

Social Justice Council Meeting

September 16, 2023

The Zoom-only meeting was called to order at 9:33 AM. Present: Linda Stoller (chair), Carole Vaughn, Bob Hedlund (treasurer), Carol Hamilton, Rev. Amy Kindred, Eloise Hardman, Eliseo Santana, Trude Diamond, Barb Foley, Maryann Hamilton, Laura Davonne, Sue Hand, Patti Thomas Hanks and Anne Burnham (secretary). Check-in followed opening words.

Minutes (for August 26th): Motion to accept by Sue, seconded by Carol H., passed.

New and Continuing Issues

- 1) Abortion petitions: Sue noted 2 benchmarks that have been reached: 250,000 signatures have been verified as accurate, which allows for petition review by the FL Supreme Court, and 700,000 signed petitions have been collected so far (goal is 1.2 million, more than the 900,000 required in order to be on the safe side). Need volunteers from UUC to collect signatures on petitions at public places. Also, while Sue is away in Oct., 2 people (for safety) are needed at UUC hub to collect signed petitions (3 Wednesdays from 4-6, 3 Sundays from 2-4). Sue will send a notice out to the congregation asking for signups.
- 2) Upcoming in September
 - Sept. 30, Arts Unite Us, 1-4, at UUC: Trude is delighted with the partnerships among diverse communities that are helping publicize the event, also promotions by other UU congregations. She appreciates all volunteers and everyone who shows up, especially people from other cultures.
 - Sept. 21st, International Day of Peace, Weaver Park, Dunedin, starts at 6 PM: Maryann reported that UUC is one of the member religious organizations. There will be speakers from various communities; no walk is involved. Carol H. said that anyone who can help set up chairs or whatever else is needed at 5:30 is welcome.
 - Sept. 24, 1st Open Issues that SJC is responsible for leading. Linda is planning a discussion about fascism based on the UUA Berry St. presentation this year and the 10 Tactics of Fascism. Attendees will discuss what the role of our faith and UUC should be to counter fascism.
- 3) Upcoming in October
 - Oct. 7, Beacon Garden and Food Forest's seed and plant swap, pesto making and other demonstrations and trunk sales.
 - Oct. 21, 11-2, People-Powered Elections mtg., Social Hall: Linda said that this will be a brainstorming session of leaders from various groups (e.g., Indivisible) re: how to get out the vote.
 - Oct. 21, evening, PFLAG Halloween Bash: Linda reported that having the PFLAG relationship is bringing together a consortium of friends in the area, including from UU Tarpon Springs. The event is on Monday's Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) agenda.
 - Oct. 28, Interfaith Tampa Bay, UUC: Maryann said there will be sufi dancing and dances of international peace from 4-6, potluck following (attendees to bring a dish, tableware in compliance with Green Sanctuary). Linda said that it needs to budget for 3 hours @ \$25 in order to pay for Susan Strauss. Note: Susan Strauss will no longer be custodian but will be staying on as events person, will do setup, provide tableware, etc. Rev. Amy will talk with Anne G. to clarify.
- 4) Little Library: This is on the LLP Committee agenda for Mon. mtg.
- 5) WeCare Family Connections, babysitting for foster parents: Rev. Amy said this hasn't taken off, need to make a decision; has been added to LLC's Monday mtg. agenda. Suggestion made that perhaps we could consider WeCare Family Connections for Outreach; Trude will contact Stephene Pierre to see what she thinks would be most helpful for the group; Eloise suggested not being too specific. Suggestion made to invite the foster families to UUC's Halloween Trunk or Treat.
- 6) SJC at Open Issues, NEW! 4th Sunday each month: Joe and Ann Myers are heading up OI, disparate groups will plan topics and it will be in person (and on Zoom, if there are members to help with that). For Oct. 22, Eloise suggested the Environmental Justice Comm. might be able to do a program on the water petition for the 2024 ballot; maybe invite someone to speak about it. Anne thought it might be good to have an update in Nov. on the IPL grant and plans for solar at UUC if Roger is back in town by then; she will contact him. Possibilities for December tabled until after holiday schedule is set.

Treasurer's Report

Bob reported that there will be no Finance Comm. meeting this month. He is planning to set up a meeting with Bob Barnett and Dale (new bookkeeper) in order to make optimal accounting arrangements for the future. Bob issued a check for \$950 to Clothes to Kids, some question about whether the amount he had been given was correct. Patti mentioned how thrilled the organization was to receive the contribution (enough for 20 full wardrobes) and 300 pairs of socks (each child gets 5). SJC members should thank the RE kids for doing such a great job decorating the bags! A suggestion was made that if a shortfall remains, we could make a special request to the congregation to make up the difference. Eliseo commented that his family has been recipients in the past and he will make sure that happens.

Outreach: Trude will send SJC members the list she has made of all recipients for the last 2 years. SJC members have voted on these groups for Outreach:

Sept. (ongoing): HEAT, Pinellas County Public Schools, aid to unhoused children

Oct: The Haven (Clearwater) for Domestic Violence Month

Committee Reports

- 1) Racial Justice: Trude said that in September the committee was busy making preparations for the Arts Unite Us event. Some UUC members attended Community Conversations with the African American Heritage Association at Tombolo Books (St. Pete) in September (film screening of *Underground History* and discussion panel).
- 2) Refugees: Barb will be returning to FL end of the month and will reassess status then.
- 3) FAST: Lore and Linda are leading small group discussions about issues of concern members would like to see addressed this year. FAST will show support for Clearwater 2025 stormwater plans at early Oct. mtg. in Clearwater. On Sept. 28th there will be a meeting with the St. Pete police chief re: issue of arrests for minor traffic violations.
- 4) Compassion & Choices: Anne G. received a call re: having a Death Café at UUC. Anne B. told her that C&C Clearwater would be interested in helping out with the event. No call back, will try to get contact info and extend a personal invitation.
- 5) LULAC: Eliseo announced formation of Clearwater Alliance for Housing. He is aware of broad support in the community to address affordable housing. Many individuals want to have impact in Clearwater re: legislation and processes. Eliseo believes there is a need to educate others who express that "want" so they can learn exactly what is happening, what options exist and how to be effective. He is requesting meeting space (donation basis) to bring community leaders together in order to discourage groups acting in silos. Nov. 18 would be the first meeting, would have an overview of the housing system. A proposed schedule of monthly meetings is available from Eliseo. Patti inquired whether Homeless Leadership Board would be involved; Eliseo responded that all are welcome, that many groups have this as their top priority. Rev. Amy cautioned that many groups are contacting Anne G. for meeting space and suggested Eliseo firm up dates and space request as soon as possible.
Eliseo reported that the Hispanic Women's group is extremely grateful to have a place at UUC for their monthly meetings. Rev. Amy advised that the women's group would need to use Surti Hall this Friday since setup for the garage sale will be taking place in the Social Hall. The group wants to make the area spiffy after their meetings, so Rev. Amy will see to it that a vac and mop are available.
- 6) Environmental Justice: Eloise reported that EJC will be resuming meetings this Wed. at 7 PM on Zoom. The agenda will include discussion about the water petition and possibility of having a program about it at Open Issues on Oct. 22. Videos and educational info will continue to be posted on the e-Octagram.
- 7) NAMI: Christina reported (in absentia) that the first meeting was successful, albeit a small gathering of UUC members only. We should spread the word about this startup group having monthly meetings at UUC. Eloise commented that networking is a 2-way street because UUC members can also learn in the process. Even if we're not affected by mental illness in our individual lives, there might be someone we know who could benefit by attending meetings. The group is very appreciative of the space that UUC is providing for their monthly meetings. Linda noted that this is about Beloved Community. Trude stated that mutual sharing of outreach goodness spreads exponentially.
- 8) Interfaith Tampa Bay: See Maryann's report in Upcoming in October (above)

Other

Carol V. asked if SJC will be having a planning retreat again this year; discussion but no decision. Eloise thinks we need to better share with the congregation what we're working on, ask what their interests are, what they think of SJC's work. Linda suggested that in conjunction with our new responsibility for Open Issues each month, we could ask people to review what SJC is doing; chance to bring in new people.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20. The next Zoom-only meeting will be on Sat., Oct. 28th, at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham