

UUC Social Justice Council Minutes

January 25, 2025

The Mission of the UUC Social Justice Council is to facilitate communication and cooperation between the Council members, Social Justice committees, UUC Board of Trustees, UUC congregation, and the wider community.

Attendees: Linda Stoller (chair), Trude Diamond, Margie Manning, Donna Polhamus, Bob Hedlund, Eloise Hardman, Christina Bellamy, Barbara Foley, Carol Hamilton, Cibby Orozco, Eliseo Santana, Maryann Hamilton, Carole Vaughn and Anne Burnham (secretary *pro tem*)

Meeting started at 9:30 AM. Opening words ("Courage to Be") and check-in followed. Minutes for the December 28, 2024, meeting were accepted with one change.

Treasurer's report: Checks have been sent to:

- UUSC Guest at Your Table (November): \$ will be reported when Tim Thorne gets the report from UUSC
- Feeding Tampa Bay (December): \$845.84
- Florida Rising Together (January): TBD

Community Outreach:

February: ACLU. Linda will ask Sandy Hoover to recommend someone from the ACLU to speak at UUC.

Committee Reports

Racial Justice (Trude): For the January 20, 2025, MLK Birthday celebration at the North Greenwood Aquatic Center (900 N. MLK Avenue, Clearwater), march, and rally at Coachman Park, we had seven volunteers serving breakfast and at least two march participants and occupied two 10-top tables (near a coffee urn, of course) of UUCers and friends some brought from other organizations.

Upcoming events:

- *Sam Modder*, one-woman art exhibit at Creative Pinellas: "Source of All Hair, Wearer of All Socks," through February 23. (Trude reported it is "delightful.")
- "iBOMS: iMAGINE NATION" Opening Reception, presented by the Woodson African American Museum of Florida and Creative Pinellas. Explore iBOMS' limitless landscape of imagination. Meet the artist: Jabari Jahi Babatu Reed-Diop, otherwise known as iBOMS (illegal. Beauty. On.My.Streets) is a 25-year-old artist based in St. Petersburg, Florida. His artistic acumen comes from personal experience and formal education at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville and Gibbs High PCCA. February 20, 6-8 PM. Exhibit continues through May 19.
- At the Woodson Museum, "Invisible Labor: Krystle Lemonias and Sharon Norwood." The exhibition explores the value of African American labor and its simultaneous invisibility. Through March 29.
- St Petersburg City Hall, Black History Month Flag Raising Ceremony, 9 AM, January 31.

FAST (Linda): FAST is gearing up for a successful Nehemiah Action on Monday April 7th at First Baptist Church, 1900 Gandy Blvd N, St. Petersburg. To start building our UUC people power, we are having our second annual UUC FAST Network Members luncheon on Sunday, February 9th, after the service. At this luncheon we will be getting updates on our two issues, water quality and affordable housing. We will also be picking names of people to invite to the Nehemiah so that UUC can reach its Nehemiah participation goal of 75 people. This is open to our FAST Justice Ministry Network members and others who are interested in learning more about FAST. Please RSVP to socialjustice@uuc.org so that we can plan the food for the luncheon.

Environmental Justice (Eloise): Six attended the EJC meeting on January 15th. The focus was on planning Earth Month activities and also field trip activities (before the weather gets too warm).

Field trips currently being looked at (some new): Tampa Aquatic Preserve, Waste-to-Energy Plant tour, HEP tour (as they grow their own produce), Moccasin Lake, Sacred Lands, Hope Spot Festival, Brooker Creek and Rosebud Continuum.

Earth Month: Earth Day is April 22nd. Barb Shimer offered to lead a meditation walk on the UUC campus the evening of April 22nd and Christina Bellamy offered a composting workshop. Carole V will check with Lori Thorn and Cibby to see what children's activities they may already have planned.

More planning and tweaking to be done at our next meeting, the 3rd Wednesday of the month, on ZOOOOM!

NAMI (Christina): We continue to trudge along, 17 people at the last meeting. Families are really hurting; exogenous hurt to families, depression, at least 1/3 were *in extremis* in January. There is no charge to participants and NAMI is very good at getting corporate and other contributions. They have hired more staff and are very thankful for UUC.

Interfaith Tampa Bay (Maryann): The January meeting focused on the services available locally in recovery from the storms, with speakers from FEMA and Pinellas County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service on January 19th at The Cathedral Church of St. Peter had guest speakers Rev. Kenneth Irby and St. Petersburg Council Member Deborah Figgs-Sanders, as well as Bahai and Jewish faith leaders.

Announcement of plans that are under way for this year: April, Peace in the Park and Earth Day; June, Pride; and October 19-25, Interfaith Week.

Food Insecurity/Garden (Cibby): The Last Saturday of the Month event (December 16th) was to attend the Coalition of Community Gardens event. Nothing new to report.

- We have a Last Saturday of the Month event today, from 1-2 PM

- We are also starting gardening classes on Sundays from 9:30-10:15 AM

We recently formed a new group: The UUC Food Forest and Gardens Team. The goals of this group include serving the wider community, sharing the vision for the possibility of abundant food security, and honoring the interconnected web of existence. We also intend to provide educational programs, become a distribution hub, nurture a mother garden and provide space for sharing, reflection, contemplation and connection. The group members are: Cibby Orozco (Chair), Chris Mueller, Amal C. Jennings, Mallika Nair. Eliseo Santana Jr. is the liaison from the Board and Rev. Amy Kindred is an honorary member. We are still in the building stages of how we will collaborate with each other and our projects. Our next meeting will be on February 8th at 1 PM in the gazebo by the garden.

In the meantime, we all are working on our own projects and collaborating with other Social Justice teams. One of the projects Amal is working on is building a compost place in the food forest where the community can collaborate by bringing food scraps. Also, Chris is working on building a few raised beds to grow vegetables for the UUC community. This group is very dynamic and impressive. I, Cibby, am very excited and honored to work with such an amazing team.

Also, we are looking for volunteers who would like to donate plants for the giveaway transplants. Please contact Cibby by text (310-993-0267). Thank you for your donations.

New and Continuing Programs

Immigration Issues: Barbara reported that Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services is trying to figure out what they are going to do, maybe we can work with them again in the future. There are thousands of refugees who were ready to come here but with new administration rulings they cannot. She mentioned the UUSJ webinar "Unequivocally Scared," led by Julie Taylor, Exec. Director of the National Farm Worker Ministry, that provided some startling statistics (more than 2 million farm workers in the U.S., 70% of them foreign-born and more than 40% undocumented). Good information, need to wait and see what threats will be acted on.

Anne shared an email that Robt. Reich sent out in answer to requests he had received for info about what we can do now re: the immigrant crisis. We discussed 2 great resources he listed—the Red Cards (https://www.ilrc.org/red-cards-tarjetas-rojas?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email) and the "Immigration Preparedness Toolkit (https://www.ilrc.org/resources/community/immigration-preparedness-toolkit?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)—that the Immigration Legal Resource Center has developed to help immigrants with no legal status or those in mixed status families. After considerable discussion, it was decided that we would print out some of the Red Cards to distribute at UUC and to groups in the community that we know are also concerned. Donna and Eliseo agreed to research getting

the cards printed and Linda will check on what funds are available for this. We may also make the tool kit available. Anne will post a short summary and links for both resources in the next *Octagram*.

Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary: Margie reported that UUC is hosting this in-person and Zoom conference on April 26th. The board has approved a budget of \$500-\$1,000, part to be contributed to the UUA. PFLAG is interested in partnering with UUC and UU St. Pete will be involved with planning. The UUA is handling registration. The time for the conference will depend on the keynote speaker at Syracuse UU. Christina volunteered to help; a UUC planning meeting will be on Zoom on Feb. 4th. at UUC. The UUA will provide training for this important outreach to the LGBTQ+ community. The event will be advertised by word of mouth in order to keep everyone involved safe.

PFLAG/Equality Florida: Linda reminded us that all are invited to the PFLAG meetings on the 3rd Thursday of the month. The next one will be on Feb. 20th, 5:30-7 for potluck, program following; Equality Florida will talk about advocating and the start of the legislative session in March. There will be an Equality Florida Day in Tallahassee again this year: March 18-19 with the Let Us Live March on the 20th. Linda wonders if we could get a group together to participate; perhaps home housing would be available from the Tallahassee UU church.

Walk of Peace: The event will begin at Pioneer Park, 420 Main St., Dunedin, with registration starting at 1:30 PM and the walk at 2 PM. Carol H. will have peace t-shirts to sell at UUC tomorrow.

Farmworkers: Eliseo reported that 80 individuals on limited visas arrived in Plant City to pick strawberries but were not prepared for the extreme cold. Following the issuing of an alert, hundreds of blankets and supplies were donated. Quick action, way to go UUC!

Social Justice Calendar – Carol H. will check these minutes for entries.

Next meeting: Feb. 22nd at 9:30 AM on Zoom. Trude will take minutes in February.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Burnham