



Executive Director's Report – P.DeJesús – January 2020

January 22, 2020

Since the previous board meeting on September 21, UUSJ has engaged in the following:

Highlights:

- 1) Our Social Justice Awards Gala 2019 was successful with 144 registrants, 122 attendees and **net profits of \$6,900**. Thank you to all who assisted. See the report.
- 2) We again collaborated with the National Sanctuary Collective, to cover UU participation in their Press Conference on Capitol Hill. See our [Twitter](#) feed.
- 3) We staffed several witness events. Primary among them were Our Day in Court (LGBTQ+), Rally to Protect DACA, and Women's March 2020. See our [Twitter](#) feed.
- 4) We had a share the plate at UUC Fairfax, and a speaker visit to Riderwood UUs, MD.
- 5) We completed the hire of a new part-time administrative assistant, **Paulette DeMers**, for 20 hours per week. With lots to do, on boarding is a continuing process.
- 6) We received an **anonymous angel donation of \$25,000**, to date the largest single donation to UUSJ. Plans and potential collaborations are being discussed.
- 7) We completed our 2019 end of the year appeal efforts. Early results show we took in **\$8,971.29 gross**. Special thanks to all who shared thoughts on "why UUSJ?"
- 8) We are transitioning between **Linda Collyer** and **Tom Hutton** as UUSJ bookkeeper; correspondingly we have updated our agreement with Washington Ethical Society.
- 9) Our **Defending Our Democracy** team collaborated with UUA in support of the "[UU the Vote](#)" in 2020 launch, developing a suite of materials and content. See the report.

Management Activity:

Our **Board composition** has changed slightly. Eleanor Piez assumes duties as Mt.Vernon Unitarian Church Board member from Linda Doyle. We welcome Eleanor and thank Linda for her service.

While the **Executive committee** remains the same, our **Core Group composition** has changed slightly. Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson has stepped down from the group yet continues as volunteer web-master. We thank him for his service and continued service. The core group handles operational and management activity, as well as strategic and tactical decisions, between board meetings. Minutes of core group meetings have been provided to the board (email 1/15/20). UUSJ would not be able to function without the core group. We deeply value their contributions.

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

- 1) Continued interactions with UU partners:
 - a. With **UUJEC and UUMFE** we began some follow-on activity from our co-hosted advocacy conference on UU values and shaping a Green New Deal.
 - b. With **UUA** we collaborated to provide content for UUA's ["UU the Vote" in 2020](#) campaign; and,
 - c. With **UUSC** they reached out regarding activity on Capital Hill and rallies which led to a March WHWN on Temporary Protected Status (TPS); and,
 - d. With **CUUSANS** we participated in their bi-monthly briefings via Zoom.
- 2) Managed two staff changes. We off boarded our advocacy contractor and then made an offer of employment to a part time administrative assistant. See operational activity below in this report for additional context.
- 3) Begun concept discussions towards several strategic and structural needs:
 - a. Membership issues as well as donor engagement strategies centered on gratitude. For related content see the Membership Committee report and the Development Committee report
 - b. Articulation of a mission-based budget. See the Update report; and,
 - c. Near term UU Funding Program grant submission(s); and,
 - d. Fundraising ideas linked to our 20th Anniversary and speaker driven events.

Needed actions remain:

- Nominations for board positions, we need a treasurer, and a vice-chair.
- Building upon new leads to reconstitute a finance committee.

Advocacy & Related Activity:

Lavona Grow continues as chair of the Advocacy Oversight Committee but we do not have an advocacy consultant assisting the Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps (AC), and "Write Here! Write Now! (WHWN)" programs. In this area:

- 1) We continued our Capitol Hill AC, with WHWN components in October, November and December 2019. Topics included: (a) 100% clean energy economy & climate stewardship, and (b) Funding Election Security, and (c) Clean Energy Tax Incentives.
- 2) In January 2020 the AC went out on the issue of Iran & Iraq – Wartime Oversight Powers, however we did not deploy a WHWN. (See the Advocacy Oversight Committee report.)
- 3) Our **Defending Our Democracy** priority task group began work to frame its basic focus. Having determined a lack of progress in the Senate on any democracy legislation, the team decided to focus its efforts on supporting the UUA's ["UU the Vote" in 2020](#) campaign. See the DrD report.

- 4) We also participated in several witness events of interest or import to UUs. They included: Our Day in Court (LGBTQ+), Refugees Welcome, Rally to Protect DACA, Pack The Court House, Women's March 2020. See our [Twitter](#) feed.
- 5) The **immigration task group** has been active this fall. In addition to supporting rallies and a planned partnership with UUSC to advocate for Senate legislation supporting solutions for holders of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), among other things, they have been exploring how to deepen partnerships with organizations that represent impacted persons as an outcome of the September strategic retreat. (See the Immigration team report).
- 6) We received an **anonymous angel investment of \$25,000**, to date the largest single donation to UUSJ, in support of our voter mobilization and related Defending Our Democracy (DRD) work through the elections 2020. Plans and potential collaborations are being discussed including proposal for the hire of an organizer.

Needed actions include:

- Articulation of a plan to use the \$25k strategically to the benefit of UUSJ and satisfaction of the angel donor's intent.

Operational Activity:

Since the previous board meeting, we experienced two key changes regarding staff, completed the Gala and ramped up our end of year appeal. In this area we have:

- 1) Completed our eNews and various eBlasts during the fall.
- 2) Held our Social Justice Awards Gala 2019. Thank you to all that assisted. It was very successful with 144 registrants, 122 attendees and **net profits of \$6,900**. Its important to note this Gala out performed previous, and continues a trend of consistent improvement. Nevertheless, we will need to evaluate future changes.
 - a. **Flag:** Martha Ades, has stepped down as Program Committee Chair.
 - b. Several suggestions have emerged around submission timing, criteria, review procedure, and event format. See the program committee report for details.
- 3) Off-boarded our advocacy consultant, **Sara A. Abdelkhalek**, who started in May and ended by November 2019. The Core Group has begun to discuss how to meet the needs covered by the position. The Advocacy Corps and WHWN programs led by Lavona Grow have continued operating with assistance from volunteers, including board members, and Pablo. We will need to address this staff capacity deficit as early as feasible.
- 4) Completed our 2019 end of the year fundraising campaign. Preliminary results show **\$8,971.29** was taken in online. Checks are being reconciled and will be added upon completion. This year we aimed for the best practice of an 8-week (or more) campaign combining direct and ancillary appeal elements, primarily through the

addition of a robust testimonial component. Special thanks to all the writers who shared motivations on “why UUSJ?” In practice this looked like:

- a. We aimed for seven direct appeal elements and completed five. We issued one paper letter, Bob’s Board Chair message with photo page insert, sent to larger donors, and then repurposed that as an email to all contacts in our database. We sent three planned CFC donation prompts. We did not use two emails that were drafted, a volunteer email and an executive director email.
 - b. We aimed for 16 ancillary appeal elements and completed 12. We included giving details in both our November and December eNews’. We issued two seasonal messages, one for Thanksgiving and one for Seasons Greetings. We distributed 7 testimonials and 1 recap of those. We did not issue any Giving Tuesday messages, but had aimed for three.
 - c. We are now doing database updates, reconciliations and preparing tax receipt replies. Firmer numbers will follow. We will then move to separate thank you acknowledgements adopting best gratitude practice.
- 5) Hired **Paulette DeMers** as a new part-time administrative assistant for 20 hours per week, 11 months of the year, off mid-July to mid-August. Streamlining and improving administrative tasks will be on going. As Paulette becomes familiar with responsibilities, we expect a lessening of stresses for volunteers. Similarly, Pablo expects to focus more on structural and strategic issues—especially donor outreach.
 - 6) After many years of donated services, **Linda Collyer**, our financial volunteer and bookkeeper extraordinaire is fully relinquishing her role. At the suggestion of Charlotte Jones Carroll we explored the prospect of using **Tom Hutton**, Washington Ethical Society (WES), just as the Immigration Film Fest does. Correspondingly we have updated our agreement with WES and have incurred some related costs.

Needed actions include:

- Housekeeping on the database to set up gratitude and donor cultivation. Then follow through on related strategies and actions.

Forward Looking:

I concur with Gary Magnuson, who said in his testimonial “I believe in the role and potential of UUSJ.” To my view, we are doing important social justice work for good cause. And we are striving to do it better. It is an exciting moment to be part of this organization.

While we cannot claim major legislative impacts or amazing mobilization output, we now have plenty of gems of success to talk about, to be proud of. The next step is to develop sustainable funding in support of the work.

We can indeed chart a path towards a future as a *bonafide* national organization.