



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

March 9, 2019

Since the previous Board meeting on January 9, UUSJ has engaged in the following:

Highlights:

- 1) We announced our new policy priority **Defending Our Democracy**.
- 2) The Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps (the Corps) continued its outings with Write Here! Write Now! (WHWN) component.
- 3) The **immigration task group** convened a general membership meeting on its priorities through 2020 and moved to submit questions for a March 6 hearing. We missed the deadline but learned an important lesson.
- 4) I bumped into UUA President Susan Frederick-Gray at a Cedar Lane event and she expressed support for UUSJ.
- 5) We completed our **2019 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) application** as a regional non-profit and are expecting approval. Subsequent steps will be needed.
- 6) We participated in both the **Women's March** and the **TPS March For Justice**.
- 7) We had key calls on development and program activity, especially as it pertains to the planned **2019 GALA** and the prospect of a **Virginia fundraiser** in June.
- 8) I was invited to a **Poor People's Campaign (PPC)** briefing and press conference announcing a phase 2 of activities, UUSJ was asked to re-commit to the PPC.
- 9) On March 3, I visited **UU Church of Columbia, MD** and spoke with lay-leaders about UUSJ. We had a between services open session for people to learn more.
- 10) We participated, using volunteers, in a panel discussion on climate action and environmental justice organized by Interfaith Power and Light at All Souls.
- 11) We were invited to join a **UU Climate Justice high-level conversation** on March 5 with many players including UU Association, UU Service Committee, UU Ministry For Earth, UUs for Just Economic Cause and some State Action Networks.

Management Activity:

Our **Board composition** has not changed. 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 decision making regarding the 2019 GALA and a proposed June 2019 fundraiser, between and among the core group, development team and the program committee. The GALA will maintain a focus on celebrating congregational social justice projects. A June fundraiser event, in Virginia, is being proposed for board endorsement to test a duplication of the December Maryland fundraiser. We hope that it will be of more local interest to our NoVa membership. I've proposed an opt-out policy for related promotional emails.
- 2) Visited **UU Church of Columbia, MD** on March 3 and spoke with lay-leaders about UUSJ, specifically how UUSJ can improve engagement with UUSJ. We also learned about an interesting rally and project opportunity being led by a 16 year old UU. The effort looks to highlight the question "where are the children" on the Mall **June 9, 2019** as part of International Children's Day. Donations of kid-sized pajamas are being requested in a model based on the famous AIDS quilt. UUSJ was asked to support and I requested more details.
- 3) Continued interactions with UU partners:
 - a. With **UUA** we've discussed their expected recommitment to the PPC; and,
 - b. With **UUSC** we collaborated on the TPS March For Justice Rally; and,
 - c. With **CUUSANS** we participated in their bi-monthly briefings; and,
 - d. With **UUJEC and UUMFE** we've begun to identify dates and concepts for an advocacy conference during **Fall 2019, focused on the environment and Green New Deal.**
- 4) Clarified a strategic posture on the type of large donor appeal we would like to develop as well as a potential timeline.

Needed actions remain:

- Visits with Board members and to their churches/congregations; and,
- Nominations for board positions; and,
- Formation of a GALA planning team and social justice awards team; and,
- Revisiting strategies for gaining UU World coverage of our good works; and,
- Continued progress addressing sustainability funding and growing membership.

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) Announced our new policy priority **Defending Our Democracy** and had a smattering of early interest shown, we've signed on to one interfaith letter on the topic, planned an Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps (the Corps) outing for March 12

focused on restoring key provisions of the Voting Rights Act and received one request to consider joining an upcoming rally on gerrymandering organized by the League of Women Voters for March 26.

- 2) Carried the UUSJ presence of the Corps into the 116th Congress, with outings on: (a) infrastructure reform legislation to include climate change, (b) introducing UUSJ to new members of Congress, and (c) the Voting Rights Act and general support of reforms of our democracy.
- 3) Held an open session on February 2 discussing the priorities of the **immigration task group** through 2020 with UUSJ members and contacts. We consulted on these with both the UUSC and UUA. Each gave us input for the team to consider. The task group also attempted to submit questions for the March 6 hearing of **Secretary Nielsen, Department of Homeland Security**, by the H. Committee on Homeland Security. Our questions did not make the cut-off date. However, in attempting to submit questions we learned what should happen, internally, for the future.
- 4) Participated in a **Poor People's Campaign (PPC)** briefing and press conference announcing a phase 2 of activities where we were asked to re-commit to the PPC. Faith partners are asked to: a) recommit to fundamental principles; b) engage in the movement in the states; and, c) participate in and share resources to support three event series—a National Emergency Truth and Poverty bus tours in the states, a Poor People's Moral Action Congress (June 2019), and in 2020 Poor People's Assembly and March on Washington. UUA thinks it can and will take these three actions since point (c) is not understood to mean financial assistance.
- 5) We participated, using volunteers, in a panel discussion on climate action and environmental justice organized by **Interfaith Power and Light** at All Souls. This was a reminder that volunteers can help UUSJ provide coverage when staff cannot.
- 6) On March 5 we joined a **UU Climate Justice high level collaborative conversation** organized by the UUA with UU Ministry for Earth, UU Service Committee, and UU United Nations Office, UUs for Just Economic Cause and several SANs. It was framed as a base to begin to see the broader UU organizational context of each of organization. Check-ins allowed participants to understand the interests of UU players and a Google group will be created to help maintain communication.

Needed actions include:

- Completion of an interim report for our current UUSJ grant to make us eligible to apply for another grant due March 15. Look to the board agenda item for detail.
- 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) Completed our eNews and various eBlasts without an AA, but we continue to suffer a cost in volunteer satisfaction and work falling through the cracks.
- 2) Completed our 2019 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) application. We strived to submit an application as a national organization, but the proof of area of service requirements was just beyond our capacity using the data we have currently available. It is possible we will be in a better position to do so in 2020 or 2021.
- 3) Sent 200 thank you letters. This was more than at any other time during my tenure. The volume and timing was such that we contracted to get it done.
- 4) Narrowed a field of eleven AA candidates down to four and began phone interviews and in-depth review. We are scheduling panel reviews by the key volunteers that would collaborate with a new AA. We hope such a person would start by May 2019.
- 5) Started the very early steps of the data migration to the new SALSA platform.

Needed actions include:

- A major database cleanup effort; and,
- Continued development and membership planning related to our growth; and,
- Capacity building towards 2019's season of marches and rallies.

Forward Looking:

UUSJ has a wonderful basic model for social justice advocacy, witness and education, but we need board buy-in to sustain this model. This is most easily expressed as a need to find new individual members, especially among our current churches.

UUSJ is small for its 20 years, especially when viewed in terms of its annual budget. However, marking the start from the pivot to advocacy, when UUSJ made a significant conceptual alteration to its model, the circumstance appears much better. We've increased the number of contacts in our database, added a new congregational member, maintained the Corps for 2 years and refined how WHWN dovetails the Corps while also providing a logical means for UUSJ's outreach to non-DMV UU churches. In this context our budget and growth pains are more understandable, yet, nevertheless, we are in need of new members.

It cannot be overstated that board members should be evangelizing for UUSJ and should actively request assistance of the core group to this end. We must all have excitement to support UUSJ and robust familiarity with UUSJ to facilitate spreading the good word on what we are doing—it really is special and rather unique. Together we should strive to jumpstart a booster culture with friend growing, networking and outreach.

- Please communicate with your Executive Director, Board Chair and Core Group about what you and your church need to help improve awareness and membership levels for UUSJ. We may not have exactly what you want, but we have a willingness to help problem solve.