

Social Justice Council Meeting

October 28, 2023

The Zoom-only meeting was called to order at 9:35 AM. Present: Linda Stoller (chair), Carole Vaughn, Bob Hedlund (treasurer), Carol Hamilton, Christina Bellamy, Rev. Amy Kindred, Eloise Hardman, Eliseo Santana, Trude Diamond, Barb Foley, Jen Garren, Marlene Calderone, and Anne Burnham (secretary). Check-in followed opening words.

Minutes (for Sept. 16th): accepted. Anne explained that she sends minutes out to SJC list within a few days after each meeting; any changes are subsequently noted in red type and included in the minutes Linda sends out before the next meeting.

NEW AND CONTINUING ISSUES

- 1) Outreach: Guest at Your Table, annual fundraiser for UUSC (UU Service Committee) will be the Outreach recipient for Nov. Linda ordered supplies, including info pamphlets that each member will receive at the Nov. 5th service (no boxes now). Donations can be made in envelopes for weekly collection plate (check or cash, specifying UUSC); online to UUC's Breeze account; or directly to UUSC (online, using QR code in pamphlet, or by mail for those who don't use a computer, using form in pamphlet). Trude will post info in the *Octagram* and Bob will inform Joe.

The *Octagram* announcement for The Haven began on Oct. 1 and has been listed on Breeze for the month of October. UUSC Guest at Your Table is scheduled to be in the *Octagram* beginning on Nov. 3 and will be listed on Breeze for the month of November. The Outreach recipient for December will be Feeding Tampa Bay.

- 2) Mitten Tree: Rev. Amy mentioned that a woman from a Methodist congregation asked her if UUC would be interested in joining with other congregations to collect hats & mittens. The group expressed interest in reinstating our traditional Mitten Tree this year. Marlene spoke about her experience heading it up, that it is labor intensive and involves storing gifts; the Shepherd Center has been good to work with in the past. A lead person and 2 or 3 helpers are needed; no volunteers came forward at today's meeting. Linda will put a notice in the *Octagram* to see if a covenant group or other congregational members would take charge of that. Linda will also call the Methodist woman and Rev. Leddy at Unity about the hats & mittens collection.
- 3) People's Elections Workshop: Linda reported a successful meeting in Oct. with 50 people (including several from UUC). Emphasis was on how to reach young people and those in marginalized communities. The group will report back in Jan. and plan next steps. Eliseo noted that at UUC we need to start working earlier, as voting will take place in Clearwater in March. Rev. Amy suggested sending out postcards to tell people they have to sign up to get mail-in ballots (new rules), perhaps include QR code on the cards to make that easier. Ann and Joe Myers have been involved with disseminating election info at their retirement complex and Carol H. took postcards to laundromats in the last election cycle. Linda will be in touch re: date for next meeting.

- 4) Open Issues, SJC Sunday: The next OI for SJC will be on Nov. 26th (Thanksgiving weekend). Carole V. suggested doing something about the Doctrine of Discovery. Christina highly recommended a discussion that a journalist moderated on WMNF with 3 local indigenous leaders. Eloise noted that Ann Myers already scheduled an indigenous leader for OI on "our" date, so Linda will check with her about what she is planning. Perhaps we could invite the 3 tribal leaders to speak on a different date for a larger audience, which would allow more time for them to speak; a previous OI would be beneficial in informing congregants about indigenous issues. Christina will send her WMNF info to Linda. Carole V. also mentioned a movie Tombole Books showed that she thought was excellent. She will check to see if she can get it to show at UUC, perhaps for a movie night, like we used to have. Trude suggested that local artists might bring artwork to hang in the Social Hall where the movie would be shown. Linda and Trude commented about the synchronicity of so many social justice issues with the arts and Arts Unite Us.
- 5) New Member Orientation: Christina and/or Eloise volunteered to speak to new members about the SJC on Nov. 12th. Linda requested that they cover the whole span of what SJC does.
- 6) Rental Events at UUC: If a group renting space at UUC can't set up & take down on their own, they can hire Susan (minimum of 3 hrs.) If she isn't available, Ryan has been hired for setup/takedown (but not cleaning). This would be established on a case-by-case basis, typically would be for half or whole day events with catered lunches. Some groups self contain, in which case they don't have to pay for services. There will be no more event scheduling during Oct./Nov. while all this is being worked out. Zoraida has been hired as the new custodian (Sun./Wed./Fri.)

Treasurer's Report: SJC sent \$487.72 to HEAT for Outreach in Sept. and NAMI received \$25 in donations. In August SJC voted to send the \$210 left for blankets in Acct. #2301 to Maria in Plant City. Linda will send her contact info to Bob so that he can request a check be sent.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 1) Racial Justice: Trude sent a report that no members reported engaging in any RJ events during October. November events will be planned at our meeting on Nov. 4th.
- 2) Refugees: Barb said that she is working with one family but scheduling is difficult because both parents are working full-time now. They may need financial assistance for clothing.
- 3) FAST: Linda reported that the research kickoff meeting will be on Nov. 13th at 6:45 at 1st Baptist on Gandy Blvd. and everyone is invited to attend. The same 3 issues are being addressed this year: affordable housing, water quality and criminal justice. April, lead organizer for FAST, will be on maternity in Jan. Clearwater Council will consider passing an ordinance re: rain gardens. Linda would like to consider hosting some legislators next year at UUC.

- 4) NAMI: Christina said that the 3rd session (Zoom and in-person) will be on Wed., Nov. 8th, from noon to 1:30. She spoke about compassion fatigue and the acute need for the spiritual/mental health, which are issues that NAMI addresses in a respectful and well researched way. These meetings are for everyone; she would like to see attendance double from current 12 or so participants.
- 5) Compassion & Choices: Anne reported that the C&C booth at the Sr. Expo in St. Pete on Oct. 25th had lots of interest, a successful event.
- 6) LULAC: Eliseo spoke about a few of the 30 local social justice groups he belongs to that involve a broad range of activities county- and state-wide. He would like to find funding for local basketball/soccer leagues (400-500 young people) that he has learned lack insurance and don't know how to interact with officials. He also mentioned that there will be an affordable housing meeting at UUC on Nov. 18th from 10-noon to discuss the status of state funding and actions to promote. There is \$15 million available in Pinellas County for affordable housing; Linda asked him to let FAST know about this.
- 7) Environmental Justice: Linda reported that Environmental Justice members Eloise, Barb Shimer and Chris Mueller did a great job presenting for Oct. OI; most of discussion was about the clean water petition for the 2024 ballot, with petitions for members to sign circulated afterwards. Eloise said that the meetings will continue to be on the 3rd Wed. from 7-9 PM on Zoom and that a new link will be posted in the *Octagram*. She mentioned that EJC is talking about having some field trips in the future. She would also like to see EJC be a sponsor for the Hope Spot Festival that will be in Dunedin on Feb. 17th next year. The EJC group wants to find out how it can help with solar planning for UUC when Roger Danada returns to Florida.
- 8) Interfaith Tampa Bay: Maryann Hamilton sent a message that she needed someone to make coffee for today's International Dances of Peace at UUC. Our group felt coffee wasn't necessary, sufficient water will be available.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50. The next Zoom-only meeting will be on Sat., Nov. 25th, at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham