

**Coordinating Team  
Report to the Board of Trustees  
January 2021**

In addition to the financial and membership reports, the Coordinating Team (CT) brings the following items to the Board for your attention and awareness:

**Board Monitoring Report for January: Insurance Policy with Church Mutual**

Please see information included in the board reports for reporting details.

**PPP Loan**

Our PPP loan lender and current bank, Truist, has officially approved the forgiveness of our loan. This information has now been forwarded to the Small Business Association (SBA) for final approval. Once the SBA issues a final approval, the loan will be officially forgiven. We will update the board on any new information that comes from this process.

**Memorial Endowment Trust**

The Endowment is now promoting their Grant program. At their January 4, meeting the Endowment announced that \$39,000 will be available for potential grants. The Trustees have invited recognized UUCS Teams and groups to apply for funding for projects that meet the grant program's guidelines. Over the next two months staff members will work with their teams and groups to shore up potential grant proposals. Applications are due by March 31. The grant awards will be publicly announced at the annual Congregational Conversation in June.

**Open Door School**

Our preschool, the Open Door School (ODS), has reopened for the first time since March 2020! The school reopened with reduced enrollment and staffing to ensure the safety of our students, families and staff. We would like to thank the returning teachers and families for sticking with us during these unprecedented times. We are so grateful for their support.

Led by our dedicated school administration and with invaluable input from our teachers, families, and other local childcare centers the school has a comprehensive safety plan that guides them in operating safely so they can provide the same quality education and care for our children that they have always offered. We will, of course, continue to adhere to all state and county guidelines and mandates and will act with the safety of our community as the driver for all decisions. Although information about COVID-19 statistics for Mecklenburg County remains fluid, at this time we are confident that we can operate safely.

The ODS Managing Team—Meghan Beverley, Stephanie Clemens (FCA chair), David Flynn (chair), Alesia Hutto (UUCC staff liaison), Sheila Locklear (ODS Director), Elaine Peed, Jennifer Taylor and Jim Van Fleet—will continue to monitor operations closely.

### **Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education search**

We shared in our last report to the Board that we delayed the search for an Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education. In weighing the cost-benefit analysis of bringing in an Interim--charged with assessing our Religious Education history, programming and culture and helping us imagine new possibilities—the cost of bringing on another full-time staff person while our programming looks very different from when we are in person doesn't feel like an effective use of resources.

We have decided to re-post the search on available Unitarian Universalist Association job boards February 1 in hopes of hiring an Interim for a July start date. The Search Group will gather to assess process for reviewing applications and interviewing the first week of February. We hope to find that our delay also results in a larger pool of candidates as we are now in better alignment with the more typical search time-frame for Religious Educators.

## **Coordinator of Religious Education for Children and Youth**

We were delighted that Lisa Walls, a long-time member and avid participant in CYRE, agreed to take on the role of Coordinator for our CYRE program in this time between the retirement of our Director of CYRE, Kathleen Carpenter, and the hiring of an Interim.

Lisa dove into her new role with us the first week of January, contacting parents and caregivers to introduce herself and provide necessary class information, assisting CYRE teaching teams, organizing another round of Activity Bag pickups, and coordinating the start of the *Our Whole Lives* alternative, *Parents as Sexuality Educators* class among other things. It's already quite clear how fortunate we are that Lisa agreed to take on this part-time role to help us maintain our current CYRE programming.

Because Lisa is part-time, she will need to focus solely on the coordination of our existing programming. Eve Stevens is also a resource for children, youth and families and is working closely with Lisa and will help with needs that go beyond the coordinator role with the additional support of our CYRE and Family Ministry Teams.

## **Charting Member Participation**

As previously reported, the staff has recently began tracking member participation. We are tracking which members are participating in our religious community, through comments on our Sunday service Facebook posts; clicks on links for Sunday services or other activities through the Sunday morning email; reported attendance from classes, team meetings and small groups; conversations with staff; submitting new pledges, etc. We recognize we are not able to track all participation, however, we do have record of approximately 59% of UUCC members participating in some UUCC activity in December. An estimated 25% of members participated in more than one kind of activity, such as Sunday services plus a Discovery Circle. Some of the most attended activities were Sunday services, Christmas Eve services, the celebration of Kathleen Carpenter and the Coming of Age ceremony.

We will continue to devote a portion of our professional staff meeting each month noting those who are not participating and making personal contact to inquire about their wellbeing, needs and interests.

### **UUCC CARES Fund**

As of December 31, 2020, the CARES Fund balance is \$27,697.21. We had one disbursement in the month of December.

### **Core Groups**

•**Cultural Justice** The Cultural Justice Core Group met, January 12. Our fourth session explored moments in our nation's history when women have pushed back against Patriarchy, including the woman's Suffrage Movement of the nineteenth century. We paid particular attention to the struggle for feminist movements to embrace intersectionality in their efforts to challenge patriarchy. We looked at the research of Stephanie Jones-Rogers who studies the relationship between white women and enslaved people in our history, noting that one of the few places that many white women exercised authority in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century was over enslaved people. Many of these same women became the dominant leaders of the suffrage movement, and their internalized white supremacy and dominance over enslaved people added painful and complex dynamics to the movement. We also noted a dynamic running throughout the suffrage movement and later feminist movements in this country, as activist and author Mikki Kendall notes, "Instead of a framework that focuses on helping women get basic needs met, all too often the focus [of feminist movements] is not survival but on increasing privilege. For a movement that is meant to represent all women, it often centers on those who already have most of their needs met."

Participants also came prepared with the lyrics from popular songs, from various time-periods, sharing their analysis of what these songs had to say about the role/experience of women in our society and what characteristics they presume about women.

•**Economic Justice** The January meeting of this Core Group focused on the issue of “property.” Founding claims on the sacredness of individual property rights were scrutinized in light of historical realities about whose rights actually mattered, whose claim to property ownership was honored, who was legally unable to acquire property and who was considered to be property. Members of the group presented insights from both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution where the issue of property is concerned. The group also discussed their reading of “The Sanctity of Property Rights in American History” by Gerald Friedman. It continues to be a challenge to present the depth of material offered in these groups by way of Zoom; the group is being impressively devoted to this process despite that challenge.

### **Concerns Related to Our Budget**

It is Board policy that the Coordinating Team present a balanced budget proposal. As indicated in the financial report, our current surplus is due to the fact that we have not yet hired an Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education, or a Sexton, along with the fact that we are spending less toward our programming while virtual. Though we will not hire a Sexton until we return to regular use of our building, we intend to hire the Interim with an anticipated July start date. These necessary staff decisions will challenge our efforts to balance the 2021 – 2022 budget.

In addition, our stewardship results through the end of December cause some added concern. While many of our members are maintaining or even increasing their pledges, we have seen reductions from some of our largest pledgers due to changes in employment or life situation.

The Coordinating Team is concerned but will be working with diligence to find a way to present a balanced budget. You can anticipate further discussion in the coming months as we consider carefully all available options that will assure our community’s financial stability.

## Ongoing Activity

We continue to strive to be a vital and engaged virtual congregation despite the many challenges that presents for all of us.

•Sunday Services We've received particularly enthusiastic affirmation of our Christmas Eve services, for the initial service of the year introducing our new byline—"Cultivate Courageous Connections"—and for the service planned and offered in response to the tragic events of January 6. Members are appreciating in new ways the import of having a community at times like these. The upcoming MLK service will feature a remarkable trio of special guest; it is an honor to host such people in our congregation. The Worship Team had an initial conversation about possibilities created by our break from habit due to the pandemic. In the coming months they will explore options for optimizing our time together once that is an option. Realistically, we do not foresee the return to in-person services for quite a while yet.

•Adult Programming The ARES Team continues to be a stalwart and welcomed group, carrying on with our array of offerings after the retirement of our Adult Programming Coordinator. Sharon Baker is due a special debt of gratitude for her work as Chair of that Team; she is investing a significant amount of time and energy helping to sustain a robust lineup of offerings for our members. The coming months will continue the very impressive trajectory of this group.

•Children, Youth, and Families Last month, our beloved Director of Religious Education for Children and Youth, Kathleen Carpenter, retired from our staff after 28 years of service to our congregation. We celebrated Kathleen's retirement on Zoom, providing time for children, youth, parents and CYRE volunteers to connect with Kathleen before opening the celebration up to the entire congregation. There was a good turn out to show our appreciation of Kathleen and wish her well in retirement.

As you'll read elsewhere in this report, Lisa Walls has begun in her role as Coordinator of CYRE, coordinating our ongoing programming for children and youth.

Another round of activity bags has been prepared and collected by families with kids 3 through elementary age and Lisa is hard at work preparing the next six weeks of take-home materials and lesson planning for three and four year olds through fifth grade.

Our Middle School youth have been meeting regularly at Boyce park on Sundays and this shift away from meeting on Zoom had significantly increased participation. Unfortunately, for the next few weeks, given the directive on restrictions due to Covid from the county Public Health Director, our youth will return to class on the screen for the coming weeks.

Our High School Youth continue to meet weekly via Zoom. Attendance and participation has been low among our youth who spend much of the week on a screen for school. Our youth advisors continue to come up with creative ways to engage our youth and show them support as they navigate the ups and downs of school and social life in the pandemic.

Following Unitarian Universalist Association recommendations, we will not be offering Our Whole Lives classes for any age group this congregational year. Instead, Lisa Walls and our CYRE Team are offering the virtual, *Parents and Caregivers as Sexuality Educators: Small Group Ministry* by Robin Slaw. Through ten sessions, “parents and caregivers [will] explore their role as the primary sexuality educators of their elementary through teen age children.”

We offered two virtual cooking competitions for families in December, one challenging families to use a strange mix of ingredients (cloves, almond extract, swiss chard, lentils, instant mashed potatoes) to create a main dish and the other inviting families to create festive, visually-pleasing holiday desserts. Turnout was much smaller than hoped for but contestants showed remarkable creativity and had a good time.

Parent Discovery Circles continue to meet monthly, providing peer support and a chance to engage in spiritual reflection related to the adventure of parenting.

•Community Building Our Senior Connections group will begin again in a virtual format in February. Seniors will be invited to meet monthly on Zoom (with tech

help available for those who need it) for programming and a chance to check in with one another.

We are continuing to plan a series of in-person opportunities, some on our UUCC grounds. The gatherings on our grounds will be small to allow for social distancing and will adhere to CDC guidelines for outdoor gatherings. A series of member-led firepit gatherings on UUCC grounds is planned for Friday nights this winter. Given the directive on restrictions due to Covid from the county Public Health Director, the start of these and other in-person gatherings will be delayed a few weeks.

- Congregational Care The Congregational Care Team in coordination with Eve Stevens and Membership Coordinator, Kelly Greene compiled a list of 95 members who have experienced loss and serious health challenges in 2020. The Congregational Care Team divided the names and sent holiday cards to all 95. In addition to responding to celebrations and crisis in the lives of our members, the team is also making phone calls to check in on members and preparing a process for sending cards regularly to people with long-term concerns.

Healing threads continues to meet at a social distance and to share hand-knitted blankets/shawls for congregants who experience loss, serious illness. Additional blankets are donated to Hospice.

Our ministers continue to reach out to our members in times of crisis, celebration, and simply to check-in. In addition, all staff continue to check-in with members who we have not seen participating in congregational offerings to see how they are doing.

The Congregational Care Team continues to provide our members with cards, meals, rides, and virtual or socially distanced visits this month. The Team also continued to go the extra mile reaching out specifically to families with kids at home to offer support and meals.

- Intersectional Justice Even amidst the challenges of this time, the Racial Justice Engagement Group created a new co-conspiracy with the Reentry Housing Alliance and invited members into participation. To date, we have helped create an impressive new data base of potential housing options for those coming out of incarceration. A second round of contacts by our members is seeking to expand



the support of RHA by enlisting landlords and property owners in this work. The Team's January meeting included an initial conversation about a remarkable new opportunity that will likely come to fruition in the coming weeks for RHA that will provide a dramatic new opportunity for us to significantly deepen our engagement in this work. We're working now to revitalize the Environmental Justice Engagement Group with the potential for two new avenues for our engagement. We will await the infusion of new members from the Cultural and Economic Justice Core Groups in an effort to revitalize these other arenas of our intersectional justice work.