



Executive Director's Report – P.DeJesús – January 2019

January 9, 2019

Since the previous Board meeting on September 29, UUSJ has engaged in the following:

Highlights:

- 1) I visited **UU Church of Las Cruces, NM** and spoke with lay-leaders about their national advocacy and social justice concerns; of urgency is the situation at the border.
- 2) Our **Capitol Hill engagement:** the Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps (the Corps) continued planned outings. Note, non-UU parties have shown interest in collaborating with or emulating UUSJ. And, January saw the largest outing yet.
- 3) The Immigration Task Group has framed priorities through 2020 and submitted public comment on the [Flores Agreement](#), and the [Aliens Subject to a Bar \(Protections Claims\)](#) rule. See the team report or webpage for details.
- 4) Our volunteer **Home-host** network accommodated a UU from **First UU Church of Austin, Texas** and the Austin Sanctuary Network with eight activists visiting Capitol Hill to do advocacy on DACA. Subsequently, the UU became a member of UUSJ. Requesting home-hosting should be evaluated as a UUSJ member benefit.
- 5) We had a very successful fundraising event on December 2, 2018 with Congressman Jamie Raskin (MD-8) as keynote speaker. We sold 144 tickets at \$75 each and after expenses **netted \$8,141.00**. This might be a model for future events.
- 6) We held a webinar with **Marcus Casey, Ph.D. of The Brookings Institution**. It had high registration (71) and participation (30) levels, possibly the highest ever.
- 7) We completed our **2018 Get Out the Vote** effort, updating our [voter mobilization webpage](#), our [UUSJ GOTV toolkit](#), launching a [Guide to Questions for Candidates](#), and conducting two related webinars.
- 8) We co-hosted a conversation with two spiritual leaders of the **Standing Rock Sioux**, at All Souls about insights from the **Dakota Access Pipeline** protest.
- 9) We began analysis of our policy survey on priorities for 2019-2020 and next steps will be discussed during the January Board meeting and beyond.
- 10) We conducted our inaugural donation stock transfer accepting **\$4,000**, the largest single donation that I am aware of, to date.
- 11) We took in **\$7,168** as donations or pledges from forty-one contributors for our 2019 End of the Year Appeal (EOYA). This does not include recurring donations set previously.

Management Activity:

Our **Board Composition** has changed little. **Frank Corsoro**, of UUC Arlington, VA has left his role as Alternate after several years; we thank him for his service. Several Board members have missed sufficient meetings that we must look at by-laws implications.

The Core Group continues handling operational and management activity, as well as strategic and tactical decisions, between Board meetings. UUSJ would not be able to function without the participation of the team. We deeply value their contributions.

In management, we remain in need of new volunteer participants and referrals to folks with specific skills and interests related to the month-to-month work of UUSJ.

Since the previous meeting, I have collaborated with the volunteers of UUSJ, and we have:

- 1) Focused on completing the successful fundraising event on December 2, 2018 with Congressman Jamie Raskin (MD-8) as keynote speaker.
- 2) Begun analysis of our membership policy survey.
- 3) Started evaluating Administrative Assistant application materials.
- 4) Continued interactions with the **UUA**, **UUSC**, the **CUUSANS** and **UUJEC**.

Needed actions remain:

- Visits with Board members and to their churches/congregations; and,
- Discernment and decision around the number of issues UUSJ will cover; and,
- Continued recruitment of volunteers, both Board members and non-Board members for various roles and tasks, such as:
 - Communications roles such as commentary writers, testimonial authors, newsletter editors/copy-editors, webpage assistants, social media trackers
 - Specialized roles such as grant-writers, database or SALSA experts, as well as branding, development, and board transformation strategists; and,
 - Team work such as a membership work-group, a friend growing/outreach team and a Gala planning team; and,
 - Committees such as the Executive, Finance and Nominating; and,
- Continued progress addressing deficits and growing membership.
- Discussion of opt-in or opt-out policy for use of Board member names in UUSJ messaging.

Advocacy & Related Activity:

Lavona Grow continues as chair of the Advocacy Oversight Committee and **Anna Rhee** contracting on our advocacy work. In this area we have:

- 1) Continued cementing the UUSJ presence of Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps (the Corps),

which went out on four outings (Sept-Jan.) to engage on: (a) Various Immigration Issues, (b) the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Farm Bill, (c) the First Step Act, and (d) on infrastructure reform legislation to include funding for climate change mitigation.

- 2) Seen the highest volunteer participation rates for Advocacy Corps thus far. What an achievement! The January focus on infrastructure and climate change may have engaged Green Activists that had not been participating recently.
- 3) Framed priorities through 2020 for the Immigration Task Group and begun preparing to discern on these with a wider group of UUSJ members on February 2.
- 4) Submitted public comment on the [Flores Agreement](#), and the [Aliens Subject to a Bar \(Protections Claims\)](#) rule.
- 5) Held a webinar with **Marcus Casey, Ph.D. of The Brookings Institution on The Evolution of Inequity Since the Great Recession**. With good participation this should serve as a reminder to try and leverage our location in DC. We did wide promotions, and partnered with UUs for Just Economic Community (UUJEC). We may have earned a few new members, certainly new contact information.
- 6) Co-hosted a conversation with two spiritual leaders of the **Standing Rock Sioux**, at All Souls about insights from the **Dakota Access Pipeline** protest.

Needed actions include:

- Holding Write Here! Write Now! information sessions to help document our engagement with UUs in states beyond the DMV and on-board new churches.
- Development of project-based proposals to fund UUSJ work.

Operational Activity:

We keenly feel the absence of our **administrative assistant (AA)**. Nevertheless we have:

- 1) Begun our 2019 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) application. The 2019 application is onerous and presents documentation challenges for UUSJ in demonstrating our work in states beyond the DMV.
- 2) Initiated our 2019 End Of the Year Appeal (EOYA) clearly taking in **\$7,168** between 12/06 and 1/10, from forty-one donors. This does not include recurring donations set previously or the full aggregate value of new pledges. The EOYA went to our entire active database, both locally in the DMV as well as beyond, nationally. It did not include a paper letter appeal. The response by donor level was: three donations from very large donors, where two gave single donations totaling \$3,000 and one set a monthly donation (pledge) equaling \$1,200 annually that began with \$100. Nine were large donors giving \$2,100; twenty-three were regular donors giving \$2,038 and two were friends giving less than \$40. The average, less the single outlier four-figure donation, was \$116.70 with a median of \$100.

- 3) Concluded negotiation for use of the new SALSA platform. We have to set a date to start the data conversion, which takes an average of 4-6 weeks to complete and will require tasks. Our cost will go up by \$144 annually, but we expect better functionality.

Needed actions include:

- A major database cleanup effort; and,
- Continue planning on development or membership tasks related to:
 - A “Join Me” campaign directed at large donors
 - Identifying potential institutional donors (Grants)
 - Membership drives twice per FY in addition to the EOYA.
 - A “Faithify” effort during the spring of 2019
 - Identification of matching funds for fundraising incentives
 - Discussion of donor/membership benefits and related messaging
 - Outreach to non-UUSJ member congregations; and,
- Capacity building towards 2019’s season of marches and rallies

Forward Looking:

UUSJ has grown productively in the direction of advocacy but we must shape infrastructure to support that success. We have a wonderfully innovative and noteworthy volunteer driven advocacy model that merits our active support. To perpetuate that success we need to friend grow within each church/congregations and improve member participation rates.

As a general rule it is far easier to transform existing contacts into new donors than find and cultivate new contacts as first time donors. But more than that, we need feedback from our UU base on what UUSJ is doing and how we are communicating its unique value. To gain this feedback we need all Board members to engage existing contacts and make simple queries on what such contacts know about UUSJ, what they perceive as its value.

This is a necessary precursor to achieve goals articulated previously: 1) excitement to support UUSJ; and, 2) robust familiarity with UUSJ to facilitate spreading the good word; and, 3) fundraising and booster culture and outcomes; and, 4) friend growing, networking and outreach culture and outcomes.

Feasibility queries continue regarding:

- A Virginia centric fundraising effort mirroring or building off the lessons learned from the event with Rep. Raskin in Maryland.
- A conference, replicating and building upon the success of our conference in 2017
- A conversation about the focus and purpose of the expected GALA in 2019