

**Coordinating Team
Report to the Board of Trustees**

January 2020

STAFF AND CONGREGATIONAL ISSUES AND TRENDS

- The Focus 2020 Task Group is coordinating the multi-phased “rebranding and outreach” project that won MET grant funding this past spring. Group members are Barry Ahrendt (chair), Manny Allen, Sherry Sample, Kim Hutchinson, Tom Nunnenkamp and Doug Swaim (staff). In December the Task Group asked members to respond to a straw poll where they were given the opportunity to choose among a list of 20 name possibilities. The list included our current name, modest adjustments to our current name and more than a dozen completely new names drawn from more than 200 suggestions that were offered by members in November and early December. Based on the results of the poll, the Task Group has asked the Board to call a special meeting of the membership to vote on changing our name to “Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charlotte.”

- This week the Trustees of the Memorial Endowment Trust announced that \$35,000 is available for grant projects for the 2020-21 fiscal year. The Trustees have invited recognized UUCS Teams and groups to apply for funding for projects that meet the grant program’s guidelines. Applications are due by March 31. The grant awards will be publicly announced at the annual Congregational Conversation in June.

- Recent analysis of the most up-to-date information on the stewardship campaign offers reason for concern. Even in these robust economic times, most of our members continue to keep their annual pledges at or only nominally above the level at which they have pledged for several years. When some members facing hardships are lowering the pledges, the resulting total reflects only a very scant gain on prior year pledges. The Stewardship Team is reimagining its approach and adding other conversations and avenues for addressing this concerning trend. Without more of our members opting for generosity, the 2020 – 2021 budget will necessarily reflect significant reductions in expenses, cuts that would almost certainly need to be made within the overall personnel line item.

- The Coordinating Team will be offering an upcoming session open to all members intended to present our overall organizational structure and to discuss the work of the Coordinating Team. This session will offer interested members a clearer understanding of how we operate as a congregation under Policy Governance and where and how the decisions are made that both guide and implement our Vision and Mission.

- As we move deeper into this year's theme, "What We Hold Most Dear: Exploring and Integrating our Individual and Collective Spirituality," members of our professional staff are experiencing a deepened understanding of and interest in the whole notion of "spirituality" among a committed core of our members. These members are engaging in our regular ARESD offerings, Second Sunday dialogues, Sunday services, and other opportunities and appreciate more clearly how our congregational commitment to spiritual, societal and environmental transformation interrelate. We are heartened by the level of interest in this theme and by the ways this core of our members is approaching it with open minds and hearts.

- We've just begun our third year of offering live-streaming of our 11:15 services, a video feed of both services into an alternative worship space (in the Bernstein Room) and archived videos of services available on our website. Made possible by a grant by from our Memorial Endowment Trust, by funding from our annual budget and by the devoted commitment of a group of volunteers who serve in our A/V booth on Sundays, this has become an important and appreciated aspect of our worship life. We were additionally able to offer a live-streamed version of our 7:30 Christmas Eve services for those of our members and others unable to be present.

TEAM REPORTS

CHILDREN AND YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEAM

submitted by Kathleen Carpenter, Director of Religious Education for Children and Youth

Sunday CYRE Classes: CYRE Program registration and class attendance are significantly below the levels of a decade ago. Attendance numbers are slightly above last year.

Preschool and Elementary Classes: CYRE teachers recently shared their opinions of the Harry Potter program. One person said it was light in content; the others were enthusiastic about it. One shared, "The kids may not remember all our UU principles, even though we focus on one each week, but they will remember that they are part of a community where values are important – just like they are in the HP books." Another commented, "They'll remember that here they experience the wonder of imagination as they create healing potions and learn how to use a wand!" All spoke highly of the Horcruxes (social ills) that the children are "fighting" this year. They are learning through entertaining activities and have opportunities to provide leadership through Horcrux-related projects.

Our focus on systemic injustice is evident: when the children brainstormed topics for their next Horcrux, they suggested equity in education, prison reform, voter access, and sexism. Animal cruelty won after a discussion about the systems and culture that create unwanted pets and tolerance for cruelty.

Youth: MS youth group leaders decided to organize the group's monthly activities around congregation events, rather than separate age-specific activities. Middle Schoolers planned and ran the haunted house during this year's Halloween party and made chili, set up, and cleaned up the Crafts with Santa/Music event. Our hope is to organize the group for the MLK Parade, but leadership is a challenge. The High School class focused on its annual worship service the first part of the year, producing a service that advocated for generational cooperation in addressing societal issues. They are occupied now planning their annual youth con, scheduled for Feb 7-9. While participation is good, our HS youth would benefit from organized leadership training.

Other Programming: Fall Mountain Cons experienced higher UUCC participation. Coming of Age and the 8th-grade OWL class are running smoothly.

Worship Changes: Teachers and CYRE Team members are enthusiastic about the plan to have all children and youth attend the first 15 minutes of one worship service monthly. Teachers offered logistical suggestions as communication of this might be challenging.

Integration: Horcrux-related events like the book collection/Kids in a Box, MS youth group involvement in congregation-wide events, and this change in worship attendance all support the CYRE Team's goal of better integrating children into the larger congregation. The biggest challenge remains getting busy families here.

COMMUNITY BUILDING TEAM

submitted by Eve Stevens, Minister

Community Building Team members are: Chip Dickerson, Dan Maples, Jeannie Fennel, Althea Clark, Emily Katz, Erin Maness, Jenn McLeod and Melissa Schropp

One of our goals for this congregational year has been to focus on creating small group opportunities for engagement and connection-building rather than focusing the majority of our efforts toward all-congregation parties and events. With this in mind, we kicked off "Saturday Suppers" in August. Thirty-nine UUCC folks participated over the course of five months, meeting monthly with the same group of people, taking turns hosting one another. Each host receives a host packet created by the Community Building Team with suggested meditations/prayers/chalice lightings and instructions to do a formal check-in with one another as the meal begins. We sent out a survey in early November asking for participant feedback. All but one participant said they'd like to participate again. The majority of participants also preferred meeting with the same group of people multiple times rather than meeting new people each month. We're working on organizing the next round of suppers for the spring.

Movie Nights with Bob Gorman continue to be a meaningful way for UUCC folks to connect with attendance consistently between 15 and 25 people. Bob selects the films to show once a month with our theme for the congregational year in mind and facilitates a discussion following the film.

Halloween Party attendance was much higher than it was last year and was heavily attended by young families. We wrote in last year's report to the board that we would work to avoid hosting our party on the same day as all other Charlotte community events in the future. That combined with bad weather on Halloween night probably contributed to high attendance. However, the main attraction of the party was an extravagant and thrilling haunted house created by our middle schoolers and we hope they'll contribute to the festivities again next year.

We also added a Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day potluck this year. Participants in both were very grateful to have a chance to gather with their congregational family on these holidays. Attendance was robust enough that we plan to continue these events with a few changes next year.

FINANCE TEAM

submitted by Doug Swaim, Director of Administration

The Finance Team advises the Coordinating Team on all UUCC financial matters. Warren Tadlock and MaryAnn Hendrick co-chair the Team this year. Other members are George Ladner, John Lee and Mary Hackenberg. The team meets monthly on the second Tuesday so they can review the prior month's financial report before it is passed along to the Board.

For the most part, the Team has focused on routine financial matters the last few months. Monthly and year-to-date financial reports have reflected steady operations, with numbers tracking our budget fairly closely. The Team continues to track our capital spending, keeping an eye on the health of our reserves. At its December meeting the Team considered in general terms the possible financial effects of upcoming staff transitions. The Team will continue to follow developments in that area closely.

INTERSECTIONAL JUSTICE TEAM

submitted by Jay Leach, Minister

Our third year of a new approach to our justice work, informed by our Vision’s focus on “transformation,” our Mission’s attention to the “challenge” of our faith, and the Board’s “Call to Action,” reflects, to date, mixed results.

It is worth noting and celebrating that more than 10% of our congregation have opted for the deep work offered by one of our Core Groups. We are now in the second round of engagement on issues of Environmental and Racial Justice following a year in which we turned, for the first time, to issues of Cultural and Economic Justice. There is no question that the serious, historically based discussions in our Core Groups is changing us as a congregation. Members understand more deeply, for example, the similarities and differences between environmental justice and environmentalism, the way our current national xenophobic tendencies reflect continuity with a long and troubling history where immigrant and the LGBTQ communities are concerned and why we continue to use the language of a “white supremacy culture” to describe our nation’s challenging racial realities.

We now have four Engagement Groups in each of the areas of justice. Their work is informed by “guiding principles” developed by participants in our core groups. These, to date, have found the work of finding partners in the larger community who are already deeply invested in issues of intersectional justice challenging.

That said, we have cause to celebrate our primary engagement thus far. A committed group of our members now regularly participate in the court watching effort coordinated by our co-conspirator, Kristie Puckett Williams (who is serving as our Guest Speaker for our annual Martin Luther King, Jr. service on Sunday, January 19.) Members report being deeply impacted by this experience and Kristie acclaims our understanding of what it means to follow the lead of a partner in this work. We look forward to expanding, significantly, the ways in which our members can embody our congregation’s commitment to transformative work.

The Intersectional Justice Team itself—Barbara Conrad, Dustin Taylor, Megan Van Fleet, Rebekah Visco, Dave Walsh, and Janet Zick—is a gifted collection of congregational leaders who have found it difficult to create and sustain cohesion. The Team is currently working to get back on track with regular and consistent meetings and a more active role in guiding this work in the future.

MUSIC TEAM

Submitted by John Herrick, Director of Music

The Music Team oversees all aspects of the music program, including seeking ways to expand the variety of music offered, participation in ensembles, community building and spiritual growth through music. The team also acts as a sounding board for the director of music and seeks to be welcoming and encouraging of all who wish to participate in the musical life of the congregation. Current team members are Paul Wilson (chair), Kathy Allen, Rob Katz, Susan McClelland, Ben Schomp and Patrick Sullivan.

For the UUCC musical ensembles, musical highlights from the fall include stirring performances from our Adult, Chamber and Children's Choirs, as well as the Handbell Ensemble and UUCC House Band. On Sunday, October 27, our senior high youth led the service, with music provided by Nora Schropp, Hallie Fleming, Charlie Schomp, Dexter Wilhelm, Alex Szanton and Elsie Schomp. On Sunday, December 1, we were treated to our in-house vocal quartet, Donna Fisher, Lisa Lackey, Judy Love and Wendy Pond. Special thanks to UUCC members John Burns, Patrick Sullivan, Eric Wilhelm and Fred Hutchinson, for providing occasional percussion throughout the fall.

Guest service musicians this past fall included JazzArts Charlotte musicians Ocie Davis, Sean Higgins and Mike Gudbhar on September 22 and guest soprano Stephanie Ann Ball on September 29. Guest performances also included the Charlotte-based a cappella ensemble Epiphony, comprised of (UUCC member) Amanda Cipolletti, Jessie Haynes, Megan King, Kimm Santa and Carrie Taft. Asheville-based fiddle-player Andrew Finn McGill was featured along with the UUCC House Band on December 15.

On Christmas Eve, the Adult Choir was joined by members of the Handbell Ensemble, John Burns on percussion and a string quartet, consisting of Sabu Yamamoto, Eddie Wielunski, David Strassberg and Alex Lapuente, to perform the beautiful "Huron Carol" by Dan Forrest. On Sunday, December 29, Nathan Hackenberg played his mountain dulcimer in the one service.

On Sunday, December 15, John and an outreach choir of 28 singers took a holiday concert to Brookdale Carriage Club and Penguin Health (formerly Curis Charlotte). At Brookdale, they were joined by the resident choir there for a shared program and sing-a-long for an audience of 100 (the audience there continues to grow with repeat performances).

Music Program community building events included a potluck at the home of Sage and Dale Brook, following the December 15 outreach program, and a potluck gathering on January 4 at the home of Kaarin Leach, friend of the music program and former accompanist. Kaarin invited area UU musicians, including musicians from the Hickory and Piedmont congregations. Members of the Music Program continue to support those who are experiencing illness or loss.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

submitted by Kelly Green, Membership Coordinator

Room in the Inn, which has eighteen volunteer slots each weekend, is underway. Approximately 25-30 volunteers are signing up repeatedly to do the work needed. To recruit additional volunteers, there has been a *Currents* article, reminders from the pulpit and a sign-up sheet at the monthly volunteer table in Freeman Hall. It has been suggested that we create more regular opportunities to sign up in Freeman Hall. In addition, emails have been sent to previous volunteers and members who indicated they are interested in helping with social justice projects.

To show appreciation for our volunteers, we continue our series of *Currents* stories highlighting each team, what they do and if they choose, a photo of them or their work. In the coming weeks, we will recognize Paul Wilson, Room in the Inn Coordinator, in our next Volunteer Spotlight in *Currents*. In addition, the list of volunteers serving on leadership teams will again be included as an insert in an upcoming order of service.

Volunteer recruitment for the upcoming congregational year is scheduled to begin within the next several weeks. Given that there will be staff changes for the upcoming year, the volunteer needs could also change. The recruitment process could be condensed.

At least 20 volunteers have agreed to take on new roles by signing up at the Membership Team’s monthly Volunteer Opportunities table. Contact information for those volunteers is shared with the staff or volunteer who coordinate the requested roles. By having available roles visible in one place, potential volunteers can easily see there are many ways to get involved and help out in our congregation.

Attendance Data for December 2019

Attendance Area	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Dec-18
ARESD Offerings	222	267	217	162
Community Building	140	204	363	236
Congregational Team Meetings	210	175	106	108
CYRE	415	446	448	392
Family Ministry	28	24	43	0
Music	228	145	187	142
Intersectional Justice	31	34	155	47
Visitors	52	70	111	108
Worship	1009	1074	1558	1665
Totals	2335	2439	3188	2860