

**Coordinating Team
Report to the Board of Trustees
March 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 March: Report on Stewardship

Stewardship

The Stewardship Team this year is comprised of John Burns (co-chair), Cyndi Martinec (co-chair), Erica Blake, Elaine Camp, Chris Clark, Franklin McClelland, Shawn Morton and Gwynne Movius, with Kelly Greene, John Herrick and Alesia Hutto serving as staff liaisons.

Faced with the pandemic and an uncertain economy, the Stewardship Team continued to encourage generosity at the 5% level across the board and oversaw peer-to-peer canvassing efforts—contacting individual members about their pledges, all done virtually. Special efforts were made in acknowledging pledges through handwritten thank you notes, the mailing of handcrafts by our CYRE children and youth and the staging of virtual UCC Member Appreciation Nights. New this year was the creation of monthly captains, who acted as “cheerleaders” by offering testimony and encouraging financial commitment and generosity. Stewardship Team members recorded monthly stewardship messages for Sunday services.

Despite our best efforts, this year’s campaign proved to be more difficult due to the pandemic. We had several members increase their pledges, but those increases were more than offset by reductions from some of our more generous pledgers. New Member Pledges are also below budget given our closure.

Stewardship Category	2021-2022	Prior Year	Variance
Current Year Pledges	\$842,642	\$868,704	-\$24,246
New Member Pledges	\$9,160	\$30,543	-\$21,383

We are trending toward an overall 3% decrease in current year pledges and a 30% decrease in new member pledges *based on the current year budget*. Other income categories such as Rental and Contributions-Other are also below budget. One of the bright spots in our picture is an increase in contributions from our pledging members. Considering all factors, we anticipate approximately a \$42,000 reduction in overall income for the upcoming congregational year.

The budgeting process is underway and as promised the Coordinating Team plans to submit a balanced budget for the upcoming 2021-2022 year. We will keep the board informed as we move through this process and present a budget for review at the board's May meeting.

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 Memorial Endowment Trust of the UUCB grant season is in full swing. As previously reported the Endowment announced that \$39,000 will be available for potential grants in the 2021-2020 congregational year. Teams are currently completing grant applications that will be submitted by the application deadline of March 31. The grant awards will be publicly announced at the annual Congregational Conversation in June. The generous support of our members makes the funds for this grant program possible.

Building and Grounds

The Building and Grounds Team this year is comprised of Roy Smith (chair), Dick Kistler, Judy Love, Lee Martinec, Tom Moore, Charles Pilkey and Jinny Sullivan with Alesia Hutto serving as staff liaison.

Since the start of this congregational year, the Team has been hard at work completing outstanding building and Memorial Endowment Trust grant projects. The team has facilitated completing the following projects:

1. Recarpeting the elevator due to an oil leak in our elevator shaft.
2. Repairing the leak at the end of the office hallway by unclogging and cleaning our HVAC drainage system.
3. Upgrading our HVAC system with MERV13 filters (HEPA filters.)
4. Waterproofing the fence around our recycling dumpster.
5. Removing five dead trees from the property.
6. Performing mitigation treatments for dying trees.
7. Repairing Freeman Hall's roof which included rebuilding the scuppers, protecting the wood beams and repairing and painting the window stops. (funds for this work was provided by a grant from the MET.)
8. Installing an electronic bulletin board in our vestibule. (funds for this work was provided by a grant from the MET.)

The team will continue to work on the following outstanding projects aiming to complete them by the end of the congregational year:

1. Waterproofing the fence around our trash dumpster
2. Updating our exterior signage (The funding for this work is provided by a grant from the MET.)
3. Finalizing the completion of our new pulpit and credenza (funding for this work is provided by a grant from the MET.)
4. Installing hearing loops in the Bernstein room (funding for this work is provided by a grant from the MET.)
5. Adding nosing to the stairs in the vestibule.
6. Installing art donated by our beloved member Judy Ghoneim.

A gardening day has been scheduled for Saturday, March 20. Our next grounds workday is scheduled for Saturday, March 27 at 9 a.m. Both gatherings offer an opportunity to help spruce up the property for spring and allow us to gather as a community.

Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education search

The Interim Search Group—Craig Harbold, Melissa Schropp, Julie Smith along with ministers Jay Leach and Eve Stevens—was pleased to receive six applicants for our position by our March 01 deadline. From a diverse geographic range, with varying levels of experience and a significant span of ages, the group feels this response gives us sufficient options to make a potential impactful selection.

Following an intentional process of assessment, the group is now creating targeted interview sessions with four of these candidates. These approximately one hour Zoom conversations will take place over the course of the coming weeks. We continue with our expectation that this critically needed member of our professional staff will be joining us in July or August. They will have a one-year contract that can be extended for a second year if both the congregation and the Interim Director regard that as beneficial. This positions us with the option either to conduct a search for a Director of Lifespan Education in the 2021 – 2022 congregational year or to continue the work of reassessing and reorganizing our approach to religious education for an additional year.

Coordinator of Religious Education for Children and Youth

We continue to benefit from the remarkable organizational skills of Lisa Walls who is serving as Coordinator for our CYRE program in this time between the retirement of our Director of CYRE, Kathleen Carpenter, and the hiring of an Interim. She has been impressive in her communications with parents and teachers and in enabling us to continue offering opportunities for our children and youth. Eve Stevens is working closely with Lisa and as discussed elsewhere in this report, is providing particular support for our middle and high school programming.

Charting Member Participation

Our membership continues to participate in services and other offerings. Sunday services remain the activity with the highest participation with 519 views averaging 130 screens per week, up from 122 in January. In the month of February, we offered another Member Appreciation Night centered around Valentine's Day which attracted 35 participants. Participation has remained constant at 61%. The Professional Staff continues to reach out to some members who have not participated in three months or more.

We had eight new people sign up for *Currents* and noted 30 visitors, down from 41 in January, which traditionally has higher than average attendance for visitors.

The Membership Team continued to contact members who have not participated nor contributed, though received very little response.

UUCC CARES Fund

Cares Fund Balance: \$27,047.21

Core Groups

•**Cultural Justice** The group met for the sixth time on Tuesday, March 9. This session was spent exploring a theme throughout United States history articulated by historian, Erika Lee, "Americans learn to define Americanness by excluding, controlling, and containing foreignness. Through the admission and exclusion of foreigners, the US has both asserted its sovereignty and reinforced its identity as a nation."

We studied the Naturalization Act of 1790 which allowed any free white person of "good character," who had lived in the United States for two years or longer to apply for citizenship. We then looked at how immigration laws have been used as a means of defining and protecting white, patriarchal, protestant people as true Americans often by characterizing immigration as invasion by peoples of color and non-protestant people of faith, deemed "un-American."

Group members also presented their learnings based on readings about the experience of immigrants to the U.S. from Haiti, Mexico, Ireland and China.

•**Economic Justice** Through guided conversations outside of the monthly sessions, individual work on particular topics of interest, shared readings and the group Zoom meetings, this group is exploring together the historical roots of our economic system and assumptions and is reflecting in real time about the injustices that suggest the need for transformation.

The members of this group continue to be exemplary in their commitment. Over the course of six monthly sessions there has been but one absence (caused by an unavoidable work conflict.) As we had hoped, our core group effort, now in its fourth year, is demonstrating we have a solid core of our members who respond with serious commitment when we express high expectations.

Our March session provided the platform for the first of the member presentations. Margaret Taylor offered an engaging exploration of the dynamics and implications of “white collar” crime. Rebekah Visco gave an impressive historical analysis and current assessment of the economic justice implications in our nation’s approach to health care. Member presentations will continue for the April and May sessions before moving in June to aggregate and assess our learnings together.

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** John Herrick, Jay Leach and Eve Stevens continue to meet monthly with our Worship Team in meetings that Jay leads. Over the course of the past year this group has offered feedback and guidance enabling us to improve the quality of our streaming services. Many of the tweaks and changes that continue to occur are due to their valuable input.

This team has begun reflecting on our anticipated return to in-person services in the late summer or early fall. We are analyzing the options as we consider the optimal use of our Sunday mornings and are considering implementing changes

to the schedule to optimize the experience for our members and guests. Aware that many of our members drive a significant distance to participate, this team and the professional staff are discussing how we might make Sunday a more substantive time for programming beyond the services. Now in the early stages of discussion, we anticipate finding ways to include the congregation in this conversation in the coming months as we look together toward our return to in-person programming later this year.

•**Adult Programming** Among the most remarkable aspects of this most-challenging year is the way we have sustained robust adult religious education and spiritual development opportunities remotely. In addition to ongoing Discovery Circles and monthly Credo sessions, the upcoming offerings for this month exemplify the devoted efforts of our Adult Religious Education Team under the leadership of Sharon Baker. These include:

Developing Intercultural Competence Workshop — Thursday, March 18 and Thursday, March 25, 7 p.m.

In this two-part workshop, facilitated by Joe Hoff, participants will learn what intercultural competence is and how to develop it. Joe has a Ph.D. in International Education, over 25 years' experience in intercultural training, and works at UNC Charlotte, where he assists students, faculty, and staff in developing their global competencies.

Videos Depict What Prison Life is Like for Prisoners — Monday, March 22, 6:30 p.m. "The Zo" is a series of short videos from The Marshall Project that looks at life inside prison, through the words of prisoners themselves. Participants will watch and discuss the videos with Melissa Mummert (who has worked with prisoners for 20 years), and some formerly incarcerated people from our own community.

***Children of the Land* Book Discussion** — Tuesday, March 30, 7 p.m.

Shannon Maples will lead a discussion of this memoir by prize-winning poet Marcelo Hernandez Castillo, who recounts his experience growing up undocumented in the United States, and the complications he and his family experience as they navigate the immigration system and attempt to live the American Dream.

•Discovery Circles Our Small Group Ministry Steering Team continues to assist lead content writer, Camilla Mazzotta, in creating each upcoming Discovery Circle session. Two of our Discovery Circles are taking on CYRE teacher appreciation as their service project this year. Members of each group will prepare notes, baked goods and other expressions of appreciation and deliver them personally to each CYRE teacher expressing gratitude for the commitment of these volunteers to our congregation's children and youth throughout the pandemic. When a member of one Circle was hospitalized recently, the other members arranged to bring him food throughout his recovery at home. These groups continue to be a meaningful source of support and spiritual growth for our members who participate.

•Children, Youth, and Families Our CYRE programming for younger children maintained attendance last month. Three-year-olds through first graders hear stories related to our seven principles with accompanying tactile activities to guide their exploration. This youngest group recently picked up another round of Activity Bags which provide materials for hands-on activities for six Sundays at a time. Our elementary students continue to explore our principles through short films, activities and discussion.

High School and Middle School youth classes have proved more challenging and attendance is low for both groups. Advisors of both groups recently met with Eve Stevens to discuss what they are finding most challenging about their work this year. Following these conversations, Eve will be checking in with both groups more regularly and offering guidance and support. Eve and Lisa have determined that this goes beyond the scope of Lisa's responsibilities as CYRE coordinator.

An energizing bright spot for our High School youth is their planning of 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. Advisors, along with Lisa and Eve, recently attended a youth-led planning session and were impressed by the level of commitment and attention to detail our youth are modeling to plan this event.

Our Middle School youth have begun, once again, gathering in Boyce Park on Sundays for in-person, socially distanced class. Advisors and youth bring yoga mats to help mark the boundaries of social distance and advisors provide prompts

for an intentional conversation to begin class. Most of class is dedicated to social time. Attendance has increased significantly since returning to in-person.

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 We've changed the format of Sunday Coffee Hour, 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. Our first month trying this new format went well. Attendance was sustained and there have been never-before-attendees at each Coffee Hour, some weeks have included a number of visitors as well.

Following the lifting of the Covid-19 related county health directive, we have begun offering member-led small group gatherings on our UCC grounds. The first fire-pit gathering was attended by seven members. This offering will take place every Friday evening unless there is rain. People interested in participating sign up in advance to reserve their spot. We are currently capping this offering at ten attendees. Along with other opportunities to socialize on our grounds, there are also opportunities to visit local museums with UCC friends.

Social Suppers on Zoom started this month, with only one group of diners participating. A monthly Game Night began hosted by two young adult members of our congregation. The hosts have made a point of trying to recruit fellow young adults to game night while welcoming people of all ages which has resulted in more young adult engagement than with previous offerings.

It has been a busy month for our Affinity Groups. Our in-person hiking, biking and walking groups have had consistent attendance. Our Luna Rising group held their annual festival celebrating the feminine and our Senior Connections group is back up and running in a virtual format.

- Congregational Care The Congregational Care Team is gathering a list of seniors in our congregation who remain isolated with little opportunity for interaction. Team members will be reaching out to each person on this list with an offer to

help them connect to Zoom for UUCC programming and the Senior Connections group in particular.

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.