

## UUC Social Justice Council Minutes April 27, 2024, Final

Present: Linda Stoller (chair), Carol Hamilton, Marlene Calderone, Bob Hedlund (treasurer), Trude Diamond, Maryann Hamilton, Christina Bellamy, Carole Vaughn, Anne Burnham, Rev. Amy, Sue Hand, Eloise Hardman.

Chalice lighting and reading

Check-in

March minutes approved

### Committee Reports

#### Racial Justice (Trude):

##### April activities we participated in:

##### Lynching Marker:

- *Facilitating the placement of a lynching memorial marker on the UUC campus near the BLM sign*, in response to a request by the Equal Justice Initiative/Pinellas Remembers, for a Mr Watson who was lynched en route to being held at the Clearwater jail pending trial. No other organizations would allow them to put it up. EJI/PR are paying all costs. The Board has approved.
- There was a segment on NPR about lynching markers in our vicinity
- Linda will talk about this at the service tomorrow.
- Rev Amy noted that representative Danny White will be in the pulpit on 5/19 to explain further.
- This is an honor and has special meaning to UUC'ers who visited Montgomery
- Pinellas Remembers holds an essay contest related to the installation
- **Motion made and carried unanimously:** for UUC to make 1-time scholarship of \$2000, from the Pat McGivern Fund, Social Justice allocation, for an excelling music student, the remaining \$239.65 to be put in the Better World Fund. Trude to execute and Bob and Trude to follow up with Dale and Danny.
  - We financially supported the April 20 Motherland Music Festival in St Petersburg by purchasing a block of seven tickets. Those of us who attended enjoyed the music and variety of food. Trude connected with the Embracing Our Differences organization based in Sarasota, who worked with the Sarasota UUs to install the EJI lynching memorial on their campus and produces outdoor exhibits of multicultural arts in St Pete as well as Sarasota, and she will keep them informed of our memorial placement ceremony and Arts Unite Us.
- **Plan for May:**
  - Support minority-owned businesses.
  - Watch for VOTE postcard writing parties.
  - ONGOING – Enjoy UUC's monthly catered lunch by our renter Farm Fresh; it's a local Black-owned business, and the food is delish.
- **Early Plan for Juneteenth:** We have listed six events groups may attend during the week-long celebration period.

#### Environmental Justice (Eloise)

Eloise reports that EJT had their monthly meeting via zoom on Wednesday, April 17th and tried out a new (to us) AI Scribe program for taking minutes. Mixed results. Let me say it was fortunate that 3 of us also did it the old-fashioned pen and paper method...

Topics mainly focused on:

- proposed field trips (Rosebud Continuum in May; Sacred Lands in June; the Waste-to-Energy Plant in the autumn)
- the recent Tampa Bay Times article re: Duke Energy's tree trimming
- Earth Month events...

I checked the raised garden bed that has been in the garden under the trees, north of the Zen Center as I was told it was about to fall down. Incorrect.. extremely sturdy and completely usable.

Several of us attended the new raised garden bed blessing by Rev. Amy on April 14th...that same day EJT had Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) cards out after service for people to pledge their commitment and care for our environment. We have sent those back to IPL.

On April 21st, after Sunday service, EJT showed the 2023 film, courtesy of IPL, "Common Ground" in Surti Hall. At least 17 attended this event.

On Sunday, April 28th, three of us will host Open Issues - Eloise, Jay and Chris. The topic will be to discuss the Common Ground film, our upcoming field trips, etc.

Our next EJT meeting, on zoom only...Wednesday, May 15th.

On clean-up day as EJT rep. Eloise cleaned out the storage areas, inside social hall and tool room, of toxic chemicals and disposed of them with the County.

**FAST** (Linda):

On Tuesday April 30<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM members and friends from UUC will join hundreds of people from 50 congregations to demand justice from elected officials in Pinellas County. This is the Nehemiah event. You don't want to miss this exciting social justice event. Over the past year members of the UUC FAST justice ministry has been organizing and meeting to promote more affordable housing for low income individuals (report in the Catalyst online newspaper), less contaminated stormwater run off into our major waterway and for the inclusion of nondangerous traffic violations in the civil citation program. Now is the time we hear from the people who we have elected to make these changes. You can make a difference by showing up on April 30<sup>th</sup> at the First Baptist Church of St. Pete, 1900 Gandy Blvd. N, St. Petersburg. A bus will be leaving from the UUC parking lot at 5:45PM. Seating is limited so you must sign up on the sign up sheet in the Social Hall at the social justice table or at [socialjustice@uuc.org](mailto:socialjustice@uuc.org). Wear your UUC tee shirt! See you there!

**NAMI** (Christina):

UUC has been hosting the monthly family support group – 6-15 attendees, almost no-one from UUC. Lore does the Zoom. Christina has been setting up and sending out many welcome emails. Attendance is unpredictable. NAMI sends 2 people every month.

The free 8-week NAMI class has just finished. 11 people, 6 from UUC.

WMNF's Playback Theater's theme next month will be mental illness and a NAMI person will give a little talk at the beginning. Monthly group will continue to June, then Christina and NAMI renegotiate and it may go Zoom only in the evening. It's currently every 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday in the Patio Room and Zoom noon until 1:30.

**Interfaith Tampa Bay** (Maryann):

MaryAnn reports: Prayer in the Park on April 7th was well attended including Linda Stoller, and John and Diane Fraser from UUC. Prayers for peace were offered by spiritual leaders and members of the community, musicians, and a Hindu youth dance performance. Synchronistically, the date available for the event was the day before the Solar Eclipse, adding to the energy for Peace in our world. Planning has already begun for having it again in 2025. Prayer in the Park is forming a committee to look into having Prayer in the Park annually and to make it a bigger and better event. Maryann will get some more info about the Hindu dancers, perhaps perform at UUC. May 16 is the next breakfast meeting at the Hangar in St Pete. Maryann will be happy to coordinate transport if anyone wishes to go.

## Treasurer's and Secretary's Report (Bob and Trude):

- **Treasurer**
  - For March, we sent \$482.43 to Elevated Access.
- **Secretary/Community Outreach**
  - We received personal notes from the family supported by our donation to the Tarpon Springs Shepherd Center Adopt-a-Family program at Christmastime, Lisa George and her son Armani Kelley. [read the brief note & show photos]
  - SJ needs to vote to approve donations of \$100 each to BLUU for their Cooperative Housing Initiative and to DRUUM to support their annual Public Worship event.
  - Our April recipient is We Care Family Connections, and our donation will go out soon after May 1.
  - Our May recipient will be Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas and West Pasco Counties "Faith Build." That check will be sent after June 15 to qualify for the 100% donation matching by Pinellas United Methodist Churches.
  - Recipients suggested for future months: Black-focused organizations that focus on social justice issues in Florida: Equal Ground Action Fund (501(c)(4)) (actions focused on voter engagement, redistricting, legislative advocacy); Florida Rising (501(c)(4)), member-driven selection of issues to act on, "Justice on Every Block" platform focused on local policy including Pinellas County). Note that 501(c)(4) organizations are non-profit and must be operated exclusively to promote social welfare.
  - Discussion: there is doubt that 501c4 is tax deductible – Trude will check. If so, UUC would have to have a vote to make donations to them as only 501c3's are currently approved for donations by UUC. 501c4's may include donations for lobbying. We can't rely on the organization to tell us if it's tax deductible or not. Some organizations are both.
  - We are effectively in May and our budget expires in May.
  - **Motion made and carried, none opposed:** donate \$100 each to BLUU (for building project and DRUM (for operating expenses).

Trude to execute.

Holding back remainder of approx \$500 in the Outreach Fund – need clarity on Eliseo's check request for cameras. We don't have to spend all of it. Bob and Linda to check that budget line with Dale – don't want to overspend the budget. We have one more meeting before the end of the year.

- Maryann noted that Community Tampa Bay is on our list of considered recipients.

## New and Continuing Programs

### **Homeless Empowerment Program (HEP)**

#### **Christina Bellamy:**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> HEP tour is next week Thursday 3pm for 2 hours. Attendees are 50/50 UUC and non-UUC. 8 people are signed up. The tour can take up to 12. Contact Christina if you want to go. (Not for SJ calendar.)

#### **Anne Burnham:**

Linda, Rev. Amy and Anne met with Edie Minton, volunteer specialist at HEP to learn more specifics about HEP programs that UUC might get involved with and homed in on two that seem like good starters for congregation participation:

**Backpacks:** Edie said that there is a great need for backpacks for the 130 children (currently) living on the HEP campus, rather than school supplies, which vary within each school system and are less expensive to purchase. HEP has a "Back-to-School Bash" that starts the end of July when the kids can pick out a backpack—generally with TV/movie characters and plain colors for ages up to 18 years. Edie will let us know what their needs are in early June. **Motion made and carried unanimously.**

**Adopt-a-Family:** Edie said many congregations like this program so we need to send in an application soon to get on the list. She said that there is also a Christmas toy drive for individual children (more like UUC's usual Mitten Tree at UUC). Discussion followed: Families might be more difficult to organize, assuming that different members would choose one or two members of a family and then organizer would have to be sure to combine them—but other family members like to get presents, too! Decision was to do Adopt-a-Family and commit to just one family and possibly expand later when we can better gauge congregational interest. Edie will let us know more when the program starts up in October. **Not an official motion but no one was opposed.** Anne will send in the application.

#### **Voting (Linda):**

Linda is putting the postcards project together. Carole V donated the postcards. Bob will look into getting USPS non-profit status to get cheaper stamps.

#### **Pride (Linda)**

June 8<sup>th</sup> Pride Family Day: UUC RE, UUC St Pete and UU Tarpon Springs.

Also, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Pride Parade: UUC is partnering with St Pete UU, Tarpon UU, UU Fellowship in St Pete. We have had 1 meeting so far. Our portion of the registration is paid and we have the same float as last year. Andy Oliver, Allendale, asked if churches could march together (as Congregations United, Churches United or LGBTQ?). Two people from each congregation sign up. \$20 registration per person. Linda and Amy have signed up but it doesn't have to be them.

Bob and Trude left the meeting.

#### **Yes on 4 Meeting: (Carole Vaughn)**

Tampa Bay Super Saturday meeting on 20 April

Those in attendance from UUC: Linda Stoller, Margie Manning, Anne Burnham, Marlene Calderone, Rev. Kindred, Carole Vaughn

The meeting was facilitated by Amy Weintraud of Florida Progress, It took place at Allendale UMC. There are many groups in the 'Yes on 4' Coalition. The event was very well organized.

It was a 'Yes on 4' Messaging training-What to say and why you should say it- the 'Elevator Speech'. Emphasized staying non-partisan - very important. Discussed how to respond to tough questions. The last part of the session was instructional on how to tell your story/Story of Self, Story of us (shared values and shared experiences) and stories of now/Strategy and action. We then paired off and did role-playing, practicing telling our stories in a safe space.

There will be a meeting each month until November Elections that will reveal/teach us more strategies on how to spread the word ie. phone banking, canvassing events, postcards, possible door-to-door, etc

Website to get involved: <https://progressflorida.org/>

**Trip with Florida Rising to the “Yes on 4” Rally in Orlando (Carol Hamilton)**

Very successful, well organized. Bus from UUC (and other Florida locations) arranged by Florida Rising. Nine attendees from UUC. Picked up the Tampa attendees at Florida Rising offices where breakfast was served and packed lunches put on the bus. Robin from FR MC'd on the bus. Rally was at the stage in Lake Eola Park, Orlando, followed by a march round the lake. Presentations by mostly women about how abortion has affected their lives. Probably 2000+ attendees. Police security. Few hecklers and few opposition present.

**Carole V:** EJT, Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Plastics and Our Health on Zoom. Contact Carole or Eloise for the link.

**Linda:** will keep us updated on Super Saturday activities for the Abortion amendment. Also talked to an organizer from UUA The Vote which has identified Florida as a focus for election work this year. So we may end up working with other UU congregations around the nation.

**Next Month's Agenda (Linda)**

Thinking of SJ retreat over summer, when? In person or on Zoom? Purpose: look ahead to coming year. Is our current organization of a council working? What kind of work will be do in the coming year. Evaluate the past year. Christina offered to do give a compassion fatigue class; Linda said she would put Christina down as a member of this little planning team.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Hamilton