

Social Justice Council Meeting

November 25, 2023

The Zoom-only meeting was called to order at 9:35 AM. Present: Linda Stoller (chair), Davonne Irion, Margie Manning, Bob Hedlund (treasurer), Carol Hamilton, Eloise Hardman, Eliseo Santana, Trude Diamond, Barb Foley, Maryann Hamilton, Marlene Calderone, and Anne Burnham (secretary). Check-in followed opening words.

Minutes (for Oct. 28th): accepted, with corrections from Eliseo and Eloise. Anne will run Eloise's changes by her before posting on the website; Eliseo's was corrected before voting on minutes.

NEW AND CONTINUING ISSUES

- 1) People's Elections Event: Linda reported that the group met yesterday. Indivisible 13 brought bags that they had put together with election info, including badges (on lanyards) that have a QR code. The idea is for us to wear the badges to events and ask people if they are registered. If they aren't, they can click on the QR code, which will take them online to the Supervisor of Elections (state and local) to register, as well as update registration and check status. The badge also provides a way to register for a mail-in ballot (now necessary to do before each election). We are encouraged to wear badges at UUC Social Hour and any members who want to get their own bags to register people can pick them up at the Social Justice table. Eliseo reported he has already registered 30-40 people this way at his events and said it was very easy to do. Linda will check with Lauren about including the QR code in the e-Octagram notice; Margie will send Zoom host Loré a message to put in the chat and also let Worship Associates know to announce during the service; Linda will hold up the badge for everyone to see when she talks about the program in her SJ report tomorrow. The March 19th election in Clearwater is not a standard date, so we need to promote registrations immediately. Trude believes it's a good idea to go to the election website about a week before elections just to be sure the state hasn't removed our names. Eliseo suggested checking the UUC directory for members who live in Clearwater and sending an email directly to them about the election (volunteer needed to do that).
- 2) Open Issues Social Justice Sunday: Linda will show a video from the UUA website about the Doctrine of Discovery and speak about the 2012 resolution at GA. Discussion will follow about steps that our congregation can take to address oppression of indigenous people. There will be no Open Issues in December.
January: highlight election issues, as there are many candidates and issues on the ballot. Eliseo will ask North Pinellas League of Women Voters president to recommend who would be best person for us to invite to speak on Jan. 28th. Other possibilities for SJ Sunday: Feb. 25th, racial justice; March 24th, FAST; April, Environmental Justice re: Earth Day.
- 3) Abortion Petition Day of Action: Anne gave a short overview about the current status of abortion petitions in FL, noting that 6 out of 14 districts have met the threshold for state validation, Pinellas County being one of them. Amy Weintraub told Linda that Wesley Chapel (in District 15) needs help and she recommended a few libraries where we could get signatures. Eliseo suggested amateur sporting events would be good places to petition; Linda will follow up with people Amy told her might have ideas for specific locations/events. Donna Polhamus, Anne, Barb F. and Linda are interested in going to Wesley Chapel; Linda will post a notice in the e-O to see if others from the congregation would also like to go.

- 4) 30 Days of Love (Jan. 15-Feb. 14): The UUA sends out ideas for activities; Marge will alert Worship Associates about suggestions for Sunday services. Carol spoke about the United Faiths Walk of Peace on Jan. 28th, in line with the United Nations Day of Peace. It starts at Pioneer Park in Dunedin at 2 PM, stops at Al Salaam Mosque, then goes on to Weaver Park. A limited supply of peace t-shirts will be for sale (\$15) at the SJ table. Lori (UUC's new Lifelong Learning Coordinator) is on board to have the kids paint rocks. She and Meghan will encourage families to attend the event; Carol will let Lori know when it's time to promote it.

Trude said that she could contact the "kindness people" to present at Open Issues and/or from the pulpit. Linda suggested that we could perhaps have a luncheon after church on Feb. 4th, which is already scheduled for catering. Trude thought that would work well; Linda will discuss the idea with Rev. Amy and John Fraser, then Trude could contact the kindness people to see if they would be available.

Treasurer's Report:

Community Outreach donations that have been disbursed:

- Sept: HEAT - \$497.72 (via credit card)
- Sept: Immolakee Workers - \$219
- Oct: The Haven in Clearwater - \$633.17.

Future Community Outreach suggestions:

- Dec: Feeding Tampa Bay (already announced)
- Jan: FRRC (Florida Rights Restoration Coalition)
- Feb: Indigenous Peoples (Christina has names)
- March: Elevated Access (a group that flies women to other states for abortions)
- April: WeCare Family Connections (foster group, Stephena Pierre)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 1) Racial Justice: Trude said that the Clearwater NAACP will let her know what we should do to volunteer for serving at the MLK Day breakfast at the Rec Center. We are signed up for one vehicle and 6 people for the parade to Coachman Park. We purchased a \$15 table for the Coachman Park event and a \$50 half-page ad in their brochure. We may need to transport some tables from UUC to Coachman Park and get help from the teen group for set-up. Trude will keep us posted.

Team members were notified of November events held by Creative Pinellas and the Pinellas Diaspora Arts Project's Afrofuturism Festival, BRIDGES. Several members attended the opening night and artist panel events at Studio@620 for BRIDGES. Trude attended the Creative Pinellas art gallery exhibit and crafts fair, and initiated contact with several new artists for future Arts Unite Us events.

- 2) Refugees: Barb mentioned that the group's \$100 whiteboard is safely stored in the SJ closet in the Social Hall (so that the young ones don't damage it with magic markers).
- 3) FAST: Linda announced that the Affordable Housing Committee will attend "On Tour" on Dec. 5 from 5:30-8 PM at Childs Park in St. Pete, which will promote the need for 5,000 units for people earning 80% or less of the area median income. FAST will encourage Mayor Welch to 1) attend Nehemiah and 2) commit to FAST goals. Margie will call members who live in St. Pete to invite them to attend; voting for a slogan for t-shirts is underway. Davonne will attend the Nov. 28th meeting of the Water Quality Committee to get updates about how Winter Haven's use of rain gardens has impacted their water quality; many other research meetings are continuing.

- 4) Compassion & Choices: Anne had nothing new to report.
- 5) LULAC: Eliseo said that the North NAACP and various other groups are emphasizing civic education in order to prepare voters for the March election in Clearwater. On November 29th a select group will meet to discuss how to move along the \$50 million that he was able to steer away from Orlando for affordable housing in Pinellas. The Foundation for a Healthy St Petersburg will let Eliseo know on December 4 if his personal grant request of \$160,000 for the Hispanic community is awarded. Eliseo taped an excellent training session on affordable housing that the Clearwater Alliance led recently and will send a tape of it to Linda. Everyone is invited to the largest family-friendly New Year's Eve party in Pinellas County, which starts at 8 PM in the Social Hall.
- 6) Environmental Justice: Eloise reported that Christina has a copy of the video "Beyond Plastics" and she will put the info about it in the e-O. She also mentioned the lawsuit that Letitia James (Attorney General, NY) has filed against Pepsi for its use of plastic bottles and recommends we contact local legislators to reduce fossil fuels in recognition of upcoming UN's COP 28 Climate Change Conference in Dubai. ~~The~~ Interfaith Power & Light did not get the grant that UUC hoped to receive some funding from for infrastructure, so any further installations of programmable thermostats will depend on the cost savings achieved from the test thermostat that is now in use. It's back to the drawing board re: solar; plan is to set up an ad hoc committee to review options. Roger will be getting details about the IRS rules for how we can get the largest reduction in cost through the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act). Linda asked if Roger had talked to nearby Trinity Presbyterian Church about their solar project (EJ members thought he had, will check on that). The group thinks UUC could be competitive in the Sacred Grounds category of IPL's annual Cool Congregations contest and will consider entering (\$1,000 prize for winner).
- 7) NAMI: Davonne attended the first two meetings, the last one having about 15 attendees. She found each one very informative and believes it is a much-needed community service.
- 8) Interfaith Tampa Bay: no update
- 9) Better World Emergency Fund: Linda asked if we thought BWEF funds should be used to donate to a peace group working for resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian crisis. The group voted in favor and ended up agreeing that \$1,000 would be an affordable amount to take from the BWEF (May balance in that account = \$4741.48).

Social Justice Calendar: Carol H. requested that additions to the calendar for December be sent to her as soon after the meeting as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM. The next Zoom-only meeting will be on Saturday, Dec. 23rd, from 9:30 AM to noon.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham