

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

**Memorial Endowment Trust**

The Memorial Endowment Trust's Grant season is underway with \$39,000 available for potential grants. In the months of December and January, UUCC teams brainstormed to develop potential grant proposals. So far, we have received the following proposals from various teams and/or groups:

- New spotlights for the Sanctuary that include the capability to be controlled remotely.
- Wi-Fi/internet upgrades to allow for better Wi-Fi/Internet access throughout the building which will include updating our phone system.
- Marketing grant that can secure additional funds for our ongoing marketing efforts. (This is the work after the Focus 2020 project.)
- Technology upgrades that create hybrid meeting/learning opportunities for our most used meeting spaces; Freeman Hall; Bernstein and Conference rooms.
- Renaming grant that will allow us to update all our interior signage and banners to bring them in sync with our new name and branding.
- An outdoor gathering space that will allow youth and our members and to gather outside in a covered area.

The cumulative list of proposals are currently being reviewed by teams to see if there is a possibility for co-sponsorship. Teams will then work collectively based on the grants they want to co-sponsor to finalize grant applications. 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 now been open for one full month and operations continue to run smoothly and safely. The school has been inspected and deemed a COVID-19 safe preschool by Mecklenburg County and received a superior score on a recent health inspection. The school will continue to adhere to all county and state guidelines and mandates and will act with the safety of our community as the driver for all decisions.

The school reopened with reduced enrollment and staffing to ensure the safety of our students, families and staff. So far, families are handling new safety procedures very well and the children are happy to spend time outside with their peers. Our goal is to operate with reduced enrollment and staffing for the remainder of the 20-21 school year and aim for full enrollment in the Fall. Registration for the 21-22 school year for prior and current families begins February 15<sup>th</sup> and for new families on March 1.

The ODS Managing Team—Meghan Beverley, Marybeth Foster (FCA chair), David Flynn (chair), Alesia Hutto (UUC staff liaison), Sheila Locklear (ODS Director), Elaine Peed, Jennifer Taylor and Jim Van Fleet—are now working with Roger Coates to gear up a campaign to secure funds for the Sue Riley Scholarship Fund. As you may recall, the ODS Managing Team received a grant from the Memorial Endowment Trust in 2020 for up to \$10,000 in matching funds for the Sue Riley Scholarship Fund. The Team will work from now under December 31, 2021 to solicit funds to maximize this grant. More details to come.

We continue to thank the teachers, families and the many volunteers for sticking with us during these unprecedented times. We are so grateful for their support.

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

We reposted our Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education position with Unitarian Universalist Association job boards and the Liberal Religious Educators Association with a March 1 deadline. We have already received some interest and anticipate more in the coming weeks.

The Search Group, Melissa Schropp, Julie Smith, Craig Harbold and both ministers will continue to gather to review applications and make decisions related to interviews with the hope of hiring for a July 1 start date.

### **Stewardship**

It is Board policy that the Coordinating Team present a balanced budget proposal. As indicated in our financial reporting for the last several months, our current surplus is *only* due to delays in hiring, along with underspending in our programming areas while virtual. Though we will not hire a Sexton until we return to regular use of our building, we intend to hire the Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education, with an anticipated July 1 start date. These necessary staff hires will challenge our efforts to balance the 2021 – 2022 budget.

Our stewardship results through the end of January cause some 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. We currently have a *net* loss of \$14,000 for current member pledges and in addition we are under budget for new member pledges by \$12,000. Since we are not open contributions are down as well, especially plate contributions. For the 2021-2022, we expect our overall income to be lower than the current year. As a part of the board's monitoring process, we will present full stewardship reporting in March's Coordinating Team Report to the Board.

The Coordinating Team is concerned but will begin the budgeting process in March with a balanced budget in mind. You can anticipate further discussion in the coming months as we consider carefully all available options that will assure our community's financial stability.

### **Charting Member Participation**

Sunday services remain the activity with the highest participation. During the five Sunday services in January (only those watching the live stream as it happens are captured), we recorded an average of 122 views per service, with a total of 610 views for the full month. Since each represents a device and does not account for more than one person watching on a device, we expect the number of people participating was higher. Members continue to participate in coffee hour, Credo,

Discovery Circles, adult classes, affinity groups, core group and team meetings, etc. The Sunday afternoon event featuring Alvin Jacobs also attracted approximately 45 attendees. Overall, we had 63% of our membership participate in some capacity in the month of January, and 51% of members participating in two activities or more.

In January, 11 new people signed up to receive *Currents*. Through Facebook likes and comments during service and clicking on the link to the service in the Sunday morning email, we noted at least 41 visitors accessing services in January. Some are long-time visitors or former members who are no longer in the area. Many are not known to have participated in other offerings.

In the month of January, we reach out to members who are out of compliance with their membership based on the UUCB bylaws requirements. Our bylaws state “At least once each year, members who have not made a recorded financial contribution during the preceding fiscal year and who have not received financial hardship waivers shall be notified by mail at their last known address that their names are scheduled to be removed from the membership list.” This year the Membership Team is taking an additional step to reach out to members directly who are out of compliance. Their goal is to invite those members to become involved with our community again.

### **Member Appreciation Night: Valentine’s Edition**

The Stewardship and Community Building Teams along with John Herrick, Kelly Greene and Eve Stevens hosted a second Member Appreciation Night since the start of the pandemic. Turnout was strong, again, as it had been in October. This was an opportunity to thank members for sustaining the life of this community with their gifts of time, energy and financial contributions. In addition to playing games, poems were read, and music sung in honor of our fabulous members and a good time was had by all.

## **Core Groups**

•**Cultural Justice** The group met for the fifth time on Tuesday, February 9. We began with an exploration of the poem “WHEREAS, my eyes land on the shoreline...” by Layli Long Soldier and the poet’s critique of the U.S. government’s continued inability to acknowledge and atone for the genocide of American Indians, discussing the importance of learning what truly happened as a necessary step toward any possible reconciliation or healing. We then looked at the history of immigration to this soil and subsequent colonization by Europeans from the 1500s through the Revolutionary War. We studied the motivation of colonizing the Americas in pursuit of wealth and prestige for European powers at the expense of enslaved peoples and indentured servants (those without the financial resources or social stability to fund or profit from a trip to the “New World”). We also studied the roots of slavery in this country as early as 1560s when Spanish colonizers brought enslaved African people to what is now St. Augustine Florida, English colonizers engaging the same brutal practice as early as 1619. Slavery and the exploitation of poor people allowed the colonies to be profitable for companies like the London Virginia Company. We also investigated how “race” became less tied to one’s national-origin and more tied to one’s physical attributes and the hierarchy of human worth that resulted and ended with a look at how the earliest U.S. census put this racial hierarchy to use in their data collection.

•**Economic Justice** The group met for its fifth session on Tuesday, February 2. Members had read six articles in preparation for the session all focused on the impact of slavery on the development of the U.S. economy. We noted the ways that historians for decades knowingly misrepresented the facts and how only since the 1990s has there been a more concerted effort to acknowledge that slavery was the driver that moved the U.S. from a new agrarian nation at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the second largest industrial economy in the world by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We also noted the ways in which this economic impact was felt throughout the nation and beyond. Many of us learned through this reading how much of our economic system including banking, the advent of mortgages and organizational models still in place today can trace their roots in this nation back to the plantation system. This was a helpful addition to our ongoing exploration of the strands of our nation’s economic DNA. Beginning next session, members of the group will make personal presentations on a topic of economic justice of their own choosing. This remains a devoted group with

everyone continuing to participate actively despite the challenges of having to do so virtually.

### **UUCC CARES Fund**

As of January 31, 2020, the CARES Fund balance is \$27,047.21.

### **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** The Worship Team gave an enthusiastic response, in particular, to the guest speakers and guest musicians we hosted in January. The combination of local activists, Alvin C. Jacobs, Jr. and Kass Ottley for our annual Martin Luther King Jr. service was noted as particularly powerful. We continue to work to create a mixture of uplifting, challenging, joyful and inspiring services addressing more directly, recently, our theme of the year: “Becoming the Community We Want To Be: Barriers, Boundaries and Belonging.” We continue to be grateful to the members who contribute spoken reflections and musical contributions to our services. We are fortunate to have such a talented group of people to draw from.

- Adult Programming** The ARESD 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.

- Discovery Circles** Our Small Group Ministry Steering Team assisted lead content writer, Camilla Mazzotta, in finalizing the next months’ Discovery Circle sessions. This month each group reflected on the topic of aloneness exploring the distinction, as Eglantine Julle-Daniere puts it, “between being alone and being lonely. Someone can be alone but not lonely and someone can feel lonely even when surrounded by people.” Our groups encompass a good mix of long-time and newer members and facilitators are enjoying the deepening of sharing and connection taking place.

Our Discovery Circles are continuing their tradition of taking on a service project of their choosing this year.

•Children, Youth, and Families Our part-time Coordinator of Religious Education for Children and Youth, Lisa Walls, continues to help our CYRE programming run smoothly. Three-year-olds through first graders hear stories related to our seven principles with accompanying tactile activities to guide their exploration. Our elementary students continue to explore our principles through short films, activities and discussion.

Our High School youth have begun planning a virtual version of their annual, Charlotte CON, which is an opportunity for Unitarian Universalist youth from a variety of congregations to come together around a theme for social connection and spiritual growth. It's heartening to see our youth energized by the possibility of continuing this well-loved tradition in a virtual format.

Our Middle School youth have started watching the Sunday service together on occasion and discussing the themes within. There continues to be interest in meeting socially and the group is eager to return to meeting regularly at Boyce park on Sundays when the county Covid directive is lifted.

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."

Parent Discovery Circles continue to meet monthly, providing peer support and a chance to engage in spiritual reflection related to the adventure of parenting. This month each Circle delved into the topic of perfection and parenting, sharing instances of feeling less than perfect and the necessary humor and self-forgiveness to navigate through to the next mistake.

•Community Building Following discussion with the Community Building Team and the Staff, the format of our Sunday Coffee Hour changed this month. We're now offering a rotating cycle of opportunities in hopes of attracting some folks who have not given Coffee Hour a try yet while maintaining a reliable gathering place for those who have attended faithfully each week. The first Sunday of the

month Coffee Hour games had a strong turn out and a variety of new and familiar faces as hoped.

Several of our Affinity Groups are seeing new life recently. Our Senior Connections group is back up and running in a virtual format, Luna Rising is preparing for their annual festival and the Open Mind Book Club and Cold Reads Plays groups continue to meet by Zoom monthly.

As we prepare for potential in-person small group gatherings in the future, the Community Building Team has continued to discuss the best way to model and uphold CDC safety recommendations, providing clear and consistent guidance to our members while providing opportunities for fun.

This month, two virtual offerings will begin that will run through April: Game Nights, hosted by a young adult crowd and an opportunity to share in Social Suppers on Zoom. Turn out for smaller group Community Building offerings has been low and we are hoping these two opportunities mix things up and attract some more folks.

•Congregational Care The Congregational Care Team has started sending magnets to members who are isolated or navigating ongoing health challenges as a daily visual reminder that their faith community holds them with love.

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 continued to provide our members with cards, meals, and virtual 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.