

Social Justice Council Meeting

July 23, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM. Attending in person: Linda Stoller (chair), Eliseo Santana, Trude Diamond, Sue Hand, Barb Czech, Carol Hamilton, Carol FitzSimons and Natasha Cruz-Knopf; on Zoom were DaVonne Irion, Barb Foley, Eloise Hardman (board liaison), Marlene Calderone (treasurer), Carol Vaughn and Anne Burnham (secretary).

Minutes (June 25th): Accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Marlene reported status quo, process should improve. Community Outreach recipients: Clothes for Kids (August), Better World Emergency Fund (September).

New and Continuing Issues

- 1) Film Series: no report from Christina at this time
- 2) Postcard writing update: Linda reported that there were 11 people at the postcard writing party last Saturday morning. UUC is partnering with the Upper Pinellas County NAACP to send postcards to residents in the Greenwood area of Clearwater; 500 cards of theirs were addressed & labeled, then 100 more were written from the lists that Broward County has sent us for our area. We will probably have another mailing party in September.
Eliseo said that 200,000 voters have been purged from the voting rolls; Linda stated that multiple organizations are checking registration information. Eloise stated that if voters have not received a new voter registration card within the last two weeks, they should verify their status to be sure their names have not been purged. Voters can update their signature by contacting the elections office, and check their status, including address on file, at votepinellas.com.
The NAACP Get Out the Vote campaign needs volunteers to drive the student canvassers to their assigned addresses in the Greenwood area from 4-7 PM; let Linda know if you can help. GOTV has raised \$10K to pay the canvassers and has applied for a national NAACP grant for more funding. They are also planning to put flyers in food boxes at area pantries. NAACP meetings are on Zoom every Sunday at 4 PM; all are welcome to attend.
- 3) Side with Love Training: Linda reported that she, Sue and Natasha attended the first of a 3-part series about reproductive justice that Side with Love is offering. The current discussion is different from 50 years ago (before Roe) in that it now focuses more on the intersectionality of issues for women of color and the poor, as well as other marginalized groups. By using the terms "reproductive justice" and "bodily autonomy, we can avoid hot button words like pro-choice and pro-life, thereby broadening the scope of discussion and action. Linda referred us to the "UUA Statement of Conscience on Reproductive Rights" that congregational delegates voted on in 2015 (<https://www.uua.org/action/statements>), which most of us were not familiar with. Natasha spoke about the ways that congregations can participate in the Reproductive Justice Movement—from low to medium to high(er) risk—that are spelled out in the Congregational Repro Justice Action Guide, online at bit.ly/UURJOGuide. Linda asked us to review this guide so that we are familiar with it when she provides information to the congregation and asks members what actions they are comfortable taking, both individually and as a congregation. Trudy said what we can do depends on FL laws; Eliseo reminded us that the governor appoints the FL Supreme Court and has veto power, need to appoint reasonable people.
- 4) Women's Equality Day, August 26th: Linda asked us if we would want to do something on that date to recognize women's rights. Trude suggested a party that could include information from the ACLU. It might also be an opportunity to give out voting info. Linda will check with the NAACP to see if there is something we might do with them.
- 5) SJC Planning Day/Visioning Retreat: This is something we did yearly before the pandemic and Linda feels we need to do again in order to establish what we want each committee to do, as well as the council as a whole. We selected October 22nd for an all-day retreat, with food, perhaps outside.

- 6) UUCSJ Immediate Response on Facebook: The purpose of the page is to inform members about events on short notice. Postings need to be approved by the administrator in order to avoid inappropriate information (e.g., endorsement of candidates that could violate our tax exemption status; Natasha will clarify the IRS rules for us). Barb C. requested more complete info in posts (e.g., exact location, carpooling); anyone can post questions and suggestions they have. Eliseo mentioned that he can provide a radio system for communication between individuals at events.

Committee Reports

- 1) Migrant farmworkers: no report from Harriet Ha-Sidi.
- 2) Racial Justice: Trude will post a notice in the next e-Octagram encouraging UUCers to sign up for the "Racism in Language" Zoom meeting hosted by ACLU Florida on Tuesday, August 16th, 6:30-7:30 PM. The discussion will be led by Rev. Dr. Kristen L. Harper, senior minister at the Unitarian Church of Barnstable (MA).
- 3) FAST: Linda reported that Lore Eargle attended a weeklong meeting sponsored by DART for FAST-type organizations. In August FAST will start preparing for September house meetings.
- 4) Compassion & Choices: Anne mentioned that she and Carol stopped by the C&C booth at the St. Pete Pride Parade and chatted with regional leaders Nicole Reyes-Palma and Daisy Orihuela.
- 5) Refugee Task Force: Barb F. reported that Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services has requested assistance from UUC in two capacities:

- GCJFS has procured the assistance of lawyers to meet with the Afghan refugees in our area to assist them with their immigration status and permanent refugee paperwork. Most of the refugees do not have transportation but our nearby location would be an easy walk for them. The request is for the use of one room on Thursdays from 1-6 PM to meet with a few families each day.
- GCJFS is also asking for a one-time use of our facility (probably the Social Hall) to display slightly used clothing that they have collected for refugees seeking professional employment to select. They would probably need to have tables set up.

No fees will be charged for either usage. The vote was unanimous to grant both requests. President Margie Manning was very positive and said to talk to Anne Gilbert re: availability.

On another note, Barb talked to Jay about offering garden space to the Afghan families; Jay was enthusiastic about the idea and has already reached out to them.

Suggestion was made to invite GCJFS to present at an Open Issues after Barb returns in October.

- 6) LULAC: Eliseo announced there will be a Judges Forum on July 28th from 6:30-8 PM at St. Petersburg College on Drew St. On August 2nd there will be a School Board Forum, same time & place. Both will also be on Zoom and have a Q&A. Eliseo expressed the importance of having an informed electorate in the Hispanic community (headphones will be provided for Spanish speakers) as well as the value in meeting candidates in person to assess qualifications. For more info, check the LULAC facebook page.

Eliseo said that the gun safety program just finished. Also, he was recently asked to cochair the Child and Family Success Project.

The next SJC meeting will be on August 27th at 10 AM on Zoom and in person in the Patio Room. The meeting adjourned at 11:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham