



June 2014

“Living Wage For All”-14 Congregations Lift their Voices in Public Witness

During the month of June, fourteen congregations in eight denominations lifted banners onto their houses of worship with the message, “Living Wage For All.”

Members from the different congregations gathered at Seattle City Hall on June 5th, for a blessing of the banners and then walked to Plymouth Church-UCC to unveil one of the first banners.

Many of the congregations lifted their banners the same week that Seattle passed a \$15/hour minimum wage ordinance. At one level the banners celebrate the worker led community organizing that was paramount for such a historic achievement for low-wage workers in Seattle and across the nation.

In the blessing of the banners, Rev. Brandon Duran of Plymouth Church described the banners at a deeper level, as “proclamations, bold statements that speak of identity and passion. The banners we claim today speak of our desire to manifest a vision broader than a single piece of legislation. We know \$15 is a good step but this is about so much more.”

Barbara Peterman of University Unitarian Church also echoed this sentiment in her comment that, “the work for all that a living wage entails is really just beginning. The banners are one part celebration and five parts diligence.”

The Living Wage banners represent a congregation’s commitment to engage in education and advocacy for a living wage. This commitment invites congregations to look internally at their own living wage practices and to also be engaged in advocacy in the public sphere.

Don Bell, a member of Plymouth Church, summarizes a living wage as a value of justice in achieving the Kingdom of God on earth where “everybody is to have the material essentials of life.” From Bell’s perspective, “the times demand the active response of people of faith.”

The idea for the Living Wage banners originated from Darel Grothaus, an active member of the Living Wage Working Group of the Church Council and a former city development planner. For Grothaus, displaying banners on the sides of houses of worship are strategic locations and “extraordinary platforms to encourage public awareness about the moral and faith dimension of a living wage.” He points out that “thousands of eyes, minds and hearts pass by our houses of worship every week.”



The idea of displaying banners was brought into fruition by a coordinated effort from members of the Living Wage Working Group that spanned several months of brainstorming, planning, and outreach.

Outreach efforts included Sunday educational forums such as the Church Council’s “God and Money” curriculum and conversations with congregation’s social justice ministries.

Judy LeBlanc, a member of University Temple Methodist, played a key role in outreach to congregations. As LeBlanc shared, she saw her outreach efforts “as a way to engage other churches in the broader issues of what it means to have a living wage.” Her hope is that the issue of a living wage in its holistic sense will become a topic of conversation and priority in congregations.

The Church Council of Greater Seattle hopes to continue to support and encourage these conversations in congregations and foster collaboration across denominations in the movement for a living wage.

As the banners were blessed, Rev. Duran reminded those in attendance that, “by displaying these banners proudly on our houses of worship, our very buildings become a living voice, a voice that calls out to our neighborhoods saying to those who struggling to make ends meet, you are not alone, that there are communities who care in word and deed.”



The following congregations are displaying a banner, forming a great cloud of witnesses across the city:

- All Pilgrim’s Christian Church-DOC/UCC
- Central Lutheran, Gethsemane Lutheran
- Plymouth Church-UCC
- Seattle First Baptist
- St. Luke’s Episcopal Church
- St. Mary’s Catholic Parish (banners in English and Spanish)
- Trinity Episcopal Parish
- Trinity UMC
- University Baptist
- University Christian-DOC
- University Lutheran
- University Temple-UMC
- University Unitarian Church

Visit livingwagejourney.org for faith resources and more on the movement for a living wage.