

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

**March 2020**

**STAFF AND CONGREGATIONAL ISSUES AND TRENDS**

- **The Focus 2020 process** passed a momentous threshold this past Sunday as the membership voted overwhelmingly in favor of changing our name to “Unitarian Universalist *Community* of Charlotte.” The Board did an excellent job of running the special meeting and Focus 2020 Task Group chair Barry Ahrendt continued to provide even-handed and open-minded leadership. The debate preceding the vote was respectful though appropriately impassioned. We do believe we have navigated this process in a way that has left members feeling heard and respected, and with minimal hurt feelings in its wake. The name change is scheduled to take effect June 1. The Task Group now turns its attention to re-branding, signage and marketing, and in these phases will be assisted by the Communications and Building & Grounds Teams. Group members are Barry Ahrendt (chair), Manny Allen, Sherry Sample, Kim Hutchinson, Tom Nunnenkamp and Doug Swaim (staff). Long-time UUCS friend and national UU leader Leon Spencer has provided valuable consulting assistance.

- At its March 3 meeting the **2019-20 Environmental Justice Core Group** explored the very challenging question, “Do non-human living creatures deserve justice?” Group members Joe Argent and Tom Moore assisted with readings and discussion around the topics of “speciesism” (our tendency to think of animals as having value only to the extent that they serve humans’ needs) and mass extinction (specifically the recent UN report alerting us to the fact that a million species are now threatened with extinction due to human activities). Preceding this session, the Group explored how we have burdened less powerful humans with environmental injustices at the local, regional and global levels. In April we will address the *despair* that attends environmental and environmental justice consciousness these days, and in May we will look for reasons to be *hopeful*. The group is comprised of 13 members and staff facilitators Kathleen Carpenter and Doug Swaim. The goal for the year is to gain a deep understanding of systemic environmental injustice in preparation for working for transformative change.

- At its most recent meeting the **2019 – 2020 Racial Justice Core Group** shared their learnings on Reconstruction and its aftermath based on videos assigned and on other research explored between sessions. There was a review of the notion of “power” and the introduction of a new concept for this session—“self-determination.” The group explored the time frame from 1900 – 1950 noting the rise of black power and the ways in which white supremacy systemically operated to suppress that power. They heard three different views—Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey—as a reminder that self-determination has historically taken many different forms among leaders in the black community. The group is exploring various aspects of our culture during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century looking both for the way in which power functioned as well as the indications and undermining of opportunities for transformation. This continues to be an engaged, open-minded group, one deeply committed to this work.

- We are doing our best to closely monitor the ever-changing landscape where the current **coronavirus crisis** is concerned. First through Facebook messaging and then last week in a congregational eblast (supplemented by inclusion in *Currents* and Facebook postings) congregants received messages from the professional staff. As the crisis continues and expands, we anticipate the need to suspend in-person activities in the very near future. We will continue paying close attention and welcome Board input on this matter.

- Following a recent Sunday session explaining the work of the Coordinating Team and its place in the organization of our congregation, Doug and Jay will be offering an **overview of the budgeting process and our congregation’s financial picture** on Monday, March 23. We welcome participation from all interested members.

- We are finalizing a new job description for our Director of Administration position and beginning the work of creating a new job description for our Office Administrator position. We are also exploring staffing options to assure the continuance of our educational programming for children, youth and adults as we prepare for staff transitions in both ARES and CYRE. In this time of **dramatic change for our professional staff** we are trying to put the appropriate plans in place that will enable us to sustain our work as we look toward greater prospects for innovation once we have moved past this significant upheaval.

## TEAM REPORTS

### Adult Religious Education and Spiritual Development

submitted by Martha Kniseley, Adult Programming Coordinator

As the ARES Team plans for the year, they take into consideration the following criteria:

- The Board's *Call to Action*,
- Intersectional Justice and the separate topics of Environmental, Racial, Cultural and Economic Justice,
- Our commitment to offering opportunities to explore Spirituality and UU Identity, and
- The 2019-2020 theme: "What We Hold Most Dear: Exploring and Integrating our Individual and Collective Spirituality."

Sixteen members attended Jay's second in the series of *Snapshots of Spirituality*. The January session was guided by the book, *Soul Talk: The New Spirituality of African American Women*, by Akasha Gloria Hull. A shared reflection from some of the participants included that it gave them "insight into the relationship of politics, spirituality, and creativity. Social justice work = spirituality is a new equation for me..."

Tom Cole, our Team's historian, organized a tour of the Levine Museum of the New South's exhibit of the history of the Charlotte's Brooklyn neighborhood. Twenty-five people enjoyed this learning opportunity on Sunday afternoon, January 12.

Eve continued her five-part series, *Exploring the Seven Principles*, with the final session on February 13. Attendance ranged from 13-23 members and visitors. Folks reported that they enjoyed personal sharing, learning about UU history and a deeper understanding of the Principles. One said that she now be able to explain our values to her non-UU friends. Another said that the experience made them feel more connected with Unitarian Universalism and the UUC.

Another powerful offering was the screening and discussion for the film, *When They See Us*. Sharon Baker, member of the ARES Team, and Barbara Conrad of the Intersectional Justice Team, facilitated the five-part series. One member said that it was the perfect follow-up to the Reconstruction series and the Racial Justice Core Group. Another member wrote that while it was very difficult to

view, she would encourage us to offer the series again as it illustrated the wrongs of our justice system. Barbara Conrad's reflects on her own experience with the course and our community's Court Watching in the March *Soundings* publication.

Curt and Lucinda Cook are currently offering *Spiritual Practices: A Deeper Dive*. Unfortunately, tornado warnings and snowy weather caused the cancellation of two sessions. Attendance has varied from 6-24 participants. We hope that we'll be able to offer those classes in the future as they create ways for our members to have shared experiences and connections.

Kurt Merkle, an OWL Facilitator, and ARES Team member Shannon Maples agreed to facilitate the discussion for the film, *The Mask We Live In*, which explores how America's narrow definition of masculinity harms boys, men, and society at large. We coordinated this effort with Kathleen Carpenter who sent a special invitation to parents with the hopes that those with kids in OWL class on a Sunday afternoon would attend. Tracy Hickman also organized a free lunch for the attendees. While the event went smoothly with about 20 members present, it was disappointing that few parents attended.

Our Small Group Ministry Steering Team continues to support two Discovery Circles with monthly session plans. Currently 24 members are participating.

### **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 work days. Team members for the 2019-20 congregational year are Roy Smith (chair), Judy Love, Jinny Sullivan, Tom Moore, Lee Martinec and Dick Kistler.

The Team has been busy with several projects recently:

We have explored how best to provide a contrasting edge/visual cue on the brick stairs in the vestibule. After testing a narrow vinyl nosing, we have decided it accomplishes our goal and can be attached despite the challenges of the uneven brick surface, so we will be applying them to all the steps in the near future.

As part of the Focus 2020 process, we have been exploring options for new signage on Sharon Amity and on our building, visible from Gaynor Rd. We have requested initial proposals from three sign companies. Now that the membership has settled the question of our name, we will proceed to work with the Focus 2020 Task Group to design and install new signage.

As the Board is aware, the congregation paid to have two trees removed recently, and also to have four trees tested for their health and long-term viability. The tests were conducted in February by Heartwood tree services. In their report they conclude that all four trees are severely compromised and represent risks to our property. We will be meeting with a representative of Heartwood later this week (prior to your Board meeting) to explore options. We are hoping to find alternatives to removing all the trees.

The Team is preparing a MET grant application for repairs to the roof of Freeman Hall. The laminated beams that are a feature of the mid-century modern interior extend to the outdoors on either side and are subject to rainwater and UV deterioration. Whether funded via a MET grant or not, major maintenance work should be done on the exposed beams sometime soon. The Building & Grounds Team has considered this work a priority for several years now.

### **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 and teams for smaller-scale projects and works with contractors hired by the UUCC on larger projects. There are four team members: Joe Argent (chair), Paul Nisely, Nancy Pierce, and Scott Smith.

This past January, the team began an intentional review of the UUCC's communications tools and platforms through the lens of our Vision / Mission / Ends / Call to Action. The first conversation in January made it clear that we could be doing more to communicate with an outward focus with the intent of building a positive reputation, attracting community partners who are doing similar work, and enabling new congregants to find their way to us.

The Focus 2020 Team has asked for our assistance with the marketing phase of the renaming/rebranding project, specifically the components and method for rebranding. We expect this work to begin in earnest after the Congregational Vote about a possible name change on March 8.

We are collaborating with the Membership Team on a MET Grant application for funds to create an electronic billboard system within the building. Scott Smith has offered to take the lead on this.

We also recently provided design services for the music program. Paul Nisley created a sign to advertise the upcoming Holly Near concert.

### **Membership Team**

submitted by Kelly Greene, Membership Coordinator

The Membership Team looks for ways to improve the welcoming and engagement of visitors, new members and existing members. Jill Criswell, Tara Anderson, Rich Greene, Rita Heath-Singer, Lincoln Baxter and Linn Martin are serving on the team this year. Kelly Greene is the staff liaison.

### **Membership**

As of February 29, we have 634 members. From December through February, 10 members have been removed, compared to 13 this time last year. Three no longer live in the area. Two felt this is no longer the congregation for them. Three did not feel connected. One died. One got divorced. We also added 13 new members. Nine of them are under 40. All but two of our new members just started attending within the last year. During the same period last year, we added 14 members.

The Membership Team has continued its efforts to contact and get feedback from members who no longer attend. Thanks to Linn Martin, we found a message that has received a handful of responses. All were positive or neutral in their remarks about our community. Some had moved. One is now attending different religious services with a new partner. One family responded by sending in a pledge. Unfortunately, we still have 28 members have not contributed since 2017 so will be removed from membership this month.

## **Visitors**

From the period of December through February, 93 visitors completed yellow cards, up from 61 in the previous three months and 67 during the same period last year. We are aware of at least 20 who still attend. We are completing work on a survey to go to visitors who complete yellow cards to better understand their experience.

46 people attended visitor sessions, including 19 who attended *Discovering the UUCC*. When we offered the session this time last year, we had to cancel due to lack of interest. We are encouraged by increased interest from visitors and continue to consider new ways, in addition to existing offerings, to help those who are new here feel connected and get involved.

## **Memorial Endowment Trust**

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. Current trustees are Laurie Reed, Mike Long, Patrick McNeely, Joy Bruce and Richard Pratt, who serves as chair.

In January the MET announced that \$35,000 is available for grant projects during the 2020-21 congregational year. At its February meeting staff liaison Doug Swaim reported that he was aware of five potential grant applications that are being discussed. Grant applications are due later this month.

The MET Trustees note the receipt of a significant bequest from the estate of member Judy Ghoneim. Later in the spring they will be publicly acknowledging this and other recent gifts. Prior to the recent market turmoil, the value of the endowment had surpassed \$850,000.

### Attendance Data for February

Attendance Area	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Feb-19
ARESO Offerings	217	253	<b>244</b>	292
Community Building	363	106	<b>78</b>	135
Congregational Team Meetings	106	108	<b>137</b>	113
CYRE	448	516	<b>562</b>	651
Family Ministry	43	55	<b>65</b>	63
Music	187	188	<b>210</b>	341
Intersectional Justice	155	97	<b>107</b>	103
Visitors	111	91	<b>85</b>	79
Worship	1558	1352	<b>1297</b>	1215
Totals	3188	2766	<b>2785</b>	2992