

Church of the Covenant Mission Fair

Mission and Advocacy Committee

14 February 2021 at 11:45

There are several mission activities and projects that members of Church of the Covenant are involved in, within the context of the congregation. Mission and Advocacy is highlighting a dozen or so of these at a Mission Fair during CE hour on Valentine's Day 2021. Some of these projects may be familiar to you, some may not be. We hope to give you a taste of the variety and maybe something will pique your interest. This handout is a quick guide containing summaries of those mission projects. M&A realizes that this list is not exhaustive and that there are plenty of COTC members who are privately involved in many more mission activities, some of which we are not even aware of.

Presbyterian Church (USA)

A commitment to address the root causes of hunger and poverty is at the heart of the PC(USA)'s Mission. Advocacy and social justice are woven into our work in the U. S. and abroad. For example, the Office of Public Witness in Washington D.C., participates in direct advocacy with members of Congress and the administration on matters of environmental and economic justice, human rights, and peacemaking. The PCUSA has partners in fifty countries and sends mission co-workers and Young Adult Volunteers to many of those countries. Working alongside World Mission and our partners on every continent are mission networks, which are loosely knit "communities of mission practice" representing U. S. congregations, presbyteries, and synods with endorsed international partnerships.

United Church of Christ

The UCC's worldwide mission program includes partnerships with local folks in the following areas: Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and Europe, and Southern Asia. I have had the great good fortune to visit Sri Lanka and get to meet some of those partners in southern Asia. Other programs include refugee and asylum advocacy, disaster response and recovery ministries, and efforts toward sustainable development—through the Global HOPE initiative (Humanitarian. Opportunities. Progress. Empowerment.)

Climate Jubilee

In January 2020 we began our Five-Year Missional Plan: 2020-2025: The Soaring 20's at COTC. At the onset of this new decade, we unfurled our prayerfully discerned new Missional Plan. In Year Two of this Plan, the Climate Jubilee Team is focused on three goals: Personal, Relational and Spiritual. We hope to help the community find ways in their Personal lives to commit to daily or monthly changes that affect the climate. We want to work in Relationship with other organizations to support and expand their environmental work. And we always need to strengthen our faith commitment to our Spiritual lives in our sacred movement of liberation for racial and eco-justice.

Next Steps:

The "Next Steps" Team is focused on the relationships we as a congregation have with those currently experiencing homelessness in our neighborhood and the communities that care for these beloved

people. Over several years the group has connected with organizations who work with unhoused people to educate ourselves, learn how to advocate, find opportunities to personally connect, and to volunteer or donate to supportive work being done. We hosted a meeting that brought together housed neighbors with personal concerns and representatives of groups working with unhoused neighbors. Staff in particular have forged personal relationships. In recent years, our activities have decreased, although connections with Women's Lunch Place, Common Cathedral, and BostonWarm continue. We would love to have new members to reinvigorate this ministry.

Food Pantry

We have operated a food pantry out of the church's basement for over forty years. We are open Saturday and Sunday mornings from 10AM to Noon. We provide bags of groceries to low-income individuals and families, serving between 300 and 500 people per month. The great majority of our clients walk from nearby subsidized housing in Chinatown and the South End. We offer dry goods like peanut butter, pasta, tuna, dry beans, and boxed milk. We also try to give away some frozen chicken or fish. Occasionally we can offer some fresh produce. We are grateful for the volunteers who have persevered even during the pandemic.

Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)

GBIO is made up of about 42 congregations, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, from across the city and suburbs. We work for the public good, by organizing and training people across racial, ethnic, class and neighborhood lines. One of our greatest successes was the Massachusetts health reform law of 2006, which became the model for the Affordable Care Act on the federal level. In 2020, we advocated for the police reform law that passed at the end of the year.

Nica Companions

The Church of the Covenant has been in a sister relationship, "hermanamiento," with the people in the Church of the Poor in Dulce Nombre de Jesus, a rural village in northwestern Nicaragua, since 1996. Our sisters and brothers in this village are part of the Christian Base Communities that grew out of Liberation Theology. It is a relationship of solidarity, reconciliation, awareness and learning from each other, despite our vastly different economic realities. Although the relationship is not based on charity, we at Covenant have helped the Nicaraguan community in times of severe need. We have exchanged delegations in both directions. Our sister relationship is accompanied and facilitated by a group called Entre Culturas: Eduardo and Luis in Managua, and Memo and Amanda in Maryland. We communicate frequently via email, WhatsApp, and Skype.

COTC Choir

It may not strike you as such, but singing in the choir is definitely a form of mission: the choir enhances with its musical contribution Church of the Covenant's worship services which, after all, are central to that mission. And it is fun! Choir rehearsals are hard to schedule for a magnet church like COTC. So, we used to get together in the hour before worship on Sundays under Tom Handel's great leadership. The addition benefit: there is still parking available at that hour. Of course, that has not worked for us during

the last 11 months. We have missed getting together on Sunday mornings, but Tom has managed to make us sing together virtually – a new challenge, but with its own charms!

CYCE

The work of Covenant's CYCE ministry centers around our Sunday mornings together. Younger children gather for the ritual of Circle Time, hear and see Bible stories during Godly Play, and share play time during "Anita Time." Our youth class shares highs and lows each week and engages with Bible stories and other topics relevant to the youth as they grow and explore their faith. Christian Formation for Children and Youth and all ages is a component of COTC's 5-point, 5-year Missional Plan. The dedicated staff and volunteers have long been doing the important work of fostering a nurturing, loving, and inclusive CYCE space; forming young people in their Christian faith; and growing disciples for the work of mission and liberation. We would welcome new volunteers and committee participants who feel called to walk alongside the children and youth of COTC in their growing faith!

Race & Identity

Race & Identity was a study group at Covenant for several years. Now, rather than meeting as a separate group, our work is integrated with several ongoing groups:

- The Sunday evening book group is reading *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson. In the past we read *How to be an Anti-Racist* (Kendi), *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Thurman), and *The Color of Law* (Rothstein).
- The Climate Jubilee Committee is examining the disproportionate impact of climate change on impoverished communities and people of color.
- The Building Committee recently announced a new initiative called "Reframe the Light." Its purpose is to re-vision our white-centered interior windows with black inspired works of art.

The Building as Mission

Church of the Covenant views the building as part of our mission. The building serves not just the congregation but the broader community. The Women's Lunch Place has continued to serve its guests throughout the pandemic. The food pantry has remained open for its clients as well. Gallery NAGA has reopened. While we have not been able to host concerts or AA groups, we expect to return to that when the pandemic is over. And we expect to be able to open the sanctuary to visitors later in 2021 as the virus is brought under control.

Presbyterian Association for Science, Technology, and the Christian Faith (PASTCF)

Our vision is that Christians will come to understand that the knowledge acquired through scientific inquiry and technological innovation are gifts of God intended to provoke theological insight, promote social justice, facilitate gratuitous kindness, and inspire self-giving humility in relation to the whole of God's creation. Our mission: point the church to scientific and technological developments as they provoke theological reformation, stimulate ethical reflection, and affect the moral actions of the community; call upon the church to incorporate the discoveries of science and the capabilities of science-based technologies in its worship, education, and mission of service in the world; and affirm Christians for whom science and technology are calls upon their lives and to encourage their distinctive responsibilities in the Body of Christ.