Social Justice Action
“What one does is what counts. Not what one had the intention of doing.” Pablo Picasso

Looking for A Guest Editor For February
Certainly YOU can write as well or better than I can!

UUCSW Service Project
Social Justice FAMILY Event –
When –Sunday January 5, 12:00 – 12:30 PM - THIS SUNDAY
Where – In our very own church kitchen.
What – Pack meals. We will be packing meals for people in a homeless shelter in Worcester. There will be jobs for all ages. We deliver 100 meals on Sunday and they are handed out the next two days.

I recently went to a meeting called “Help Me Understand”. Their tag line is “Do you ever find yourself baffled by the thought of someone voting differently than you? Are you frustrated by the lack of civil discussion regarding the issues facing our country today? This group will provide an opportunity to engage in a productive dialogue which reaches across party lines. “

The topic that week was “Anti Racism”. So I said to myself, “how can there be a diversity of opinion on that topic – the participants are self-selecting.” While the group was indeed not very diverse, I learned a lot.

The session started with the dictionary version of racism – sounded good, but with no real teeth. The meeting warmed up when someone asked, “If I’m not anti-racist, am I racist.” An outstanding question that forced us to get into a real grappling with our own definitions.

I came away with five definitions/stages/aspects/perspectives on racism. In the same way that a fish doesn’t know it’s swimming in water, we see only the views of those around us; we don’t realize there are ponds engendering other views. We all self-justify our own pond.

Perspective 1: This is the stereotypical “Uncle Harry” who comes to Christmas dinner and uses the “N Word”. He has very clear views on race and racism.

Perspective 2: This is the individual who says “I don’t see race”. Such a person really has never given it a thought. Not good, not bad, but there are so many things in this world to be concerned about.

Perspective 3: Understands in an academic/philosophical sense that we should be concerned about racism. Such a person understands “The inherent worth and dignity of every person” and builds off that underlying principle. Probably has not been discriminated against, and may not feel much White Privilege.

Perspective 4: Understands that the world IS racist and has policies to maintain that racism. Understands if you or your friends and relatives have ever inherited property, you did so because of U.S. Government policy – people are poor because society has decided to keep them poor.

Perspective 5: Actively works against racism – an Anti-Racist. Actively working with others to reduce the impact of racism through education, active volunteering, etc. Expending energy in whatever way they can.

There were several Perspective 5 people at this meeting. Swimming in their pond, they couldn’t understand how anyone could be different from them – the evidence is so clear! But then, we are all swimming in our own ponds.

So where do we stand as a Congregation? I would guess we are at Perspective 2. While our individual members have various Perspectives, we as an institution have never really thought about the topic. Are we a “Welcoming Congregation” when it comes to race? How can we be; we’ve never thought about it in a structured way?

Jerry Breecher is your editor. Please contact him at Jerry@Breecher.com