

UUSJ BOARD MEETING MARCH 28, 2020

Participants (via zoom): John Peterson & Ed Kringer (Accotink), Emily Koechlin & Serena Lowe (All Souls), Larry Underwood & Kathy Nickel (Bull Run), John Gubbings (Cedar Lane), Eleanor Piez (Mt. Vernon), Pat Behenna (Paint Branch), Jack Lebowitz & Jana Kirkman (River Road), David Shilton & Suzan Chastain (Arlington), Al Carlson & Terry Grogan (Reston), Bob McCarthy (Fairfax), Gary Magnuson (Frederick), Sean McCarthy (Rockville), Peter Bishop (WES), Martha Ades, Bob Denniston, Lavona Grow, Charlotte Jones Carroll & David Strauss (at-large), Pablo de Jesus and Paulette DeMeres, staff, plus Nancy Sorden (Finance Committee) and Evan Junker (strategy facilitator). Thirteen congregations and all five at large represented. Only Towson and Columbia UU congregations not on call.

Bob opened the meeting with a welcome to new alternate members Kathy Nickel and Serena Lowe and a chalice lighting. Opening reading: *Prayer for a Pandemic* (shared afterwards as was closing reading).

ACTION ITEMS:

- Lavona: *Assemble advocacy files and make available for board and transition planners
 - *March 29 webinar with WHWN partners on how to do virtual advocacy
 - *Debrief with the UUSC and immigration team results of 3/10 Advocacy Day on TPS
 - *Help train Paulette as WHWN system administrator
 - John G/Pablo: request \$4K matching grant from UUFP
 - Bob/Pablo/John G: Pablo send Fair Share report to board, and all three follow up with any congregation unsure about making Fair Share contribution
 - Finance Committee: Revise proposed budget for June board
 - Membership Committee: Refine membership option #3 with comments from 3/28 meeting
 - Nominating Committee: Seek 3rd member for Membership Comm, permanent Treasurer and Vice Chair
 - Bob/Sean: Get governance guidance from Evan Junker for strategic planning work
 - Pablo/Lavona with R Keithan: Select organizer and finalize MOU for Mobilizing for 2020 Elections work
 - Development Committee: Proposals for 20th anniversary and general fundraising events/measures
1. Quorum and past minutes: Secretary Charlotte Jones-Carroll confirmed a quorum was reached. Minutes of the January 25 board meeting were approved with no changes.
 2. Advocacy Program Update: (See associated report for details). Presented by Lavona with Serena: following up on last Board meeting's decision, an advocacy oversight working group (Sean, David Shilton, Serena Lowe and Peter Bishop) had been working in coordination with Lavona and subsequently also with Evan Junker. The key issue is Lavona's need to step back but not out of the leadership of this important program by end-August (her board term expires in June). Serena Lowe is leading an ad hoc group to discuss this transition. Issues include: who will perform what functions in the future, with what support? How much is staff and how much volunteer? What is the right vehicle for advocacy oversight (a board function)? How might we be more flexible, nimble, efficient and savvy? Lavona is assembling all the related documents to make them available to this team and the rest of the board. Extensive discussion of this transition included expressions of appreciation for Lavona's role in the start-up and leadership

over the past three years of the advocacy program, clarification of her future involvement (maybe more specific work on environment, she says, help with interfaith and other UU partners and on-site support during advocacy days). Many agreed that we may need to adjust the model used to date – reducing the frequency from almost monthly to fewer visits, possible use of alternate communication modes (such as Zoom and teleconferencing) besides letter-writing and personal visits to House/Senate, recognition that this change needs to be coordinated with Strategic Plan work and Development, Finance and Membership Committees as well as the Executive Committee and ad hoc oversight team. John P argued for better funding for the Advocacy Corps work as the most important/strategic activity of UUSJ. Queries were also made about how we are pivoting to take account of COVID-19, which has cancelled our April and probably May visits and what are exact steps and hours involved in an advocacy “cycle” leading up to Hill visits.

3. Current advocacy efforts: Lavona plans a webinar on 3/29 to brainstorm with WHWN partners as to how to conduct a virtual WHWN. No assistant for the advocacy work has been hired to date, with no immediate plan now to do so, without clarity on skills needed. A revised possible job description will be circulated by April 15. March 10 advocacy day on supporting pathways to legal status for TPS holders – done in coordination with UUSC and TPS Alliance – resulted in over 1070 letters being collected for delivery to Senators. A debrief on the results of this AC visit is needed with the UUSC and UUSJ Immigration Task Group. Earth Month (April) will drive the April-May work, in partnership with UUFME. We may need to find alternative ways to deliver the letters if the pandemic prohibits the early May AC day. Lavona also briefed the board on the data pilot; Paulette needs to be trained as the system administrator. The planned Beta test of the “Storytelling as Advocacy” workshop has been delayed by the pandemic but is ready to go. Lavona’s Advocacy Report provides further details and includes the 2018-2019 UU Funding Program Interim Grant Report, a list of Advocacy Corps members and a UUSJ/Advocacy Corps handout for congregational use.
4. Treasurer’s Report: (see report provided for details). John Gubbings noted that while we have considerably more (\$43,511) cash on hand compared to same time last fiscal year, this reflects savings from personnel understaffing and the receipt of nearly all grant income, some of which is to be applied to future expenses. Budget versus actuals shows actual income higher than budgeted because of the \$25,000 unexpected donation for mobilizing for 2020 elections as well as successful end-of-year appeal in December. Expenses were under budget because of understaffing (now the AA slot has been filled so this will change). We still expect to request the \$4000 UUFM matching grant, since we raised that amount and thus qualify. The main concern was the lagging congregational contributions, given that the pandemic will almost certainly affect those congregations using share-the-plate or other fundraising events to get the fair share for UUSJ. Bob noted we may need to do follow-up with each congregation still expected to contribute. Pablo asked for those members who have information/concerns to contact him and John Gubbings.
5. FY20-21 Budget proposal (Report distributed, for details): Charlotte (representing the Finance Committee) reviewed the assumptions on which the budget proposal is based and noted that the two “shifting grounds” already taken into account (advocacy transition, strategy discussions) are now joined by the pandemic’s unknown impact on already fragile financial sustainability. The main assumption is that the Executive Director and new Admin Assistant will take on some of the advocacy program implementation with a modest amount of funding for other support

person(s) for this program. Secondly, we cannot expect significant UU funds for advocacy at this time, as UUFP on principle does not continue funding programs they have kick-started. Third, there will be, for next FY, some savings as noted by Treasurer, which allow us to cover much of the budget, but for future years such savings are not available, as we will have under our current model a structural deficit. Discussion followed, focusing on concerns about how much time Pablo can dedicate to advocacy, whether to include staff benefits following UU standards (not now included), what Finance Committee thinks are the priorities needing our core funding, are we overly dependent on fair share contributions from congregations at a vulnerable time? Should we count more on individual members or try to track down big donors in future (a debate for the Development Committee) and how much revived task groups (if this can happen) for environment and economic inequality might provide content for advocacy work (as immigration group did for March AC). Clarifications were sought on the budget Excel table, which could not show how the projected \$29,000 savings in this FY could be generated, since it only shows status as of February 2020. Some of the current UUFP advocacy grant will likely be carried over into the new budget year, Lavona noted. Discussants of the new line item for an information service on Congress felt such a tool was important, but likely one could be found for less than now proposed. Savings with SALSA costs might be possible if we partner with CUUSAN, Lavona suggested. The Finance Committee will take these comments into account and propose a budget at the June meeting for approval by the Board.

6. Membership Committee Report (see document for details): John Peterson and Gary Magnuson had offered three tiered membership options to consider and noted that the Committee preferred Option #3 (no tiered membership). Ultimately the board voted to accept Option #3 with the amendment that the dollar amounts should be made flexible, as they are likely to change. The additional three options made by the Committee were deferred to a later meeting due to time constraints. There was general concern about exchanging inputs on advocacy work for higher donor amounts, but general support for some sort of recognition for bigger donors. Annual reports (the usual place to recognize donors) have not been done for some years by UUSJ, but should start again for many reasons, including this one. The Board also discussed the Committee's different ways to compute congregational Fair Share contributions, ultimately tabling decisions until a future meeting. Note: Membership Committee needs a third member.
7. Strategy: Although Evan Junker had been listening in on much of this discussion, and commended the decisions, he was not able to stay in the meeting to talk about getting the strategic planning back on track. Bob will ask him to send a timetable for that, as well as to send Governance Committee guidance, as Sean (its chair) has requested.
8. REPORTS:
 - A. Mobilizing for 2020 Elections: Lavona and Pablo reported that they are interviewing candidates (with Rev. Keithan of All Souls) for an organizer to work on 2020 elections, the main use of the \$25,000 anonymous donation for this work. A memorandum of understanding must also be formalized next.
 - B. UUFP grant application: Application for a grant for the "storytelling for public policy change" initiative has been submitted. Total project cost \$12,000.
 - C. Development committee: Will be meeting in next two weeks to discuss 20th anniversary event and how to work with membership committee on future fundraising.

- D. Nominating Committee: Sean noted that the Treasurer slot was the most crucial, since John Gubbings agreed only to be an interim treasurer. A new candidate would not have to be a CPA (we have a new bookkeeper now, via WES). A third member for the Membership Committee is also needed to abide by By-laws. (Vice-Chair is also unfilled).
- E. Next board meeting – Annual Meeting is June 13, hopefully in person at WES. (A strategy discussion is planned in May as well).
- F. Fair Share Report: Pablo will send this (confidential) table to board members as well as a database showing who in each congregation is an individual member of UUSJ.

The meeting was adjourned with a reading from Lavona Grow (circulated separately).

Charlotte Jones Carroll, Secretary