

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice Board Meeting

Saturday, June 18, 2016

Held at Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, Virginia

(This is an early first draft July 31, 2016 for your reference and review. Board minutes with enclosures will be sent with Board documents for the September Board meeting.)

Attendees:

Present:

Bruce Griffin, member, Accotink UU Church
Lavona Grow, member, at large, UU Church of Arlington
Brendan Orsinger, alternate, All Souls Church, Unitarian (New)
John Gubbings, member, at large, Cedar Lane UU Church
Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson, member, Mount Vernon Unitarian Church
Linda Doyle, alternate, Mount Vernon Unitarian Church (New)
Loretta Garcia, member, River Road UU Congregation
Al Carlson, member, UU Church in Reston
Martha Ades, member, UU Congregation of Fairfax
Gary Magnuson, member, UU Congregation of Rockville
Marti Mackenzie, member, Towson UU Church
Nancy Sorden, member, Washington Ethical Society

Absent:

Ed Kringer, alternate, Accotink UU Church
Armele Vilceus, member, All Souls Church, Unitarian
Frank Corsoro, member, UU Church of Arlington
Larry Underwood, member, Bull Run UU Church
Pat Karlsen, member, at large, Cedar Lane UU Church
Kay Scott, member, Cedar Lane UU Church
Janet Overton, member, Paint Branch UU Church (New Board member replacing Nancy Boardman)
Carmelita Carter-Sykes, alternate, Paint Branch UU Church
Jana Kirk-Whitman, alternate, River Road UU Congregation (New)
Pat Bradshaw, alternate, UU Congregation of Rockville
Ed Butterworth, alternate, UU Congregation of Fairfax

Staff and Contractors

Elizabeth Stevens, Administrative Assistant (not present)
Sarah Masters, UUSJ Contractor (not present)
Ashley Egan UUSJ Contractor
Pablo DeJesus, Executive Director effective July 1, 2016
Anna Rhee, UUSJ Contractor

Guests:

Marsha White, Accotink UU Church
Bob Denniston, UU Church of Arlington, UUSJ Communications Committee
Adam Wasserman, UU Congregation of Fairfax

Opening

Welcome and reflection: Martha Ades welcomed everyone to the UU Congregation of Fairfax and did a reading for the lighting of the chalice titled *Praise the World in All Its Pain and Blessings*. Lavona asked for a moment of silence to remember those who died in the Orlando shooting and their families.

Call to order: Lavona called the meeting to order at 2:40pm.

There was a remembrance of Charlotte Brewer from Cedar Lane UU Church, a climate change activist, who passed away in January.

All attendees read the Board Covenant in unison.

After the reading of the covenant we received a welcome from Rev. David Miller, Senior Minister of the UU Congregation of Fairfax.

Preview of the agenda: Lavona reviewed the agenda for the meeting. There was an adjustment to the agenda to table the agenda item for consideration of bylaws changes. Because the new Executive Director will be starting on July 1, it was decided to postpone discussion of the proposed bylaw changes (which was distributed with the other meeting documents) dealing with the Executive Committee structure to introduce an immediate past chair position, and change from Co-chairs to a Chair and one Vice-chair.

Introductions

Each attendee gave a brief introduction by giving his or her name, if he or she is a board member, an officer, alternate, or guest. They were also asked to share what committees with which they are involved and to share where they grew up.

New participants (noted above in attendance list) were invited to share their social justice passion and their previous religious affiliation if any.

Our new Executive Director, (Pablo) Pavel DeJesús, introduced himself.

Anna Rhee, consultant to UUSJ, has been working with UUSJ on advocacy issues introduced herself and gave a brief overview of her background.

While not in attendance, Heather Coccozza, consultant, was introduced. She helped UUSJ develop its first-ever Policies and Procedure manual. Phase one has been completed. Heather is helping us establish a new digital records organizational system and protocol for filing and naming our records in DropBox.

Also Sarah Masters was not in attendance, she works with UUSJ as contract staff on our database, staffs our meetings and programs among other things. Since Sarah was not able to staff the meeting today, Ashley Egan, her backup, once again was assisting us with today's meeting.

Quorum Count, Minutes and Information Request

With the required 50% plus 1 Board members in attendance (12) a quorum was reached.

There were no corrections or changes to the February 20, 2016 Board Minutes so a motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded. There was no discussion so the minutes were approved unanimously.

Announcements

Lavona asked for a show of hands of those planning on attending General Assembly.

UU's for a Just Economic Community will be holding a conference in Washington, DC in April, 2017. Their conference will include a chance to lobby legislators on Capitol Hill. UUSJ will participate in the lobbying effort and may also participate in the conference in other ways that are yet to be determined and decided.

Lavona mentioned that she was invited and planned to attend the pre-General Assembly meeting of the Coalition of UU State Action Networks (CUUSAN) on June 22nd so she hopes that UUSJ will have some coverage.

Lavona also mentioned that at General Assembly a new Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) will be adopted. UUSJ will hold a special briefing on the new CSAI, as we did a couple of years ago, sometime in early December.

September 17, 2016 is being held for the next UUSJ Board meeting.

Frank Corsoro, Sarah Masters, and Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson volunteered at the February Board meeting to get together to brainstorm ways to grow membership. They met and came up with the idea of holding a special membership meeting with a well known speaker to serve as a draw. They recommended a "meet and greet" for members only to be followed by a special talk by the speaker. Bill recommended that after a private gathering with the speaker and members it could be open to the general public. It may or may not be a fund raiser. Chuck Collins, author of *99 to 1: How Wealth Inequality is Wrecking the World and What We Can Do About It*, is a possible speaker. October 1, 2016 is the tentative date for the membership event. The date will depend upon the availability of the speaker.

Because of our limited bandwidth, the Program Committee, with concurrence from the Executive Committee, has decided that we will not hold our Social Justice Gala this fall but possibly hold it sometime in Spring of 2017 or skip a year and hold it in October of 2017.

Executive Director Search Committee Report

For the sake of new people Lavona covered the history of our decisions and search for a new Executive Director when our former Executive Director Rev. Terry Ellen stepped down after ten years of service. She covered the succession plan, development of a job description for the Executive Director, determination of the role and duties of the Co-Chairs, development of a compensation package commensurate with the change from 10 hours per week to 20 hours a week, the creation of a Search Committee, and the reasons for the search process.

Martha Ades gave the report of the Search Committee. The committee was set up in February, 2017, consisted of two ministers, Rev. Kate Walker: Rev. Richard Nugent (chair); David Strauss, who previously worked as an executive director for a non-profit organization and Marc Narkus-Kramer a former UUSJ Board co-chair. Martha Ades served as the UUSJ Board representative on the committee.

After review of the submitted applications the committee conducted one-hour video interviews via Zoom online service. They interviewed seven people after which they narrowed the selection to two people. The committee recommended two people for consideration by the to the Selection Committee. .

After an in person interview with both candidates, the Selection Committee members (Core Group/Executive Committee plus a former Board co-chair) selected (Pablo) Pavel DeJesus and Pablo accepted the position. Martha reviewed Pablo's qualifications and then introduced him. The full Executive Director Search Committee report is included in the Committee and Task Force Reports.

Pablo's Self-Introduction

Pablo shared his excitement in joining UUSJ and his eagerness to meet one-on-one with folks to learn about the passions for social justice, to help board members discern how UUSJ can help with their congregation's social justice program. He feels that there is potential to effect change at the federal level in areas of interest to UU's. We can leverage our proximity to the capital to share the UU message to our government. Pablo shared his experience having worked with two governors. He said that organized determined people can affect change in policy, that people holding elected official accountable is most effective.

Pablo's first question to all is what should UUSJ do to respond to the event in Orlando, Florida. Eventually there will be hearings on the Hill and it is up to UUSJ to shape the UU message to Congress.

He asks that everyone try to reach out to him, that if a good time for a face-to-face cannot be found then he is willing to talk on the phone.

Publications

Brochures: We have a new brochure that everyone should distribute at their congregation. The brochure will probably be updated sometime this fall.

Business Cards: We also have business cards with no name, just UUSJ information, on them for Board members to use as needed, and for people who go to the Hill to use when visiting Congressional offices. . You should write your name and personal contact information on the card.

Congregational Issues and Social Justice Organizational Structure

Each Board member was invited to share what social justice issue is of greatest importance to their congregation, and what committee, group or staff manages social justice at their congregation.

Mt. Vernon: Climate change, housing and poverty, get out the vote, immigration. This congregation has a social justice council and does not use policy governance.

Reston: have two main groups, a social action group which deals primarily with local issues, and a social justice groups which is heavily involved with VOICE. Their new incoming minister has expressed interest in LGBTQ issues.

All Souls: voting rights and get out the vote, affordable housing, racial justice, refugee, Islamophobia, and environment group.

River Road: they disbanded their social justice council and reconstituted it as a social justice ministry working closely with the minister. The task forces are Racial Justice and Latin America.. The Racial Justice task force has focused on black lives matter with a vigil every Friday from summer 2015 and ending this month (June 2016). The Latin American task force works with the El Salvadoran community in this area as well as in El Salvador. They do fund raising through sale of fair trade products.

Accotink: They have a social justice committee that is active. The committee picks a social justice area for the congregation to focus on for one year. They are ending the focus on climate change at the end of the current church year, were working with their Green Sanctuary committee to show movies, sermons, classes, adult discussions and religious education program centered on climate change. They also help out in a hypothermia shelter. Their congregation votes on the outside organizations that receive their share the plate collections. They continue their work with Beacon House and again plan to be involved in the Immigration Film Festival.

Fairfax: They are under policy governance but do have a committee whose focus is on strategy. Has had an Escalating Income Inequality discussion group for the past year. They did research on the issue and did congregational education with presentations using slides they created and have made available on their website for others to use their presentations. They are entering phase 2, phase 1 being the education and research phase. They will divide interested congregants into two groups, one of which will continue doing additional research and the other group will do outreach. They will take the information they gathered and reach out to other congregations and will explore what the next steps are in addressing the issue. They will do outreach in conjunction with UUSJ.

They have a strong LGBTQ group and have a Transgender Day of Remembrance. They also have a Muslim Liaison Group. Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions is pressing the congregation to spend from a special fund they have to do environmental remediation on their buildings. Rev. David has passion for gun violence prevention.

Bull Run: BRUU has a social justice committee. BRUU provides voter registration information which they take to various fairs, such as the Latino Fair and African-American heritage Fair, where they have a table to distribute this information.

Washington Ethical Society: Does not have a social justice council or committee. Initiatives are developed by their minister. They have an Earth Ethics Team which is fairly independent and which takes responsibility for seeing that they are on the "right path." Their minister initiated a relationship with the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN). They also do a sidewalk vigil for Black Lives Matter once a week. They also have a couple of racial justice groups and they have a number of folks who helped start the immigration film festival and work to keep it going.

Rockville: They have a social justice committee. They have a Green Sanctuary team, Immigration Team, Hunger Relief Task Group, LGBTQ group meeting with the Montgomery County police, and the Peace Study Group. Their Social Justice Committee will soon have a strategic planning session to set priorities.

Arlington: They are under policy governance and do not have a social justice committee or council. They have had for years a Partners with Guatemala focusing on immigration issues and on related issues such as mining extraction issues, climate justice issues. They are heavily involved in VOICE, an active Middle East Justice group, and Equality UUCS (LGBTQI) group. They also give their entire weekly plate collection to organizations. Last year they gave over \$100,000.

Cedar Lane: They are under policy governance with responsibility assigned to their assistant minister. They have a group called Together which focuses on LGBTQ issues and also the congregation's efforts around Black Lives Matter. They have an Environmental Justice Ministry. They are also involved with Action in Montgomery (AIM). Part of policy governance states that there will be a single social justice issue that the whole congregation participates in. They tried that with various support activities at a local high school but found the participation rate to not be sustainable.

The Cedar Lane minister asked UUSJ for technical assistance with an effort he is involved in around the Senate's lack of action on the consideration of the Supreme Court nominee. Lavona and Anna provided assistance with a sign-on letter. Rev. Abi is working with Representative Van Hollen's office to schedule a press conference. UUSJ will try to get people to turn out for the press conference which is tentatively scheduled for early July. He is also very interested in the GOTV effort and has signed on to our grant request letter.

Advocacy

Anna Rhee who is consulting with UUSJ on development and support of an advocacy program gave a report. She has participated in some of the advocacy activities that UUSJ has already done, is reviewing systems, and working to help broadly define our meaning of advocacy. She distributed a draft UUSJ Advocacy Guidelines, which defines how we view advocacy, why are we involved and how do we address it. The guidelines serve as a guide to UUSJ overall but also to the issue groups as they identify whether focusing on a specific issue area fits with the UUSJ mission and vision as well as whether our involvement addresses the causes of injustice. The guideline also address the how of advocacy for UUSJ, what tactics we will use. For example will we advocate on our own or partner with other groups working on the same issue. Also the guidelines speak to how we will measure our effectiveness.

Anna emphasized that UUSJ needs input from and the support of Board members to make UUSJ advocacy involvement work. To finalize the guidelines, the Board members were asked to submit feedback by July 1. (the draft guidelines were sent to all Board members the week following the Board meeting; handout enclosed)

Lavona reminded the Board that last year an issue survey was sent out to all UUSJ members, not just Board members. Members from 15 congregations responded. Based on their input, the new UUSJ priority issue areas for 2016-18 will be: Climate Change, Immigration, and Escalating Income Inequality. Each of these areas are broad so we will research and identify specific actionable areas and further "sub-divide" each issue area depending on our bandwidth and interest.

What was initially an ad-hoc advocacy group to do some brainstorming, has met twice in person and had one conference call since last November. It may become a more permanent task group or committee. See the Advocacy Oversight Committee report for more details (see the Committee and Task Group Reports for the Board meeting below).

Anna reported that the June 1 webinar conducted by the UUA on voting rights was a result of a suggestion from UUSJ. We co-sponsored the webinar, Anna helped with the planning and played a role during the webinar. UUSJ will apply to the UU Funding Program (UUFPP) for a larger than usual grant to work collaboratively with UUSJ congregations on a Get Out The Vote campaign.

As part of the Get Out The Vote effort UUSJ will apply for \$2,500 but since they only have \$10,000 we will more likely get around \$2,000. UUSJ sent in a letter of intent in May to float the idea and was invited to apply. The UUFPP suggested that having several congregations sign on to support our application would help get us the grant. Anna is seeking additional support from congregations by early next week. The signatory can be a minister or the social justice leader of the supporting congregation. To date we have ministerial support from Cedar Lane and Arlington as well as support from Rockville, Towson, and Bull Run.

For documenting and reporting on our advocacy meetings we have created an online reporting tool to report who was lobbied, what was said and by whom, etc. We can not afford any of the existing online services. We are also creating policies and an organization template for issue committees, something we currently do not have.

Write Here! Write Now! Tool Kit: An Advocacy Corp is in the works. When a congregation has a letter writing event using this tool kit, they should contact Elizabeth Stevens who will let the Advocacy Corp know and who will take the letters to Capitol Hill. If people from the congregation want to come along the Corp will escort them to the Hill.

Citizen Activism - Advocacy Training: This past fall and spring we piloted a new training program "Citizen Activism: Everything You Need to Know." A short version was conducted at UUCA in October 2015, and at Bull Run in March 2016. We hope to offer additional training events and to prepare a "Train the Trainers" program to create a pool of 3-5 people who would be able to conduct the training at area congregations.

Website Presentation

The new design for the website was shown by Bill Alsmeyer Johnson. The UUSJ website is run using the widely used open source software Wordpress which uses a theme to control presentation of information. What is actually new about the new site is the theme which is provided by the UUA. It is responsive, that is it causes website content to be rearranged to fit on whatever device it is being viewed on. Many people are only accessing the Web via tablets and smart phones which have a small display area. The new theme ensures that the content is displayed in a readable format regardless of the device.

The color scheme was chosen by the theme developers to be as accessible as possible to people with visual issues, color blindness for example.

Some suggestions were made:

- Create and show a graphical timeline of UUSJ, its history, its accomplishments.
- See if the menu items can be a different color than currently.
- Ensure that on every page a donate button is shown.
- We need examples of website maps that people like and find easy to use.

We need to make the search link a single word.

Board members were asked to submit their comments about the website by July 1 to Bill.

Congregational Visibility: Follow-Up to Feb 20 Board Meeting

Bob Denniston, a member of the Communications Committee, started off his presentation speaking of some of what is needed for UUSJ eNews, and that is commentaries. We've relied on those who received awards at our Social Justice Gala in October, 2015 to provide commentaries and they have done a good job. But that is a limited source. We've printed commentaries by ministers, lay folks, social justice leaders. We are also interested in sermons that are of interest to the wider UU community and any article published on a congregation's website. In these cases we will publish an excerpt and provide a link to the sermon or article a congregation's website. It is a win-win situation getting increased traffic to the UUSJ site and also a congregation's website. It was mentioned that Rev. Marilyn Sewell has said we could repurpose some of her posts to Huffington Post. Also Alex Kapitan formerly of the UUA, has offered to write a commentary.

Bob made a video and it has been posted to the UUSJ Youtube channel where Nancy Boardman shares why she is motivated to do social justice work. Bob is looking for more volunteers to speak about their motivation for a one to two minute clip. Links to the clip will be posted to the website and will also be included in the eNews.

He also reported that many member congregations' websites still do not have any inclusion of UUSJ, so UUSJ will be offering technical assistance beginning in September to help board members work with their congregational communications folks to include more UUSJ news on websites, Facebook pages, and newsletters.

Expertise Database

We've previously mentioned wanting to put together a database of skills of UUSJ Board members, UUSJ members, and others from UU congregations with content expertise. David Strauss, Lavona, and Marth Ades met with John Sutton who some time ago volunteered to set up this database. The effort has been on hold but will be picked up again in July when our new Executive Director joins the staff.

Blue Ribbon Panel Event and Nominating Committee Report

Gary Magnuson, of the Nominating Committee, gave a comprehensive report on the Blue Ribbon Nominating Panel event held May 19, 2016 at Cedar Lane. The report was handed out at the Board meeting. What isn't mentioned in the report is that there is interest in replicating the panel meeting in several member churches.

Nancy Sorden, Nominating Committee chair, presented a summary of the Nominating Committee's report (submitted prior to the Board meeting and is included in the enclosed list of Committee and Task Group Reports). Nancy reported that at this time there are no candidates for Co-chairs. (* See Al Carlson's commentary below about bylaws changes to the Executive Committee structure.)

Treasurer's Report

John Gubbings, the Treasurer, gave the report (available online and enclosed with the minutes). John singled out the money we've saved by not having an Executive Director which means that we have about \$62,000 on hand at the end of the current fiscal year whereas previously we usually ended the year with \$30,000 on hand. So we have enough on hand to cover a half-time Executive Director for about two years. Fair share contributions are running behind the prior year's contributions.

Pablo emphasized that it is important to know the social justice passions/motivations of each congregation because that will help UUSJ find how to show a congregation that UUSJ provides value. Pablo will make an effort to go around to each member congregation to meet with the people identified as the decision makers by the Board members and it is critical that they be people who get things done. Pablo asked that over the next couple of months Board members help fill his schedule with meetings with these movers.

UUSJ has been invited to return for a UU Funding Program grant. Our current grant ends August 31st.

Pablo shared that he is impressed with the money UUSJ has managed to get through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). He stated that many organizations put in a lot of effort to get CFC funds and get a lot less than UUSJ. He feels it is worth the effort to advertise in the UU World again and perhaps look at targeting cities in other regions that have a large federal presence (e.g. Denver).

Lavona covered the potential effects of the Board's decision made last year to NOT credit contributions from individuals (unless so specified by the individual) including from CFC or through other means, to a congregation's fair share. In some cases the individual contributions were a significant share of a congregation's fair share contribution. We are monitoring the effects and may report on them in the future.

The monthly financials are available online for review.

Proposed 2016-2017 Budget: We have \$7500 of unspent grant money that will be carried-over to the 2016-2017 budget. The proposed budget is available online and enclosed.

** (See commentary below) At this point it was announced that the Board would go into Executive Session to discuss personnel budget issues.

The Board went into Executive Session to discuss personnel budget issues. The outcome of the decisions are summarized as follows: The Executive Director Selection Committee decided to sign an agreement with the Executive Director, which deviated from the Succession Plan and went from the previous 20 hours per week for 11 months to the same hourly salary but for a 12 month period. This reflects 10 paid holidays and up to two weeks of paid leave. This change reflects the desire of UUSJ to live our values and to provide as fair a compensation package as we are financially able to provide.

The Executive Committee recommended, and the Board agreed, to provide our Administrative Assistant with a 3+% cost of living increase.

Lavona made the point that the fair share report assumes receipt of 100% of each congregation's fair share amount while previously an 80% figure was assumed.

The 2016-2017 proposed budget was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40pm.

Commentary post-Board meeting, July 30, 2016, by Al Carlson

* As we reach the end of this fiscal year, we are still in transition for our Board Leadership. Our plan to revise our bylaws (changing our leadership structure from two Co-chairs to a Chair, Vice Chair and Immediate Past Chair) is currently on hold, and we currently have no Co-Chairs. The Nominating Committee is using the results from the Blue Ribbon Nominating Panel event to actively engage in recruiting dedicated people from our congregations to perform the duties necessary to complete UUSJ's vision and mission. They will be working to identify candidates for our Co-chair positions too.

** Before going into Executive Session we took a short break. This was our last board meeting for the 2015-2016 fiscal year, and it was the last meeting with Lavona Grow serving as Co-chair of UUSJ. Since the other Co-chair position is vacant, she was actually serving as our Chair for the past two years. In acknowledging Lavona's four years of dedicated service, Martha Ades presented Lavona with a gift certificate to Appalachian Spring, a local shop offering unique handcrafted gifts. During the past year, Lavona had also performed the functions of our Executive Director while the search committee conducted the search for a replacement of our former Executive Director, Rev. Terry Ellen, who retired June 2014. Al Carlson also presented Lavona with a symbolic image of Lavona leading us along the "yellow brick road" on the path to our future, expressing our strong dependence on her achievements.

Enclosures:

([Board Documents online for June 18, 2016 Board Meeting](#) are still available on the UUSJ home page Quick Links. All of the enclosures listed below will be included in the final draft of the Minutes to be sent in September)

- Treasure's Report
- UUSJ Proposed 2016-2017 Budget
- Committee and Task Force Reports

Handouts at the Board Meeting:

- Blue Ribbon Nominating Panel Report
- UUSJ Draft Advocacy Guidelines (sent to Board members and Board Contacts following the Board meeting requesting comments by July 1. The updated version will be provided in the September distribution of documents.)

Please submit any corrections or comment to Elizabeth at info@uusj.org by September 1, 2016.