

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

March 2019

STAFF AND CONGREGATIONAL ISSUES AND TRENDS

• **Cultural Justice Core Group**

As this group turned its attention to the last half of the nineteenth-century, they engaged prior to the meeting with articles outlining the complex relationship between the work for women’s suffrage and the work for racial justice. The group noted examples in which a failure to think in an intersectional way resulted in oppressed groups being pitted against each other.

The group then turned its attention to an 1888 document called “Government of Aliens” that used shockingly xenophobic, white supremacist language to address the influx of immigrants to the U.S. We noted the disturbing similarity between the thought process and descriptions in the document and those now in circulation. It was another example of the group recognizing anew that claims that the current administration is unprecedented or uniquely egregious are belied by a deep look at our complex cultural history.

The upcoming March session will look at the first half of the twentieth-century, continuing to ask questions about patriarchy, sexism and misogyny, about the attitude toward immigrants, about the ways religious exclusivity is at play, and about the struggle for LGBTQ justice.

• **Economic Justice Core Group**

The Economic Justice Core Group has devoted its last two meetings to intersectional topics. In February we read Ta-Nehisi Coates’ “The Case for Reparations” and examined the momentous and enduring role of racism in creating inequity in our society. In March we read portions of *The New Jim Crow* as a basis for exploring how our criminal justice system has become the latest tool used by our white supremacist society to limit the economic prospects of people

of color. In upcoming meetings we will continue to explore intersectional topics: public education, healthcare, gender and environmental justice.

- We have now taken 79 of our members through the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's **anti-racism training**. This intensive process, made possible by a Memorial Endowment Trust grant, challenges our members to reflect deeply on the meaning of our commitment to transformation. We're grateful to the MET and acknowledge in this report the invaluable role Martha Kniseley has played in making this opportunity possible for our members. The professional staff is reviewing one key document offered by our PISAB trainers and the ways this year's participants assessed our congregation's progress toward becoming a more fully anti-racist congregation.
- The Intersectional Justice Team and our Engagement Group leaders were profoundly gratified by the initial response of our members to our new **opportunities for involvement in the larger community**. This team is meeting early Tuesday morning, March 19 to review the sign up lists and continue facilitating the process for engagement. It marks a significant milestone to get to this step in our process, one that now enables us to continue listening and learning through working with partners leading transformational work in the our area. We anticipate being able to offer additional opportunities in the coming weeks and months.
- Deepened attention to Family Ministry, Community Building, and Congregational Care have enabled us **to more intentionally nurture a loving community here**. A recent Wednesday had a large group of our seniors gathered at mid-day for a presentation followed that evening with a sizeable group of families here for our regular family worship and fellowship experience. While devoting significant energy and time to our work beyond these walls, we are attending to need and opportunity among our members in ways that embody additional aspects of our Mission.

TEAM REPORTS

Adult Religious Education and Spiritual Development

submitted by Martha Kniseley, Adult Programming Coordinator

As we make decisions regarding our programming, the members of the Adult Religious Education & Spiritual Development Team (ARESD) continue to ask: What do our members need to know in order to engage in partnerships in our community? As we listen to our members, how do we respond to their quest for deepening their own spirituality? What do we need to know about Unitarian Universalism—the knowledge that connects us to our common faith?

The ARESD Team shifted the focus to different areas of Cultural and Economic Justice after the New Year. Members Heather Douglas and Shannon Maples facilitated a UU curriculum, “Class Conscious: Class and Classism in UU Life,” with 18 members attending the four sessions. Jay led a two-part discussion, posing the question most asked this past year—What Do We Mean By White Supremacy? Thirty-two members participated, with a mix of folks who have been involved in past racial justice classes and some who were just entering the discussion. At the end of February, we invited Imam John Ederer from the Muslim Community Center to speak on Islamophobia. Fifty people attended his powerful PowerPoint presentation and discussion with new information and more questions about the experience of Muslims in the Charlotte community.

While not a function of the ARESD team, we must commend 39 members who committed 18 hours of their time away from work and family on March 7, 8, & 9 to attend the second Undoing Racism training by People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond. It is heartening to realize that 79 folks from our congregation now have a shared experience of anti-racism training at the UUCC or in the Charlotte community. We are grateful for the Memorial Endowment Trust grant and for the contributions from our members for making this possible as we continue to answer our Call to Action.

We also explored elements of Spirituality in January when Bob Bushorn and our ministers Eve and Jay offered a three-part series for 25 members: Spiritual Practices-- Lectio Divina, Prayer, and Activism as a Spiritual Practice. After the second service on Feb. 17, fifty people came back into the sanctuary to hear a talk

Jay had done last year at Temple Bethel about Unitarian Universalism, addressing the questions What Does God Want and Who Speaks for God?

Carol Gay continues to provide leadership for the Credo series on the fourth Sunday. She has created a line-up of member presentations throughout the year with attendance often exceeding our 50-seat capacity in Bernstein. We don't want to forget that the Small Group Ministry Steering Team continues to meet, support and create monthly session plans for our Discovery Circles. While many members may have decided to be engaged in other ways this year, we continue to provide opportunities for our members to connect deeply with one another.

Two of the facilitators shared that their group has proven to be one of "extraordinary openness and generosity of mind and spirit." They reported a session that was "nearly transformational as we moved from the discussion of simple childhood church attendance and rituals to the meaning of death and the existence of the soul. We both felt a vibration of connection and warmth within our Circle at the end . . . almost afraid to breathe for fear of breaking the spell of the moment. We are humbled and very grateful."

It was gratifying to watch so many people stand up in last Sunday's Intersectional Justice service when asked if they had attended any of the educational opportunities this year. It will also be an interesting exercise to analyze the attendance at all of our events to find out how wide the circle is, or the percentage of our congregation that is actually involved in ongoing programming. The ARES Team is now wondering about next steps in our planning for the coming year as we have witnessed the intersectional layers throughout these courses. How will we address racism and classism in our congregation, for example? How will we answer the call from the four Engagement Groups to continue educating our congregation about systemic injustices in our community?

Building and Grounds Team

submitted by Doug Swaim, Director of Administration

The Building and Grounds Team advises the Coordinating Team on a broad range of facility- and property-related issues. Team members help directly with some projects and organize and take the lead on annual spring and fall congregation-

wide work days. Team members as of March 2019 are Tom Moore, Lee Martinec, Dick Kistler, Roy Smith and Mike Raible, who serves as chair.

The B&G Team has lent its support to the Greening Our Facility project. Mike Raible is representing the Team on the capital campaign leadership committee and in that role drafted the committee's Frequently Asked Questions document to have available for members. Roy Smith is assisting with the lighting upgrades part of the project by researching options and helping to solicit bids.

As follow-up to the MET grant-supported Freeman Hall renovation, the B&G Team has been looking at vulnerabilities in the Freeman Hall roof and windows. We have recently sought and received a proposal for replacing the metal "scuppers" that direct rainwater run-off away from the building. In addition, we have sought and received proposals for repairing rotten window stops that are allowing wind-blown rain to enter the building.

Along with the Finance Team, B&G is assisting with the development of a forward-looking capital spending plan. At its February meeting the Team updated its "wish list" of grounds- and facility-related projects. At its March meeting, led by chair Raible, the Team will rank the projects in order of priority.

Communications Team

submitted by Belinda Parry, Administrative Assistant

The Communications Team provides graphics, design, writing, photography, web and social media services directly to UUCC staff, Board of Trustees and teams for smaller-scale projects and works with contractors hired by the UUCC on larger projects. There are four Team members: Joe Argent, Paul Nisely, Nancy Pierce, and Scott Royle, who serves as chair. Courtney McLaughlin recently resigned due to family commitments.

Currently the team is working closely with Doug Swaim and the "Greening Our Facility" Campaign Team on messaging around the upcoming capital campaign to fund energy-efficient lighting upgrades and solar panels for the UUCC facility. Joe Argent is the liaison between the two teams. The Communications Team continues the work of evaluating the efficacy of current UUCC communication

platforms (website, *Currents*, *Soundings*, Facebook, etc.) and the potential usefulness of platforms the UUCC does not currently utilize.

Membership Team

submitted by Kelly Greene, Membership Coordinator

Members: Phyllis Bertke, Rich Greene, Jill Criswell, Tara Anderson.

From December through February, 14 adults and their nine children joined our congregation, compared to nine new adults and one child in the same period last year. Nine of our new adult members are under age 50. One shared that here he received the warmest welcome he's gotten anywhere. Almost all of our new members previously participated in other faith traditions. They said they are joining UUCC to be in a community where they and their children can grow spiritually, where they can work with others to create justice and where they can connect with people who have similar values. Through adult programming, family ministry, volunteering, etc. these members are already getting involved in the life of our congregation.

During this period last year, 92 visitors completed yellow cards, compared to just 67 this year. In February, just nine visitors completed yellow cards. This is just the second time in four years there have been so few. 25 visitors attended *Getting to Know Us* and *Meet a Minister* this year compared to 20 last year. We have had fewer visitors, yet more of them have been attending visitor sessions and becoming members.

We also lost 13 members. Two died. Two moved. Nine asked to be removed. They gave reasons such as finding community elsewhere, not having time to be involved here, and their children no longer attending religious education classes.

We had planned to offer New to the UUCC for new members. Due to low interest, it was cancelled. We will offer Discovering the UUCC for new members and interested visitors in April.

MET

submitted by Doug Swaim, Director of Administration

Five Trustees appointed by the UUCC Board oversee the Memorial Endowment Trust, which was established in 1980 and constitutes a long-term financial resource for the congregation. Some sizeable gifts, along with gains in the stock

market, have propelled the endowment past the \$750,000 mark. Current trustees are Laurie Reed, Mike Long, Patrick McNeely, Joy Bruce and Richard Pratt, who serves as chair.

Late last year the MET Trustees voted to change the method they use to calculate how much is available for grants. With a goal of “smoothing” the amount available, they are now using a running average of three years’ end-of-year balances rather than only the balance from the preceding year. Employing this new method, the Trustees announced early in January that up to \$33,000 would be available in the 2019-2020 grant cycle -- despite stock market volatility in the last quarter of 2018. Grant applications are due by March 31.

The Trustees thanked recent contributors to the endowment in an article in *Currents* last month. They also sought to keep the endowment visible by setting up a table in Freeman Hall. The Trustees have been planning their biennial Legacy Society gathering, which will be held at the home of Trustee Laurie Reed on Sunday, May 5.

Attendance Data for February

Attendance Area	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Feb-18
ARESD Offerings	162	292	348	259
Community Building	236	135	109	108
Congregational Team Meetings	108	113	131	104
CYRE	392	651	545	692
Family Ministry	n/a	63	45	n/a
Music	142	341	174	171
Intersectional Justice	47	103	107	82
Visitors	108	79	55	74
Worship	1665	1215	1048	1037
Totals	2860	2992	2562	2527