

Social Justice Council Meeting

April 29, 2023

The Zoom-only meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM. Attending: Linda Stoller (chair), Natasha Cruz-Knopf, Carole Vaughn, Marlene Calderone (treasurer), Harriet Ha-Sidi, Carol Hamilton, Rev. Amy Kindred, Eloise Hardman, Margie Manning, Eliseo Santana, Trude Diamond, and Anne Burnham (secretary). Check-in followed opening words.

Minutes (March 25th): Accepted.

New and Continuing Issues

- 1) Policy/Procedure for Space with Nonprofits: Linda reminded us that we had determined that coalitions are the way to get work done, as well as a way we can be supportive of other groups. Eliseo provided a good example of how well this works with the teach-in; there were lots of kudos from those attending and appreciation for the great space that we provided, as well as visibility for UUC. The policy for nonprofits, which SJC endorsed earlier, states that a member of SJC must be present for the event, with no cost to the organization, other than love donations. If anyone knows of a nonprofit (or any group that matches our goals) that is looking for a place to meet, let Linda know. Anne Gilbert needs clarity if someone calls in with a request; by checking the list of SJC committees, she can best determine what fits. Linda said that each request requires a vote of the council; she can put it on the next agenda or send out a special email if necessary, then Anne G. needs to know so that she can put it on the UUC calendar. It is the nonprofit's duty to do their own setup, breakdown and cleanup (not Susan Strauss, as that would incur extra expense) and the responsibility of the SJC member present to make sure everything is left in good order. Carol H offered to write up a simple statement of the process, which we can vote on by email so it doesn't have to be on the next agenda.
- 2) Pride 2023: Linda said that everything is coming together for St. Pete and Tarpon Springs to join us in the parade on June 24th; Lifelong Learning is making plans for the Family Day on June 10th, which other congregations may also join. There will be a truck with trailer to decorate for the parade.
- 3) Banned Books Distribution on May 6th, 11 AM to 1 PM: Carole V. reported there was a recent organizing meeting, the big push now is to broadcast the event and get the flyers out. There will be a lot of activities for children, we should encourage them to come. Eloise reported that last she knew, the Clearwater libraries won't post community events (although Carole V. found one in the county that would); Anne suggested the community boards at Panera Bread locations; Eloise said she'd do WMNF (but before the meeting ended, she found out that they need two weeks' notice; we should keep that in mind for future reference); Margie will send info to WUSF, Bay News 9 and Patch; Patti is sending out press releases. Eliseo mentioned that other groups (like the Teachers Union) are also having events and Chispa would like to donate Roberto Clemente books. Rev. Amy said that Adam Tritt has a process in place for us to follow while he is here. She feels it would be best to spread out events, including the unveiling of the Little Free Library at UUC, to keep the issue in the limelight. Linda has had thumbs up from Indivisible and the League of Women Voters, Carole V. from the ACLU.
- 4) Family Promise: Anne learned from Denis Sousa, executive director of Family Promise, that they will soon be moving to a much larger, static location in Pinellas Park. It will provide much-needed stability for the unhoused families and will also allow more of them to be served. Denis is scheduled to speak at Open Issues on May 14th and Anne hopes that many members of the SJC will attend to learn about these exciting developments and how UUC might become involved.
- 5) UU Transgender Workshop, May 20th at 1 PM: Linda reported that the Southeast Cluster is putting on a Zoom by two speakers from Equality Florida. One will be discussing transgender life through trans eyes and give a current legislative update; the other will address issues currently facing LGBTQ youth and families here in Florida. Linda has a flyer that she will send to each of us. She suggested having a watch party in the Patio Room, or members could just view it on their own. The Zoom will probably be recorded for later use.

- 6) Bread & Roses Women's Health Clinic: Rev. Amy reported that Rev. Ben (St. Pete UU) mentioned to her that the clinic needed volunteer escorts, so she went to check it out. She observed that there is a fence blocking the facility from the road but that still allowed someone to be on a ladder yelling at patients as they arrived and departed. Escorts carry umbrellas and turn them to protect the privacy of the patients. More info will follow about how we may be able to help
- 7) Arts Unite Us, May 13th, 1-3 PM: Trude explained that the intention of this event is to bring different marginalized groups together and build alliances at UUC and in the community. The focus will be on centering each culture's event in the middle of the Octagon round space, embodied in word and action. Three presentations: #1, a gourd artist and storyteller will show the book *Follow the Drinking Gourd* and children will participate by using gourd shakers; the artist will speak in the Social Hall afterwards about making these events; #2, Dallas Jackson will present a more scholarly talk about the African-American experience and activism through the arts; and #3, the Safety Harbor Diversity Advisory Board dance instructors will give a salsa demo and show how dance expresses cultural experiences from sadness to joy. Linda spoke about the incredible significance of this unique experience, which might need more explanation for UUC members. Volunteers are needed: to help set up and/or greet artists and audience in the Octagon, contact Trude; to set up and/or clean up in the Social Hall, contact Soledad Vaquer. Two events are budgeted for 2023-24, so there may be events in September '23 and May '24.
- 8) Foster Care Organization: Rev. Amy recounted how last fall a woman named Stephena Pierre came to UUC with an amazing story. She is CEO of WeCare Family Connections, the only minority woman-owned foster care agency in Florida. (Pinellas County has the most children of color in foster care in all of Florida.) After the two talked, Rev. Amy asked her what we could do to help and she replied, "babysit occasionally." Since we're not using UUC space enough, perhaps once a month, 10 AM to 2 PM, we could offer babysitting to give foster parents some time off. We'd need 2 adults for safety reasons, no more than 2 children per adult, background checks (Anne Gilbert has a service to do that); age of children to be determined. Maybe start June 3rd? This project might appeal to some members of the congregation who are not currently involved in the SJC. Stephena will be doing an interview with Margie during tomorrow's service. A coordinator is needed to be the point person; contact Margie or Rev. Amy if interested.

Treasurer's Report: Marlene gave this rundown for March: \$200 from the Refugee account went to a family in desperate need (balance of \$4,256.76); \$210 remains in Social Action In & Out for blankets (Harriet has had no volunteers to store blankets; will probably buy blankets in the fall with the money); \$1,607 available in Charity of the Month after disbursing \$1,605.30 to Feeding Tampa Bay, \$682.36 for Neighborly Meals on Wheels and \$88.50 to Habitat for Humanity (new donation); \$262.99 remains in Racial Justice; Fair Trade Coffee has \$500 (starting again?). The current SJ Budget balance is \$611.33 but \$400 is already committed to Adam Tritt and \$250 to the Pride Parade, so that account is slightly over for the year. Linda expressed concern about the overage and the need to avoid turning in a deficit budget for next year; she suggested that the overage amount be paid from the Pat McGivern account, Marlene agreed. Marlene is going to check with Joe Pace to see if he can automatically send out the final numbers for each month as soon as he has them, in order to facilitate timely SJC treasurer's reports. Marlene plans to retire at the end of this fiscal year (as soon as books close in June). Linda is looking for someone to do Community Outreach and another person to track income/expenses.

Committee Reports

- 1) Racial Justice: Trude reported that some members have told her that they have attended other community events.
- 2) Refugee Task Force: Barb Foley told Linda that she will wrap up ESL soon, that this group of refugees has achieved their goals so will not continue next year; she will see if there are other families in the fall.
- 3) FAST: Linda said that the Joshua Assembly on May 8th will include a followup to Nehemiah as well as the annual investment drive. Network members have received invitations to donate. Linda said that UUC was 4th in total turnout for Nehemiah!

- 4) Compassion & Choices: Anne reported that \$74 was received in donations at the March event (turned in to bookkeeper). As a result of the event, the ALF near UUC requested info and Anne met with the owner; she and the C&C St. Pete team leader will be meeting with a Quaker group in May, also at their request.
- 5) LULAC: Eliseo said that CPR training is ongoing at UUC, important for some people to have certification for employment. Chispa members have been meeting with school board members about using new federal funding for electric school buses; Pinellas will get 21 buses in August, the largest number in all of Florida. Lobbying in Tallahassee for HB 195, to put solar in schools that serve as emergency shelters, got 100% bipartisan support in the House (but won't pass in the Senate). Talks about affordable housing are ongoing with the St. Pete mayor and city council, as well as Clearwater city council. The Hispanic Women's Coalition is meeting monthly at UUC and the Teachers Union will have a "Work to Live" event at UUC (May 6th, 1 PM).
- 6) Environmental Justice: Eloise reported that paperwork was sent to the board for inclusion in the annual meeting packet so that the congregation can recommit to the Green Sanctuary Covenant and be made aware of the revised Environmental Policy (last revision was in 2012). Barb Shimer, Chris Mueller and Eloise gave a presentation at Open Issues on April 23rd. Rev. Amy pointed out that only 30 congregations have achieved Green Sanctuary status. It appears that UUC is also already following most of the 2035 UUA guidelines. Last night's Fourth Friday Fun at the Beacon Food Forest brought out a lot of UUC members who greeted attendees from the community; s'mores were made in the parking lot due to fire restrictions.

SJC Report: everything we talked about today! Harriet asked Linda to mention that someone is needed to help lead Migrant Justice.

Additional comments: Harriet would like for SJC to reinstate a Legislative Action Team, like we used to have. We should urge members to sign up for the SJC Calendar of Events mailing list.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 AM. The next Zoom-only meeting will be on Sat., May 27th, at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham