

Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden



Annual Report *Fiscal Year* *2019 – 2020*

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Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden

Rev. Tony Lorenzen, Minister
508-344-3668 /revtonyuu@gmail.com

June 3, 2020

Dear Members of UUCM,

The Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden is hereby called for **Saturday, June 20, 2020 at 1:00 PM via Zoom:**

Topic: Congregational Annual Meeting

Time: Saturday, June 20, 2020 01:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3082073466?pwd=bXVSejViaUwydXhzRjlzOGFseEoyQT09>

Meeting ID: 308 207 3466

Password: 202122

Or dial in via phone:

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Items on the agenda include the following:

- Minutes of June 9, 2019 – Annual Meeting
- Minutes of December 15, 2019 – Special Congregational Meeting
- Treasurer's Report – Fiscal Year 2019 - 2020
- Budget for July 2020 – December 2020
- Election of officers – postponement until Special Congregational Meeting in October (date TBD)
- Annual Report – Fiscal Year 2019 - 2020
- State of CT Certificate of Incorporation of Existing Religious Society
- Any other business that shall come before the meeting

Members of at least 30 days by June 20, 2020 are eligible to vote. Please plan to attend this important meeting.



Yours truly,

328 Paddock Avenue • Meriden, CT 06450-6985
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Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden
2019 Annual Congregational Meeting
June 9, 2019

President Donna Stimpson opened the meeting and lit the chalice, calling for a quorum
22 members were present

BOT Members present:

- Donna Stimpson, President; Jane Dioguardi, Vice President
Trish Schneider, Treasurer Sandy Duffy, Finance Chair
Tina Caplan, Clerk of the Board Ann Smith, member at Large

Kathy Lindberg, member at Large (Randy Heath, Property Chair – absent)

2018 Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes (previous year congregational annual meeting)– June 10, 2018 were presented for approval by the congregation. Paul Kline made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Janet Hiller, approved unanimously by voice acclamation.

Approval of Treasurer’s Report from 2018 – Donna called for approval of the final report. Jeff May made a motion to accept, which was seconded by Richard Gault, and the motion carried unanimously.

2019-20 Proposed Budget

Trish reviewed the proposed budget for 2019-20 in detail.

John Sepples asked if the surplus would carry forward into the present FY – Trish explained about the building fund being a possibility for the surplus and put about \$1000.

Jeff May asked whether there could be another ask of the congregation for more pledges to bolster the budget. Donna asked for additional help and ideas, and Jeff pointed out that if everyone added a small amount (~5.00/week), we’d meet our pledge goal, so the idea of an additional ask made sense.

Paul Kline made a motion to accept the budget– Ryan Senft seconded. Five members opposed passage, with four abstentions. The motion carried.

Donna recognized the Board of Trustees and the chairs of the committees for their service.

2019-20 Board of Trustees Elections

Donna announced the slate of nominees for the Board of Trustees for 2019-20:

- **President: Jane C. Dioguardi**
- **Vice-President: Tina Caplan**
- **Clerk: Kathleen Lindberg**
- **Finance Chair: Sandy Duffy**
- **Property Chair: Randy Heath**
- **At-Large: John Sepples, Ann Smith, Paula Snedeker**

Clerk motioned for submission of one ballot (etc.) Nancy Burton made the motion to accept the slate; seconded by Sandy; carried unanimously.

Minister Report

Rev. Jan Carlsson-Bull presented her final annual report to the congregation, speaking on the biblical significance of the number 7.

Ministerial Committee Update

Jeff May, representing the Ministerial Search Committee, updated the congregation on the new, incoming interim yoked minister, beginning on August 19th with Reverend Tony Lorenzen. Ann asked about the year by year contract and if it were possible for both parties to agree not to renew the contract. Jeff clarified that yes both parties could either renew or not.

Donna asked members of the congregation to consider being members of the Ministerial Committee – it's at least a three-member committee and members cannot be members of the Board of Trustees.

Pastoral Care Update

Discussion of pastoral care coverage in the interim between Rev. Jan's retirement and the beginning of Rev. Tony's ministry; the Board of Trustees will be developing a plan for ministerial care during this period.

Other Business

Donna ☐ capital account – asked for specific donations to this account in addition to pledges – Jan raised the possibility of adding no-cost solar panels when we replace the roof and reach out to Cindy Ferguson for funding ideas -- Nancy Burton asked about other grant money – Angie asked if someone would find out the information from Cindy and Jan suggested we reach out to the Board.

Diane Szymaszek invited members to support formation of a new Environmental Justice group/committee.

Sanctuary Debriefing

Nancy Burton debriefed the congregation on the end of Sujitno's time in sanctuary and next steps for the committee, adding that there are 10 established sanctuary congregations in Connecticut, with three people currently in sanctuary.

Other announcements:

- June 14 – Rev. Jan's retirement celebration and potluck
- June 16 – Rev. Tony joins Rev. Jan in the sanctuary
- July 27th – Three UU Congregations (Meriden, Mattatuck, Picnic – Gazebo – Hubbard Park

Barbara Kline made the motion to adjourn; Jeff seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Rev. Jan Carlsson-Bull shared final words and extinguished the chalice.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Caplan

**Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden
Special Congregational Meeting Minutes
Sunday, December 15, 2019**

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 11:30 AM by Jane Dioguardi, Board of Trustees President.

II. Reading of the Covenant and Mission of the Congregation

Jane read the UUCM covenant and mission.

III. Election of Vice President

Jane introduced John Sepples, who made a brief statement of his commitment to UUCM and willingness to serve as Vice President on the Board of Trustees.

No other candidates came forward or were nominated.

A quorum was reached with 21 active members present, and members voted unanimously to elect John as Vice President.

IV. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 11:40 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula A. Snedeker
Clerk, UU Meriden Board of Trustees

Annual Report of the President
Jane Dioguardi

We are close to the end of an unusual year, full of wonderful beginnings and unprecedented challenges. As of August 2019, we have a sister congregation, the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society (MUUS) of Woodbury, Connecticut. With MUUS, we sought out and hired our new yoked minister, the Rev. Anthony Lorenzen. Our partnership has been a positive and exciting one, as we come together to share worship and resources. Our Boards of Trustees have voted to extend Rev. Tony's contract for another year.

Rev. Tony has brought vitality and new ideas to our congregational life. With our Worship Associates, he has made our Sunday services the kinds of stirring experiences that have often been called "the highlight of our week." As we adapt our worship and social events to fit the demographics of our congregation (taking into consideration the fact that, at present, we have relatively few children and young adults), we've moved into the kinds of services that are genuinely geared to people of all ages. We have particularly enjoyed the monthly Friday night events for families, incorporating games, stories, and refreshments. Our annual December Holiday Fair was a great success.

Under the auspices of the Social Justice Council, our congregation has continued to bring our spiritual strength to effect environmental, racial, immigration, LGBTQI+, and health care justice. Under the leadership of Kathleen Lindberg, we launched a new Lay Pastoral Care team.

And then, in March, we and our siblings around the world were hit with a heretofore unexperienced obstacle that we have begun to overcome: the COVID-19 crisis. The Board of Trustees, in agreement with the recommendations of the Unitarian Universalist Association and state guidelines, immediately closed our church building to all activities. With only two or three days to spare, Rev. Tony, the Worship Associates, and our pianist Alan Dougherty put together our first live-streamed worship service. After a few minor glitches, we were able to produce nearly flawless weekly online experiences, on our own and in conjunction with MUUS. With the help of our Zoom experts, we began conducting our meetings and all other church business virtually.

Like all congregations in the UUA and beyond, we are facing great financial difficulty: Because of enforced quarantining and the limitation of in-person events, many stewardship activities have been cancelled, postponed, or changed from live to digital. Meriden's Daffodil Festival, a major money-maker for us, was called off. We are working to figure out how to hold our annual Goods and Services Auction on line, as other congregations have started to do, and to determine a safe way to hold our Tag Sale. At present, we are facing a budget deficit.

One bright spot: We have entered into an agreement with Trinity Solar. Church members who agree to have free solar panels installed on their single-family residences through this program will have a contribution of \$1000 per home donated to our church. At this writing, three households have signed up for the program. Any of these members who are able to have friends or relatives sign up for the program by July 31 will also receive a \$1500 referral bonus.

A contingent of UU Meriden folks were able to mask up and attend the vibrant Black Lives Matter demonstration and march on Sunday, June 7, carrying signs and our Black Lives Matter banner from City Hall to the Meriden Green, where we listened to addresses by Black community leaders and local and state governmental representatives.

Via Zoom, we conducted our Budget Hearing, and will be doing the same for our Annual Meeting. Because the UUA's General Assembly will be held virtually instead of in Providence, Rhode Island, Rev. Tony and our delegates, Past President Donna Stimpson and current President Jane Dioguardi will be attending from their homes.

So many members of our small but mighty church family have been going above and beyond the call, giving generously of time, treasure, and talent. As your president, I am awed by and grateful for your work during these most challenging of times.

***Annual Report of The Rev. Tony Lorenzen
to the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden
for the Program Year 2019-2020***

I was hired jointly by the Board of the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society (MUUS) and the Board of The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden (UUCM) as a contracted minister to work half time with each congregation on developing a 3-5 year plan and begin work on accomplishing the goals and objectives of such a plan. Overall, I have been able to make progress on this, and my contract is being renewed by the MUUS and UUCM boards for another church program year.

I began my ministry by forming a Development Team that would work with me to assess the congregation and propose a list of goals for a 3-5 year plan so that we could facilitate a congregational conversation on which of the goals should be our first priorities. We were just about to hold that congregational conversation when the COVID-19 pandemic halted our progress, and the Development Team's work was put on hold. It will resume one way or another with a Committee on Ministry at the start of the next program year, in late summer 2020.

My pastoral tasks/goals for the year were process oriented. Task 1: Joining the System, Task 2: Analyzing the System, Task 3: Connecting with the Denomination, Task 4: Focusing and Assuming Responsibility, Task 5: Exiting and Evaluating.

Here my thoughts after the first program year on how I did in terms of accomplishing these tasks.

Task 1: Joining the System This means “How well have I / has Rev. Tony done at “joining” the congregational system; how well have I become “part of the family”?

I have made a lot of progress at joining the congregational system. I have met with over 40 people in individual (or with partners or family) meetings. I have spent some time (but not as much as I would like) hanging out with people when they are in the church building. I have a sense now of how the major committees work (Board, Dev. Team, Worship, Membership, Social Justice, CYRE). I have a sense of how the church office functions. I have gotten to know the congregational leaders and patriarchs/matriarchs and have had the opportunity to share with them what I feel are important things for congregational leaders to know about the changing landscape of church and church leadership in the 21st century. This happened through meetings and Zoom seminars on related topics. I have made a covenant with the retired minister, Rev. Jan. I feel like I have been accepted and welcomed by the congregation and the membership in general. I do not feel any stress/critique/major disapproval with my ministry so far.

Task 2: Analyzing the System “What is my/Rev. Tony’s analysis of the congregational system after four months?”

I have noticed these strengths in the congregation:

- Members ***genuinely*** like each other and value being together in each other’s company.
- There do NOT seem to be any cliques or ongoing conflicts between/among members.
- There is a STRONG commitment to social justice and UUA social/cultural/justice issues.
- The congregation rallies together well for important events, projects, and even financial needs such as sanctuary, the holiday fair, starting up the minister’s discretionary fund, etc.
- There’s a general commitment to creative thinking and wanting to improve/grow/learn.
- There is a real and solid investment in working with the partner congregation, MUUS.
- There is an abundance of good leaders and people willing to do extra heavy lifting if needed.

I have noticed these issues that need collaborative, creative problem solving:

- The Building - Our church building is not adequate for our needs IF we want to grow the congregation beyond its current numbers, programs, and scope. IF we DO want to grow, we will need to A. build an addition to enlarge the sanctuary and do some renovating so that we

have a separate “church hall” space or B. Sell the current property and build or buy a building that is adequate for growth or C. Sell the building and rent property in short term leases so that we can rent larger as we grow larger.

- Religious Education - The days of religious education classes divided by developmental learning level with a targeted age group curriculum (i.e. “Sunday School” model) are over and they are not coming back anytime soon. This is a demographic problem and not a quality problem. The reason the church doesn’t have more families is NOT because our RE program is poor, it’s because there just aren’t as many families available to recruit. Take away Catholics and people who want nothing to do with church, and our potential recruiting field is tiny compared to what it was even 10 years ago. We need to find a way to rethink and restructure what “RE” means. This has only become more important as faith development has moved online. The church must become a resource center so that faith can be taught at home. In terms of adult education and formation, there seems to be a need to establish / re-establish UU identity and an understanding of Unitarian Universalism among adults. The visitor to member to leader program will help this.
- Finances - Pledges will not adequately fund the congregation any longer. Even if all members pledge 10% of their gross or net income, we will still need more funding. We don’t have anyone close to pledging 10%, so we will need to move to year round fundraising. We need to find a way to do this so that our membership doesn’t spend all its time at church fundraising.
- Membership Development - We get plenty of visitors but don’t retain a lot of them. We need to put an intentional visitor to member to leader pathway in place and stick to it.
- Leadership Development - One of the congregation’s tasks during a developmental time is to develop new leadership. Some long time leaders need to intentionally step back from some things in order to make room for new leadership. ANY member who has already served on the board or finance committee should NOT be nominated or voted onto those bodies from this point forward.
- Communication - Right now we have no one actually coordinating things such as greeters and welcoming Sunday visitors. We have no one coordinating Sunday potlucks. There are a number of things that happen at the congregation out of ingrained culture and that people are used to doing. We need to better organize and intentionally manage some things that are just coasting along on “muscle memory.” We are in the middle of restructuring the congregation’s communication so that all information comes into the church office and then out to: website, weekly email, Sunday insert - and then to FB events, social media, and website.
- Congregational Organization - The congregation has the organizational/committee structure of a church three times our actual size. We need to consolidate and combine some committees. I am recommending that we consider merging into three active teams - the Board, which will also encompass the finance and fundraising committees; the Committee on ministry, which includes worship, education, pastoral care; and Social Justice.

- Isolation and Silos - There is a general lack of cohesion. A lot of committee work is disconnected from other things going on in the congregation. For example, there is a strong sense of social justice, but I sense that social justice work is done largely by the social justice committee and Chalice Sanctuary Team, and although *approved of* by the congregation as a whole, not necessarily **owned** by the congregation as a whole.

Task 3: Connecting with the Denomination “How well have I/has Rev. Tony helped us connect with the UUA?”

The congregation is working with a partner in MUUS and that’s a fantastic strength, as it is the way of the future for smaller churches to share resources/merge/collaborate. Congregational leaders attend UUA Regional and National educational seminars and some trainings. There is a sense that things like the UUSC and Guest at Your Table, Side with Love, Anti-Racism/Anti- Oppression / Dismantling White Supremacy Culture, and Immigration/Sanctuary work are important. There seems to be little connection to GA as a congregation, although some individuals attend. Working with the congregation to expand our partnership with MUUS to include more congregations will help.

Task 4: Focusing and Assuming Responsibility “What will I (Rev. Tony) begin to focus on for the 2nd (next) year?”

I think that from this point forward, I should focus my work on:

- Transitioning more fully to a digital age congregation, including multimedia worship, continued live streaming, online classes and groups, and meetings. We will continue to use more technology even after we return to meeting in person.
- Encouraging, exploring, and implementing a plan for a year round fundraising program including a new approach to pledging.
- Membership and Leadership Development
- Lifespan Faith Development

I will also need to finish discerning the development work, forming the 3-5 year plan and choosing next immediate goals. The immediate next goals the Development Team was looking at when COVID-19 halted our work are:

1. Renovate our meeting space.
2. Experiment with alternative or additional worship service times, such as 4 p.m. on Sunday afternoon.
3. Find partners to work with us in funding staff positions such as administrator, music director, janitor/sexton so the combined hours add to a half-time or full-time job that will draw applicants.
4. Creative year round fundraising

5. Start a religious non profit fundraising organization to raise money for all congregations in the yoked congregation partnership.
6. We will make our right relations covenant prominent.
7. Implement an intentional visitor to member to leader program centered on training leaders in skills needed to support a vital congregation.
8. De-silo and redesign our organizational structure, including decreasing the size of the board and combining finance committees.

Now that COVID-19 has caused us to alter the way we function in terms of church, some of our possible next immediate goals may need to include:

- Reassessing job descriptions and staff functions for an increased online environment.
- Creating a disaster plan for future incidents such as COVID (or relapse of COVID) that necessitate a quick and organized move to more online and less in-person congregational life.

Task 5: Exiting and Evaluating “Is it time to think about exiting and wrapping up, or should we continue the ministry?”

I think there is still more work for me to do here and I am happy to renew the contract with MUUS and UUCM.

CONGREGATIONAL PROGRESS

Just as I have tasks directly related to developmental work and my contract ministry, so too does the congregation have specific tasks to work on during my contract ministry. These are:

Task 1: Understanding how the group’s history plays out in the present; **Task 2:** Investing in congregational Mission and UU Identity with vigor; **Task 3:** Leadership changes allow new people to steer us forward; **Task 4:** Creating and/or Renewing Community Partnerships; **Task 5:** Commitment to new directions.

I asked the board to reflect on how the congregation is doing in terms of making progress on these tasks, and then we discussed them together. Here is what we agreed upon:

Developmental Task 1: Understanding how the group’s history plays out in the present.

The leadership understands the dynamics of the congregation’s history and how it affects and influences decisions and UUCM culture in the present. We are not sure that this is widely understood by the membership. We definitely need to make this part of the leadership development training going forward.

Developmental Task 2: Investing in congregational Mission and UU Identity with vigor.

The leadership is invested in our mission and in developing a UU identity. The next task is to get the congregation as a whole to develop a mission focus and identify as UU's with a common understanding of what that means.

Developmental Task 3: Leadership changes allow new people to steer us forward

The Board and I agreed that leadership development is lacking and needs to be an increased focus of our attention. We still recycle leaders, and “fill slots” instead of intentionally teaching members how to successfully run a congregation so that we can discern who the next leaders should be and have confidence they have had actual training and basic education in things congregational leaders need to know in order to be successful.

Developmental Task 4: Creating and/or Renewing Community Partnerships

The Board and I agreed that UUCM has some solid community partnerships. We need to build on these and increasingly become a more public voice for liberal and liberal religious values in the community.

Developmental Task 5: Commitment to new directions

The Board and I agreed that UUCM leadership has a strong commitment to forging new directions but are not so sure the membership at large has this commitment. Having to re-imagine UUCM in light of COVID-19 has given us some momentum in pursuing new directions that might have had more pushback otherwise. Some of these new directions are:

- An increased video and social media presence
- Developing and implementing more online giving
- Reimagining fundraising
- Making use of technology to hold meetings and classes via video conference
- Realizing that our reach far exceeds the number of people who physically join us on Sunday.

My Goals as Your Minister for the coming YEAR, 2020-2021

Goals: 1. Improve year round fundraising and increase donor base. 2. Expand the partnership to include more congregation(s) than just MUUS. 3. Increase focus on UU Identity. 4. Identify, name and formally approve a three-year plan.

1. The foremost goal for me in the coming year is fundraising. This includes establishing a donor database beyond our membership, moving away from a congregational understanding of pledges as the main source of income, establishing a narrative budget, and expanding year round fundraising. I will work to revise bylaws and policies that restrict fundraising initiative and fundraising for special needs or projects. I will work more closely with the finance and fund-raising team, establish a yearly cycle and program for fundraisers, establish a donor appreciation philosophy, set up a Faithify account, apply for UU Funding Program grants, and teach fundraising communication and strategies to the leaders.
2. Expand the MUUS/UUCM partnership - I have already begun to work with NE Regional Staff to expand the project and expect to make a “pitch” to identified small congregations in CT about joining our effort.
3. Increase UU Identity with more robust adult faith formation, more attention to families with children, and a visitor to member to leader program heavy on UU basics and UU identity.
4. The Three-Year Plan - The Development Team will modify into a Committee on Ministry, and that team will help us create a three-year plan. Part of this will be deciding what to do to make sure our building is meeting our needs.

Pastoral Care Team Annual Report
Kathleen Lindberg

The Pastoral Care Team met for the first time in Dec. 2019. It consists of eight members; more are welcome at any time. We discussed our roles. At that time they were rather simple, such as mailing cards and visiting congregants.

We met again in January and February. Cards had been mailed as needed and visits made to members with medical conditions.

Our visits ended with the pandemic. A list of congregants was divided among team members as a way of keeping in touch and determining needs of congregants. Cards continue to be sent as appropriate.

We have been able to help church members, with guidance from Rev. Tony, keeping the needs confidential. We are looking forward to meeting in person and growing our roles as needed.

Annual Report of the Communications Committee
Trish Schneider

This committee produces the church newsletter, maintains our Website, engages with social media (Facebook and Twitter), and facilitates the dissemination of church news and events. We also facilitate getting church news releases out into the wider community. The Committee chairperson was Trish Schneider. Members of the committee were Angie Swanger, Jane Dioguardi, and Anita Sanders. The Communications Committee has four teams: Weekly Update, Website, Social Media, and Newsletter. The communications chair keeps in touch with each team. The Committee has reviewed internal and external communications tactics. They found that UU Meriden needs to make changes in the way we do internal and external communications.

- We have moved to staff handling the majority of the Communications with volunteers backing up staff. Rev Tony and Steven Nahas, office admin, are handling the social media and website and Weekly Newsletter.
- The Social Justice Council has a weekly Social Action email.
- Social Media: This year UU Meriden's YouTube channel has been added as one of UUCM's Social Media platforms.
- The Weekly Update has been renamed The Weekly Newsletter since the monthly printed newsletter has been discontinued.
- UUCM website: The committee has added webpages to the UUCM website including but not limited to: Thematic Resource page, Members Toolbox page and Stewardship pages.
- External communications: In today's culture, seekers do their research online about faith communities. The Committee has worked with committees of the church to improve the UUCM Website. By partnering with the committees, we give those interested in our congregation an authentic picture of UU Meriden.

Communications Goals for 2021

- Review and improve internal and external congregational communications tactics.
- Develop brand and best practices for internal communications.
- Develop local media/press releases and improved social media postings.
- Increase the visibility of the congregation to Meriden and surrounding communities
- Transform the UUCM website to be resources for members and visitors.

Trish Schneider is stepping down as Communication Chair as of June 30, 2020. Thank you to Angie Swanger, Jane Dioguardi, and Anita Sanders for their service on the Communications Committee. Thank you to Steven Nahas and Rev Tony for taking over the major tasks of the communication teams, and to Jeff May for his tech support.

Respectfully submitted,
Trish Schneider, Communications Chair

Annual Report on Lifespan Development
Rev. Tony Lorenzen

This year our educational program looked a lot different than it has in years past. We no longer have a formal classroom based program for young people, but we did however provide child care on Sunday mornings and there were frequent pull out sessions of activity for young people who didn't want to remain in the sanctuary. Whenever Rev. Tony preached there was always a substantial educational part to the service, sometimes targeted at younger people and sometimes targeted at all ages as intergenerational activities. These were very well received. Our program for adults was robust with a dozen or more leaders taking part in monthly leadership training and shorter term sessions led by Rev. Tony both in person and online. The Soul Circle small group program has two large and flourishing groups meeting on Zoom.

Annual Report of the Leadership Council
John Sepples

The UUCM Leadership Council is chaired by the vice president of the Board of Trustees and consists of representatives of all the standing committees. Leadership Council meetings went on hiatus during the vice-presidency of Tina Caplan and have not resumed since.

Historically, the function of the Leadership Council was to afford representatives of all committees, councils, and ministries the opportunity to meet face-to-face to discuss each group's activities and to encourage direct communication and cooperation that can often be lost when different groups meet separately. Such a meeting tended to be a summary of each committee's previous meeting. Summaries can be communicated more efficiently by publishing meeting minutes or written reports to the Board of Trustees. This is my request of the church's leadership for the balance of my term as vice president.

This past fall several of the trustees participated in a webinar series called Small Congregations Infinite Possibilities as well as leadership discussions facilitated by Rev. Tony. I learned that small congregations can be impactful by focusing on their mission. One of the challenges I see at UUCM is each committee and council doing their own thing. Leadership Council can be a forum to bring together leaders of disparate groups within the church to work toward common goals in support of the congregation's mission. This is the direction in which I would like to guide the Leadership Council in the coming church year.

Annual Report of the Social Justice Council
Angela Swanger

We began the year 2019-20 with the Chalice Sanctuary Team considering Emergency, Short-Term sanctuary needs for the Undocumented Community due to increased ICE raids in CT. In January the Chalice Sanctuary Team decided to disband, due to a lack of requests for sanctuary; there was no longer a need for a separate committee. The funds still left in the CST budget were to be turned over to SJC, with a request that any use of those funds be spent on needs of immigrants.

Humanitarian of the Year was awarded to Alok Bhatt, who leads CIRA (CT Immigrants Rights Alliance) and was instrumental during Sujitno Sajuti's time with us in sanctuary. A \$100 donation was given to CIRA in his name.

In August we welcomed Rev. Anthony Lorenzen as part-time minister of UUCM and began the time of adjusting to his ministry with us.

Budget: SJC was able to carry over \$1,000 from last year, as we continue to receive 25% of the Sunday undesignated cash donations.

The annual Guest at Your Table fundraiser for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee was begun with handing out collection boxes and envelopes during the service on November 24. It was concluded at our Annual Stone Soup service and Luncheon on Feb. 9, 2020. Barbara Kline served as chef for the Luncheon, with several people from the congregation providing their favorite breads. Twenty members of UUCM donated a total of \$955, which was sent to UUSC at the end of March.

Nancy Burton, Steve Volpini, Diane Szymaszek and Rev. Tony met with the Meriden Chief of Police in October to discuss the new "Trust Act" and its implementation in Meriden.

We participated in a Vigil for the Deaths of Homeless in Meriden during 2019 and to also commemorate the life and death of Rev. John Blossom with other community organizations and churches on December 15, 2019.

Once again we collected, wrapped and delivered holiday gifts for the men residing at Shelter NOW in Meriden in December.

We also participated in the Meriden Martin Luther King Jr./Albert Owens Scholarship Breakfast on Jan. 20, 2020, with attendance of 20+ members and friends. We also bought a full-page ad for the program.

LGBTIQQA/Rainbow Gathering Group convened an organizational meeting Jan. 31st. Emily Kwolek volunteered to facilitate the group..

There was conversation about having a discussion of the 2018-19 UUA Common Read *Justice on Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Environment* after the Earth Day Service on April 19. COVID-19 interrupted those plans, though we were able to complete the UUCM Earth Day service remotely with the help of Jeff May.

The Anti-Racism Discussion Group, led by John and Pamela Selders, held a discussion on "Black Perspective on White Fragility."

In response to the needs of the COVID-19 crisis, we donated the plastic gloves, which had been kept in storage for the Daffodil Festival, to organizations in the Meriden community who need them. In addition, Diane Szymaszek and Donna Stimpson are working on putting together metal drinking straws and cleaning brushes in homemade bags for sale sometime in the future.

During this year we have begun to plan some collaboration with the MUUS Social Justice folks. As of June, we have some plans in place for next year and are looking forward to more times we can join together on Activities of Social Justice.

In March we began meeting by Zoom. We also began to put out to the congregation weekly Social Justice Action suggestions. Also at that time we started to seek out needs in the Meriden Undocumented Community, as they are receiving no COVID-19 federal or state relief funds due to their status. While researching the needs in the Undocumented Community, we decided to immediately donate \$200 to each of the following organizations: SCOW (Spanish Community of Wallingford, who also provide services to the immigrant community in Meriden), New Opportunities of Greater Meriden, and the CT Bail Fund for Undocumented Immigrants. These moneys were taken from the Chalice Sanctuary Team funds of \$2,470 and

Social Justice Council funds of \$1,124. In addition we also encouraged UUCM members and friends to engage in issues around Emergency Funding for Undocumented Immigrants by writing/calling the governor and participating in on-line protests, as well as “Honkathon Car Rallies” at the State Capitol.

From Steve Volpini:

Less than a month ago, the Social Justice Council heard from a friend of the Meriden UU church that there was a possibility of a United Way grant for our work with the undocumented. With leadership from Angie Swanger, we swung into gear and wrote a request for \$5,000. And we got it!

The SJC had decided to use the leftover money we had been given as a sanctuary church and assist families in the Meriden undocumented community. We saw that because of the COVID-19 virus, many residents had lost hours of work. Some had themselves become sick with the virus and needed to quarantine, or care for loved ones. And for all of them, federal and state aid was specifically forbidden because they are not citizens.

We wished in a modest way to fill the gap for several dozen families, helping with food, utilities, rent, or other expressed needs.

We will use this grant to respond to the needs in the community and make referrals to local helping agencies.

Even if some state aid becomes available, the Social Justice Council will seek further assistance from our church and sister church in Woodbury—MUUS—and from the wider community.

We see the mission of sanctuary as part of building a welcoming, caring community. We give thanks for the generosity of the United Way and to all who wish to help.

APPENDIX – FY 2019-2020 BUDGET

Sandy Duffy

The 2019-2020 Budget will be released as a separate document.