

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

Movement Back to In-Person Activities

A survey regarding members' opinions about in-person services was posted in *Currents* on Thursday, August 12 and repeated there again on Thursday, August 19. In addition, all members received it in an email on Friday, August 13 and it was posted to our member Facebook page as well. We received over 250 responses from our members. Approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated that they would consider attending in-person services again with a clear preference for scenarios that would allow for social distancing. While the survey indicated that masks will be required, several underscored the importance masking played in their willingness to attend in-person. Several also took time to express their appreciation for this effort to hear from members.

The congregation was informed of the results in an email message sent on Tuesday, August 24. Included in that message was information about the need to remain virtual for now and the particular challenges our building creates. We also reiterated in this message that anyone who is eligible but who has opted not to be vaccinated should avoid all in-person activities whether on the grounds or in our facility.

On Sunday, September 12 we shifted to offering services that will be livestreamed from our Sanctuary at 234. As Board Members are likely aware, regrettable technological challenges kept most from accessing the service. Though it was made available in audio form on both our website and our member Facebook page, we are chagrined that most did not experience the kickoff of our theme for this year— "Beginning Again, Seeing Anew." As of this writing, we are preparing for our second attempt at a livestreamed service for Sunday, September 19.

We are hopeful that, if we can both work out the technological glitches and create more visually engaging services, we can proceed to a next step in October. Based on the perceived safety of doing so, we are planning now to invite a small number (likely 25 or so to begin) to volunteer to come on a Sunday morning to watch the service being videoed. Assuming all goes well with this small group, we're hoping to gradually increase the number of volunteers in the Sanctuary throughout the month.

We are continuing to offer CYRE on the grounds each Sunday (weather permitting.) And we're continuing to offer adult programming both in our building at 234 and in other settings. We are considering the prospects of increasing the current limit of 20 people inside while continuing to require masks for all who enter our facility.

The CT welcomes the perspective of Board members as we continue trying to make the most responsible decisions for our community.

Session on Sunday, August 22

Seven Board Members and three members of our Focus 2020 Task Group spent several hours in a session led by our minister, Jay Leach. They reflected on the current identity of the congregation, the prospects for attracting new members and the challenges in doing so. This session was offered in anticipation of the Task Group's discussions on marketing and the Board's discussions of the next steps in the embodiment of our Vision and Mission.

Sexton Update

The search for our sexton began in July of 2021. The job was posted on the UUCC website. In addition, it was sent to the Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church and to several contacts in the community including Melissa Mummert and Chablis Dandridge. It was also posted on Craigslist, Google Jobs and Monster.com. We received eight resumes which yielded three interviews. Overall, one candidate declined the position due to the vaccination requirement. The other two candidates declined due to family obligations and moving out of the area.

The current job market creates challenges for filling this type of position. We will continue to market this position and interview as necessary. We will keep the board posted on any updates.

Open Door School

Our preschool, the Open Door School (ODS) Managing Team consists of—Suzanne Clements (chair), Marybeth Foster (FCA chair), Alesia Hutto (UUCS staff liaison), Sheila Locklear (ODS Director), Jen McGuire, Elaine Peed and Jim Van Fleet.

At the August meeting, the Managing Team worked to make sure that the safety plan was up to date which only resulted in changes considering full enrollment and mask requirements for *all* students. The team also ensured that the school had what it needed for a safe school year. On Tuesday, September 7, the 2021-2022 school year officially began. ODS has higher than usual new staff, but all new staff have a former affiliation with ODS and are fully aware of the philosophy. As of the second week of school things are running smoothly and enrollment is almost at capacity (98%) with two openings in the 2's class and two openings in the 4/5's class. We expect those classes to be filled in the next few weeks given the interest.

The ODS Managing Team is now taking over the grant matching campaign 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 first leg of the campaign consisted of former ODS Managing Team members and identified advocates canvassing potential donors for contributions. As of August 31, 2021, the campaign has collected \$7,000. We would like to give a well-deserved thanks to Roger Coates and the advocates: Gillian Baxter, Latoya Gardner, Connie Glass, Suzanne Lake, and Liz Pratt. The campaign is now shifting to current and alumni ODS families. We have an ad hoc team working on this effort that includes Alesia Hutto, Sheila Locklear, Jen McGuire, and Suzy Moore.

If you wish to contribute, please [click here](#). Donations can be mailed to the Open Door School at 234 North Sharon Amity Rd, Charlotte, NC 28211 (please include Sue Riley Scholarship Fund in the memo line.) The campaign concludes on December 31, 2021.

Update on Memorial Endowment Trust Grant Projects

The Memorial Endowment Trust (MET) of the UCC provides an opportunity for members to contribute financially to the life and well-being of the congregation through legacy gifts, memorial contributions, and other means of celebrating or honoring lives within our community. Members are invited in regular appeals to consider including the MET in their legacy giving. The MET Board is happy to report that total net assets in the Trust exceed one million dollars!

Years of careful cultivation and management by MET trustees have resulted in a balance sufficient to generate significant income. Each year the trustees determine the portion of that income available to support and enhance the work of the congregation through grant funding. The Memorial Endowment Trust awards grants for worthy projects that might not fit cleanly into our operating budget, but which support our Community's Vision and Mission.

This year, the MET board announced that they awarded \$39,000 to six different Grant proposals that have come from the Community, which include (with their status):

1. Outdoor Gathering Area with a Fire Pit located near the Memorial Garden and CYRE Classrooms (nearing completion): The chairs will arrive on 9/23 and the benches will be installed shortly afterward which will complete the project. Alesia and Eve are working to create rules and guidelines for usage of that space.
2. Updating Interior Signs and Banners: The deposit has been made, the Communications Team is shoring up the designs.
3. Technology Upgrades to Create Hybrid Meeting/Learning Opportunities: The Bernstein room was completed on Friday, September 17. The Conference room will follow. Freeman Hall will be scheduled based on availability.

4. Updating the Aesthetics of the Worship Experience: No progress to date.
5. Upgrades to allow for Internet/Wi-Fi access Throughout the Building:
Completed
6. Marketing Grant: Underway. The initial work has been done of identifying our intended audience; we are now working to secure a meeting date for the Focus 2020 Task Group.

The generous contributions of our members to the Memorial Endowment Trust of the UCC make their grant program possible.

Charting Member Participation

In August, service views through YouTube totaled 547 devices with an average of 109 per Sunday. It is notable that when the May report was submitted in early June, we had 396 total May views, with an average of 79. We now show a total of 708 views or an average of 142 per service for May. While real-time viewership looks lower than we would prefer, total numbers of views are significantly higher.

In response to the congregational survey regarding reopening, approximately 55 of the 263 respondents volunteered to help make that possible. We recorded involvement for 51% of members, though we recognize this is likely missing some of the many ways members are connected to this community and each other.

Approximately 60 visitors participated in services and/or attended activities such as ARESD offerings or Summer Sing in August. By comparison, we noted 11 visitors in August 2019. Then, we were only counting people who completed visitor cards while in the sanctuary. We are now including service views, contacts to staff and event/small group attendance.

UUCC CARES Fund

Cares Fund Balance: \$28,522.21

There have been no requests for assistance in the past month. As a reminder, when we determine that there are no more pandemic related financial needs among our members, we will transfer the balance of this account to the “Minister’s Discretionary Fund,” a fund that has historically been used to meet financial needs among our members and in the larger community.

Ongoing Activity

•Sunday Services The Worship Team in its September meeting reviewed our summer series— “Roots Hold Me Close.” They were generally pleased with the quality and content of these services. They particularly noted the large number of members included in services this summer, the inclusion of both longtime members and relative newcomers, and the surprisingly honest, vulnerable quality of many of the offerings.

We will be relying on this Team for observations and feedback regarding our livestreamed services aware that even after our return to some form of in-person services the capacity to transmit these services to members who will not or cannot attend in person will continue to be an important part of planning and leading services.

We’re fortunate to have a strong group this year including Mark Fox, Shelagh Gallagher, Laura Hamilton, Carol Hartley, Michael Kelly, Dick Kistler, Ben Schomp (Music Team liaison), and Erin Stoody. Jay Leach leads the Team; John Herrick and Eve Stevens also participate.

•Adult Religious Education/Spiritual Development Our Adult Religious Education/Spiritual Development Team, under the leadership of contract coordinator Sharon Baker continues to create regular offerings both in-person and virtual. They are focused now on this year’s theme— “Beginning Again, Seeing Anew.” They are expressing a particular interest in offerings of a more spiritual nature as well as offerings of short duration—one or two sessions. Among the offerings in the works are a documentary film series and a session on the nature of hope. They

are hoping to attract more of our members to these offerings in the coming weeks.

•Building and Grounds The Building and Grounds Team for 2021-2022 is comprised of Roy Smith (chair), David Johnson, Judy Love, Dan Maples, Tom Moore, Charles Pilkey and Jinny Sullivan with Alesia Hutto serving as staff liaison.

The team continues to work on wrapping up the installation of the new exterior signs. The team is happy to report that one of the exterior signs has been installed and has received favorable reviews. If you have not had a chance to see it, it is pictured below:



We have experienced a delay with the installation for the sign at the corner of Sharon Amity and Hardwick, but overall, the project is still moving forward. We hope to have the work completed soon. The creation and installation of our exterior signage was made possible by not only the work of the building and grounds team, but also the Focus 2020 Task Group. Funding for the sign was made possible by a grant from the Memorial Endowment Trust (MET) of the UUC. The generous contributions of our members to the MET make the funds for their grant program possible.

The Team is also working on ways to make our bathrooms safer as we move toward in-person services. The team concluded at their September meeting that the best possible option would be to increase ventilation in those spaces by upgrading the fans in the bathrooms in the office area as well as behind Freeman Hall. Alesia is working closely with Dan Maples, team member and HVAC professional, to secure an estimate for the costs around this upgrade. Alesia plans to present a request to the Board of Trustees at their upcoming meeting on Tuesday, September 21 for funding for this necessary improvement.

Lastly, the team is planning to meet onsite on Saturday, September 25 to take care of some minor building and grounds repairs and nail down the location of the exterior sign to be installed at the corner of Sharon Amity and Hardwick. Like last year, we have a very active team who deserve many thanks for their hard work.

•Children, Youth, and Families Our fall programming for CYRE has had an encouraging start. As a reminder, we had combined all children's classes for the summer and still had a fairly small cohort attending each week. September 12 for the kick-off of a new CYRE year we had the strongest attendance in each age group since the pandemic began. Classes for all ages are being held outdoors with participants masked at 11:15 a.m. Children and youth have access, one at a time, to the bathrooms outside Freeman Hall which are better ventilated than our other options. Our CYRE Coordinators, Melissa Schropp, Lisa Walls, and Michael Amy Cira along with Eve and both CYRE and Family Ministry Teams continue to work together to navigate the uncertainties created by the pandemic while creating meaningful programming.

Our children 4 years old through 1st grade will continue with [SpiritPlay](#), a program that applies a Montessori approach to exploring the 7 Principles through stories, activities and "wondering questions". Elementary students will be using a curriculum called *Windows and Mirrors* by Gabrielle Farrell, Jenice View, and Natalie Fenimore that "nurtures children's ability to identify their own experiences and perspectives and to seek out, care about and respect those of others. The metaphor of windows and mirrors represents the dynamic relationship among our awareness of self, our perceptions of others, and others' perceptions of us." Our Middle Schoolers are engaging in an incredibly dynamic curriculum called *Lodestone* by Katie Covey, which includes accessible science, art and theater-based activities used to explore four topics: Unitarian Universalism, Money, Race, and Death. Our High Schoolers will be drawing from *Lodestone* as well as having conversations on current events.

Because CYRE is offered following the service, we've started a Sunday morning parent group to meet at 11:15 a.m. concurrent with CYRE classes. Our first session on September 12 was well attended. Parents took turns introducing themselves and describing the joys and challenges of the phase of parenting they are currently navigating. These sessions will sometimes include a workshop on a

parenting topic such as positive discipline and other times be used as a time for parents to attend orientations about CYRE, Coming of Age and Our Whole Lives.

The *Wings of Fire* Youth Book Group continues to meet multiple times a month. This is our first attempt at a children and youth Affinity Group and thus far attendance and enthusiasm are strong. The CYRE Team is hopeful that other parent/child groups will create their own Affinity Groups to connect with others in our congregation on our grounds in addition to regular CYRE and Family Ministry programming this year.

- Community Building A robust crew of members and newcomers set out to find and take pictures with a collection of Charlotte's oldest and grandest trees. This was attended by people of a variety of ages and well enough received that we've planned another trip to the big tree museum and gardens of Historic Rosedale combined with a historical tour of the grounds for those who are interested. Both efforts have been beautifully pulled together by Althea Clark. Meanwhile, Karen Bringle and Rita Heath-Singer will host an afternoon of playing cards in Freeman Hall this month, hoping to hook novice and advanced players alike with learning Minibridge. Members continued to participate in Affinity Group offerings such as the hiking and walking groups, Cold Read Plays, and a puzzle swap with Senior Connections.

We are encouraging sign ups again for a virtual social supper group. Last year a small contingent got together for four consecutive months on Zoom for conversation and to share the same meal (prepared separately in each participant's home). Thus far we do not have enough sign ups to move forward with this opportunity. Virtual Coffee Hour will continue for now at 9 a.m. on most Sundays with a small and consistent crowd who remain grateful for this opportunity to check in with one another.

- Discovery Circles Thus far we have enough people signed up to hold two Discovery Circles. We will have one Circle start on Zoom with the possibility of transitioning to in-person meetings and another group who will meet masked in Freeman Hall. Signups for Parent Discovery Circles have been slow, and we are still unsure if we will have enough interest to form a Circle.

- Congregational Care Our Congregational Care Team delivered meals and cards to members in times of crisis and celebration.

The Team welcomed four new members this summer and continues to explore ways of sharing the tasks of meal making and delivery as well as visits and phone calls in an attempt to create a more sustainable model of communal care that relies less on the same one or two people doing the lion's share.

Our ministers and other professional staff continue to reach out to our members in times of crisis, celebration, and simply to check-in.

- Intersectional Justice Team This year's Intersectional Justice Team—Manny Allen, Shannon Maples, Neal Sigmon, Rebekah Visco, Dave Walsh, and Janet Zick with professional staff liaison Jay Leach devoted much of their September meeting to a deep discussion about our structure. The Team recognizes that we have not yet been able to create the kind of robust opportunities for our members to be engaged in justice work outside our walls that we had anticipated. The Team is inviting those who are leading Engagement Groups to meet with them to review their experiences and to strategize together on how to become more effective in this area. The Team is hopeful that as the prospect for more in-person activities reemerges, we can find many more ways to foster involvement in the larger community.