

SEJC Meeting Minutes – April 27, 2025

Chalice lighting

Quorum met (requires 8 members/21 attendees)

Present: Ann Stevenson, David Curley, Mike Betz, Sita Amba-Rao, Lucy Kesteron, Beth Brownfield, Marsha Vollkommer, Todd Jones, Kara Black, Sidney O'Connell, Allison Jones, Rob Vollkommer, Murray Bennett, Kristin Barber, Constance Ohana, Ellyn Lee, Henry Ohana, Rose Edington, Betty Scott, Michael Berres, Susan Thurn

Meeting dates for next year approved: September 21, 2025, January 25, 2026, and April 19, 2026

Todd addressed the open Vice-Chair position on the Executive Committee. There were no volunteers. Announced Marsha Vollkommer as Secretary.

Michael Berres presented an overview of the INDIVISIBLE/SEJC partnership.

INDIVISIBLE locally has 3,500 members. The organization coordinates rallies, demonstrations, and other events. It is currently presenting approximately 10 forums a month. INDIVISIBLE is reaching out to various groups in Bellingham and Whatcom County to join in immigrant support services. The greatest need is for individuals willing to provide transportation and accompaniment for immigrants accessing legal, social, medical and daily-needs appointments. Training is provided for volunteers interested in this program. There are currently 6 BUF members participating.

Henry Ohana moved to make SEJC a member of the immigrant support group organized by INDIVISIBLE. Motion seconded by Rose Edington. Motion passed.

Finance Report, as distributed, was presented.

Humanitas – Henry Ohana reported that Humanitas has been resurrected, is flush with volunteers, and found a treasurer (Rob Vollkommer).

Food Bank Funding – Mike Betz – Discussion reverted to previous immigrant support

(follow up email from Kara Black reminds committee that we have funds to donate to the Food Bank as they lose federal funding – this could be addressed at the next meeting)

Fair Trade Sales – Susan Thurn

Susan reported on difficulties regarding both farming and shipping being experienced by Equal Exchange partners in Palestine – shared the certificate received by the BUF Equal Exchange program denoting our position as one of the top 100 sellers in the US – as prices rise, should we raise our prices for customers in order to continue showing a profit, or should we sell at cost to soften the blow for our buyers? – committee agrees we should raise prices accordingly, particularly as coffee sales provides one of the committee’s financial supports

Sunday Collection Process – Kara Black

19 applications submitted – Zoom presentations will begin at 12:50 on May 7 – decision made at last meeting that anyone may vote – non-SEJC members need to contact Kara for process, documents and Zoom information – all submissions should be read and considered prior to May 7 – committee agrees applications should be presented un-edited

Discussion of criteria – per document explaining application criteria, “We choose non-profit organizations serving in the following areas: women and children; environment; poverty/homelessness; peace and human rights; social and economic justice; and health.”

Lucy Kesterson moved to change “women and children” to “the marginalized.” Seconded by Allison Jones. After discussion Lucy amended her motion to add “the marginalized” while leaving “women and children.” Seconded by Henry Ohana. Motion passed.

Rather than addressing the rest of the criteria, Kara Black suggested creating a team to address possible changes for the 2026 process to bring to the SEJC committee as a whole. General agreement. *(Amended by Kara Black to indicate that the team already in place would address possible changes. MMV)*

Other Business:

Lucy Kesterson reported on the search for an accountability process for the Beloved Community Covenant. None is currently in place. BLM Ministry Action Team Report (4/26/2025) was distributed.

Beth Brownfield reported on Earth Day Service at BUF - \$1000 was raised for the Gathering of Eagles – SEJC & BUF each gave \$200 to the Blackhawk Singers – reminders of other coming events

Sita Amba-Rao posed the suggestion that SEJC make a contribution to the general budget of BUF in service of reducing the current pledge shortfall

Motion by Beth Brownfield to give \$1,000. Amended motion to give at least \$1,000. Seconded by Lucy Kesterson. Motion passed. Henry Ohana volunteered to write a short article for the Midweek Update

Henry Ohana reminded the committee of the upcoming course, Transgender Inclusion in Congregations, that he and Constance will be facilitating and emphasized the connection with Beloved Community

Meeting adjourned