

Unity in the Community
General Membership Meeting
6:30 P.M., Sunday, March 18, 2012

Manassas Church of the Brethren
10047 Nokesville Road
Manassas, VA 20110

Members Present: Bob Gaskill, Dexter Fox, Kathy Clark, Illana Naylor, Lydia Gonzalez, Jim Amaral, Gregg Reynolds, Joann Bagnerise, Wali Hassan, and Taalibah Hassan.

Chair Kathy Clark called the meeting to order at 6:34 P.M. A quorum was present.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

1. Secretary's Report. Paper copies of the minutes for February's meeting were distributed for review. The minutes were accepted as presented. Dexter Fox noted that, though the minutes correctly summarized the actual report for item 10 – Spring 2012 Immigration & Human Rights Cinema (IHRC) – the report itself had been in error regarding the March feature, Well-Founded Fear. It was reported that this feature is a documentary about privacy issues. It is actually a documentary about asylum issues.

2. Treasurer's Report. Gregg Reynolds reported that Unity in the Community (UITC) has a balance of \$1,623.50, \$878.53 of which is in the general fund, \$150.00 in the humanitarian fund, and \$594.97 in the study circles fund. The report was accepted as presented.

3. Vice Chair's Report. Lydia Gonzalez had no report this month.

4. Chair's Report. Kathy Clark reported that she participated in a recent action that Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE) organized in Washington, D.C., on March 8, 2012. Members of VOICE marched to the lobby of a building on Pennsylvania Avenue that houses General Electric's (G.E.) offices. There, they figuratively fired Jeff Immelt, G.E.'s Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the White House Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. One reason given for the request to fire Immelt was G.E.'s continued lack of concern regarding the mortgage crisis in the Nation's Capital's back yard (Prince William County). The crisis was caused by subprime lending practices. Many homeowners in the Irongate, Westgate, and other local communities who were holders of subprime loans found themselves "underwater" in their mortgages. As a result, they were unable to refinance their homes when jobs became scarce. This ultimately led to foreclosures on many of their homes. VOICE has been asking businesses who made subprime loans to help homeowners who are still struggling to meet their mortgage requirements. VOICE targeted Immelt for action because G.E. owned WMC Mortgage Corporation when it was still operating. WMC Mortgage originated many of the subprime loans in the Irongate & Westgate communities. VOICE officials stated that the G.E. company is the only subprime lender that has not entered into conversation with VOICE since it launched its lender accountability campaign in Prince William County last April.

Kathy spoke as a retired educator who witnessed the negative effects subprime lending practices had on the families of her students.

Unfinished Business

5. Everyday Democracy Study Circles. There was no report for this agenda item.

6. Forum on Compassion with Chinn Library. Kathy Clark and Taalibah Hassan reported that the questions for panelists at this forum were prepared and that Cindy Brookshire will make CD copies of Unity in the Community's "Words of Compassion" document for audience members who wish to have a copy. This event will take place from 2 to 4 PM on Saturday, March 31. Dexter Fox and Bob Gaskill highlighted a continuing need to try to attract people from the wider faith community to attend events such as this. Kathy and Taalibah highlighted the fact that personal contact works best when trying to invite new people.

7. NAACP Response to Situation – Update. At the November 2011 meeting, it was reported that a worker and a union shop steward of a local trash disposal services company have been targets of racial intimidation. When the wife of the worker called Supervisor Wally Covington's office to make a report of the incidents (the company's offices are located in Covington's district), she received a flippant response ("sounds like your husband needs a bodyguard") from the secretary who answered the call. Bob Gaskill reported at this meeting that the targeted worker, Mr. Sloan, has been looking for community support in getting light shed on the problem. Bob also reported that Supervisor Covington said he would check on getting some security lights setup in the area where racist graffiti was painted on company property. Mr. Sloan has also installed security lights and an electronic security system at his home. Mr. Sloan has also provided the local Human Rights Commission with a packet of information about this incident that the Commission had requested. The similar packet of information has also been sent to the U.S. Department of Justice. It has been provided a packet similar to what was provided the local system. Bob reported that Mr. Sloan plans to be at NAACP meeting this coming Tuesday night, so more information may be forthcoming.

8. Spring 2012 Immigration & Human Rights Cinema (IHRC). Dexter Fox reported that he is still in negotiation over screening rights for the April and May films. The scheduled feature for April 15 is The Shock Doctrine, a movie based on a book of the same name about economic policy and political corruption. The scheduled feature for May 13, HONK!, is a documentary about the American death penalty as seen through the eyes of the French. Dexter stated that he would like to extend an invitation to attend the May feature to the Virginian's Against the Death Penalty. Taalibah Hassan reported that the IHRC's February feature, Better This World, was just shown on the Fairfax campus of George Mason University (GMU). Dexter stated that he will prepare posters for April film and forward them Kathy as soon as he has secured permission to screen. Concern was expressed about the fact that the screening date for May's film is also Mother's Day. It was asked if the day might be changed. Dexter said that he will check on this. Wali Hassan noted that a prior IHRC film feature, A Better Life, was an Academy Award nominee, and yet, attendance at the monthly screenings are sparse. This prompted a conversation of possible changes in scheduling, venue, and advertising that might be made to help attract a larger viewing audience at this event

NEW BUSINESS

9. Interfaith Earth Day Event. Taalibah Hassan reported that there was an opportunity for an Interfaith Earth Day Event to take place on Sunday, April 22, on the grounds of Dar Al Noor if another sponsor, such as UITC, would agree to co-sponsor it. Taalibah stated that a representative from the U.S. Forestry Service will help organize five activities that will enable children who participate in the event to earn a Junior Ranger Badge. Another organization will make food using solar energy cookers. The clown Mrs. C., a member of UITC, has also volunteered to share her talents at the event. All UITC would have to do is help spread information about this event. Illana Naylor moved and Gregg Reynolds seconded a motion that Unity be a co-sponsor of this event. The motion passed.

10. Dale City 4th of July Parade. Kathy reported the receipt of an invitation to be part of this year's Dale City 4th of July Parade. Following the parade, there will be a Family Fun Day event at which UITC could have a booth. An application must be submitted by June 1 for UITC to be listed in the parade booklet and to be eligible for a trophy. The parade begins at 10 AM. Dexter Fox moved that UITC submit an application as a participating unit in the Dale City 4th of July Parade. Gregg Reynolds seconded the motion. Discussion included the following: UITC needs to demonstrate its diversity of membership when in the parade; that if UITC have an exhibition booth, the public may expect that UITC give something (e.g., ink pen, UITC pins, etc.). The motion passed with (four in favor; three opposed; one abstention). Gregg Reynolds agreed to complete and submit the participation form.

11. International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP). Illana Naylor stated that she was considering asking the First AME Church or First Baptist Church (both in Manassas) if they would agree to host this year's IDPP. It was suggested that Illana ask the First AME Church first since its parking lot is larger.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

12. Illana Naylor stated that she attended an evening event on March 18 to hear Coleman McCarthy speak to a group of about 100 people about "How to be a Peacemaker."

13. Joann Bagnerise passed around program from the Prince William NAACP's Freedom Fund & Awards Banquet on March 17. The program featured UITC's full-page ad about its work and film series. Joann also reported that the Rev. Boykin of First AME Church in Manassas was ill and asked that UITC send him a get-well card.

14. UITC member Gregg Reynolds was quoted in a March 17, 2012, Washington Post article entitled "Justice Department: Prince William County exempted from Voting Rights Act provision." It was reported that Gregg was surprised by the Justice's decision and that he felt Prince William should receive continued scrutiny given its recent history with members of the immigrant community.

15. There will be a Forum on Compassion at Chinn Park Regional Library on Saturday March 31 from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M.

16. The Prince William/Manassas Boys & Girls Clubs will hold its 23rd Annual Steak ‘N’ Stake Dinner on Monday, May 21, 2012. A reception will take place from 6:00 to 7:00 P.M. and will be followed by dinner and a program. Individual tickets cost \$100. Additional information about this event may be obtained by contacting Carolyn Brodeur at 703-217-7763 or by emailing her at cbrodeur@bgcgw.org.

17. April’s Immigration and Human Rights Cinema (IHRC) will feature the film *The Shock Doctrine*. The film will be shown at 3:00 P.M. on April 15 in the Verizon Auditorium located on the Prince William Campus of George Mason University. Light refreshments will be available before the start of the film. (See item 8 above for additional information about the film series.)

18. The next meeting of UITC will be on April 15. The meeting will take place on the Prince William Campus of George Mason University immediately after the IHRC film that is being shown on the same day.

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Amaral, Secretary