

Social Justice Council Meeting

January 28, 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 and Anne Burnham (secretary).

Check in, followed by chalice lighting with opening words from 30 Days of Love (by Adrian Graham, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville).

Minutes (December 17th): Accepted

New and Continuing Issues

- 1) Family Promise: Anne spoke about the calls she made to participants at Allendale United Methodist, which was a Host Congregation prior to the pandemic. They had positive comments about their experience but SJC members agreed that we probably don't have enough congregants who could commit to such a large project. Other "soft start" suggestions to address homelessness in our county followed: be a Support Congregation for FPPC or a cold-weather shelter for the unhoused (both of which UU St. Pete does); bring trucks with showers & washer/dryers to campus for homeless, a real need for those working or seeking work (like Mt. Olive AME Baptist is doing). Christina reminded us about being in alignment with our strategic decision to be a "regenerative" community and Anne mentioned that while helping other groups with their programs we would also be building relationships in the community. Carol will check with her contact at Mt. Olive to see if they partner with other groups; Natasha will check with the Community Engagement Coordinator at Directions for Living about possibilities; Anne will get more info from Denis Sousa at Family Promise about becoming a Support Congregation rather than a Host Congregation.
- 2) Reproductive & LGBTQ Justice: Linda reported that Amy Weintraub (FL Interfaith Coalition for Reproductive Health & Justice) expressed concern about the increasingly loud and threatening protests (perhaps involving paid protestors) at the Bread & Roses Clinic in Clearwater since the overturn of Roe v. Wade. Amy's group has been strategizing with the city of Clearwater and thought we might want to be part of those talks in the open comment time. It is important to keep the issue on the Clearwater agenda. The group would also like to have a room to use at UUC for discussions. Carol went to a rally at the courthouse on Jan. 22nd in support of abortion rights that was sponsored by West Pinellas NOW. We need a point person from UUC; Linda will reach out to UUC members. Eliseo is a member of the NOW group, as well as the North Pinellas League of Women Voters, and will keep us posted about their activities in this regard.
- 3) Debriefings of past events:
 - A) MLK Day (Jan. 16): Carol asked for volunteers to serve at the breakfast, as UUC has done in the past; terrific response. Carol said she liked having time following the breakfast for everyone to meet at least 5 people they didn't know, also that the event attracted younger people.
 - B) NAMI (Jan. 21): Two volunteers and one paid staff member spoke to the 35 attendees about the many programs NAMI offers, and the volunteers told their personal stories as well. All but one of the attendees were from UUC and the feedback afterwards was very positive. There is a need for support for anyone directly or indirectly involved with someone suffering from mental illness and not knowing where to turn for help; e.g., with resources, self-care, asking for help, compassionate care, etc. UUC could be a beacon as a congregation open to this need. Davonne would like to see it include the community, not just UUC. Natasha suggested checking with other groups as far as frequency of meetings and to have NAMI initially facilitate to get the group started. Christina said that NAMI has a First Aid for Mental Health program. Support meetings at UUC would be informal, organized along the lines of those Al-Anon offers, with info followed by open-ended discussion. The meetings wouldn't be on the NAMI calendar; would be up to us to decide what is best for our particular community. Christina will take the issue to the Board to see if UUC would want to do this.

- C) Black History Month Series: The Pinellas County African American Museum had a presentation on Jan. 27th about the destruction of Rosewood, a predominantly Black community in Florida that was destroyed in 1923 during a racially motivated attack. UUC members met for dinner beforehand at K-Picu, a Puerto Rican restaurant around the corner from church.
- 4) Upcoming Events
 - A) Black History Month Series (cont.) The next presentation will be on Feb. 17th at 7 PM: "The African Diaspora Experience in Florida." Linda would like to see more UUC members attend these talks that speak to our 8th Principle. She will post them in the e-Octagram.
 - B) Peace Walk: Carol Hamilton is the point person for UUC. The walk will be tomorrow (Jan. 29th). Those attending can have lunch at the potluck after the service and be at Pioneer Park in Dunedin for the start of the walk at 2 PM.
 - C) Leif Nissen Foundation: Linda said that Karen Lieberman contacted her about the next presentation at Temple Beth-El, which will be about immigration on March 19th. Linda asked if we would want the SJC to be listed as a sponsor again (at no cost), we said we would. Linda will tell Harriet about it so that she can let the CIW (Coalition of Immokalee) know.

Treasurer's Report: Marlene reported that there is still \$1,158.83 in the Social Justice Budget. She will be sending the usual checks to UU-UNO and, after getting the official count of UUC members, to UUSC and UUJF. She and Joe Pace met recently and both now have a clearer picture. The Christmas Eve donation amounted to about \$1,600. In June Marlene will send \$1,000 to HEP (Homeless Empowerment Program)* from the Better World Emergency Fund (which recently received \$2,000 from the family). Two weeks from now Maria will be receiving the Rice and Beans money (\$250 for Igloo containers and \$540 to be added to the Feeding Tampa Bay account to purchase food for the migrant workers, as we voted on earlier).

The next Community Outreach recipients will be:

March: NAMI

April: Equality Florida

May: one of two immigration groups that Marlene will research

(Another suggestion for a future month: ACLU)

*Marlene would also like us to organize a tour of HEP's excellent facility.

Committee Reports

- 1) Migrant Farmworkers: Harriet absent, see Marlene's report above re: payment to Maria.
- 2) Racial Justice: Trude's report (in absentia): "UUC members assisted in setting up the Greenwood Recreation Center for the MLK Day breakfast on the preceding Saturday, and many more helped serve at the breakfast on Monday. We're gathering information on February Black History events in addition to the usual monthly opportunities to support minority-owned local businesses."
- 3) FAST: Linda stated that research and meetings continue re: this year's 3 topics. The Rally will be on Feb. 27th. Linda is trying to get a date set up for Open Issues.
- 4) Compassion and Choices: Anne reported that she and the core group of volunteers had a Zoom planning meeting with lots of good ideas re: the event on March 18th, which will be open to the community. David Feick will be testing the projector on the big screen in the Social Hall and Anne will be sending the info to the Digital Dept. at C&C for them to prepare a flyer for distribution and publicity.
- 5) Refugee Task Force: Barb Foley is leading the ESL group each Saturday during our SJC meeting time, so unable to attend.
- 6) LULAC: Eliseo summarized recent events: Hispanic Leadership Gala raised funds for scholarships at St. Pete College; Juvenile Welfare Board children's gathering of all organizations; Hispanic Women's Coalition met and thanked the SJC for providing the space. Future events: Press conference at City Hall to advocate Tropicana remain in hands of citizens and include affordable housing; Faith in Florida, to encourage north county to take more actions on housing crisis; CPR training will be held at UUC on March 25th; making civic education video of different elected positions in Pinellas County, starting with judges.

- 7) Environmental Justice Team: Eloise said that the EJT has reconvened and will meet on the 2nd Tuesday, same Zoom # for each. The group is small now, proposal to congregation to recommit. There was discussion about the UUA 2030 Green Sanctuary; many of the items UUC has already done, may not need to recertify. The team is trying to focus on one thing at a time.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40. The next meeting will be Zoom only on Sat., Feb. 25th at 10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham