

Social Justice Council Meeting

September 24, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM. Attending in person: Linda Stoller (chair), Eliseo Santana and Anne Burnham (secretary); on Zoom were Rev. Amy, Natasha Cruz-Knopf, Carol Vaughn, Davonne Irion, Barb Foley, Eloise Hardman, Marlene Calderone (treasurer), Harriet Ha-Sidi (board liaison) and Christina Bellamy.

Minutes (August 27th): Accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Marlene reviewed the August report for Rev. Amy's benefit. Changes from the last report are: Charity of the Month has a balance of \$410.30 after sending \$300 to Feeding America Tampa Bay; the Better World Emergency Fund has \$2,616.86, with more UUC member donations possible before the end of the month (and the family will be making an annual contribution in Dec./Jan.); discussion about what to do with the \$500 remaining in the Fair Trade Coffee account was tabled for the SJC retreat this fall. The total balance for all the committed funds = \$11,524.74. The operating funds remaining in the Social Justice budget = \$1,165.62.

Marlene asked us to consider donating to Puerto Rico for catastrophic damages from Hurricane Fiona. Eliseo recommended an organization, Boricua de Corazon, a 501c3 out of Brandon that is very organized and working in Puerto Rico now. We voted to immediately send \$600 from the Better World Emergency Fund to that organization. Eliseo suggested inviting other UU churches in the area to donate along with us and said that he could set up a PR event on short notice. After considerable discussion, it was decided this would be a difficult time to involve the media, given that hurricane warnings are up for our area now and we also need to have a better contact list in order to get quick responses from nearby UU churches. We expressed appreciation for Eliseo's offer and would like to make arrangements with him for future press events.

New and Continuing Issues

- 1) Film project: Christina reported that she has reserved both Nov. 12th and 19th on the UUC calendar. NAMI staff have been very busy and she has yet to hear back about when a licensed mental health person can participate in our film event. The NAMI website does have short videos that we are able to use and there are many UUC members who can help with the Q&A and also caring for anyone in the audience who may be triggered by the content. Rev. Amy mentioned that her sermon on Nov. 13th will be a good tie-in with this event. There is a new Communications Team that might be able to help publicize this and other film events. Kelly Tew is a member of that team and has just completed a marketing course.
- 2) Postcard writing: Linda reported that a group of 15 members came to the NAACP Get Out the Vote postcard event at UUC on Sept. 17th and labeled/stamped 2,000 postcards. At 10 AM on Oct. 1st there will be a party to celebrate finishing up the Broward for Progress postcards that members and friends have been writing for the past several months; mailing of those cards will follow. (There will also be a seed/plant swap, with large community attendance expected, in the garden area from 9 AM-noon; consider arriving early to join them.) Linda suggested that Davonne send some photos from our postcard events to Broward for Progress. Harriet asked Davonne, at the board's request, to speak at its next meeting about the GOTV postcard work that has been done.
- 3) SJC Planning Day/Visioning Retreat: Due to many of our individual schedule conflicts, the planning/visioning date had to be moved to 9 AM on Nov. 12th or 19th, whichever day the NAMI film won't be scheduled for. It is important that all of us attend the retreat; for now we have been asked to keep both dates open.
- 4) Facilities Use Policy: Linda thought it best for us to review UUC's policy on using campus facilities, as there have been some revisions. A couple of the highlights that pertain to SJC: When groups "closely tied to UUC purposes and priorities and without ongoing external support" (such as LULAC, Puerto Rico Connect, FAST, refugees) use rooms on campus, there is no charge, just a request for love offerings from attendees. Linda also pointed out that in such cases a member of the SJC must attend the event and, where warranted, there may be charges for security and custodial services.

Committee Reports

- 1) Migrant Farmworkers: Harriet said no one volunteered to cochair the rice & beans and blanket distributions for Plant City migrants. She wondered if it might have seemed like too big a job; perhaps a new posting could ask for a volunteer for Harriet to mentor. Harriet agreed to make a list of what each project entails and how to contact the various people she has been working with. Discussion ensued about how to disburse funds from what is now in the rice & beans account (\$789.51), which Marlene feels is a lot of money to spend for just rice & beans. She is aware that Maria, spokesperson for the farmworkers, is in need of coolers for the perishables that she has collected to distribute along with our rice & beans, since in the future there will be no access to the camps. Barb F. volunteered to distribute the rice & beans after she returns on Nov. 1. We voted to donate \$250 for coolers, with any money left over to go to Maria's food pantry. Marlene will request a check; Harriet will send Maria's address to Marlene.

There is also \$210 still available for blankets for the migrant workers. Harriet said this is a bigger effort, that perhaps we can work with other groups on this; she will ask Maria if her church would be interested in joining with us. This is an example of instances where we need to be creative and collaborative in our outreach!

- 2) Racial Justice: Trude reported (in absentia) that a number of UUC members attended the Zoom on "Racism in Language" that ACLU Florida hosted on August 16th, led by Rev. Dr. Kristen L. Harper, senior minister at the Unitarian Church of Barnstable (MA). She also reported that the Pinellas Remembers First Annual Gala on Sept. 17th was "an uplifting event of remembrance of past racial terrorism in the form of lynching, and a celebration of a joyous, purposeful present and future." Carol added that about 120 people attended the gala, with UUC members filling one table; the group's next meeting will be from 3:30-5 on Oct. 1.

Carol also mentioned that the Pinellas County African American Museum will be hosting a talk, "100 Years of Voter Suppression," on Sept. 30 at 7 PM; Linda may organize a carpool for UUC members who want to attend.

- 3) FAST: Linda said that she and Lore Eargle have been organizing house meetings, now underway with 24 network members from UUC. The Annual Assembly will take place on Oct. 24th at Holy Family Catholic Church in St. Pete.
- 4) Compassion & Choices: Anne announced that plans are in the works for Clearwater Compassion & Choices to show a filmed theatrical production about end-of-life planning at Studio620 in St. Pete on Tuesday, Jan. 31st at 7:30 PM. It should be a fun and informative evening; stay tuned for more info.
- 5) Refugee Task Force: Barb F. reported that from 2-5 PM on Oct. 15th Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services will be in the Social Hall to give away professional work clothing. 60-80 refugees are expected to attend and 3 task force members will be there to assist; no clothing has been requested from us. Barb said that Anne Gilbert has been the point person with GCJFS and has been doing a terrific job with that. Christina asked if children will be attending; Barb said that she has let GCJFS know that parents have full responsibility for any children they bring. Some discussion followed about letting them go to the playground; Natasha will check with Lifelong Learning to see if there might be volunteers available to supervise play. (There will also be a Leadership Council meeting at the same time, plenty of space for everyone.)

Barb expects ESL classes to begin on Nov. 5th (through May).

- 6) LULAC: no report at this time because Eliseo had to leave early. (See his input earlier in the meeting re: the donation for Puerto Rico.)

Social Justice Report (9/25): \$600 donation from Better World Emergency Fund to Boricua de Corazon (an example of how this fund enables us to quickly respond to crises) + UU the Vote.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM. The next meeting will be on Sat., Oct. 22nd at 10 AM, on Zoom and in person in the Patio Room.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham