful to be a part of this interfaith response to welcome and serve our siblings seeking refuge.



Photo by: Nikki Beezley & Dana Buhl



september

Oregon UU Voices for Justice Annual Meeting

Saturday, September 15 in Oregon City

We are all stronger together! Join Oregon UU Voices for Justice 2018 annual meeting. Click here for more information and to register.

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Report-Back from Faith Floods the Desert

Sunday, September 16 from 1:00-2:30 p.m. in Buchan Reception Hall.

Join First Unitarian delegation to the border for an inside look at their journey. Faith Floods the Desert was an action of solidarity with No More Deaths/No Más Muertes, a volunteer group that provides humanitarian aid to migrants walking through the desert from Mexico to the U.S.

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Africa Connections Sale by Quilts for Empowerment

Sunday, September 16 in Margaret Fuller Hall,

following both services. Proceeds go toward strengthening self sufficiency in Kenyan female survivors of obstetric fistula surgery and sexual abuse.

16

Screening of Rikers: An American Jail

Tuesday, September 25 6:30-8:30 p.m. in Eliot Chapel. FREE, donations welcome.

Come watch Rikers: An American Jail, a new documentary from Bill Moyers, followed by facilitated discussion. Brought to you by Ending the New Jim Crow, a Social Action Group of First Unitarian, and [Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon](#).

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UPCOMING SOCIAL JUSTICE EVENTS

october

Portland Historic Bus Tour with the Fair Housing Council of Oregon

Tuesday, October 9 from 7:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Optional debrief & brown-bag lunch 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

09

Our Social Justice, Family Ministries & Adult Faith Formation programs collaborate for this inter-generational tour of the Civil Rights Housing History of Portland. The four hour bus tour visits sites throughout Portland and features personal stories from guest presenters. The tour is full.

Shaka Senghor

Thursday, October 18, 6:30-8:30 p.m. in Eliot Chapel/Fuller Hall.

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Suggested donation \$10 - \$25 (Free for community members impacted by the justice system)

Shaka Senghor is a leading voice in criminal justice reform, an author, and Senior Fellow with Dream Corps. Following his talk will be a panel discussion and reception. Presented by Ending the New Jim Crow, in partnership with The Pathfinder Network. RSVP encouraged.

For more information and to register: <http://www.thepathfindernetwork.org/shaka-senghor/>

For updated First Unitarian Portland events please subscribe to [Front Steps](#), our weekly e-Newsletter.

SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION GROUPS

At First Unitarian Church of Portland

Africa Connections

Contact: Anne Pickar
apickar@cs.com

Committee on Hunger & Homelessness (COHHO)

Contact: Lois Heinlein
matlein@gmail.com

Community for Earth (CFE)

Contact: Brian Brumley
bebrumley@yahoo.com

Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG)

Contact: Michael Wade
wade.michael@comcast.net

Ending the New Jim Crow (ENJC)

Contact: Ethel Gullette
effieg47@gmail.com

Immigrant Justice Action Group (IJAG)

Contact: Wendy Rankin
wendyjrankin@gmail.com

LGBTQIA Pride

Contact: Lonnie Martinez
nomoredrama0711@gmail.com

Mental Health Action Group

Contact: Rosebud Kirwin-Alvord
rbka1@frontier.com

Peace Action Group (PAG)

Contact: Tess Beistel
tesslovesgreen7@gmail.com

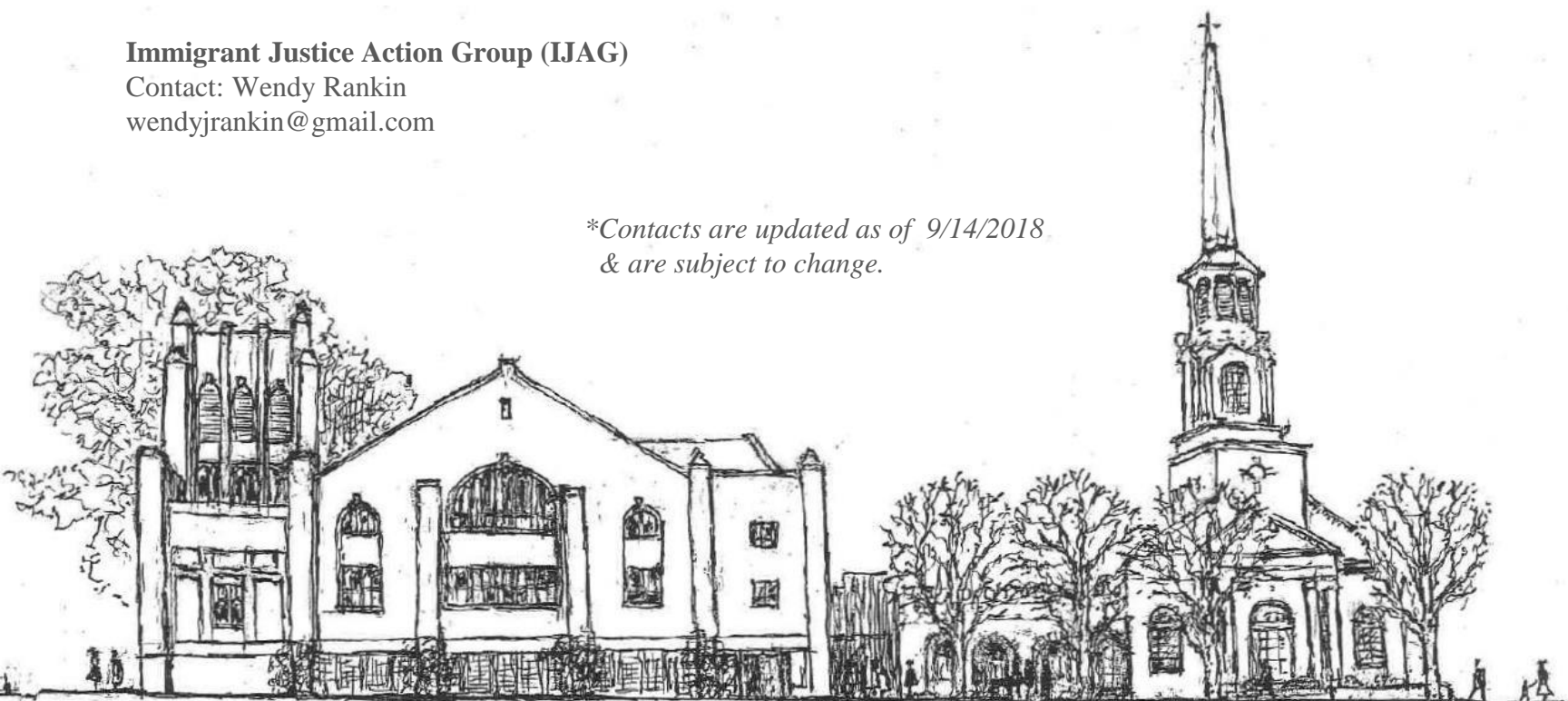
UU Animal Ministry (UUAM)

Contact: Keith Iding
torturgamigo@gmail.com

UU's for Justice in the Middle East

Contact: Curt Bell
curt.c.bell@gmail.com

**Contacts are updated as of 9/14/2018
& are subject to change.*





CONNECT WITH FIRST UNITARIAN PORTLAND

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE OFFICE

Dana Buhl, Director of Social Justice
dbuhl@firstunitarianportland.org
Office #: 503.228.6389 ext. 442

Nikki Beezley, Program Assistant for Family Ministries &
Social Justice
nbeezley@firstunitarianportland.org
Office #: 503.228.6389 ext. 152

GENERAL OFFICE

Office Address
1211 SW Main St.
Portland, OR 97214

Office Phone
503.228.6389

Facebook
[facebook.com/FirstUPDX](https://www.facebook.com/FirstUPDX)

Website
firstunitarianportland.org

MINISTERS

Rev. Bill Sinkford, Senior Minister
bsinkford@firstunitarianportland.org

Rev. Thomas Disrud, Associate Minister
tdisrud@firstunitarianportland.org

Rev. Mary Gear, Acting Assistant Minister
mgear@firstunitarianportland.org

Mira Mickiewicz, Intern Minister
mmickiewicz@firstunitarianportland.org

