



wayfinding

THE DIGNITY PROJECT

Social Justice Giving for July: The Dignity Project

In the fall of 2017, Rev. Ilene Tompkins-Gillispie worked with the Social Action Team to identify work that UUTC could do to meet a currently “unmet” need in our community. In talking with the leaders of local non-profits, she quickly discovered that the marketplace inequities (“luxury” taxes on menstrual hygiene products, for instance) were further

exacerbated by these products NOT being eligible for purchase through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This leaves our most economically vulnerable women faced with an even greater hurdle – on items they have no choice but to purchase.

The Dignity Project is based on Unitarian Universalism’s First Principle: *The inherent worth and dignity of every person*. A collection to kick-start the project was taken in December of 2017 and deliveries were begun to five key agencies, who serve the largest numbers of people in need: Bread of Life, El Centro, The Haven, S.A.F.E. and The Sharing House. These agencies would be our partners in delivering a little dignity. In addition to the five organizations named above, we now also work with the Children’s Center and Rise and Shine.

“The Dignity Project has made a tremendous impact for our neighbors in need. When it is hard or even embarrassing to ask strangers for much-needed and costly hygiene and birth control items, the Dignity Project is a welcomed resource! This respectful way of giving items takes away the stigma and honors everyone’s basic human needs.” – Rev. Shelly Webb, Sharing House Executive Director

Deliveries of menstrual hygiene products, diapers and wipes, dental health products, condoms, razors, shampoo and soap began in January 2017 and have continued monthly. All of these are items our neighbors desperately need in order to feel their inherent worth and dignity. The project is funded by an annual congregation-wide collection and individual monthly contributions. This month is that annual collection.

Items purchased are based on needs identified by our partner agencies. Without our partners in the community, there is no way we could equitably distribute these items – we are very, very grateful for the work these agencies do in our community.

Minutes & More

For the full Minutes, the Treasurer's Report, the Operations Report and the Minister's report, please visit the [Board's Page](#) and select the reports you wish to view.

Present: John Austin, Jill Beach, Glenn Cockerham, Ian Cowie, Jim Hardy, Vicki Held, Gail Meyers, Quim Moya, Carlene Ragan, Phillip Thomason, Kay Webb, Alice Wellborn, and RK Young.



Minister's Report – Challenging the congregation to address social justice issues directly, individuals who arrived early to Rev. Bob's Installation service in June were encouraged to fill out postcards to political representatives in support of public education budgets in NC; hosting the Asheville Gay Men's Chorus for a concert and inviting LGBTQ folks and allies to attend was a social justice offering by UUTC in a county that has no Pride recognition.

Treasurer's Report – In Treasurer Mike Griffith's absence, consultant Gail Meyers reported that, as of June 19, 2023, we had a small surplus due to the Auction revenues and the Board's decision to retain the 2021-22 surplus and to move \$10,000 from the Reserve Fund to the Operating Fund.

Operations Report — reported on the near completion of the bog project, funded by a B.W. Wells Grant from the NC Native Plant Society (NCNPS), and the work of the Grow Getters to implement Earthscapes' landscape design for the area beside the front parking lot and Varsity Street. ~ She applauded Kevin Lausch and Trisha Wesley for another successful Chalice Camp and reported on Chelsea Caldwell's continued progress.

Old Business: Compensation Update—Gail reported that the issues that occurred with Rev. Bob's retirement reporting have been resolved. All scheduled retirement payments were made to UUA appropriately; the issue arose in the inaccurate reporting by the payroll company.

Board Retreat Update: Ian reported that he will be in touch with Council member Michael Solomon and with Rev. Bob to plan a time, location, and agenda for a Governance/Ministry Annual Retreat.

New Business: Piano – John Austin, Carlene Ragan, and Jim Hardy attended the meeting to speak on the issue of UUTC's current Steinway piano. John met with Gary Griswold of Griswold Piano Service and obtained a cost estimate to provide rehabilitation maintenance to improve the piano's playability and sound quality. Jim Hardy and Matt Cannizzio investigated the cost of a new digital piano, should we wish to replace the current Steinway. Jim and Matt recommended the Yamaha Clavinova CLP 795 Grand Piano, a 4-foot digital piano with full-size opening top, at a cost of approximately \$8000. After discussion, Alice made a motion to contract with Griswold Piano Service to provide the services detailed in the estimate of approximately \$1800 to maintain the Steinway; Glenn seconded the motion. The motion was approved.



Awful Choices & Inspiring Voices

Rev. Bob Renjilian

We'll have a UUTC worship service dedicated to what we found most inspiring or noteworthy from our trip to the UU General Assembly (GA) on July 9. There were four of us as delegates from UUTC. Here is a snippet of one of the more controversial topics, from my personal viewpoint (and I admit I've left out much of the complexity to fit the page).

The delegates were given a proposal to vote for divestment from fossil fuels and to provide reparations out of the UUA endowment. This would be in line with previous calls for more environmentally attuned investment strategies in past years. What was different this time is that the young people who spoke up at the microphone included those who had been on the front lines of protests against a pipeline going through lands that Native Americans wished to remain unstained by such encroachments. They reported how they were fired upon. They told how afterwards they found that the law enforcement officers who shot rubber bullets at them (and the Native American protesters) had received funding from one of the companies that the UUA endowment profits from - and they want us to divest.

This was a harrowing experience for these speakers and traumatic for me to hear. Youth Caucus members in the assembly stood (some on their chairs) to give encouraging cheers and moral support to the young speakers. Please remember, these are teenagers who as children watched a nine year old Greta Thunberg from Sweden call the world to attention to environmentalism. Greta is now about 20 years old. These are teenagers who have attended their various congregations' Earth Day activities and were taught our principles of "inherent worth and dignity" and "Interdependent Web of which we all are a part".

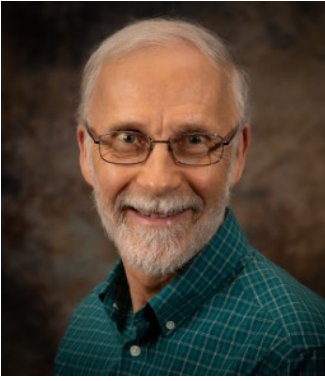
The elders - folks closer to my age - urged the assembly to be financially practical and vote down the divestment proposal. They got their way - over 2/3rds of delegates decided not to call for immediate divestment and reparations. I know why this was logical, but it is heart wrenching.

The youth came forward at the end of debate and chanted and held up signs. Business was paused for that brief time. I think everyone there realized this is not the end and that all our UU congregations are likely to continue the conversation. It is impressive for UUs to speak up like the youth did at the GA. The Unitarian Universalist Association, with the power of its members, can be a major force to effect change.

See you at church on July 9.

*"We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint — the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform — the bigger your responsibility. Adults keep saying: 'We owe it to the young people to give them hope.' But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. **I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is.**"*

—Greta Thunberg, 2019



President's Corner

Ian Cowie

Delegates Elect New Leadership, Advance Bylaws Changes

UUTC members Michael Solomon, Vanessa Cowie, Reverend Bob and myself attended the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) annual General Assembly (GA) in June. This year's gathering of more than 2300 delegates from 715 congregations was significant. We elected a new president and voted on new proposed bylaws.

Our new UUA president is the Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt. She will be both the first out queer individual and the first woman of color elected to the role. She succeeds the Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray.

In accepting her new role, Rev. Betancourt said, "Unitarian Universalism has a vital, liberating message for our time. Our nation and denomination are experiencing challenges in a time of significant division, change and radicalization. But together, I know we can serve one another, organize for justice, widen the circle of concern, collectively imagine new ways forward in community, and grow spiritually."

President Betancourt has served Unitarian Universalism for more than 20 years as a religious educator, minister, scholar, and member of the UUA national staff. She served as interim co-president in 2017. She holds a Ph.D. in Religious Ethics and African American Studies from Yale University as well as an M.Div. from Starr King School for the Ministry.

Delegates voted to move forward with bylaw changes. This was last done in 1987. Over the years there have been many projects, resolutions and task forces to take a look at our principles, purposes, bylaws and rules. Two years ago an Article II Study Commission began to review how our principles can better help us relate to ethical, moral and spiritual crises. At this GA, delegates took the Article II Study Commission report, discussed recommendations, passed amendments and then voted to accept the report. It will not be until 2024 that GA delegates will vote to finalize the revisions. In the meantime, congregations will be made aware of the revisions and provided opportunities for more input.

Delegates also voted on Actions of Immediate Witness. We overwhelmingly voted for three social justice resolutions: support health equity, end the planned "Cop City" training center in Atlanta, and protect the rights of Dreamers, those who have received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) status.

Outgoing president, Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray told delegates during her six-year tenure UU's became an established voice for progressive people of faith. She led the Association through the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and launched the UU the Vote initiative to defend and expand democracy and democratic participation in our country. Several UUTC members were part of the 3,000+ volunteers who contacted more than 2 million voters.

In addition to denominational business and spiritual gatherings, Rev. Bob, Michael and Vanessa attended workshops and other events focused on UU social justice priorities. Much of my time was attending choir rehearsals. In an upcoming UUTC Sunday service we will provide more details about our time at GA. Before then, spend some time and watch the GA Sunday morning worship service. Here is the link: <https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2023/sunday-worship>.

In Covenant, Ian

Fellowship Opportunities-Time to Know Each Other!



Souper Sunday is a kid-friendly, congregational shared meal. It relies on volunteers who cook or bake and on others to attend and enjoy their gifts. It's a great time to sit down with someone you don't know as well and have a conversation. This event happens every 'Second Sunday' of the month. **Our next Souper Sunday is July 9th.** If you can bring soup or some other simple item to share for that day, please sign up this Sunday at the front counter—and thank you!



Fellowship On Tap is typically a “pop up” event, but has also been held in restaurants, where we need to set up reservations. Since Covid, we hunt for venues that are open air, usually in Transylvania County. **To be aware of these, you will want to join the Fellowship on Tap group in Realm,** where text and email messages are sent from. We shoot for at least monthly events. **Not yet on Realm? Drop by the office with your device and let's get you set up!**



Weekly on Tuesdays, we have **Fellowship on the Green.** If it's raining, we have this event in the social hall, but otherwise, we meet outside in the fresh air, sunshine, and zooming songbirds. Starts at 11:30am and runs until 1:00pm. Folks come and go as their schedules permit. Rev. Bob and RK anchor the tables and look forward to enjoying your company and conversation!



Wonderful Wednesdays are “Dinner and a Program,” with a more relaxed meal, prepared by volunteers. Dinner starts at 5:30pm, and the program starts at 6:30, leaving folks time to chat more than they typically have on a Sunday after church. Our next Wonderful Wednesday is **August 9th.** Programs are always stimulating, and in August we will enjoy a concert provided by The Bakery Band: John Austin, Mark & Sally Wingate and others. Mark your calendar for a program of “eclectic” music!

Take a Retreat with UUTC... at The Mountain RLC!



September 8 - 10, 2023

This is a three-day, two-night fall congregational retreat for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Brevard. We welcome members and friends of UUTC of all ages. There will be fun and fellowship for all, including nature walks, arts and crafts, workshops, singing and music, and a Sunday service. Choose lodging according to your needs— UUTC's programming will mostly happen in the Lodge. The Mountain is very private, part of a unique biome. It's a beautiful place for a retreat.

Get the best price by registering by July 28th. [Register HERE!](#)

Piano! Piano?

Last week's Board meeting featured extra guests and an unusual agenda item: discussion on whether to repair or replace our Steinway Model A Grand piano, manufactured in 1907. As you can image, the topic was fraught— but all in attendance were keenly focused on not only being good stewards of UUTC's funds, but of finding a solution that was the best fit at this time.

The value of a used Steinway Model A in playable condition can fall anywhere between \$35,000 and \$70,000. New ones cost double these amounts. Insurance, however, values one like ours closer to \$8000. At the budget forum held in May, this insurance value was brought up, spurring conversation about whether it made good fiscal sense to make repairs to what we have, when we might more easily afford to replace it with a digital version that would better fit our space and provide other benefits.

The repairs needed for our Steinway are more than what we have committed to — the current work being done is an attempt to restore a “lighter touch,” through lubrication of the hammer assemblies, via mechanical methods and teflon. (Each hammer assembly is being removed, worked on and replaced.) Currently, rendering sound from her keys requires, shall we say, an “emphatic” touch. This has worn on Carlene, and Matthew Cannizzio, filling in this month, has admitted that he can't play with his normal flourishes. A more complete overhaul would cost significantly more, and require the piano to be offsite for six weeks or more while the work was being accomplished. Essentially, we have committed to doing a thing that may help, but is unlikely to restore the original handling of the keyboard. It is a step we can take to make it easier to play, perhaps putting off a major expense for a few years more.

Prior to the Board meeting, John Austin had provided an estimate for the work currently being done, from our usual, skilled, technician. Also prior to the Board meeting, Jim Hardy and Matt Cannizzio researched current offerings in digital grand pianos, and recommended a Yamaha Clavinova CLP 795 Grand Piano, a 4-foot digital piano with full-size opening top, at a cost of approximately \$8000. Board members were able to watch videos and listen to the sound of the Yamaha, and gain an understanding of its extracurricular skills. These skills include being able to prerecord music on the piano and have it played back via an app on an iPad by someone either at the piano, or from the sound booth.



All parties agreed that the congregation does have “an attachment” to having an actual (authentic?) grand piano, and since our current talents, Carlene Ragan and John Austin, prefer to play the real thing, the Board was unanimous in trying this repair intervention in an attempt to make the Steinway more responsive.

This discussion is in the pages of this newsletter because, well, it may not be enough. The Board has refused to be hasty, and Members and Friends of UUTC should know that this is not a problem being shot from the hip. Music is very important to our worship services, and the quality of sounds we produce matters. Available talent to play our instrument also matters. Thank you for being part of this journey.



Risk-Taking: What More Can We Do?

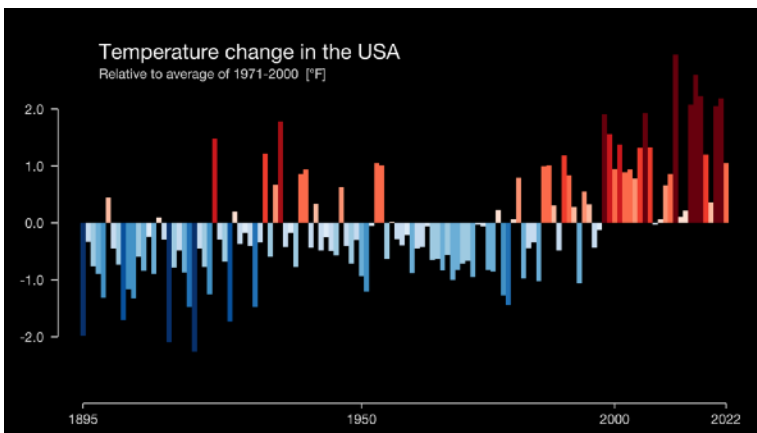
RK Young

Years ago, maybe 2017, we had a Congregational Forum about flags. Pride Flags, specifically, and putting up a flag pole, and maybe adding an United States flag as well, to diffuse possible anger in response to the Pride Flag. Needless to say, we haven't spent megabucks and installed a flag pole—with our without an United States Flag.

Today, however, we have a fairly new sign which includes rainbow hues. We have “gone public” with our openness to all, regardless of gender identity. Shockingly, nothing bad has happened. In fact, the only comment I ever heard from the community was from a teenager, when the colors had been pulled down to be reworked. She was afraid they had been vandalized, and was soooooo happy that that was not the case. She was ready to be covered up in anger and angst, which is a message in itself. We haven't been as bold as we yet may be, but it is clearly important that we stepped forward on behalf of our local LGBTQ+ community.

But in reading Rev. Bob's letter in this issue, I am reminded that we haven't done enough. Not for Pride, not for Planet. Staff is looking to make next June a real Pride event—here, on this campus—in cooperation with others. We will need help, so if you can spare a day in June (a Saturday, yet to be determined), please let me know. What types of events can we imagine? What will make Pride a celebration, and not just a statement?

In the area of climate change, UUTC has long subscribed to wind power from Arcadia, paying \$15 monthly to require Duke Energy to pay for energy offsets. But is that the best we can do? The Grow Getters have had a big impact on providing greater ecosystem services to our local wildlife through the removal of invasive species, but should we be hot composting to keep our food waste from generating methane in the landfill? Should we be helping the non-profits we support to do the same? What more can we do?



(Above) graphic generated by data compiled by the [University of Reading, UK](#). The page at the link is full of good stuff to chew on. #ShowYourStripes

Greta Thunberg is right—life on this planet is getting a lot riskier. The fastest way to fix this is to stop producing greenhouse gases... much of that is burning fossil fuels, but a lot of it is also food production. What changes can we make individually, and as a community to lower the risk? Some have been driving hybrid vehicles for years. Rev. Bob is riding his bike at least once a week 16 miles to get to the church. Wonderful Wednesday now includes a vegetarian menu item...every time. More brains equals more ideas equals a greater chance of internalizing the changes in our habits that need to happen.

The divestment discussion held at this year's General Assembly in Pittsburgh is important in many ways. UUTC's Community Outreach Endowment Fund is held by the

UUA—their investments are our investments. What would you do? Next year's General Assembly is in Portland, OR—you could attend and be a delegate to participate in this important work!

Damages from natural disasters in 2022 totaled \$165 billion with at least 474 direct or indirect fatalities ([climate.gov](#)). So far this year, prior to hurricane season, there have been 99 deaths and over a billion dollars of damages. Many in Transylvania County have moved here away from the (flooding) coasts. Are we ready to stop feeding the fossil fuel industry? Discuss!

July 2023 at UUTC



Appreciate,
Celebrate,
and Stand Up
for Your Freedoms
and the Freedoms
of Others

nday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p>is this month's Social Justice Giving</p>			<p>Don't miss it! Souper Sunday July 11th after the service</p> <p>Nursery Care will be available during Sunday services all summer</p>			1
2 10:00 service In-Person & livestreamed Music by Jon & James 3:30 Book Grp	3 5 Meditation & Discussion	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY OFFICE CLOSED 9 Men's Grp Zoom 9 Grow Getters 11:30-1:00 Fellowship in the Hall or Green 5 Quiet Meditation	5 1:30- Women of UUTC 5:30 Team Night	6 9 Men's Grp Meeting Live 4 A Course in Miracles	7	8
9 10:00 service In-Person & livestreamed 11:30 Souper Sunday 12:30 On Being	10 10 Caregivers Support Group 11:30 Grief Support Group 5 Meditation & Discussion	11 9 Men's Grp Zoom 9 Grow Getters 11:30-1:00 Fellowship in the Hall or Green 5 Quiet Meditation	12 1:15 Dream Group	13 9 Men's Grp Meeting Live 4 A Course in Miracles	14	15
16 10:00 service In-Person & livestreamed Music by Jon & James	17 5 Meditation & Discussion	18 9 Men's Grp Zoom 11:30-1:00 Fellowship in the Hall or Green 5 Quiet Meditation	19 1:30 Women of UUTC	20 9 Men's Grp Meeting Live 4 A Course in Miracles	21	22
23 10:00 service In-Person & livestreamed	24 10 Caregivers Support Group 11:30 Grief Support Group 5 Meditation & Discussion	25 9 Men's Grp Zoom 9 Grow Getters 11:30-1:00 Fellowship in the Hall or Green 5 Quiet Meditation	26 1:15 Dream Group 4 Choir Rehearsal	27 9 Men's Grp Meeting Live 4 A Course in Miracles 5:30 Board Mtg	28	29
30 CHOIR SINGS 10:00 service In-Person & livestreamed	31 5 Meditation & Discussion	August 1 9 Men's Grp Zoom 9 Grow Getters 11:30-1:00 Fellowship in the Hall or Green 5 Quiet Meditation	August 2 1:30- Women of UUTC 5:30 Team Night	August 3 9 Men's Grp Meeting Live 4 A Course in Miracles	August 4	August 5