

## UUSJ Board Meeting January 25, 2020

Participating Full-time: members or alternates Martha Ades, Pat Behenna, Peter Bishop, Bob Denniston, Eleanor Piez, Terry Grogan, Lavona Grow, John Gubbings, Charlotte Jones-Carroll, Jana Kirkman, Emily Koechlin, Jack Lebowitz, Gary Magnuson, Sean McCarthy, John Peterson, David Strauss, Larry Underwood. Staff: Pablo de Jesus and Paulette DeMeres. Informally, Melanie Milner (U Columbia). Participating part-time: members David Shilton and Suzan Chastain. Guests: Nancy Sorden (former board member) and (for Strategy report only) Evan Junker, strategic planning facilitator

Introduction: Bob opened the meeting with a reading from Martin Luther King and introduced two new participants, Eleanor Piez – new member from Mt Vernon UU congregation – and Paulette DeMeres, new administrative support person. Bob also noted that Nancy Sorden was joining as volunteer who will help with budget formulation and Evan Junker, on strategy. David Strauss asked to add the Development Committee report to the agenda, and Bob noted that there was already a spot for this under fundraising. Pablo offered some pointers on using zoom for those not fully familiar with it.

1. Quorum/Minutes: Charlotte noted that a quorum had been reached (16 of 21) plus one (and later two) alternates, the informal member from UU Columbia, plus two staff. The meeting then approved the minutes of the UUSJ September 21, 2019 meeting.
2. General Assembly: Bob proposed that UUSJ participate in General Assembly (June 24-28 in Providence, RI) again this year, as a crucial part of being a national UU organization. He asked that the Board authorize from this year's budget an amount not to exceed \$800 to pay for space (booth to be shared with UUJEC) and materials. Board members attending GA would do so with their own funding. The focus/topic is to be determined. Lavona emphasized the need for volunteers to staff the booth during GA, as well as to coordinate ahead of time. Board members sought details on the benefits from last year's participation. Responses included: though hard to quantify, a considerable interest from booth visitors and from follow up communications post GA, in our work and our "products." Board discussion agreed that GA presence was crucial to having a national image, and that the Executive Director should go to GA, potentially with fees, transport and lodging reimbursed from the budget, and also that the Exec Director should take on the task of coordinating volunteers and materials preparation. The final agreement on this last point was postponed until a proper estimate could be made. The motion to provide budget funds for booth at GA not to exceed \$800 was approved.
3. Twentieth Anniversary: Bob asked the Board members to think how we might celebrate this anniversary next year – one or more events? Interfaith activity? Congregational engagement? Volunteers are needed to move this forward. David Strauss will seek ideas from Development Committee, as he considers this an ideal fundraising opportunity. With options clarified, they need to be costed/funded, a logo developed, and preferably tied to the "next 20 years" if the anniversary is used for fundraising.

4. Treasurer's Report (separately circulated): John G noted that UUSJ had \$103,992 as of 12/31/19, compared to around \$63,000 at the end of 2018. However, this included the unexpected donation of \$25,000 from an anonymous person, just deposited, which will be earmarked for very specific expenses related to getting out the vote in 2020. (See separate discussion on this donation below). The improved bottom line also reflected good results from the Gala and from End-of-Year appeal. However, last year we did not have an advocacy consultant on board the whole time, nor an administrative assistant, so we had "savings" that will not be replicated. John G also reported on the transition from volunteer bookkeeper Linda Collyer to a professional arrangement with Washington Ethical Society (expanding our existing agreement with WES) to provide bookkeeping services in exchange for \$780/year. This transition is nearly done and will be finalized upon Linda's return from travel. In discussion, Bob emphasized the good news about successful fundraising, while others asked about continued projected deficits. While the lack of complete staffing this past year meant we likely won't have a deficit, we cannot know of the future deficit until we see how successful upcoming fundraising and congregational donations are. We need to recognize that there will not be a new grant from UUFJ to fund our advocacy program, so we need to find \$20,000 from elsewhere or do less advocacy.
5. Check-signing authorization: In addition to the Treasurer as an authorized signer of UUSJ checks, we need a back-up. John G moved that Board Chair Bob Denniston be authorized to sign checks as well. The motion was approved.
6. Gala and Programs Committee Report (separately circulated): Martha Ades summarized the report – 122 persons attended the Gala (and more paid but did not attend) which maxed out the space at UUC Arlington. The net funds raised was \$6900, highest ever. There was good participation of Board and other volunteers at the event and on the awards committee. This year there were more nominations for social justice awards than ever, in multiple areas. All this success however leads to some challenges. First, is this regional approach appropriate if we are a national organization? The board should consider changes needed well ahead of the next (every two years so 2021) event. On program committee in general, given that much programming has moved into the issues groups and other parts of UUSJ, it may make more sense to name a coordinator for each event and not to have a general committee. Martha is stepping down as head of the current committee, so that is both a challenge and an opportunity to restructure.
7. Membership (report separately circulated): This new committee was tasked with re-thinking membership in light of (i) going national and (ii) fundraising needs. This committee also intends to interact with the Development Committee and strategic governance committee. Any changes now might be different after the strategic planning exercise is completed. John P summarized the main recommendations for changing individual membership to a tiered one with graduated dues associated with

more benefits. Regular dues remain \$40, Activist (\$100) and Steward (\$500) levels could suggest topics and join advisory council to advocacy work, respectively (these amounts reflect estimated cost of one hill visit or of one WHWN exercise, respectively). A fourth level (\$1250) is suggested for issue sponsor. Discussion emphasized the importance of not pricing out non-affluent individuals from membership/influence, and of not letting individuals dictate what we work on. Other comments are invited from board members to John Peterson or Gary Magnuson before February 10. This committee should be at least three trustees, and now has only two. Sean McCarthy volunteered to be the third.

8. Strategic Planning (facilitator's report circulated separately): Bob noted that the strategic planning effort had hit a bump when the facilitator was out of commission unexpectedly for medical issues. Evan Junker is just now back to work and was happy to see that the Values and Covenant committees had managed to carry on anyway. The Governance Committee will intentionally take longer as he knows that some of us are encountering issues with his company's online training program, owing to a software change, and this is now nearly fixed. He will hold a zoom meeting Feb 1, for those that need help logging on, with office hours immediately after, and regularly in the future, for ease of contacting. Individuals who want to speak with him should go onto their website (reachourgoals.com) and under "contact Evan" schedule a phone call. He emphasized that any comments on proposed outputs (e.g. covenant, values) should go to the committee chairs, not to Evan.
9. Values (report circulated separately): David Shilton and Suzan Chastain joined the board meeting at this point to discuss their progress. They took the brainstormed values from the last strategic planning meeting and consolidated them, posting them into values grid format, for which they would appreciate feedback by February 10.
10. Covenant (proposed covenant circulated separately): Gary, Martha and Larry had prepared a draft covenant, strictly for use during the strategic planning exercise. They would appreciate feedback by February 10 also.
11. Advocacy Program (report to be circulated): Lavona noted that the Advocacy Oversight Committee had not met for a year, so proposed disbanding it. Several board members disagreed, seeing that it played a reasonable role if advocacy was UUSJ's main program (and furthermore, that it should be a board decision to disband). Rather than ending the oversight committee, it should be reconsidered and perhaps restructured. After much discussion, a motion was made and approved to table this question until the Spring board meeting and use the intervening time to examine structure and purpose. Who should be choosing the topics for advocacy day visits? Who should chair (not the head of the advocacy corps program)? Make roles and duties clear. Make the advocacy topic choice process a nimble one so as to stay relevant to evolving events. Expect possible change once the strategic plan is completed. Sean, David Shilton, Peter Bishop volunteered to rethink.

12. Future of Advocacy Program: Lavona urged the board to consider how to make the advocacy program sustainable. She will not always be around to run it, and the start-up grant from UUFP will not be continued. There are some savings available for some added months, but this priority program needs a plan for the future, including funding (mainly for an assistant, recently Anna and then Sara). For the time being, a storytelling-for-advocacy training module is being developed and needs to be tested. A congregational venue needs to be identified. Please advise Lavona if your venue might be available in Feb or March. Also, a curriculum for congregations on "Roots of Justice" is being developed and needs congregations/individuals to work on testing this.
13. Achievements of Advocacy Program: Lavona shared data on advocacy visits since September (when these were done in coordination with the climate justice conference). This will be available on the website, as well as being circulated to the board. These visits have developed into a big operation, with new members joining the corps regularly, more Hill meetings and more volunteers in a support team to prepare the documents for the visits. UUSJ's capacity to manage this is pushing its limit. Discussion on this focused on how important the advocacy program is to UUSJ identity, so we need to figure out how to engage both donors and activists willing to take on more leadership.
14. Budget Preparation: Our next annual budget process should start now, with committees and officers developing estimated inputs for UUSJ programs, which should be sent to John Gubbings by February 15. These should be realistically within UUSJ's capacity to fund, taking into account the likely full complement of PT executive director, administrator and advocacy assistant for 2020-21 fiscal year, without the grant funds to pay for the latter. A draft budget will be shared and discussed at the spring (March) meeting with final formal approval at the June meeting of the board. To help formulate this budget, in coordination with the interim treasurer, we need to reactivate a Finance Committee. Current Trustees Charlotte Jones Carroll and David Strauss volunteered to join that Committee, and former board member Nancy Sorden is also willing to provide advice and inputs on budget to the Finance Committee. A motion to approve this committee membership was made and approved.
15. Program Budget Format (update circulated): At our June meeting, a discussion took place regarding the values of a program budget, in addition to the line item budget which our bookkeeper's software follows. Charlotte shared an update on the thinking along these lines. Having a better idea of the funds that go into our programs (advocacy, witness, education) plus fundraising and administration is important not only for the board but to attract and engage donors. While there are issues related to our organization being mainly volunteer-driven, rather than staffed, and thus harder to cost out, there are ways to at least start this approach in the near future. The transition (still ongoing) of permanent treasurer and the strategic planning process impact on our future programs also suggest a gradual approach to this. "Going national" itself is not a separate program but incremental costs of this can be estimated. Stay tuned.

16. Development Committee (report circulated): David Strauss shared the plan for this committee, of which the first goal – matching the UUPF \$4000 grant – had been achieved. David and Gary expressed a need to re-examine membership and ramp it up. UUSJ board needs to think bigger about sources for funding our programs and promoting them. The move to being national and what that means for membership potential, the strategic planning process and the need to interact with membership committee were highlighted.
17. “Angel” Donation: An announcement had gone out January 8 from Bob to the Board about the anonymous donation of \$25,000 to UUSJ to fund work to mobilize voters, agreed to by the Executive Committee. Board members wanted more details. The only condition placed on UUSJ was that the funds be used this calendar year on voter mobilization. UUSJ’s newest program – Defending Our Democracy (DRD) – is related. The main use foreseen of these funds is the hiring of a community organizer-type consultant and perhaps supporting his/her travel. Since All Souls Unitarian in DC (ASC) has experience with managing this sort of work/consultant, Lavona has been in touch with them, and one option emerging is to partner with ASC to jointly hire someone. Since the UUA is also putting funds into voter mobilization, we (UUSJ/ASC) might focus on the mid-Atlantic region (Pennsylvania to Georgia) while UUA sends resources to the northern-mid-US. Building on our attempts in 2018 in this area, Lavona thought making phone calls, finding local partners, building relations are all likely parts of this person’s duties. Some UUSJ congregations are undertaking their own GOTV efforts (e.g. River Road), and for those, UUA has a rolling grant program for up to \$500 that can be sought, rather than trying to use this grant. Since this is a fast-moving initiative still in its early stages, Board members wanted to get regular reports. Charlotte will send Core Group minutes out to the Board shortly after the meetings to meet this expectation.
18. Defending Our Democracy, DRD (report circulated): UUSJ’s newest content team is DRD, with a convener based in Boston, Fred van Deusen, two team members from around here (Martha Ades and Ursula Scott) and three members from outside the DC area. The UUSJ website has materials on this topic, including questions for candidates that align with UU concerns and spiritual grounding. Congregations will be urged to develop their own plans by March 31, with a planned February 6 webinar to assist.
19. Future Board Meetings: Bob suggested we save the dates of March 28 and June 13 for our spring and end of year Board meetings. If anyone cannot make those dates or have their alternate make those dates, please let Bob or Pablo know. We also need to volunteer venues for these meetings, which will be in person, rather than zoom.
20. Board contact information: Charlotte will circulate the latest Board member contact information to all members immediately, to aid follow-up actions highlighted above.

Charlotte Jones Carroll, Secretary

## ACTIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

### For All Board Members

- Provide feedback by Feb 10 on Values (to David Shilton or Suzan Chastain) and Covenant proposals (Gary Magnuson or Larry Underwood) for strategic planning. Also by Feb 10, comments to John Peterson on Membership Committee proposals (tiered individual membership especially).
- Participate as needed in 2/1 meeting with Evan Junker on how to use his training site
- Consider what funds to request (via committees) for next year's budget and advise John Gubbings by 2/15.
- Think about how to celebrate 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UUSJ next year
- Offer venues/volunteers to beta test advocacy storytelling and Roots of Justice training modules: advise Lavona Grow
- Offer venues for March 28 and June 13 board meetings and advise Bob if those dates OK
- Longer term: think how to revise program committee functions and sustain advocacy program

Pablo: Estimate costs for his participation in General Assembly and consider options.

Charlotte: Send Core Group minutes to full Board shortly after each Core Group meeting and send updated Board member list to all immediately.

Sean McCarthy/David Shilton/Peter Bishop: develop restructuring ideas for advocacy oversight

Charlotte/David Strauss/Nancy Sorden/John G: develop proposed budget by mid-March