



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

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June 13, 2020

Since the previous board meeting on March 28, UUSJ has engaged in the following:

- ❖ Covid-19 and its effects continue to present strategic, tactical, and logistical challenges for UUSJ; most acutely in the areas of advocacy and development.

Highlights:

- 1) **Lavona Grow** has held successful input gathering sessions and tested “virtual” and “remote” alternatives to our staple program offerings with the help of board members. This helped UUSJ stay active despite Covid-19, which forced us to suspend the typical Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps (AC) and *Write Here! Write Now!* (WHWN) for April, May, and June. For details see the Advocacy report and the [eNews](#) archive.
- 2) We hired **Kelsey Cowger** as the joint Reeb/UUSJ non-partisan voter mobilization organizer. A memorandum of understanding for the project is pending signature.  
\* Please promote her webinar with UUSJ on June 17, to explain the project.
- 3) The **Immigration Task Group** acted despite Covid-19: sponsoring UUSJ letters to Congress, Executive Departments and Governors; joining interfaith letters/petitions; supporting partnerships; hosting a webinar on Covid-19 issues. See their report.
- 4) The **Finance Committee** articulated a draft FY 2020-2021 budget for the board's consideration now in June. Please review the internal cover note and budget.
- 5) The **Ad-hoc Committee on Advocacy Program Oversight and Sustainability** continued its review of our advocacy posture. Please review their internal report.
- 6) The **Membership Committee** met and revised its proposal #3 of March, to reflect further guidance. They also articulated language for our donation page and collaborated on preparations for a membership drive. See that internal report.
- 7) The **Development Committee** met and has begun planning for *20th Anniversary* activities, a development calendar, and collaborating for a membership drive.
- 8) The strategic planning **Governance team** began a review of UUSJ bylaws in detail. We thank them. Please see their interim report.
- 9) The strategic planning **Mission & Vision team** distributed a proposal for comment and input. They have updated their proposal. We thank them. See their report.
- 10) **Paulette DeMers**, our Administrative Assistant was on medical leave for about a month. Apart from that, we did receive our 2020 CFC designation, we raised \$1,304 from an email appeal, and have collected 69% of FY 19-20 Fair Share requests.

Management Activity:

Our board has grown. **First Unitarian Church of Baltimore** has joined UUSJ officially, building on a history of supportive donations and an eagerness to join UUSJ. **Kenneth Mitchell**, an Advocacy Corps volunteer, is joining the board as the representative. Otherwise, formally, our board has remained unchanged. However, four members are reaching their term limits at the close of June 2020. We thank **Al** Carlson of Reston, **Carmelita** Carter-Sykes of Paint Branch, **John** Gubbings of Cedar Lane, and **Lavona** Grow of Arlington for their dedicated service over the years..

The **Executive Committee** composition remained the same, handling much activity, between board meetings. We deeply appreciate their guidance. Charlotte Jones-Caroll, Board Secretary, has provided meetings minutes to the board. The **ad-hoc, and strategic planning teams** that stepped up during the previous quarter continued robust activity. Thank you all for your participation and leadership.

- ❖ Covid-19 has affected UUSJ volunteers who are reporting general sleep issues, Zoom fatigue/overload, and cabin fever as factors.

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

- 1) We hired **Kelsey Cowger** as the joint Reeb/UUSJ non-partisan voter mobilization organizer. A memorandum of understanding for the project is pending. We are ramping up operations, engagement and striving to connect with stakeholders.
- 2) Experimented with “virtual” and “remote” advocacy approaches during April, May, and June. We tested our action alert capacity. We tested ways to maintain the interest and participation of regular program volunteers. Thank you, Lavona Grow.
- 3) Continued the work of the **The Ad-hoc Committee on Advocacy Program Oversight and Sustainability**, who have given many hours to understand our advocacy culture, desires, and needs. They have articulated a proposal structured on oversight, scope, and capacity that requires close consideration, especially in light of our strategic planning and the pandemic.
- 4) Furthered concept discussions towards program and fundraising ideas linked to our **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**, with a practical emphasis on a likely “virtual” event.
- 5) Made some progress on identifying our database structure and user needs. Thank you Martha and John and **Membership Committee**.
- 6) Participated with **the CUUSANS**, Coalition of Unitarian Universalist State Action Networks, in their bi-monthly briefings.
- 7) Completed a draft budget for FY 2020-2021. Thank you Charlotte Jones-Caroll,

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Nancy Sorden, David Strauss, and John Gubbings.

Needed actions:

- Finalization of a memorandum of understanding for the 2020 Reeb Project/UUSJ Voting Campaign Organizer and related project.
- Agreement on a job description and hire an assistant to help advocacy activity.
- Outreach to Towson UU Church to explore reviving a relationship with UUSJ.

Advocacy & Related Activity:

**Lavona Grow** continues leading our advocacy programs and strategizing our advocacy posture on most policy issues. Lavona has successfully capitalized on the shelter in place context, creating opportunities for feedback, input, and programmatic alternatives to our traditional programs. Assessment of these “virtual” and “remote” alternatives is needed.

- ❖ It is possible the “virtual” and “remote” posture will last till January 2021 impacting Advocacy Corps (AC), *Write Here! Write Now!* (WHWN) and Voter Mobilization (VM).
- ❖ Covid-19 forced cancellation of our April, May and June AC and WHWN offerings in their traditional format.
- ❖ It is unclear how witness events will unfold as people protest and rally in reply to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade.
- ❖ We have made some progress connecting our work to Covid-19, now we must consider how to highlight the cross-cutting issues of police reform and racial justice.

In this area:

- 1) **We modified our advocacy approach.** We experimented with “virtual” tools allowing UUs to email or call congress. We switched to “remote” AC and WHWN offerings by opting for online gatherings and briefings in lieu of face-to-face programs. Using this approach we carried forward collaborations with **UU Ministry For Earth** during April and May on “super pollutants” — hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). For June we are engaging on Secure our Vote as our WHWN issue. This reinforces our experimental action alerts on the issue that occurred previously.
- 2) Among numerous smaller Zoom gatherings, we had three larger successful webinar briefing sessions. Two on HFCs and the other on Secure our Vote with **Public Citizen** presenting.
- 3) The **Immigration Task Group** has been active remotely by joining and authoring letters. They also piloted a “salon” style event focused on immigrants and Covid-19. As an experiment this was helpful. Unfortunately it ran in conflict with a Poor

People's Campaign. See their report.

- 4) Our support and collaboration of the **Poor People's Campaign** has picked up speed heading into the movement milestone of June 20th. One consequence has been that Pablo was named to the UUA's UU PPC Leadership Council.

Needed actions:

- A transition plan as Lavona Grow steps back as volunteer advocacy program chair.
- Strategies to manage our response to **Covid-19** and its impacts on our advocacy.
- Strategies to respond to the unfolding national conversation on **racial injustice**.

Operational Activity:

We had a near month-long pause in support from our **Administrative Assistant Paulette DeMers**, due to medical issues, but she is back now on a working recovery.

- ❖ In response to Covid-19 we have converted all face-to-face gatherings to Zoom for the foreseeable future. This will likely impact our *20th Anniversary planning*.

In this area we have:

- 1) Completed our eNews and eBlasts. Pablo did these tasks while Paulette was out.
- 2) Requested disbursement of our FY 19-20 UU Funding Program challenge grant of \$4,000. To meet the challenge we raised **\$4,404** from new donors since the start of the grant term, which was \$1,960 from our Gala event and \$2,444 in direct appeals.
- 3) Added an extra email appeal linked to Covid-19 and raised **\$1,304** from 17 donors from 4/21 - 5/18. The appeal featured two emails.
- 4) Been approved for our 2020 Combined Federal Campaign designation.
- 5) Collected **69% of Fair Share** funds, with pledges up to 77% of our FY 19-20 goal (\$30,651). With pledges, this represents an **end of year deficit of \$6,941**. More importantly, this may be the start of a downward trend in Fair Share collections as congregations reconfigure budgets and support priorities in light of Covid-19 and now the racial injustice imperatives following from recent events.
- 6) Begun planning towards a summer membership appeal. The appeal includes \$6,000 in matching funds for new donors. We thank the board members that made this possible. The appeal will build upon analysis and lessons learned throughout the previous 17 months by the **Development** and **Membership** committees.

Needed actions:

- More database housekeeping to set up donor cultivation, including the appeal.

Forward Looking:

**The summer will be important.** We need to synchronize the interactions of our advocacy and fundraising in a highly volatile context.