

## UU Social Action/Outreach Committee Meeting July 31 2016, 9:30

Present: Sue Beckham, chair; Dick Beckham, secretary. Mary Emberger, Sarah Singer, Bettsey Ter Linden. Guest: Martha Ter Maat

1, **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PROJECT:** Martha Termaat was invited to discuss a how UUSRF could do social action regarding **Amnesty International (AI)**. AI will hold its annual "Writes for Rights" on Dec. 10. AI provides the names and addresses of prisoners unjustly held by authoritarian governments. It asks citizens to send cards to these prisoners to lend them moral support and to call the attention of their captors to the fact that their actions are under international scrutiny.

The plan would be for UUSRF to gather a group of people, have them use donated excess Christmas cards or gift cards provided by many non-profit organizations (and by UUSRF members ). Several people at the gathering would send cards to each prisoner. Dec 10 is also the day of the annual UUSRF cookie exchange. Martha has talked to Cathy Cliffe who agrees that the two activities would coordinate nicely.

To Mary's asked how many cards. Martha says about a dozen (NOT SURE ABOUT THIS NUMBER: It seems that we would have more cards and more people to write them). Each person might write two cards. The only expense involved is international postage, currently about \$1.90. Martha says some groups defray that by putting out a jar and asking people to contribute their pocket change

Martha suggests that next year we may want to partner with another group—the Congregational youth group, for example—or hold a public card writing gathering at some place like the Dish 'N Spoon.

In the meantime Martha will write up her July 14 presentation, post it on the website, and thus make it available ot the membership at large.

UUSRF may also wish to hold a follow-up service on AI. Martha has much more information about the organization to share with us. Perhaps she might do so in conjunction with the Dec 10 cardwriting project.

Sue asked about proper places to advertise the program. The website is one place, but Notices in **Sneak Preview** and the monthly newsletter might encourage more people to participate . Martha suggests we start in publicizing the project in October. She says AI also has suggestions about publicity. Sarah offered that Duluth conducted such a card writing campaign and entered each participant's name in a drawing for a piece of art.

Mary Emberger reported on the **Ecumenical Asylum Committee** on which she, Bob Emberger and Sue Beckham serve. It meets on the first Monday of each month at the United Methodist Church. Pastor De Long has been especially supportive offering

herself as target for a pie throwing contest which raised enough money for a month of expenses for the family. Heidi, the mother, has filed for a work permit and should get it in 150 days. She may be able to work for a house-cleaning business in RF. Ellie Richards has been coaching her in ESL and she's taken other classes. The children have been to summer church schools and the three oldest to a Rocky Branch summer program. The current focus is on learning money and what it will buy. Allison who has a keen eye for change, collected about \$5 worth, and offered it to buy bread with it at a timely moment.

**UUers who want to donate can do so by writing a check to UUSRF and noting "Asylum Committee" on the memo line.**

Martha noted that a Congo book group read "Enrique's Journey," and suggested it might be a good book for the UUSRF group.

Sue suggested that it was not too early to begin thinking about the January Scholtus program.

Betsy reported that the Bad River Band of Ojibwe's has recently suffered some bad flooding.

Sarah suggested that the committee think about a future program focused on the rise of the right wing in Europe (Dick Beckham, Chair of the Program Committee, will take that into consideration).

Another SA/O meeting to follow up on these ideas and event will be called in August.

Adjourned: 10:20.