

# Social Justice Council Meeting

July 22, 2023

The Zoom-only meeting was called to order at 9:35 AM. Attending: Linda Stoller (chair), Carole Vaughn, Eloise Hardman, Eliseo Santana, Trude Diamond, Davonne Irion, Sue Hand, Bob Hedlund, Christina Bellamy and Anne Burnham (secretary). Reading was by Peter Morales (past UU president).

Minutes (June 17th): Accepted

## New and Continuing Issues

- 1) Abortion on the ballot: Sue said that she will continue to be at UUC for pickup/dropoff of ballots (Wed. 4-6 PM, Sun. 2-4 PM) as well as Anne Gilbert in the office (Tuesdays & Thursdays 9 AM-noon). Sue has been collecting about 15 petitions every other week from a community person but not many from UUC members. Need to keep the momentum going, try to encourage members more through the Octagram, collecting outdoors in the heat is difficult. Might be good to have a dropbox for petitions on campus, but it's also possible to mail them to the return address on the petition. Slightly more than half the petitions required have been received statewide; the deadline is end of December.
- 2) Collection of school supplies: UUC will not be collecting this year. Trude mentioned that the Pinellas Education Foundation gets school supplies to the greatest number in need all year long—might want to consider the PEA for Community Outreach (see below). Christina said that RAMWI (Refugee & Migrant Women's Initiative that helps refugee and migrant women resettle in the Tampa Bay area) will be distributing supplies in August; Linda asked Christina to send her the link so that UUC members can donate if they wish to.
- 3) Letters to the Editor project: Linda received an email from members of the Venice UU Congregation inviting UU congregations in Florida to submit LTEs monthly to their respective newspapers in order to educate readers about important issues before the 2024 election. Bob thought it might be more effective to write to members of Congress; perhaps both could be done at once. Linda thought it would be effective to have this sort of statewide UU action and it could also provide an outlet for our frustrations about the political situation. There was some confusion about the project, however; Linda will follow up and bring back a formal proposal. Sue mentioned that at GA she heard about a group taking similar action and she'll find out more about that.
- 4) Side with Love Workshop: Linda reported that at the UU Minister Assoc. meeting before the start of GA, the minister who gave the Berry Street Essay spoke about the Ten Tactics of Fascism (<https://uuma.org/berry-street-essay/2023-berry-street-essay-the-reverend-cecilia-kingman/>). A workshop followed for further discussion and has since led the UUA to think more about this issue and the responsibility of people to take a stand. Linda suggested showing Rev. Kingman's address at Open Issues when it starts up again. Sue thought that perhaps Rev. Amy would want to speak about this in one of her services. Christina suggested that the Living Mirror Playback Theatre that she is active with might have an interest in doing an experiential playback on bystander training when they regroup in Sept.

Linda cited an incident at the Palm Harbor Library as an example of the need to speak up when encountering bullying. Recently Pinellas County Commissioner Chris Latvala sent a letter to the director of the library, as well as the Community Services Agency, complaining about a Pride Month display of books in the children's section and told the director he was unfit to run the library. There was considerable public outcry but unfortunately the director decided to **retire**.

- 5) PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays): Linda received a request from PFLAG to meet at UUC. SJC members support this; Linda will meet with a representative to get more details and keep Anne Gilbert in the loop.
- 6) Clothes for Kids: Patti Hanks sent a message that in August she will be working with the RE kids to make a big box in which members can donate socks (must be new!) to go to Clothes for Kids.
- 7) NAACP check returned: Eloise reported that the \$100 check we donated to the NAACP in February as part of our once-a-year Social Justice Budget donations was returned. It appears there are some changes in officers at the Upper Pinellas chapter; we'll revisit giving a donation in 2024. Since the money was never taken out of the SJC account, the check will be voided.

- 8) Planning document (new): Linda emailed the document to SJ members before today's meeting. It lists topics and ideas by month that we can refer to when determining Community Outreach possibilities, discussions, events, etc. This is intended to be a living document that can help our groups coordinate activities and use resources most efficiently, as well as instigate deeper discussions at UUC. Sue suggested adding to it a reminder that at the start of the year Covenant Group themes need to be selected. Linda will inform the board about the list and it with them.
- 9) IPL survey: Anne reported that Interfaith Power and Light is applying for a Renew America's Nonprofits grant from the U.S. Dept. of Energy. UUC may have a chance to get some of the funding if IPL receives the grant. This grant offsets the cost of energy efficiency upgrades (e.g., programmable thermostats, door and window replacements at UUC); it is separate from applying for IRA solar funding. Roger Young (Property Comm. head) is filling out the IPL survey and asked for help answering the question "Tell us about your community and how this funding would benefit your community and neighbors." SJC members were helpful in listing groups that meet on campus as well as UUC outreach programs. Carole offered to help get a one-line description from each group, where needed, and Anne said she would put together a statement for the survey. Roger will seek board approval for the application on Wed. (7/26).

Treasurer's Report: Bob (incoming SJC Treasurer) reported that 3 checks went out from Charity of the Month and the Better World Fund. Anne asked if in the future the reports could provide more specific information, e.g., how much was received & disbursed for each Community Outreach organization each month (affirmative response). No written report this month; Bob hasn't received the church budget yet.

Community Outreach: Trude (incoming Community Outreach Coordinator) restated that we had voted earlier for Equality Florida (June) and Clothes for Kids (July/August). She had two new nominations: Foundation 451 (to get banned books to students directly) and HEAT (Helping Educate All in Transition), which aids homeless children. SJC members chose HEAT for Sept.

Future possibilities: Pinellas Education Foundation, a coalition of business and community leaders who collaborate with community partners to tackle education's most pressing challenges (for Oct?) and Voter Participation Center (Washington, DC), which helps register voters and get them to the polls (for Nov?). Sue suggested the FRRRC (Florida Rights Restoration Coalition), which advocates reinstating voting rights for former felons, instead of the VPC.

Patti messaged that she will be doing the service on Aug. 20th about the importance of community group awareness and will mention that there is a form to fill out in the member section of the UUC website to recommend 501(c)(3)s for Community Outreach. Trude said that she will also be posting information about the form during the year in the e-Octagram. Perhaps that will bring in some new ideas from members for consideration at our next meeting.

### Committee Reports

- 1) Racial Justice (Trude): UUC members have been participating in various community activities in June and July and have more events coming up in August.
- 2) Refugees (Barb Foley): no report
- 3) FAST (Linda): Meetings will start again in September. She is planning to talk with the Worship Associates about having a service in August or September.
- 4) Compassion & Choices (Anne): no report
- 5) LULAC (Eliseo): There were 20 at the last Hispanic Women's Coalition mtg at UUC; the group is growing rapidly. About 100 people representing 14-15 organizations attended First Friday; \$265 from the group is an indication of their appreciation for our meeting space.
- 6) Environmental Justice (Eloise): The meeting date may change to the 3rd Wed. of the month.
- 7) Farmworker Justice (Harriet): no report

In closing, Linda reminded everyone to let Carol **Hamilton** know about any upcoming events for her to post in the SJC Calendar. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM. The next Zoom-only meeting will be on Sat., Aug. 26th at 9:30 AM; Sue will take minutes In Anne's absence.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anne Burnham