

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

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

We've obviously had a setback in our desire to move "as quickly as we can, toward a fully-restored in-person presence, for worship and community." As we continue to monitor the data for our region, primarily through https://covidactnow.org/us/metro/charlotte-concord-gastonia_nc-sc/?s=24201333 the precipitous increase in cases, infection rate and positive test rate necessitated the discontinuance of in-person activities for the month of January. The professional staff is meeting on Tuesday, January 18 (the same day as the Board meeting) to review data and plan for February. While we are hoping for a return to in-person options, we will, as we have done all along, continue to be guided by both the data and the guidelines commended by the UUA.

In reviewing our records for November, December and the first Sunday in January, approximately 100 of our members chose to reserve a seat to attend a service in-person in our sanctuary. Many who attended did so multiple times; most of our members chose not to attend in this way. Similarly, most in-person ARESD offerings reflected limited interest. The choices being made by our members make it difficult to gauge the actual interest in a return to in-person activities in the ways we have been able to offer them.

Search for Director of Lifespan Religious Educator

Our search for a Director of Lifespan Religious Education continues. The Search Group includes Craig Harbold, Melissa Schropp and Julie Smith in a process that Jay is leading. A portion of our website is already devoted to this opening on our professional staff. Group members are meeting with both the ARESD and CYRE Teams to get their input and suggestions. We are finalizing a piece to be circulated through the available UUA channels. Our hope is to make a choice by

late spring and to have our new Director on site by mid-summer, likely early August.

Sexton Update

The search for our Sexton began in July of 2021. A candidate has been identified and has tentatively accepted the position. We plan to bring the Sexton on staff starting February 1 as a part-time employee. The choice to offer a part-time position is due in part to the uncertainty of the pandemic and to also measure if the hire is a good fit for the position from the employer and employee perspective. If both parties are in agreement with continuing the relationship, we will offer a fulltime position to begin May 1.

Black Church Engagement

On Sunday, January 16, a Sunday we've typically devoted to commemorating the life and witness of Martin Luther King, Jr., members are being encouraged to attend a service in a Black congregation locally or nationally. Information appeared in two issues of *Currents* providing possibilities for our members along with guidelines for participation.

On Monday, January 17 at 6:30 p.m., Kelly Greene and Jay Leach will offer an opportunity for members to reflect on their experiences in these services.

On Mondays, January 24, 31, February 07 and February 21, Kelly and Jay will be offering sessions reflecting on the PBS services "The Black Church: This is My Story, This is My Song" with Henry Louis Gates. Participants will view a portion of the documentary series in each session and discuss it.

As we consider both the possibility of partnering with a Black congregation in the future and the implications of the proposed UUA 8th Principle, we hope this focus will be of benefit. We're hoping many of our members will participate in these opportunities, made much more accessible by being offered in virtual formats.

Proposed 8th UU Principle

In a repeat of the session offering on Tuesday, December 14, Eve and Jay will lead a session intended 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, 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.

Downloadable/Podcast Portal

Thanks to concerted work by our Office Administrator Belinda Parry, we are in the final stages of creating a new way for members and other interested people to access our offerings. A portion of our website will include audio material that can be downloaded from the website itself and from our own designated sites on both Spotify and iTunes.

We are populating this initially with our services which we will offer as both full services and as just the sermon portions of services. We will begin to include other offerings including Credo sessions and ARES classes. In time we anticipate creating audio material specifically for this site in the format of podcasts. This will be another portal by which we can communicate with, inform and educate the congregation.

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 signs are being created and will be install upon completion.
2. Technology Upgrades to Create Hybrid Meeting/Learning Opportunities: We are awaiting feedback from Charlotte Sound and Visual on recommendations for an additional camera in the Bernstein room and selecting the 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 set to meet with the Focus 2020 Task Group the week of January 19. More news to come.

Later this month, the MET board will announce the available funds for the coming 2022-2023 congregational year. In the meantime, UUCC professional staff members have been working with their teams to solicit grant ideas that will be discussed at their next staff meeting on Tuesday, January 18. The generous contributions of our members to the MET of the UUCC make their grant program possible.

In addition to 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

In December, at least 48% of our members were recorded as participating in our offerings. Those who did not access the service through the Sunday morning email and did not comment on our Facebook page may not be included. Online service attendance averaged 65.5 devices per service. Not counting the three services we had on Christmas Eve, in-person attendance averaged 41 persons per service. With the approximately 180 people who attended Christmas Eve, that average jumps to 75.5. We also had over 250 views of the video of attendees singing “Silent Night” at the end of the last service. We also had 58 people sign up to attend adult classes. At least 50 visitors participated in December offerings, and at least 20 have participated so far in January. Affinity groups such as Open Mind Book Club, Lotus Path and our hiking group continue to be important ways visitors get to know us and members stay connected with this community. While we have had some members disconnect during the pandemic, we have also had new people, some UUs who are new to Charlotte, seek us out and get involved.

UCC CARES Fund

Fund Balance: \$23,722.21

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

The pivot back to prerecorded services presents yet another challenge for those creating our services. We remain committed to doing all we can to offer substantive services created to inspire, comfort and challenge. Because most of our members were accessing our services virtually, this change in format may not be particularly disruptive.

Our Worship Team continues to provide insightful feedback and suggestions on our services. We are incorporating their counsel into our approach as we create new services each week.

This Team will sponsor one of the MET Grant requests that will entail an upgrade to the quality of our technology in the sanctuary, improvement that we hope will improve the quality of our livestream. Barry Arendt is providing guidance as we reflect on how best to offer services designed both for participation in our sanctuary and for viewing on a screen.

•Adult Religious Education/Spiritual Development

Regrettably, our pivot away from in-person programing resulted in the postponement of some offerings planned for January. These will be rescheduled as soon as possible. As mentioned above with both the Gates “Black Church” series and the 8th Principle class, we are continuing to find ways to engage, educate and inform our members in virtual ways. We have a strong and committed ARES Team this year and remain deeply appreciative of the leadership of Sharon Baker in this challenging time.

•Children, Youth, and Families

Last month we shared that 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 decided to allow all currently meeting age groups to hold class indoors in the new year. Unfortunately, the rapid increase in cases, the infection rate and positive test rate for Covid-19 in our area required that we instead pivot to fully virtual offerings for the month of January.

Our CYRE Coordinators, working with Eve, quickly made plans to offer pre-recorded online offerings for our SpiritPlay and Elementary classes. Melissa Schropp and Lisa Walls created video recordings of the lesson for each age group and included additional activities and discussion prompts for families to engage with at home. Office Administrator, Belinda Parry, added these videos to our YouTube channel, website and the Sunday email which proved successful in helping families easily find CYRE programming for the week. Based on the number of views for each lesson and feedback received from participants, we had a higher level of participation in each of our younger classes than our December in-person average and engaged with families we had not been seeing in-person for months.

Michael Amy Cira worked with our Middle School and High School advisors to create alternative session plans for this month. The Middle School class will meet on Zoom and view portions of services from other faith communities in Charlotte before discussing their observations with one another. The High School class will meet on [Discord](#) to check in with and support one another. As previously experienced, turnout is very low in our two youth classes when we turn to virtual programming.

Our Coming of Age (COA) program has been off to a strong start with dedicated participation from mentors and mentees alike since the kick-off retreat in the fall. Michael and Lisa have transitioned quickly to make COA meetings virtual this month and are finding fun ways to encourage mentors and mentees to meet using Zoom or FaceTime to interview one another and continue building on their relationship.

The Parent Discovery Circle will meet for a fourth time this month, this time on Zoom, exploring the difference between being a loving parent and being a perfect

parent. This continues to be a meaningful way for parents to find support during a challenging time for families. Many thanks to the parent volunteer facilitators who make it possible.

•Community Building

The Community Building Team, working with Eve, was in the midst of planning social events to be held indoors this month. They have, of course, since pivoted to offering virtual options only. Zoom social opportunities have had a low attendance rate in the past. Nevertheless, there will be both small group and a large group social opportunity available on Zoom this month. The team is continuing to think outside the box about what might be offered in addition to Zoom while we cannot gather in-person. One approach being promoted this month is an invitation for UUCC members to be pen pals for a month, exchanging snail mail with one another in response to prompts provided by the CB Team.

•Discovery Circles

The Small Group Ministry Steering Team (SGMST) will meet with Eve this month to discuss upcoming sessions and review how the first three sessions have gone. Two Discovery Circles met for the fourth time this month. Many thanks to the dedicated volunteers who facilitate these Circles each month.

•Congregational Care

Our Congregational Care (CC) Team continued to make phone calls, visits and to send cards to members in times of crisis and celebration this month. The team discussed the current procedures related to the distribution of prayer shawls and baby blankets with the Healing Threads Affinity Group, the group that makes the prayer shawls and baby blankets. Previously, only those diagnosed with a terminal illness or who have lost a partner or child have received prayer shawls. Going forward, the CC Team may decide to provide prayer shawls to those who have lost parents, siblings and other loved ones on a case-by-case basis.

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.

For the months of December and January, the team has continued to work on and complete outstanding tasks which include getting the roof, gutters and drains cleared of leaves, completing and installing a locking cover over the firepit, and filling the compromise in the roof over the table closet. The work of clearing the leaves and the construction of the cover for the firepit has been completed. The installation of the cover and creating the locking mechanism will be completed the week of January 17. Tom Moore will work with Charles Pilkey on a solution for filling the compromise in the roof over the table closet.

In the month of December and January, the team also presented and considered potential MET grant projects and also reviewed grant opportunities through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The team has agreed to present a grant for installing awnings over the entry ways and adding more lighting to the Memorial Garden side of the building. Dan Maples is looking into awnings. David Johnson, team member and grant writer has agreed to assist Alesia Hutto in facilitating 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 newly formed Intersectional Engagement Group met for the first time on Tuesday, January 11. This Group—Susan Cox, Marsha Kelly, Debbie Rubenstein, and Kathryn Whitfield with Richard Pratt as the newly selected Chair—will meet again at the end of January to continue 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.