

Voices for a Just Society

north Toronto churches concerned about social justice

March 21, 2013

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

Dear

Voices for a Just Society is an ecumenical initiative of members of a number of churches in north Toronto. It was formed in 2010 to bring together faith-based voices to speak out for just public policies. Over the past three years we have begun the process of getting to know one another, educating ourselves and advocating together.

I am writing to ask for your help to bring our message and vision to the wider congregation.

Our Vision

Our vision reflects the work we want to do.

A growing community of faith-based groups in north Toronto working together for a just society by strengthening and supporting relationships within our community; learning and sharing to increase our knowledge of issues; speaking with one voice; and acting together to address injustice.

One key focus for us is to explain social justice in the context of our faith, not as separate from charity, but rather as part of a continuum of justice work, the goal of which is to ultimately change lives. This is a very long-term goal. Indeed, one wise Minister said that although we may plant the seeds, others may need to bring in the harvest. This is for some, a challenging concept to understand. And it is one of the reasons why we are working together rather than alone. It is also why I am asking for your help to bring this important message of social justice to the wider congregation.

Our group has put together educational seminars on 'life after prison' and 'the urban Aboriginal's housing challenges'. We have created an informal information network to keep up to date on the latest from City Hall and Queen's Park. We decided on a focus of 'poverty reduction' and spent considerable time examining both the Drummond and Social Assistance Review reports published in 2012. We provide support to initiatives of our fellow churches. A case in point was Bedford Park United Church's seniors' housing initiative that not only garnered moral support but also signatures on petitions to allow this creative use of church space to move forward.

During the provincial election in 2011 we made visits to candidates in our ridings –usually as a group of representatives from two or three different churches. And we sent the clear message that faith groups are actively interested in what our politicians are doing to alleviate poverty. Just last month, 24 of us signed a letter to the new Premier requesting her action on key recommendations from the Social Assistance Review – a first of what will likely be many letters and other initiatives speaking with one voice.

Members, Voices for a Just Society