

**Coordinating Team
Report to the Board of Trustees
May 2020**

Again this month for what we assume are quite obvious reasons, we are foregoing our typical format for this Coordinating Team report. What follows is our effort to inform you about the activities of our community in this past month and to call particular attention to a few essential matters.

We continue to work to be a robust, caring, connected though entirely virtual congregation. We've engaged our members and are even attracting new members during this time. Support for the congregation through participation, financial contributions, and messages of appreciation and concern are welcomed reminders of the place of the UCC in the lives of our members.

Again in the past month we've offered:

- Sunday services—we are continuing to attract large groups of viewers each week. Services have taken a variety of forms and have involved members in reflections, family chalice lightings and as musicians. We continue to benefit from the skills and patience of Belinda Parry whose technical acumen is proving quite valuable. After Jay created and participated in leading all but one of the services in Eve's absence, Eve is assuming this more role for a few weeks.

- Children and Youth programming—Kathleen Carpenter continues to create ways for children, youth and families to stay engaged including on Sundays and during the week. We are hearing that some families are resistant to programming that requires even more screen time for their kids and have distanced themselves during this time. We, regrettably, don't have options that we can offer aside from ones involving computer time in some way.

- Adult programming—Discovery Circles are still meeting virtually. Both our Economic Justice and Racial Justice Core Groups have maintained their monthly sessions with substantive content. We've created some additional offerings for adults including the recent and very well "attended" exploration of "Incarceration and Decarceration." John Herrick continues to coordinate weekly opportunities for us to connect through music on Wednesday evenings.

- New opt-in small groups—Kelly Green's effort to organize all of us into neighborhood groups proved unsuccessful. She is now pivoting to a model of

“opt-in” groups for those looking for a mode to connect with a smaller group of members. Kelly continues to work to create these new groups now.

•Caring for our community—Our professional staff has been proactive in reaching out to members several of whom have experienced losses in this time including a few directly related to the pandemic. Jay offered twice-a-week Community Check In for any looking for connection and support; as participation waned, we’ve suspended that effort for now but will recreate it should the need arise. Martha and Jay have been spending a significant portion of their days responding to member needs; Eve is now joining in this. Our Congregational Care Team is reaching out with both phone calls and cards to members who are facing particular challenges.

•Professional Staff—We have continued to meet weekly. In addition to focused attention on the known needs within the congregation, the operational challenges in these times, and our efforts to continue offering programming, we spent significant time recently on two items:

Volunteer Recruitment: We have created revised descriptions of all of our areas of programming and operation, noting within each the opportunities for volunteer involvement. Kelly is aggregating these descriptions into a format that will help inform our members of these opportunities. We will be using a more open recruitment process this year, one that invites our members to express the areas or positions in which they’d like to be involved.

Planning for Summer and 2020 – 2021 Focus: We devoted a major portion of a recent meeting to our own internal “monitoring” of our work since the implementation of the new Vision. We reflected on these questions as a guide:

1. What has gone well? About what can we feel rightly proud? When has what we intended actually happened?
2. What has changed? How have we collectively changed? What examples do you have of individual change—in yourself or in someone else at the UUCC?
3. Where’s the rub? What is creating tension? pushback? misgivings? How are we hearing resistance being expressed?
4. In these times, in this time in the life of the UUCC, what might be our next right step(s)?

Out of this exercise, we have decided to focus our summer theme around “community” based on our impending name change. We’ll be exploring positive experiences with the notion of “community.”

We will pivot for the coming congregational year to exploring questions around expanding our sense of “community” both within and beyond our “walls.” As we delve ever deeper into the challenges of the Vision, Mission and Call to Action, whose perspective is missing and how do we attract those voices and views to the UUCC? How and to whom do we listen and learn beyond our walls? What might help us understand more fully and engage more deeply in the meaning and work of spiritual, societal and environmental transformation?

We, of course, welcome the board’s response and visionary leadership as we reflect on the next steps in the long journey toward embodying our ambitious Vision.

ITEMS FOR YOUR FOCUSED ATTENTION

• **Environmental Justice Core Group** - The EJ Core Group held its next-to-last meeting of the year on May 5 and, after having plumbed the depths of “Despair” in April, sought inspiration (within the broader theme of environmental justice) by laying out all the themes and developments that give us “Hope.” We talked about the Green New Deal and the fact that all the major Democratic presidential candidates included some version of it in their platforms. We find hope in the youth movements that support climate and environmental justice. We see an increasing awareness of intersectional justice among those fighting for environmental issues. We find hope in the attention being paid to the “green wisdom” of indigenous groups. We find hope in the regenerative power of the natural world, which has been on display during the pandemic. The thirteen members of the Core Group will convene one last time in early June to recap our year-long exploration and celebrate our time together.

• **Racial Justice Core Group** The RJ Core Group continues its exploration of 400 years of white supremacy. In our most recent session we reflected on the strategies of the Freedom (Civil Rights) Movement. We delved deeply into five overlapping strategies as a way of analyzing how transformative steps during this time were achieved. This is also intended to remind participants that current strategies toward racial justice will take many forms, some of which will be regarded as problematic and upsetting by those invested in the dominant culture. We’re reminding ourselves that this is consistent with the ways many of the strategies in the 1950s and 1960s were resisted by many in positions of power.

We are further reminding ourselves that our role is to listen to and learn from those engaged in this struggle because of their personal and collective experiences with oppression even when that creates discomfort for us. We will continue our work in upcoming May and June sessions.

• **Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)** - The UCC has received a \$173,000 loan under the PPP included in the late March Federal stimulus bill. We applied for the loan primarily because Open Door School lost all of its income when it joined CMS in closing its doors in mid-March. Of course great uncertainty hangs over congregational finances as well. It now appears we will use between \$110,000 and \$120,000 to cover ODS's shortfall and another \$10,000 to \$20,000 to cover shortfalls in congregational finances that we can tie directly to the pandemic. We have confidence we can document sufficient eligible expenses to have a portion of the loan "forgiven" so that we can cover these pandemic-related shortfalls. We anticipate that we will repay the balance of the loan this summer.

• **Focus 2020** - The Focus 2020 Task Group has been working on the "rebranding" phase of the project by working to develop a new tagline to accompany our new name when it is displayed in some media. The Task Group has been working in concert with the professional staff, and the goal is to choose a tagline that lifts up our Vision/Mission. The Task Group has also been working on an RFP they will use to solicit the assistance of a graphic designer in updating our logo and other branding materials. Meanwhile, Richard Pratt has been working on a restatement of our Articles of Incorporation to submit to the Secretary of State that will make our name change official. The goal is to submit the documents as soon as possible with an effective date of June 1.

• **Facility issues** - Unfortunately, during the time our building has largely been vacant, we have been hit with a spate of building and grounds issues. A rainwater leak has developed, an air conditioning unit has lost its power supply, our elevator has suffered a control system breakdown and our solar panels have either stopped generating electricity or stopped reporting their output. We suspect that a power surge during one of the recent electrical storms may be responsible for several of these issues. We are proceeding with repairs and exploring making an insurance claim to cover these unanticipated costs.

•**Board appointments** - The Coordinating Team asks the Board to make two new appointments to the Memorial Endowment Trust’s Board of Trustees. Richard Pratt and Laurie Reed are cycling off the MET board, both after serving two three-year terms. The remaining Trustees recommend, and the Coordinating Team endorses, the appointments of Rita Heath-Singer and Thomas Nunnenkamp as new Trustees. Similarly, we request that the Board approve a list of nominees to the Open Door School Managing Team. From this list, we hope to find one person to take the place of Roger Coates, who is cycling off the Managing Team. The nominees are: Jim Van Fleet, Ed Coombs and Joe Simmons.

•**The UUCC CARES Fund** We have been touched and heartened by the generous response to the creation of our UUCC CARES Fund. We’ve accrued a robust balance from member contributions and are now able to more directly invite requests for assistance. We have now begun making distributions and anticipate that the coming months will likely surface considerably more member needs. We’re deeply grateful for the ways our members have embodied our commitment to be a caring community.

•**Transitions Task Group** We have created a “Transitions Task Group” to help us reflect on possibilities of transitioning back to some in-person activities. This group includes: Claire Lukens, representing our CYRE Team, Lee Martinec, from our Building and Grounds Team, Michael Kelly, representing our Worship Team, Melanie Greely, from our Family Ministry Team, and Sheila Lay, representing our Congregational Care Team. Jay Leach is coordinating this group and serving as the liaison from our professional staff. In our initial meeting we reviewed the NC plan put forth by the governor and reflected on issues related to our building and programming. Members asserted clearly that we should not, for now, alter our position and should continue to avoid any in-person programming.

The board is encouraged to read the message from our UUA president Susan Frederick-Gray that was circulated on Thursday, May 14. It offers a stark and challenging perspective and a clear recommendation for congregational activity. Should we opt to adhere to the UUA’s guidance this will have very serious implications for our coming year. You can find that message here: <https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/message-uua-president-updated-guidance-gathering>

As the implications from the pandemic continue, we need to discuss this in much greater detail. If the upcoming meeting does not allow such an opportunity, we ask that we consider a special meeting for this discussion.