

Social Justice Council Meeting

February 25, 2023

The Zoom-only meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM. Attending: Linda Stoller (chair), Natasha Cruz-Knopf, Carol Vaughn, Marlene Calderone (treasurer), Christina Bellamy, Davonne Irion, Eliseo Santana, Eloise Hardman, Harriet Ha-Sidi (liaison to the Board), Trude Diamond, Carol Hamilton, Rev. Amy, Patti Hanks (ministerial intern), Kathy Krohn and Anne Burnham (secretary). Everyone introduced themselves and said how long they had been UUC members; chalice lighting with opening words followed.

Minutes (January 28th): Accepted

New and Continuing Issues

1) Family Promise: Anne followed up with Denis, Executive Director at Family Promise, re: UUC becoming a Support Congregation. That would mean signing a one-year agreement with a designated Host Congregation to help them as needed (e.g., providing food, helping children with school work, etc.). Denis has offered to speak at UUC any time and the group agreed that would be a good next step. Patti said that when UU St. Pete was a Support Congregation the requests could be small to large; Rev. Amy said she felt it was important for Denis to articulate what the specific tasks would be. Anne said she felt that Denis would try to partner us with a congregation that had experience with hosting. Eloise expressed concern about whether enough congregants would be committed.

Re: involvement of other groups with the homeless: Carol will check with Mt. Olive about the groups that they partner with and Natasha will ask at Directions for Living about possibilities.

2) NAMI: Christina said that volunteers offering to help with a support group at UUC have come forward following the NAMI presentation at UUC on Jan. 21st. The support group is intended for caregivers and family. She said that mental illness is everywhere; if not in our own families, we can learn and be supportive of our neighbors who are struggling. Often family members don't know where to go, having support meetings at UUC would help ground people. Davonne attended a support group and then 8 classes in NAMI's Family to Family program. She reported that NAMI does an excellent job, has a wealth of knowledge and tons of resource materials. Question: Is there any money in the budget to help with this? Rev. Amy said it would be like the setup at UUC for AA, which pays a room rental fee (\$105/mo., but Christina added that AA internal rules are that they do pay rent wherever they meet) and then there are love offerings from the group. Christina agreed to be the point person (for daytime meetings only). Harriet made a motion for the SJC to sponsor the project; Carol H. seconded; passed unanimously.

3) Banned books: Rev. Amy informed us about a former congregant of hers and high school English teacher in Brevard County, Adam Byrn Tritt, who has launched Foundation 451: Banned and Challenged Book Distribution. Its purpose is to distribute banned books for free to all ages. Adam has agreed to bring a trailer full of books to UUC on May 6th and he will also speak at the service on the 7th. He has requested a homestay for Friday and Saturday nights and travel expenses for the 4-hour drive each way. Rev. Amy said there needs to be a contact person at UUC since Adam is from a former congregation of hers. Kathy said that she would be willing to do that (and maybe Carol V. also). Adam will need some volunteers to help with the distribution of books. Eliseo made a motion that SJC sponsor and fund \$400 for the event; Marlene seconded; motion passed unanimously. Individuals can also donate directly to Foundation 451 on its website. Harriet suggested that this would be a good 501(c)(3) for Share-the-Plate later on. Meghan Foley's husband, Carl Brink, said he would make a Little Free Library for UUC.

Publicity: Rev. Amy said that she would fill out the UUC Publicity Committee form. Trude said that she has a list of websites that she will share; Anne will add hers to a list that SJC can have for future use. Eliseo recommended that we promote the event with other groups and said that he can bring in the media. All should share in that task by reaching out to various media outlets and sharing info with groups they belong to. Rev. Amy will get Adam's contact info and where he has already interviewed. Trude warned that there could be unwelcome guests on Saturday; need to

check with Gary Strauss to see if he can provide security. Harriet will let the Board know about this event.

Upcoming Events

- a) March 19th at 4:30 PM, Temple Beth-El, St. Pete: Author Saket Soni will speak about immigration and his book *The Great Escape*.
- b) March 27th at 7 PM, Nehemiah Action at Indian Rocks Baptist Church on Ulmerton Rd.
- c) March 18th at 2 PM in the Social Hall, premier screening in Florida of *Wooden Nickels*, a play about dementia.

Treasurer's Report: Marlene said that there is \$864.67 left in the 9550 Acct. (SJC budget). She mentioned that she would like to close the Social Action In & Out Acct. before the end of the fiscal year. Congregants originally contributed that money to buy blankets for the migrant workers and Harriet said that she would like to do the blankets program again. The best solution the group could come up with was to use the money to buy blankets now and find a congregant who is willing to store them at home until volunteers are able to distribute them in the fall.

Linda asked Marlene to order a check for the second half (\$1500) that we owe FAST. Linda requested reimbursement (\$44) for Side with Love posters that she ordered for the MLK March and she will send Marlene her receipt. Some posters are left over for future use—and Rev. Amy reported that the UUC banner has been found!

Outreach: Marlene suggested postponing our next two selections in favor of Ukraine and Turkey/Syria. The group agreed that due to the enormity of the situation following the earthquakes in Turkey & Syria, that they should be the first recipients. The donations will be from Share-the-Plate rather than from the Better World Emergency Fund so that congregants will have the opportunity to give from the heart. Harriet suggested using BWEF for backup, so that if donations come in at less than \$1K, the BWEF will make up the difference. Eliseo said that he prefers giving to local groups, such as the Jewish Refugee Committee, in support of Ukrainians; currently there are 3 Ukrainian families living near UUC. Eloise commented that little drops to a large organization make a difference, whatever we can give. In the end the International Rescue Committee was selected for Share-the-Plate in March, with all of the money earmarked for Turkey & Syria. We'll discuss giving to Ukraine at next month's meeting.

Committee Reports

- 1) Migrant Farmworkers: see Treasurer's Report above re: blankets distribution.
- 2) Racial Justice: February: Trude stated that 9 UUCers had dinner together before attending the highly informative program at the African American Museum on Feb. 17th. Some UUC team members attended the UUA "So You're Working on the 8th Principle" Zoom session.
Coming in May: Arts Unite Us, May 13th, 1-3 PM. Artists from diverse cultural backgrounds present and discuss their works, sharing how the works express their cultures and experiences within (or outside of) American culture. The first presentation will be a story common to all cultures, and the artist will take children to a classroom for creative activities related to the story and their own experiences (accompanied by Lifelong Learning volunteers). After the presentations in the Octagon, attendees will enjoy a coffee time in the social hall for conversation with the artists and each other. This event will be widely publicized beyond UUC media to attract people of many cultures.
- 3) FAST: Linda reported that the FAST Network Team met recently and will be making calls to UUC congregants to encourage them to attend the Nehemiah Action on March 27th. The FAST Rally to review the current status of the 3 issues (clean water, criminal misdemeanors and affordable housing) will be on Feb. 27th.
- 4) Compassion & Choices: Anne said that the core team will be meeting again soon to finalize plans for the premier screening in Florida of the *Wooden Nickels* play about dementia. It will be in the Social Hall at UUC on March 18th at 2 PM and information has been sent to various outlets to publicize the event, which is open to the community.
- 5) LULAC: Eliseo spoke about 2 important events coming up:

- a) March 2nd, 6 PM, at Clearwater City Council (pre-meeting at the main Clearwater library at 5 PM), to urge council members to allocate more resources for affordable housing; check the Facebook page; Clearwater residents can speak for 3 minutes @.
 - b) March 25th, CPR training at UUC, sponsored by LULAC. Lunch will be served at noon, followed by the training at 1 PM. American Heart Assoc. states there is a high need in the Hispanic community; training is also open to others, sign up early. Linda advised about protocol at UUC for food carry in/out; Eliseo will check with the environmental group (Barb Shimer, Chris Mueller, Eloise) to make sure he follows that. Eliseo made a motion for SJC to sponsor the event, seconded by Harriet; passed (7 in favor, 2 abstained).
- 6) Environmental Justice: Eloise said that she and husband Jay set up a UUC booth at the Hope Spot event at Edgewater Park in Dunedin on Feb. 11th. Hope Spots recognize the need to protect global ocean areas. This year's event was well attended and fun (despite some rain). In other committee news, Roger Young attended the latest SJC meeting to give an update on the solar panel research he has done. Eloise reported that there are new refugees at the garden (with translators). EJ members are currently tweaking UUC's Green Covenant and starting research on installing solar panels.

SJC Report: March events, including *Wooden Nickels*, Nehemiah, CPR training, need for congregant home to store blankets.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM. The next meeting will be Zoom only on Sat., March 25th at 10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham