

Pioneer Congregational United Church of Christ
Social Justice Policy

Responding to Jesus's call to love our neighbors as ourselves, Pioneer Congregational United Church of Christ is passionately committed to working for social justice through preaching, prayer, education, direct service to our community, and public policy advocacy, honoring each church member's freedom to reach their own individual decisions and with no implication that the church speaks for all its members.

Under the church bylaws and subject to any other actions the congregation may take, the Church Council is responsible for church policy on all of the church's social justice work. The council, speaking for the church, decides on specific activities and advocacy positions, except that the council delegates to the pastor and president (or vice president in the president's absence), acting jointly and within church policy, the authority to decide on activities and positions in three fields. However, the pastor and president instead refer any decision in these three fields to the council when either of them deems it prudent to do so. The fields are:

1. LGBTQ freedom and equality.
2. Homelessness and affordable housing.
3. Disability rights.

Seeking to speak truth to power, the church's advocacy is generally directed at the decision-makers in our community, such as elected representatives and voters, but may also coordinate with UCC bodies, the California Council of Churches, and other state, national, and international social justice organizations.

In considering their social justice decisions, the council, pastor, and president consult the Social Justice Committee.

The Social Justice Committee is part of the Outreach Board, which selects the committee chair. The committee is open to all members and friends of the church. The committee speaks with, not for, the church, including by recommending policies, activities, and positions to the congregation, council, pastor, president, and other church bodies. In speaking to the church, the committee may sponsor educational events that also attract the community. The committee may speak publicly for itself, after consulting the pastor and president and always being careful not to imply it is speaking for the church.

The council, pastor, president, and Social Justice Committee seek to keep the congregation informed of all the church's social justice work and to invite all church members and friends to participate, including by suggesting, agreeing, or disagreeing with any policies, activities, or positions.

Honoring separation of church and state and to protect the church's tax-exempt status, the church, including the Social Justice Committee, is careful never to support or oppose candidates or political parties, never to appear to do so, and never to spend more than 5% of the annual church budget on public policy advocacy.

Adopted by the Church Council May 17, 2015
Amended by the Council April 23, 2017