



## UNITY IN COMMUNITY – North Mecklenburg 2023 IMPACT REPORT

2023 was another busy year for UiC. Here are highlights of our activities, events, and impact:

### **Community Activism**

**Voting:** 2023 was a challenging year with a focus on local elections. Despite heightened attacks on voting rights, increased gerrymandering, and a Republican supermajority, UiC’s voter registration and education efforts contributed to the hard work of many organizations to turn out voters in the off-year elections, ahead of the pivotal 2024 elections.

- Took advantage of community festivals and gatherings to reach concentrations of people of color, youth and older people – those frequently targeted in voter suppression efforts. Connected with the Latino community through Backpack Blessings, sponsored by the Neighborhood Care Center and Back2School Bash, sponsored by Caterpillar Ministries. Also participated in “Get to Know” Caterpillar Ministries.
- Sponsored AMP America’s voter education campaign, “Learn how to VOTE FOR YOUR LIFE! In 15 Minutes or Less.”
- Added a twist to our voter registration and voter education efforts – the “spinning wheel,” thanks to the League of Women Voters Charlotte Mecklenburg. The wheel attracted people of all ages to our event tables, where we were able to increase awareness about the upcoming elections, particularly the new voter ID law; and to continue to educate people about why the confederate monument, which stands in Cornelius, should be removed.
- Collaborated with the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections and local churches (Torrence Chapel AME Zion, Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist, and Gethsemane Baptist) to sponsor 3 voter education workshops to build awareness and provide information about the 2023 elections.

**Organizing:** Continued our campaign to remove the Confederate Monument in Cornelius. In keeping with our new focus on elevating the contributions of African Americans, while continuing to advocate for the monument’s removal, UiC joined with Torrence Chapel AME Zion Church (TCC) and Davidson Presbyterian Church to celebrate the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday by honoring Nannie Potts, the only Black woman mayor of Cornelius. The event raised more than \$1,100 for TCC’s Education Committee, which provides scholarships for young people attending college.

### **Speaking out:**

- Labeled and spoke out against an incident that occurred in Davidson. UiC worked with the Town of Davidson and the Davidson Police Department to ensure that a racist act was seen for what it was – a hate crime.



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- Advocated against discriminatory state legislation targeting people of color and the LGBTQ+ community.
- Advocated for affordable/workforce housing at the Cornelius Planning Board’s Growth Management Public Hearing.
- Participated in the recently formed North Mecklenburg Affordable Housing Forum.

### **Building Relationships**

**Collaborations:** Continued to build and strengthen partnerships with community and faith-based organizations, including the Ada Jenkins Center, AMP America, Caterpillar Ministries, Common Thread Theater, Davidson College Presbyterian Church, Common Thread Theater, Davidson Presbyterian Church, Davidson United Methodist Church, Gethsemane Baptist Church, Hunter’s Chapel United Methodist Church, Inclusion Community, League of Women Voters – Charlotte Mecklenburg, Mecklenburg County Board of Elections, Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, the Neighborhood Care Center, North Mecklenburg Communities United, Promising Pages, Smithville Community Coalition, Temple Kol Tikvah, Torrence Chapel AME Zion Church, and Union Bethel AME Zion Church.

**Sponsorship:** supported a young adult’s participation in the Deep South Pilgrimage, organized by Hunter’s Chapel United Methodist Church (UMC), Inclusion Community, and Mt. Zion UMC.

**Supporters:** Added more than **60** new people to UiC’s newsletter list for a total of **445** subscribers.

### **Large Group Meetings**

**January:** Kicked off the year with a jubilant celebration of UiC’s 5-year anniversary. The occasion was enthusiastically supported by a number of local organizations and businesses. UiC extended our deep appreciation to Davidson College Presbyterian Church for opening up their beautiful facilities to host the event and to Wilson Realty for its generous financial donation; to Chick-fil-A, Dunkin’ Donuts, Food Lion, Table and Board, and The Fresh Market for food donations; and to C & D Innovations, Davidson Soda Shop, Fresh Egg, Fresh Chef, Harris Teeter, Publix, and Whit’s Frozen Custard for door prize donations.



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**April:** As part of our confederate monument removal campaign, our topic was “Confederate Monuments - What’s All the Fuss?” Dr. Hilary Green, the James B. Duke Professor of Africana Studies at Davidson College, was our amazing speaker.

**July:** Our focus was on the role of the faith community in these turbulent times. “Navigating the Crossroads: Faith, Beliefs, and Social Justice” was a panel discussion, moderated by board member, Rev. Aurrita Payne. Our phenomenal speakers included Rabbi Becca Diamond (Temple Kol Tikvah), Imam John Ederer (Muslim Community Center – Charlotte), Rev. Anita Harvell (Union Bethel AMEZ Church) and Rev. Peter Henry (Davidson College Presbyterian Church).

**October:** With increased attacks against the LGBTQ+ community, both legislatively and physically, UiC invited activists from the LGBTQ+ community to talk about “Sharing Our Stories. Sharing Our Strengths. A Community Discussion of LGBTQ+ Equality.” Moderated by UiC board member, Rev. Pat Jobe. Our incredible panelists included: Rev. Sonja Lee, Troy Aikens, and Tre Torbit.

### **Small Groups**

Initial findings of a UiC ad hoc Small Group Committee make clear the need and the value of UiC’s small groups. Small groups became a focus of our attention after the challenges several small groups had to confront last year. We continue to marvel at the friendships/relationships being strengthened after nearly 6 years for many and the impact they are having on small group members as well as the community. The Committee will be releasing a report on the results of our work and possible next steps later this year.

### **Education/Training**

**Re-activated education committee** under the leadership of Aurrita Payne, UiC Board member, and Nancy Lingle, member of UiC’s “Absolutely Amazing” small group. Its first order of business is the development of UiC’s next study guide. The committee hopes to release the study guide sometime this Spring. In the meantime, small groups have continued to identify topics of interest to the group and learn from informative and provocative discussions.

**Participated in the Program Managers Institute Professional Development Day Conference.** UiC was one of several nonprofits invited to participate in one of the workshops – a first for UiC.



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### **UiC Operations**

UiC held its 3rd board retreat with 4 new members: Mary Jane Freeman, Pat Jobe, Bruce McDonald and Aurrita Payne. Board officers continued: Pam Jones, President; Sue Rankin-White, Secretary; Brenda Schmidt, Treasurer. Remaining members included: Sandra Hayes, Willie Jones, and Deanna Wilson.

Maintained our Social Justice and Supporter Committees; Enlarged our Communications Committee and re-activated our Education Committee.

Continued to improve our monthly newsletter, informing supporters of UiC activities, meetings, and events, as well as relevant local activities, meetings, and events.

### **Fundraising**

Raised over \$5,000 in donations to UiC from supporters and friends. Raised almost \$1,200 as “Team UiC,” for the Barefoot Mile Walk, an annual event that raises money to support JOY International, a nonprofit dedicated to the prevention of child trafficking.

### **Marketing/Public Relations**

Maintained our website: [www.uic-nmeck.org](http://www.uic-nmeck.org)

Continued our private Facebook page; added a public Facebook page. Also continued Instagram.

Continued to promote UiC and build relationships with local media, primarily Cornelius Today and the Charlotte Observer.

### **Other**

Established the Lenzy R. Wallace, Jr. PhD Excellence Award.

Partnered with Common Thread Theater to help publicize, organize, and hold a “Talk Back” after one of the screenings of “How to Make an American Son.”

Participated in St. Mark’s Episcopal Church’s Juneteenth Event.