

**Coordinating Team
Report to the Board of Trustees
October 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

Beginning with the first Sunday in October, we are now including small groups of people on Sunday mornings in the Sanctuary while the services are created for the livestream. Response to this opportunity has been limited. We are evaluating our communication mechanisms in an effort to increase participation.

On Tuesday, October 12 the professional staff met at length to discuss the appropriate next steps. We reviewed a significant amount of data. Should Board members be interested, you can find the information we are accessing at:

<https://www.uua.org/pandemics/gathering-guidance>

https://covidactnow.org/us/metro/charlotte-concord-gastonia_nc-sc/?s=24201333

<https://www.mecknc.gov/news/Pages/Mecklenburg-County-COVID-19-Data-for-October-6-2021.aspx>

<https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/media/618/open>

While Mecklenburg County is still in the “Substantial Community Spread” category and while COVID Act Now still shows the Charlotte metro area in the “VERY HIGH” risk category, the trends are encouraging. We particularly noted the infection rate which clearly indicates that COVID cases are decreasing in our area and are projected to continue to fall rather dramatically in the coming weeks.

As such, we now think it is appropriate to take the next steps. Our proposal is this: beginning with the first Sunday in November, we will offer the first of our

hybrid/multiplatform services at 11:15 a.m. with CYRE continuing on the grounds at that same time.

We will circulate a sign-up opportunity in a direct email to those on our mailing list and include this information in *Currents* and on our two Facebook pages. Based on the Building and Grounds Team's careful assessment, we have approximately 70 safely distanced seats in our sanctuary. Those interested in attending an in-person service will be invited to sign up each week to be one of the 70 people in attendance. These services will be planned and led intentionally to include both the people in the room and those accessing the service by way of the livestream.

For these Sundays, we will not open Freeman Hall but will invite those attending to gather in the traffic circle following the service.

We are projecting this as our plan for November as we continue closely monitoring the data and the counsel offered to places of worship.

The CT now requests the perspective of Board members before we inform our community of this potential next step.

In-Person Session with Prospective Members/New Members

After service on Sunday, October 3, six new members and seven visitors attended a newcomer event in Freeman Hall. For some visitors and some new members, it was their first time in our building. For many, it was their first time meeting our ministers Eve Stevens and Jay Leach. People who had joined, signed up for *Currents* or started attending since we stopped meeting in person in March 2020 were sent invitations. Attendees were invited to share their stories, then heard from Eve and Jay. Following that session, three attendees became members of our community.

Charting Member Participation

In September, our average service views went up to 197 from 109 for the previous month. The total views of 592 do not include September 12 when we had technical difficulties. We recorded at least 48 visitors participating in our services and other activities. For members, we recorded at least 40% of members participating in UCC activities in September.

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 have been placed and the benches, which are being custom built, will be installed soon which will complete the project.
2. Updating Interior Signs and Banners: The deposit has been made, the Communications Team is awaiting design proposals from Fast Signs.

3. Technology Upgrades to Create Hybrid Meeting/Learning Opportunities:
The Bernstein and Conference room installations are now complete.
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. 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.

Report on Jay's Activities

We regularly update Board members on Jay's work outside of our community. Jay continues to serve on two national Unitarian Universalist Boards. He is now the longest serving member of the Board for the Starr King School for the Ministry, our Unitarian Universalist seminary in California where he also continues in his role on that Board's Executive Team. In addition, Jay serves on the Editorial Board of Skinner House, one of our Unitarian Universalist publishers.

Sexton Update

The search for our sexton began in July of 2021. The job was posted on the UCC 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, Monster.com and now Zip Recruiter. We received eleven resumes which yielded five interviews. A candidate was interviewed on Thursday, October 7 and another on Monday, October 18. There is no update from these interviews as of the writing of this report. Alesia will offer an update at the board of trustees meeting scheduled for Tuesday, October 19.

UUCC CARES Fund

Cares Fund Balance: \$28,422.21 There have been no requests for assistance in the past month.

The CT has now identified what we regard to be an appropriate use for a portion of this Fund. MeckMIN and Crisis Assistance are partnering to create the “Faith Community Eviction Prevention Fund.” Board members can read about this effort at:

<https://www.meckmin.org/faith-community-eviction-fund>

<https://www.crisisassistance.org/donate/evictionfund/>

Given the fact that we have gone several months with no new requests from among the members of our community, the CT would like to transfer \$5,000 of our UUCC CARES Fund to the “Faith Community Eviction Prevention Fund.” We welcome Board members response to this suggestion.

(As a reminder, when we determine that there are no more pandemic related financial needs among our members, it has been our intention to 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

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

•**Sunday Services** As noted above, recent livestreamed services have included the opportunity for a small group of members to be in the sanctuary while the service is being created. The first week saw 21 such participants (including three people who were in that room for the very first time!), the second only ten. We are now prepared to make this opportunity available to approximately 35 people each week and are trying to make signing up for this opportunity an easy thing to do.

We continue to explore this year's congregational theme, "Beginning Again, Seeing Anew." These recent livestreamed services are essential as a learning experience for our professional staff and volunteers as we move toward offering hybrid services. Each week we are learning a great deal about how best to offer these services given the limitations of our space, technology and volunteer capacity.

The Worship Team continues to serve as a valuable resource, providing helpful feedback to our services each month. The Team this year includes Mark Fox, Shelagh Gallagher, Laura Hamilton, Carol Hartley, Michael Kelly, Dick Kistler, Ben Schomp (Music Team liaison), and Erin Stody. 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 virtually focused now on this year's theme—"Beginning Again, Seeing Anew." To date we continue to have modest response to these offerings. Upcoming sessions include one led by Kelly Greene on becoming a more welcoming congregation, a session on UU principles led by Eve Stevens, and a two-part series on spirituality with Lauren Hood and Jay Leach.

•Children, Youth, and Families Classes for all ages continue to be held outdoors with participants masked at 11:15 a.m. on Sundays. Children and youth have access, one at a time, to the bathrooms outside Freeman Hall. Attendance for October CYRE classes has held fairly steady thus far. Our youngest kids in the SpiritPlay class spent last month engaging with stories introducing the 7 principles and the history behind our chalice. Elementary, Middle School and High School classes spent last month getting to know one another with a social focus on time together.

Our CYRE Coordinators continue to be hard at work this month. Melissa Schropp has been sifting through our SpiritPlay archive to offer classes that connect with new beginnings and new ways of seeing as part of our theme of the year. Lisa Walls has begun engaging our elementary classes with the *Windows and Mirrors* curriculum exploring the dynamic relationship among our awareness of self, our perceptions of others, and others' perceptions of us. Michael Amy Cira has waded

into the lengthy *Lodestone* curriculum with our Middle School class exploring Unitarian Universalist identity for their first unit and engaging our High School class in conversation about current events on Sunday mornings. We continue to be incredibly grateful for our CYRE teachers and advisors who make all our programming possible.

Lisa and Michael are in the beginning stages of offering an adapted version of the much beloved Coming of Age program. At this point, all Our Whole Lives classes are being considered for spring when we can be more certain of in-person gatherings, hopefully indoors.

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 remain consistent.

Our Sunday morning parent group has continued to meet at 11:15 a.m. concurrent with CYRE classes. Attendance has been strong with as many as twenty parents at one session. Visitors and some of our newest members have found this a good way to connect with other parents in the community.

We have one Parent Discovery Circle this year. The group will start this coming Sunday and meet monthly through May. While Sunday morning parent group is open to all and requires no ongoing commitment, Parent Discovery Circle is an opportunity for the same group of parents to gather monthly for more focused spiritual reflection and connection-building.

•Community Building This coming weekend we will host our second annual UUCC Plant Swap. This was a big hit last year and was the first in-person event after going virtual. We had about thirty attendees and our avid gardeners thoroughly enjoyed stocking up on one another's garden treasures. This year we'll host the event in the parking lot at 234. Participants will bring plants and descriptions of the care they need and participate in multiple rounds of plant selection with plenty of time to socialize. We hope both avid gardeners and curious novices will attend.

The following weekend, Susan Hill of the Community Building Team will host a get together in Belmont for an event called Moonlight on Main that invites participants to explore Main St. while enjoying a traveling exhibit called *Museum of the Moon* by UK artist, Luke Jerram.

We have offered both small virtual supper groups (a hit for one small group last year) and online game opportunities with zero interest thus far.

- Discovery Circles Two Discovery Circles start this month and will meet monthly through June. We have two large groups of thirteen (including facilitators) with both returning and first-time participants. Camilla Mazzotta continues to create engaging session plans that are then workshopped by Eve and the Small Group Ministry Steering Team. One Circle will meet via Zoom until further notice and one Circle will meet in-person in Freeman Hall each month.

- Congregational Care Our Congregational Care Team delivered meals and cards to members in times of crisis and celebration. The team pulled together beautifully as a number of team members had their own various care needs this month.

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

- 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 wrapped up the installation of our final exterior sign which is now located at the corner of North Sharon Amity and Hardwick roads. The team is working with the gardening group to develop a landscaping plan for the area surrounding the sign. If you have not had a chance to see it, it is pictured below.



The creation and installation of our exterior signage was made possible by not only the work of the building and grounds team (with a special thanks to Charles Pilkey), 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, under the leadership of Roy Smith, is also working to develop a mitigation plan to save an oak tree on the property located next to playground #2.

It was recommended by arborist Matthew Hanson that the slim flux, which is killing the tree, can be removed with a soapy water treatment. Roy is working now to secure volunteers to help him provide this treatment at regular intervals.

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 continuing to work closely with Dan Maples, team member and HVAC professional, to coordinate the installation of the new bathroom fans. As a reminder, the team recommended upgrading the ventilation in the bathrooms in both the office area and behind Freeman Hall. The board approved up to \$2,000 in funding from the reserves to cover the costs.

The team met onsite on Saturday, September 25 to work on some minor tasks. The work included pressure washing the benches, cutting and removing dead branches, creating social distance markings in the Sanctuary and decorating the display cabinet in the vestibule. We have a very active team who deserve many thanks for their hard work.

•Intersectional Justice Team This year's Intersectional Justice Team—Manny Allen, Shannon Maples, Neal Sigmon, Rebekah Visco, Dave Walsh and Janet Zick—along with professional staff liaison Jay Leach met in October with Susan Cox, Marsha Kelly, Richard Pratt and Debbie Rubenstein, all of whom have been

involved in trying to create opportunities for member involvement in the work of justice beyond our walls. The meeting explored what has worked, what has made this challenging and how we might together create a more fluid and workable approach.

Most significantly, there was enthusiasm expressed for creating a single Intersectional Engagement Group rather than continuing with the effort to create four different groups, each of which focuses on one area—cultural, economic, environmental and racial justice—of our overall approach. The Team will be working with those already involved in the engagement process to support their work in ways that make it more possible to identify opportunities for our involvement.

The Team will also be reviewing and revising our “Guiding Principles” to make them more functional in this effort. There is consensus that we must retain our commitment to work that aspires to support systemic change while endeavoring to offer both short term/one-time opportunities and more long-term ways to be involved.

The Team is working to have this more fluid approach in place by early 2022 when the prospect for engaging deeply and safely in the larger community seems possible.