

**Coordinating Team
Report to the Board of Trustees
December 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

See in Children and Youth report below information about moving CYRE indoors beginning in early January.

We continue to monitor the data for our region, primarily through https://covidactnow.org/us/metro/charlotte-concord-gastonia_nc-sc/?s=24201333. As of Thursday, December 16, this denotes the Charlotte Metro risk level at “Very High,” up from the “High” risk category of one month ago. It continues to claim that “Charlotte metro is more vulnerable than 79% of U.S. metros.”

As a reminder, in addition to the use of the Sanctuary on Sundays, we currently have the Bernstein Room available for groups up to 10, the Conference Room available for small groups of six or fewer people and Freeman Hall able to accommodate up to 35 people safely distanced.

Search for Director of Lifespan Religious Educator

We have initiated our search for a Director of Lifespan Religious Education. The Search Group includes Craig Harbold, Melissa Schropp and Julie Smith with both Eve and Jay participating as well.

The position is now posted on a national UU web listing of job openings. We now have a portion of our website devoted to this opening on our professional staff with a description of the position and a job description posted.

In January, a representative from the Group will meet with both the ARES Team and the CYRE Team. This meeting is intended to inform these Teams about the search and to gather their feedback regarding the position.

As a reminder, we anticipate filling this position in the late spring with our new Director of Lifespan Religious Education beginning here sometime in the mid-summer.

Proposed 8th UU Principle

On Tuesday, December 14 Eve and Jay led an initial session to inform interested members about the proposed 8th UU Principle. This session sets the proposed new Principle in the context of the initial six Principles, the revised (and current) seven Principles, and the historical setting out of which the proposed Principle has arisen. We anticipate offering this session again in the new year.

As of Sunday, December 12, 142 UU congregations and other organizations have voted to adopt this new Principle. The national General Assembly vote is slated for 2023 and 2024.

Stewardship

The Stewardship Team for 2021-2022 is comprised of Franklin McClelland (chair), Erica Blake, John Burns, Elaine Camp, Chris Clark, Gwynne Movius, Mike O'Sullivan and Julie Smith with Kelly Greene, John Herrick and Alesia Hutto serving as staff liaisons. The canvassers include Lincoln Baxter, John Burns, Shelagh Gallagher, Ellen Holliday, Jane Kusterer, Debbie Marr, Cyndi Martinec, Franklin McClelland, Gwynne Movius, Mike O'Sullivan, Julie Smith, Jinny Sullivan and Paul Wilson.

The Stewardship Team continues to encourage generosity at the 5% level across the board through direct messaging in stewardship materials, peer-to-peer canvassing efforts, messaging through monthly stewardship captains who act as "cheerleaders" by offering testimony and encouraging financial commitment, through recorded monthly stewardship messages for Sunday services and regular notices in Currents. We thank members who pledge with a letter from the

congregation signed by the minister and stewardship team chair, a handwritten thank you note from the team and with handmade crafts from our CYRE youth. The team continues to offer member appreciation events with the first of those events, the Fall Back Festival, taking place on November 6. This event was well received with over 40 attendees.

The strategy for the 2021-2022 congregational year has been to move the needle forward amongst those not considered our largest pledgers. Despite our best efforts, this year's campaign has proven difficult given that members are not as engaged in the life of the Community as expected and the lingering effects of the pandemic. Monthly pledge response rates so far have ranged from 31% to 63%, with an average response rate of 49%. While we had 25 member units increase their pledges, we have also had 25 reductions/losses. Amongst those 25 reductions eight are due to resignations/death. One bright spot is that we have higher than expected New Member pledges. In summary, existing pledges are down by \$36,942, but that reduction is offset by \$24,060 in new member pledges which equates to a \$12,882 loss compared to last year's pledge total as of December 15.

In the coming months the team hopes to increase engagement with the campaign through intentional messaging, new marketing tools, creative thank yous and celebrating. The team has created ad hoc groups within the team that focus on doing just that. Our messaging group is working on intentional language varying monthly with the hopes to encourage members to be more attentive to our pleas. The marketing group has been seeking creative ways to push these messages. Some of the upcoming marketing efforts will include texting, social media, monthly videos and an upcoming "Share the Plate" campaign. We will continue to partner with CYRE to include tokens of thanks with thank you cards and celebrate with the community through member appreciation events. Stay tuned to Currents for more information about these efforts.

Memorial Endowment Trust

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. Members of the 2021-2022 MET board include Fred Dodson, Mary Ann Hendrick, Ellen Holliday, Patrick McNeely, Tom Nunnenkamp (chair) and Rita Heath Singer.

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. For the 2021-2022 year, MET board announced that they awarded \$39,000 to six different Grant proposals that have come from the Community. We have four grant projects that are still outstanding for the 2021-2022 congregational year:

1. Updating Interior Signs and Banners: The sign plans have been approved and we are awaiting the next steps from Fast Signs.
2. Technology Upgrades to Create Hybrid Meeting/Learning Opportunities: We are now working on adding an additional camera in the Bernstein room and selecting the appropriate cameras for Freeman Hall.
3. Updating the Aesthetics of the Worship Experience: This work is underway under the leadership of John Herrick and Judy Love.
4. Marketing Grant: Alesia Hutto is working with the Communications Team and the Focus 2020 Task Group to develop a working structure that will help guide the work in hiring a marketing consultant and creating a marketing plan.

Later this month, the MET will begin to publicize the upcoming grant season. The staff is working within their teams to solicit grant proposals for the 2022-2023 congregational year. In the month of January, the board will announce the available funds for the coming year. The generous contributions of our members to the MET of the UUC make their grant program possible.

In addition to gearing up for the upcoming grant season, the MET plans to resume sending their annual Legacy Society mailing. The upcoming mailing will feature longtime member Simonne Lake. The mailing encourages members to include the MET in their planned giving, especially their estate documents. Anyone who does so becomes a member of the Legacy Society.

Charting Member Participation

We recorded 46% of members participating, compared to 51% in October and 40% in September. Our in-person service attendance average increased from 17 to 39 per service. Online service viewing decreased from an average of 89 to 77. As with many if not most Unitarian Universalist and other congregations, participation is lower than in pre-pandemic years. We continue to encourage engagement and offer many ways for people to connect. Members and visitors participated in a variety of virtual and in-person offerings, including classes, a pie walk, Trunksgiving, a Fall Back festival and a range of affinity groups. Visitors continue to find us and become members, with two joining in November and three joining in December as of the 14.

Sexton Update

The search for our Sexton began in July of 2021. A candidate has been identified for hire. We are awaiting feedback from their references. We will keep the Board informed about any updates as they become available.

UUCC CARES Fund

Fund Balance: \$23,622.21

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

We celebrate the commitment of our audio and visual volunteers whose role has become much more important now that we are offering “hybrid” services each Sunday. Ministers leading the services are creating very detailed scripts for these volunteers who prepare for their roles for one hour prior to the beginning of the service. Without the devotion of these volunteers, we would be unable to offer services in the Sanctuary or by way of our livestream and archives.

This work with these volunteers is only one aspect of the challenges created by offering services that will be accessed in different ways. We are continuing to learn how best to create services intended to engage both those in the Sanctuary and those viewing the services by way of a screen of some sort. We are immensely appreciative of those who are taking the time to offer messages of encouragement and support as we undertake this challenge each week.

•Adult Religious Education/Spiritual Development

Sharon Baker continued to lead our ARES Team in creating a wide variety of offerings. They are already programming into March 2022 as they help us explore this year’s theme “Beginning Again, Seeing Anew.” We continue to see a wide range of interest from our members with some sessions including more than a dozen participants and others cancelled from low registration numbers.

This Team is mostly offering one session classes and has been able to make some of these classes available both to a group in Freeman Hall and to those accessing the class by Zoom.

Sharon and her team welcome suggestions from members. They are also consistently seeking members willing to provide ARES offerings.

•Children, Youth, and Families

After reviewing guidelines and best practices from the [CDC](#) and [NC Department of Health and Human Services](#) for indoor schooling for children and youth, we have decided to allow all currently meeting age groups to hold class indoors

starting January 9. Our preference is still to hold classes outdoors and when the temperature is at least 50 degrees and there is no rain, ice or snow, classes will continue to be held outside in our current configuration.

The CDC is recommending social distancing of three feet for students while indoors. Both the CDC and NCDHHS acknowledge that maintaining social distance for the youngest children is extremely difficult and often not sustainable. Because of that, both recommend putting other precautions in place including wearing masks while inside, frequent hand sanitizing/washing, and increased ventilation in classrooms. We are currently looking into the square footage of our available classrooms to determine the maximum number of participants we will allow in each, marking classrooms for social distancing, and figuring out how to increase air circulation. Our Open Door School (ODS) has had great success operating safely using similar precautions.

Drop off and pick up for all ages will happen through the side ODS door so that children and youth are not using the same entrance or occupying the vestibule at the same time as adults attending service. As we do with all ages, we will require that those eligible to be vaccinated be vaccinated in order to participate in programming and will encourage parents to keep their children home when they are not feeling well or are displaying symptoms of illness.

SpiritPlay class continues each week, engaging our youngest participants in interactive stories and wondering questions related to our principles. Elementary students continue to assemble their windows and mirrors art displays, considering each week how they see the world. Our Middle School youth will begin a unit that considers our Unitarian Universalist values and how they shape our relationship with money. Parents will be invited to participate in a conversation with their youth around these issues as part of this series. Our High School youth continue to support one another in a peer-driven, safe space around the firepit on Sundays. Twelve HS youth participated in the kickoff Coming of Age retreat at Camp Canaan late last month, taking time to bond with one another and their mentors. This event was a great success, requiring many hours of time and energy from our volunteers and CYRE Coordinators.

Sadly, our annual Crafts with Santa event was cancelled due to weather. An encouraging number of volunteers had created games and crafts in advance and

were ready to put on a wonderful event including visits with Santa. The CYRE Team is pleased to have a jump on planning for next year.

The Parent Discovery Circle will meet for a third time this month, providing an ongoing opportunity for parents to gather for more focused spiritual reflection and connection-building

•Community Building

We had planned a Winter Solstice celebration to follow Crafts with Santa that also had to be cancelled due to the weather. Volunteers were ready to host cider and ginger snaps around a bonfire and both kids and adults were excited to put on a theatrical retelling of The Rebirth of the Sun by Starhawk. Our Adult Choir had prepared music for the occasion as well. Due to the scheduling conflicts of many volunteers, there is not a plan to reschedule. While it's disappointing to have had to cancel, the number of volunteers who excitedly agreed to help with the event was encouraging!

We will have two Christmas Eve cookie receptions outdoors following each of the family friendly services. Members of the Board and Community Building Team will heat and serve cider and members of the congregation will provide a spread of cookies. Again, it's wonderful to have members cheerfully stepping up to provide some merriment for the community.

•Discovery Circles

Two Discovery Circles met for the third time this month. We have two large groups with both returning and first-time participants. One Circle meets via Zoom and one Circle meets in-person. It continues to be a big help to have use of the Bernstein Room again which allows a better experience for intimate Discovery Circle discussions.

•Congregational Care

Our Congregational Care Team met the first Sunday of the month to put together this year's holiday mailing. In past years, holiday cards have been sent to people who have had a death in their family during the year. This year, the team felt strongly that every household in the congregation should receive a card. Under the leadership of Jan McNeely and Sheila Lay, with help from Belinda Parry who printed the cards and address labels, the team assembled and addressed each card now making its way to a UUCU household. The team also delivered meals and cards to members in times of crisis and celebration. 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.

In the month of November, the team discussed plans for completing our outstanding projects and potential grant projects for the upcoming 2022-2023 congregational year. Other items addressed included clearing our gutters, drains and roofs of leaves and ideas for better lighting around our entry ways to the building.

To address our outstanding projects, Alesia agreed to secure an outside company to address clearing the leaves from the drains, gutters and roofs. Charles Pilkey has created a locking cover for our newly installed firepit. He is adding the final touches and plans to have it in place by the end of the calendar year. The tree mitigation work will resume in the spring with Roy Smith, chair, taking the lead on the project, and we will have our potential Sexton install the required ADA signs for the hearing loops. The team plans to have a second discussion around potential MET grants at its January meeting and settle on a project that gets consensus from the group.

- Intersectional Justice Team

The Intersectional Justice Team met again in its December meeting with those interested in being a part of a unified Intersectional Justice Engagement Group. Together the Team and Group reviewed a revised version of our Guiding Principles and a document intended to help facilitate initial and ongoing relationships with potential “co-conspirators” in the larger community.

The new Group—Susan Cox, Marsha Kelly, Richard Pratt, Debbie Rubenstein, and Kathryn Whitfield—will convene in early January to begin their work together. They have been charged to help identify a wide variety of ways for UCC members to engage in the work of justice in the community. They will be pursuing a range of options requiring various levels of engagement from simple acts members can do quickly from home to deep commitments that will require training and months of involvement.

We are aware that this new effort will take time. But, both the Team and this new Engagement Group seem hopeful that the upcoming year will mark a time when UCC members will be offered many ways to engage in our commitment to justice under the leadership of those with who we will partner in this work.