

**Coordinating Team  
Report to the Board of Trustees  
February 2022**

In addition to the financial and membership reports, the Coordinating Team brings the following items to the Board for your attention and awareness:

**Movement Back to In-Person Activities**

The vagrancies of the pandemic continue to challenge us; there's no question the necessity of returning to all virtual programming in January was a setback and yet another barrier to fostering the kinds of connections we all want to see happen. Happily, the data for Mecklenburg County is, at long last, very encouraging. As you probably know, the case load is falling dramatically, and the all-important infection rate is the lowest it has been in a long, long time.

The professional staff made the collaborative decision that reinstating our hybrid services on February 20 is appropriate. We will also reinstate in-person CYRE classes on the grounds (weather permitting) or indoors (as necessary.) And, we'll be adding more opportunities for in-person activities in the coming weeks.

We will continue to monitor the situation very closely. We anticipate being able to reopen services without distanced seating very soon. As has been the case all along, we welcome the Board's perspective on this critically important issue.

**Search for Director of Lifespan Religious Educator**

Our search for a Director of Lifespan Religious Education went public as recommended by the Unitarian Universalist Association on February 1. We're now listed throughout the Unitarian Universalist (UU) network, each listing referenced to the portion of our website now devoted to this search:

<https://uuccharlotte.org/dlre-search-2022/>

Following the public launch of our search, we communicated with the congregation in a lengthy *Currents* article on Thursday, February 3. The article was intended both to inform our members and to invite their questions and input.

As a reminder, because UU religious professionals make commitments based on the congregational year (which, in most cases, is July 1 – June 30), anyone with a current position would not be available until after the end of the 2021 - 2022 congregational year. Given time in transition, we are hoping that our new DLRE will join our professional staff in August of this year.

### **Members in Need**

In the past few weeks, we have had both considerably more needs and much more serious needs among our membership. Several of our members face very serious health challenges and quite a few have had deaths in their families recently. Both of our ministers continue to be deeply involved with these members and our Congregational Care Team continues to respond with expressions of our collective support and concern.

The profound work of caring that takes place every day in our community often goes unnoticed but is both an essential part of who we are and something deeply appreciated by the recipients of our care. We continue to encourage our members to reach out to one another when needs are expressed in *Currents* and in the service. These acts of connection help shape our identity as a caring community.

### **Sexton Update**

It was reported in the month of January that a candidate had been identified and accepted the position. Although the candidate had initially reported they were vaccinated, when asked for proof they were unable to provide it. Unfortunately, this resulted in rescinding the offer for the position. In the meantime, Alesia Hutto has met with a potential resource for job candidates. She is awaiting a list of potential candidates to vet and possibly interview.

## **Proposed 8<sup>th</sup> UU Principle**

On Thursday, February 17, Eve and Jay will lead a third session intended to inform interested members about the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> UU Principle. This session sets the proposed new Principle in the context of the initial six Principles, the revised (and current) seven Principles, the historical setting out of which the proposed Principle has arisen and the current concerns about the persistence of a white supremacy culture within Unitarian Universalism. We hope members will take time to learn and reflect before engaging in critique.

As we noted previously, a significant number of UU congregations and other organizations have engaged in deep learning about this proposal resulting in them voting to adopt this new Principle. The national General Assembly vote is slated for 2023 and 2024.

## **“Share the Plate”**

The Stewardship Team is excited to share an important opportunity to broaden our generosity through a "share the plate" initiative. We will share half of our contributions (not payments on pledges) with organizations creating positive change in the broader community for a designated period. This effort will begin this month and continue throughout the year at regular intervals.

We will begin with Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU). BLUU was formed in 2015 by Black UUs with the mission of justice-making and liberation through our faith. BLUU expands the power and capacity of Black UUs within our faith. In BLUU, Black UUs have access to spiritual support, meaningful connection and community with other Black UUs, religious education for Black UU youth and more. In addition, BLUU’s mission of justice-making and liberation expands outside of UU spaces. Find more information about BLUU at <https://blacklivesuu.org>.

BLUU recently announced they are launching a three-year invitation for congregations across the country to support their work. As we at the Unitarian Universalist Community of Charlotte (UUC) “share our plate”, we can be one of the first congregations to help get this campaign off to a strong start.

The Board of Trustees is encouraging the Community to “renew our commitment, reconnect with each other and remember what matters most” in their recent message to the UUCC. This “share the plate” effort offers our community the opportunity to engage with this call from our board by “strengthening our connections with other justice-seeking communities in Charlotte and beyond.”

This “share the plate” initiative is part of UUCC’s proud history of generously engaging with the people and needs around us. We will continue to identify opportunities and make connections between UUCC and organizations who share our passion for justice and transformation.

### **Memorial Endowment Trust**

The Memorial Endowment Trust (MET) of the UUCC 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.

The Endowment Trustees are pleased to announce that there is \$44,000 available for potential grants for the 2022-2023 congregational year. They invite recognized UUCC Teams and groups to apply for projects that meet the grant program’s [guidelines](#). Over the next two months, staff members will work with their teams and groups to shore up potential grant proposals. Applications are due by March 31. The grants awarded will be publicly announced at the annual Congregational Conversation in June.

## **Charting Member Participation**

For January, 44% of our members were recorded as participating in our offerings, down from 48% in December. Attendance at January services averaged 107 per service. This is significantly higher than the average of 75.5 for December. This does not include the Sunday when UUCC did not offer a service. In January, at least 40 visitors participated in a service, affinity group or other offering. One of the largest offerings was a class, facilitated by our ministers, regarding the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> principle.

Our Membership Coordinator, Kelly Greene continues to monitor membership/involvement not only within our community, but within the larger denomination. Of the 24 large (over 550 members) Unitarian Universalist congregations that reported their membership to the Unitarian Universalist Association in both 2021 and in 2022, all but three lost members. The average loss was 40 members. From speaking with other membership professionals, some of these numbers include the removal of members who are no longer contributing financially but did not resign and some, as with UUCC, have not yet removed those members. We have approximately 33 member units that have not given in at least 12 months. Several membership professionals said their congregations have also experienced significant drops in participation of children in religious education and their families.

We have removed 11 member units this congregational year. One member died. One moved recently and another moved years ago and finally joined a church in her new city. Eight other member units resigned. Of those, three mentioned they had not been involved, four shared concerns about leadership and one did not give a reason and is still involved.

## **UUCC CARES Fund**

Fund Balance: \$23,772.21

## 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

We continue to look for ways to enhance the experience of those sharing in our services. We're experimenting with adding a more interactive component to the Facebook posting that occurs when our service is streaming live. The Sunday, February 6 virtual service offered the texts of readings and the meditation, links to referenced material and other information about the service content. If this proves valuable, we'll explore how to continue it with our hybrid services. We want those accessing the service by way of screen to feel as much a part of an experience as possible.

John Herrick and Judy Love are now at work exploring how to add aesthetic elements that would enhance the platform area. These include new flowers for the niche, elements for the (future) credenza (being built to match the new pulpit), paraments for the pulpit itself and other possible enhancements. We want our services to be visually compelling both in-person and on the live stream and this will help us achieve that aspiration. This work is being funded by a prior MET grant.

### •Adult Religious Education/Spiritual Development

Our Membership Coordinator, Kelly Greene, and minister, Jay Leach, have been leading a four-week series of classes focused on Henry Louis Gates' PBS series "The Black Church." Between 14 and 20 participants have joined in watching a portion of the series each Monday evening and then discussing the learnings. As this course offering concludes, participants are being asked to reflect on the question: "Obviously a primary part of Gates' focus has been on the centrality of the Black Church in the formation of individual and collective Black identity. What have you noticed in viewing this about the role of the Black Church in this regard?"

As we move back to the prospect for in-person and hybrid programming, we'll reactivate several of the ARESD offerings that were postponed due to the return to virtual only programming in recent weeks. We hope there will be robust participation in these offerings as they offer great ways for our members to fulfill the Board's focus on "connection."

- Children, Youth, and Families

As stated elsewhere in this report, CYRE programming will return to being offered in-person on February 20. If the temperature is above 50 degree and there is no rain, ice or snow, we will hold classes outside. Should the weather necessitate, we will hold classes indoors. Guidelines and best practices from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services \(NCDHHS\)](#) for indoor schooling for children and youth recommend 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 will be following all of those recommendations for our indoor classes. 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 ask that those eligible to be vaccinated be vaccinated 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.

During January and the first half of this month, Melissa Schropp and Lisa Walls worked with our volunteer teachers to pre-record each week's lesson which Belinda Parry then posted to our website and YouTube channel. Similar to our streamed Sunday services, the number of views for these lessons rises as the week goes on. The number of views for both class videos has been equal to or greater than previous in-person attendance numbers. With that in mind, as often as possible considering CYRE Coordinator and volunteer bandwidth, lessons for our SpiritPlay and Elementary classes will be offered both in person and virtually.

Our Middle School and High School youth have participated in live Zoom classes in very small numbers. Eve and CYRE Coordinator, Michael Amy Cira are currently working on creating more social opportunities for the youth to engage outside of Sunday morning. Our Middle School advisors have wanted to wait until the class could meet consistently in-person before embarking on a unit exploring how our Unitarian Universalist values influence our relationship with money (or don't). As far as we know, March will offer that opportunity.

Our Coming of Age program will continue with another virtual session this month inviting youth mentees and their adult mentors to explore what they hold most dear in preparation for writing Credo's in a few months to share with the wider congregation.

The Parent Discovery Circle will meet for a fifth time this month, again on Zoom, though they hope to return to in-person gatherings in March. This continues to be a meaningful way for parents to find support during a challenging time for families.

#### •Community Building

The Community Building Team showed tenacity and flexibility pivoting to virtual social opportunities this month. We currently have six pairs of UUCC members and guests exchanging letters as pen pals and are also happy to have a larger group for Virtual Social Suppers over the next few months than we had last year. This month, team member, Julie Prentice will facilitate an opportunity to "geek out" about the cosmos and team member, Susan Hill along with her daughter will offer an opportunity to learn more about creating butterfly habitats in time for spring. We've also set up a way for members to connect with one another while playing games or watching movies online but have only had one person interested thus far.

#### •Discovery Circles

The Small Group Ministry Steering Team met to discuss upcoming sessions and review how the dynamics of each circle and the content of each session are coming along. Facilitators report that participants particularly look forward to this



experience of peer support and spiritual reflection each month as a means of navigating another complex and challenging pandemic year.

- Congregational Care

Our Congregational Care Team continued to make phone calls, visits and to send cards to members in times of crisis and celebration this month. As noted elsewhere, this has been a particularly painful stretch with a number of our members navigating the loss of loved ones or serious health concerns. As such the team has distributed a number of prayer shawls this month which were gratefully received. 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 Ginny Sullivan with Alesia Hutto serving as staff liaison.

In the month of February, the team began to plan its work on submitting a grant application to the MET for adding awnings over the exterior doors leading to the vestibule and adding lighting on the Memorial Garden side of the building. The team has also agreed to co-sponsor a grant on behalf of the Open Door School Managing Team to replace the aging sheds on two of the playgrounds. Dan Maples has agreed to investigate awnings and lighting to obtain an estimated cost to include with the grant application. Charles Pilkey will work with Alesia Hutto and Sheila Locklear on options for sheds on the playgrounds.

The team continues to work toward applying for a grant through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Included in the Act is a pilot program for making federal grants to tax exempt 501(c)(3) organizations to upgrade buildings to achieve more energy efficiency. The Act specifically addresses the installation of materials on buildings that reduce the building's use of fuel and other energy, such as upgrades to roofing material, lighting systems, windows, doors, and HVAC systems. The Act provides up to \$50 million in grant funds annually through the year 2026. An organization can receive up to \$200,000 in grant proceeds. David Johnson, team member and grant writer has agreed to assist Alesia Hutto in

applying for the grant. Dan Maples is looking into our HVAC needs and Tom Moore and Charles Pilkey are looking into our exterior door needs. More news will be provided as it becomes available.

- Intersectional Justice Team

The Intersectional Engagement Group met twice in January and will be meeting again soon. This group—Susan Cox, Marsha Kelly, Julie Prentice, Debbie Rubenstein, and Kathryn Whitfield with Richard Pratt as the newly selected Chair—are continuing to organize and define 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. Jay has engaged in a lengthy conversation with Richard Pratt, is offering his support in any way that will be of value but is continuing to take a hands-off approach that allows the work in which we will be engaged to emerge not from his preferences or personal involvement in the larger community but from the members of our congregation.