

UUC Social Justice Council Meeting November 23, 2024

Minutes

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.

Meeting Chair: Linda Stoller Secretary: Carol Hamilton

Attendees: Barbara Foley, Trude Diamond, Eloise Hardman, Maryann Hamilton, Donna Polhamus, Carole Vaughn, Anne Burnham, Cibby Orozco, Lore Ergle, Margie Manning.

Chalice Lighting and Opening Words, Brief Check-in

Additions to agenda: PFLAG, Carole V and “A Welcoming Congregation,” Margie Manning

Acceptance of Minutes of Meeting October 26, 2024 was omitted .

Treasurer’s Report and Community Outreach Recipients: *Trude Diamond and Bob Hedlund reported:*

Treasurer

Checks have been sent to:

- Meals on Wheels: \$329.30
- Poynter: \$382.92 (inc. today's \$20)

Any questions – email Bob Hedlund

Community Outreach

- June: Community Tampa Bay Inc, \$302.30 (inc. today's \$5)
- Also June: HEP (Homeless Empowerment Program), \$604.24
- July: Clothes to Kids, \$1562.62
- August: Recovery Epicenter Foundation, \$154
- September: Poynter Institute, \$382.92 (inc. today's \$20)
- October: Pinellas Meals on Wheels, \$329.30
- November's recipient, UUSC Guest at Your Table amount, TBD.
- December's recipient will be Feeding Tampa Bay
- January's recipient will be Florida Rising Together (dedicated to advancing economic and racial justice across the state by building power in historically marginalized communities).

We have received thank-you notes from Habitat for Humanity, HEP (Homeless Empowerment Program), and The Woodson African American Museum.

We have received solicitations from:

- American Friends Service Committee (climate justice in the Middle East and North Africa)
- Americares
- BLUU
- Equality Florida: Our membership in Equality Florida (Equity Florida Action, Inc.) is about to expire. Our May 2025 recipient spot is open. Their donation form says that they're a 501c4 of a tax-exempt category to which donations are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. But we have donated to them before, obviously, and their cause is important to us. Shall we plan for Equality Florida in May? If yes, Trude will give the donation form to Anne in May.
- Heifer International
- The Clearwater Free Clinic
- The International Rescue Committee, which sent us a 2025 wall calendar. I'll put it in the SJC mailbox for anyone who wants it.
- The League of Women Voters

Linda noted that we may want to review recipients based on feedback from the retreat.

Committee Reports

Racial Justice: Trude Diamond reported:

Going forward, Racial Justice will actively participate as allies in events and projects sponsored by our partners in the local Racial Justice space, such as the Woodson Center, LULAC, the Clearwater African American Museum, RaceWithoutIsm.com, Pinellas Remembers, Alianza, Green Book of Tampa Bay, Creative Pinellas, and other communities of faith. Trude and/or Aryna will send the RJ mailing list a monthly notice of opportunities to support the businesses and cultural events of the BIPOC communities.

Let Trude know if you want to be on the mailing list (currently about 21 people). The RJ Committee will meet more or less often depending on when there is an event on the monthly list of opportunities that RJ will organize.

Linda clarified that only the events/opportunities on the RJ Monthly Notice in which UUC participates or organizes will be on the Social Justice Council Monthly Calendar.

FAST: Linda Stoller reported:

This week we received two updates from the FAST Office:

This week, the Water Quality Committee had a productive meeting with Dunedin's Sustainability Director, Natalie Gass. She will be updating the city's sustainability matrix document to include changes we discussed that will ensure GSI (Green Stormwater Infrastructure) solutions are utilized in future development projects in the city. **We are making progress and you all should feel really proud of that!**

At the same time, we recognize that this is just the first step in the process to getting these changes

vetted, approved, and--ultimately--implemented in the city of Dunedin. We will have important work to do in the coming months to make sure GSI makes it into the final updates that get presented for a vote to the Dunedin Commission. **The first opportunity for us to show up and demonstrate our people power will be on Tuesday, December 3rd at the Committee on Environmental Quality and Sustainability meeting in Dunedin, in the library.** At this meeting, the public will be able to give feedback on the proposed updates and we need people there to make sure Dunedin staff and officials understand that these solutions must be included. All are encouraged to attend.

The meeting will be at 6 PM that evening, so we will meet 30 minutes beforehand to go over talking points and next steps. If you would like to come to show your support or provide public feedback, please reach out to April for more details. April's phone number is 727-518-5591.

On Mon, Dec 9th at 6:45pm at Shiloh Missionary Baptist in Largo we will be having the Research Kickoff. If you are interested in working on increasing affordable housing or improving water quality you are invited to attend this social justice event. This is also the last meeting for our lead organizer Jacqueline Reyes. Instead of an evaluation, we're going to do a brief goodbye to Jacqueline right after the Research Kickoff ends that night.

If you have any questions about FAST please contact Linda Stoller or Lore Eargle at socialjustice@uuc.org

Lore clarified that the kickoff is to say this is our plan for the coming year and we're going to start interviewing officials to gather information about where they are and what they are doing then we start figuring out what and who do we need to ask.

***NAMI:** Christina Bellamy reported:*

The NAMI monthly Family Support Group continues to happen every second Wednesday, noon to 1:30 in the Patio Room and on Zoom. This is our second year, and we plan to continue until at least Sept. 2025. If you know anyone who might benefit, please pass this welcome along. Open and free to any UUC'er, and also to the general public. Donations are gratefully accepted to operate the space. NAMI Pinellas often sends us people, and they are so grateful for an in-person place to download all the confusion, chaos, anger, sadness, and overwhelm. Also just glad to have a brave space to sit and listen. Contact Composting Christina Bellamy for further questions.

***Interfaith Tampa Bay:** Maryann Hamilton reported:*

Interfaith Tampa Bay week October 20-23-26:

Sunday at Unity Midtown St. Petersburg with Fred Johnson presenting "Lift Every Voice, Open Every Heart" well attended with speakers, music, dancers representing diverse faiths

Wednesday: Palm Lake Christian Church, hosted by Rev. Oscar Banks, "What is Our Common Ground".

Saturday: Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Pinellas County at the Clearwater center. "Listening to Every Voice" speakers presented spiritual paths and singing, followed by a dinner giving people opportunities to share personal experiences.

Maryann added that the I/F week was very successful. She attended the Bahai event which was wonderful and very well attended.

***Environmental Justice:** Eloise Hardman reported:*

We met Wednesday, November 20, 2024 (after having no October meeting due to the hurricanes Helene and Milton). Because of the damage to the field trip sites we planned on visiting this fall, we are checking those sites for possible early 2025 visits (to Rosebud Continuum, Sacred Lands and the Waste to Energy plant).

Linda Stoller gave a wonderful and informative presentation on the online class she took on Beyond Plastics with Bennington College. Inspirational.
We also are already planning our Earth Month activities.

More recent update from Eloise: Waste to Energy plans on re-opening in January. Update from Barb Shimer whose niece works at the WTE plant: no plastic bags, no bottle tops, etc. she will send us the list. From Carole V: Show on plastics on NPR, this Tues, 10-12 noon.

Garden: Cibby reported:

Not set in stone but we are working on 3 projects: we're working with 15th St farm about a partnership to have a garden class with Allianza, UUC and 15th St.farm who will supply resources - hopefully will start soon. Thanks to Kathleen Krohn, who introduced me to those who were singing at the retreat [Priscilla and Ian]. They have a community garden and they want to partner with us, having classes, etc. Cibby will be meeting with Ian later on today. On Thursday, Cibby met with Rabbi Michael Birnholz from Temple B'nai Israel who wants to have a food forest and collaborate with classes. Cibby gave him some plants.

Linda and Trude: Trude met Priscilla when she bought her house. She is on the Safety Harbor Council for a Diverse Community. Eliseo knows her. Trude invited her to Arts United and she is now connecting with the garden.

Cibby added that next Sat between 1 and 2 she will be giving out tomato plants in the garden.

PFLAG: Carole V reported:

The 21+ social: "PFLAG Safety Harbor & Friends Celebrate!" for LGBTQ+ and allies at the Honu Restaurant and Tiki Bar, 516 Grant St, Dunedin, on Thursday, Dec 5th at 7pm.

Carole added that there were about 40 people, a great group, potluck, good community and exchange. Wendy recognized everyone. There was another group attending: Metropolitan UUC, Friends of Peace, Pinellas Park. The kids had fun. Ann Burnham and Chris Mueller were there. A very nice evening.

Linda: The Dec 5th event is appropriate for the UUC SJ Calendar – it's important that we support this group. PFLAG are still using meeting space at UUC free of charge. Linda will verify that is still the status. It's important that we have one person from SJC attending to be the point person for questions, make sure clean up is done and the air is turned down etc. Linda has been doing it up to now. Third Thursday of the month – 5:30 – 7:30. Linda would like to have a team. Carol V suggested a rotation spreadsheet where people can sign up for that. Carol H and Linda will work on it in Google docs on Excel so that those shared with can update the spreadsheet for the date they wish to volunteer. Carol H suggests the name is also added to the UUC online Calendar in the detail section. Carole V will check with Wendy if they're having it in Dec at the usual time. Carol V will take December. Eloise suggested that someone who signed up then can't do it, they can contact

someone else on the team to fill in. Anne B isn't comfortable with Google. Trude offered to help her. When a doc is shared, the sharee sees it in their google account docs which is a link to the source document. We will organize a class for people needing more information on google docs if necessary

New and Continuing

A Welcoming Congregation: Margie Manning

UUA is asking congregations designated as Welcoming Congregations to undertaking some practices of renewal of the "Welcoming Congregation" initiative to ensure an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals. From the Worship perspective, on Oct 6 we had a talk with Daphne Ferraro, a drag performer – an interview style conversation that was very fun and enlightening. On Nov 17, we played a video about the Transgender Day of Remembrance during Joys and Sorrows, a week from tomorrow we will have a service focused on World AIDS Day with reading and stories from folks who had experience with AIDS. Rev. Amy is not present at those services, which means there's reduced attendance, so I'm asking you to come to support these initiatives. Also community involvement such as working with PFLAG, hosting their space, attending their meeting and also financially supporting organizations such as Equality Florida. The UUA would like us to put on a seminar or webinar about LGBTQ+ issues. These are available from the UUA multicultural office, so Margie will get in touch with them to look into that, and have something hopefully before the end of the congregational year. Linda ordered red ribbons to be given out on that Sunday and also a sign saying World AIDS Day with a red ribbon. Linda will be in DC that weekend so will get the materials to someone else. Margie noted that Rev Amy has the ribbon and will organize their being given out before the service – good for the SJ people to give them out. Carole V will mention this to Wendy. Linda asked who is available to give out the ribbons – Donna and Barb at 10am. Thank you Margie – do you want this to be a regular monthly report – periodic report rather than every month.

Mitten Tree: Anne Burnham reported:

Many hands helped with the Mitten Tree this year: Linda, Carole V. and Rev. Amy set up the tree after the SJC retreat; Mary Thornton, Donna Polhamus, Aryna Ryan and Carol H. decorated the tree and tagged mittens after setting up for the new art show in the Octagon; Parker, Sierra, Ember and Jovan cut out and creatively decorated 26 mittens during RE; the Mitten Tree team—Carol H., Marilyn Magee, Elaine Bovinette and Anne Burnham (lead) —met to attach the wish lists to the mittens for the children that Directions for Living posted on their website and to organize the process for the next three Sundays. Now we're ready for the members to select mittens, starting this Sun., Nov. 24. Gifts need to be returned to UUC by Dec. 8th.

Social Justice Retreat: Linda reviewed the feedback:

Many folks suggested that we write letters to elected officials and to "letters to the editors" as issues come up. These letters should be on issues that relate to the UU values. The issue of immigration was often mentioned as a topic for education and action as we prepare for the coming year. Donna Polhamus said she would talk to the Hispanic Outreach center to see what needs they were seeing. We need to reach out to others in the community to find out what would be most useful going forward.

After-Notes from Trude Diamond, SJR secretary:

I think that probably what I suggested about SJC action going forward over the next couple years wasn't clear from the conversation transcription, here's the clearest I can make it:

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortes solicited her constituents' thoughts about why many of them had voted for her but not the top of the Democratic ticket (or not voted at all for President), and where they got the information that informed their decision. What's important for SJC action is that the voters said they got their information from *trusted local sources -- service providers* (politicians and others) whom they interacted with regularly, who asked about their needs and addressed those needs. So ...

SJC can sponsor townhalls to which we invite local elected and appointed officials and other service providers who can explain what services/programs they provide and *ask which of those services are most important to the voters*; and then tell attendees *what they're worried about for providing those services over the coming four years*, given current federal and possibly state & county budget cuts for services. These townhall panels on, say, education could include school principals, librarians, and school board members. An immigration panel could include county agriculture department members, farmers, and others in the local food production industry where many immigrants work, as well as immigration attorneys. Not all elected/appointed gov't officials; also small business owners and others they interact with regularly.

We'd want panelists to *address voters' selfish survival and economic concerns* -- Social Security (inc. Disability and other programs), ACA healthcare as well as Medicare and Medicaid; school lunch programs, before and after school activities and child care services, library hours (where some kids babysit themselves after school); and food availability and higher prices (because of scarcity and/or having to pay workers more to keep them from leaving the U.S.).

We want the panels to make very clear that programs that began and/or grew in 2020-24 have been cut by the Trump administration. This should become clear by the end of 2025. Timing is important. Too soon, and nobody's feeling the pain yet. We need to leverage the financial pain that white consumers will feel by early 2026.

We want voters to say "WORSE" in 2026 and 2028 when they're asked if they're better or worse off now than in 2024. Of course, we're a church and can't say we want that. But when we invite panelists to speak, we can say something like "Our goal is to empower voters to know that they have to exercise the power of their vote to get the government services they count on. ONLY their vote can improve government so it serves *them*."

Social Justice calendar – No new additions

Next meeting is on ZOOM at 9:30 on December 28th