

Coordinating Team
Report to the Board of Trustees

October 2019

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). The project got underway in September with congregational meetings on the 21st and 22nd during which members were invited to help develop the criteria for our “ideal name.” Over 100 members attended the two sessions. The Task Group will continue to offer “interactive dialogues” between services through the end of October. At the same time they will be reaching out to a range of stakeholder groups within the congregation. As of early October, they have called together a generous givers group, Team leaders, professional staff and middle schoolers. The goal is to “saturate” the congregation with these conversations to insure that everyone is heard. Early results show substantial support for reconsidering our name.

- The 2018 MET grant originally awarded to the Worship Team for Sanctuary re-design will soon be utilized to commission a new pulpit and, depending on how much money is left, to improve sanctuary lighting. We are hoping for a pulpit that is less imposing and that obscures less of the speaker. We’re also hoping for a design that will allow three people to speak comfortably while standing side-by-side.

- We have a wide variety of meaningful opportunities for engagement to offer this fall as we delve deeper into our congregational theme for the year (“What We Hold Most Dear: Exploring and Integrating our Individual and Collective Spiritualities”), take on spiritual and societal transformation through the lens of spirituality, and endeavor to infuse joy into our worship and programming throughout the year. Stewardship is intentionally integrating a sense of celebration and joy into their continued efforts, while ARE/SD will provide a variety of opportunities including a presentation exploring justice and joy, along

with a challenging ongoing discussion of racial justice via the Henry Louis Gates series, *Reconstruction*, and a five-session class exploring the 7 principles of Unitarian Universalism.

CORE GROUPS

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CORE GROUP

The 2019-20 Environmental Justice Core Group convened its first meeting on October 1. 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 the group's first meeting they looked at the early history of the modern environmental justice movement, beginning with the effort to prevent the location of a hazardous waste landfill here in Warren County, NC, during the 1980s. They noted some foundational definitions: "environmental racism" and "sacrifice zones."

RACIAL JUSTICE CORE GROUP

While Jay Leach is on sabbatical, the Racial Justice Core Group is being facilitated by Melissa Bailey and members of the previous Racial Justice Core Group. Melissa has provided the following summary:

The 2019-2020 Racial Justice Core Group held its first meeting on September 19th and will continue meeting on the third Thursday of the month. All 12 members were present plus the facilitators, Jay Leach and Melissa Bailey (formerly Vullo). To prepare for a closer look at the ways racial injustice is embedded in the history and current reality of the United States, we delved into the meaning of transformation, systemic injustice and the word "race." Participants were asked to do two readings and watch a video on the history of the fallacy of race focusing on details from the 17th century.

TEAM REPORTS

CHILDREN AND YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

CYRE Team members: Peg Argent, Mary Ellen Brook, Tracy Hickman (Chair), Holly Hoerst, Claire Lukens, Erin Maness, Debbie Rubenstein, Greg Schropp, Stefanie Smith, Lisa Walls, and Kevin Yount. Kathleen Carpenter is staff liaison.

Trends, Challenges, and Successes as we enter 2019-20:

After years of decline in attendance, we are off to a good start with a 10% increase in attendance over last September. Numbers are particularly good in the nursery and in the elementary classes. Next year, that will change as our many two-year-olds in the nursery move up.

For the third year, CYRE Sunday morning programming reflects the congregational Call to Action, along with the year's theme around spirituality.

In selecting curricula for the elementary children, attention was given to finding something that might better engage the children while still allowing them to consider issues of justice in an age appropriate way. We think we've found it with a Harry Potter themed program. Written by a Unitarian Universalist with significant edits by Kathleen, it aligns the values of that book series with our UU principles. In addition, we have empowered our 4th-5th graders (an age notoriously unenthusiastic about their religious education) in a fight against "horcruxes" – social ills such as poverty and illiteracy. They are doing this through leadership roles in CYRE organized events like Kids in a Box.

Our Middle Schoolers are using a values-based curriculum based on the TV series *The Twilight Zone* but, like the older youth, they spend many Sundays on topical issues or planning / leading activities. Both Middle and High School groups are providing feedback as part of the Focus 20/20 process.

Recruiting CYRE leadership (teachers, team member, youth leaders) is never difficult, despite hearing stories of the opposite at other UU congregations.

The CYRE Team spent the last five months on program assessment. The result is a new mission statement, along with program goals and strategies. Their underlying

desire is for better integration of our children and youth into the life of the larger congregation, including worship.

Several special activities have been offered by CYRE leadership this fall: a First aid/CPR training, a high school lock-in, Middle School youth group, Operation Sandwich, and Kids in a Box (the last two being social justice events open to families).

And finally, it should be noted that this is a Coming of Age (COA) year. Seventeen high school youth are participating along with a corresponding number of adult mentors. The last two COA programs were similarly sized. The program sessions and retreats have been – and continue to be - updated to reflect new understandings around oppression and intersectionality.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

submitted by Eve Stevens, Minister

With the start of a new congregational year, we have a new configuration of people serving as our Community Building Team. We said our grateful good byes to Anne Forcinito and Kathy Jackson for their dedicated and creative contributions over the past few years. We welcomed Chip Dickerson, Dan Maples, Jeannie Fennel, and Althea Clark to the team and are fortunate to have Judy Calabrese, Emily Katz, Erin Maness, Jenn McLeod and Melissa Schropp continuing.

We began Saturday Suppers in August. These are small, informal gatherings in members' homes. Each member of the group takes a turn hosting which means the same group of people get together 3-5 months in a row. The host provides an opening reading as a way of "saying grace" before the meal, and then invites everyone to participate in a check-in. Our hope is that these suppers allow people to form deeper connections that will help them feel more at home while attending the UUCC.

Over the summer, we held two potlucks including a "Foods with Funny Names" potluck that involved some creative food submissions! We held a number of "Fun and Games" afternoons which involved inviting people to play games together during coffee hour immediately following our one Summer service. We had worked to promote a New Names Contest, inviting people to keep track of how many new names they learned while attending UUCC worship and programming

over the summer. Unfortunately, we did not receive a single entry by the deadline for submissions.

We had wonderful participation for our kick-off lunch to celebrate a new congregational year, and have already enjoyed playing with our theme for the year (What We Hold Most Dear: Exploring and Integrating our Individual and Collective Spiritualities) to imagine a series of small group events in the winter and spring. We look forward to a monthly film series that begins this month as well as all-congregation and family community building events this fall.

FINANCE

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.

Outgoing Team chair Randy Whitt reviewed the Memorial Endowment Trust's financial transactions for 2018 at the end of last fiscal year and presented the results in July. This service provided by the Finance Team saves the MET the not-insignificant expense of turning to an outside accounting firm for its annual review.

Over a number of months starting last winter, the Team was engaged in discussions about forward-looking capital spending, the results of which were presented to the UUCC Board at your September meeting.

Last year the Team identified a need for increased focus on network security here at the UUCC and subsequently worked with staff to develop a network security plan. Office Administrator Alesia Hutto has now finalized the plan which will be implemented by the professional staff.

MUSIC

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.

It was an active summer with monthly Summer Choir rehearsals, community building activities and our second summer outreach concert to Curis and Waltonwood, where a number of our retired members now reside. The Music Team also hosted “Music and Justice for All” with author Frye Gaillard, singers Anne E. DeChant and Dewitt Crosby on July 13. The event drew a large audience.

Fall rehearsals for the Adult Choir and Chamber Choir began on Wednesday, September 4. The Handbell Ensemble and Children’s Choir began rehearsals mid-September. Both the Adult Choir and Children’s Choir continue to attract new singers, while the Chamber Choir remains stable. The Handbell Ensemble added one additional ringer this fall and two ringers returned from health-related hiatuses.

21 members of the Adult Choir participated in the Music Program fall retreat on Saturday, September 28. Guest facilitator Stephanie Ann Ball led a session on African American Spirituals as well as taught vocal technique to individuals within the choir. As part of the weekend, Stephanie also gave a well-attended Friday night concert, entitled “Renaissance & Remembrance, A Musical Celebration of Black History.” She was accompanied by John Herrick on the piano and the program was narrated by UUCC member Michael Amy Cira. Stephanie additionally sang in services on the 29th and was well-received.

In addition to Stephanie, JazzArts Charlotte performed in services on September 22. Players included Ocie Davie on drums, Sean Higgins on piano and Mike Gudbhar on bass. Members of the UUCC Band performed in services on Sunday, October 6.

The Music Team is planning a Holiday Outreach Concert on Sunday, December 8 to assisted living facilities. On Saturday, December 14, the Music Team will assist with a holiday campfire sing, which will follow Crafts with Santa. Social activities are being planned for December and January, and the music program continues

to reach out to members who are experiencing illness or loss. Individual birthdays are regularly celebrated.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

submitted by Kelly Greene, Membership Coordinator

Recruitment for our leadership teams led to an increase of about 15 more total team members than last year. To let members know of other available roles, the Membership Team now has a table with sign-up sheets in Freeman Hall on the second Sunday of each month. This has resulted in new volunteers for coffee service, ushers, greeters and office help.

So that members are more familiar with what each team does, each week through January, *Currents* will include a story explaining what each team does. Approximately quarterly, the Order of Service will include a listing of each Team and its members. We will also continue to profile individual volunteers in *Currents*.

Our volunteer role in greatest need of new people is Safety Patrol. Individual requests to targeted members have not been successful. The Membership Coordinator is working with the Security Team to find additional ways to encourage members to serve in this role.

Attendance Data for September

Attendance Area	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Sep-18
ARESD Offerings	173	133	180	211
Community Building	138	127	141	55
Congregational Team Meetings	62	115	241	172
CYRE	128	102	608	416
Family Ministry	59	26	38	45
Music	44	51	306	190
Intersectional Justice	0	18	21	n/a
Visitors	37	34	59	39
Worship	682	665	1197	917
Totals	1323	1271	2791	2085