

Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing
Board of Trustees
268 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road
Titusville, NJ 08560



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

June 8, 2022

Zoom Meeting due to Covid-19 Virus Social Isolation

President Maria Baratta called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Also in attendance: Secretary, Colleen McCourt; Scribe and Trustee Heather Edwards; Trustees: Wendy Stasolla, Jim Sanders, Michael Howe-Smith; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang and Director of Lifespan Faith Engagement (DLFE), Robin Pugh. Absent were Joe Schenk, Treasurer, Vice President Jamie Evanini and Trustee Michael Waas.

First Hour

COVID Protocol Discussion

Rev. Kim shared some anecdotal experience from congregants who feel excluded by current church guidelines around vaccination. The Board and staff discussed the guidelines and explored what future changes and timing might look like. Key areas of consideration included:

- Understanding of current science regarding relative risk levels to unvaccinated and vaccinated individuals
- Covenantal nature of UUCWC regulations, which are based on protecting the most vulnerable and trying to reduce the spread of infection as much as possible
- Pending approval of vaccines for children under 5
- Logistical considerations impacting staff and congregants
- Small group guidelines; they are largely defined by individual groups at this point, but generally in practice most groups seek to be aligned with larger church guidelines

There was a poll via Zoom to assess whether the Board is ready to revise the current guidelines; there was unanimous consensus that we will continue under our current protocols for now. The Board decided not to make any decisions at this meeting, especially since three members were not able to be present, with the anticipation of further discussion and evaluation in the future.

RJM Discussion

Regina Podhorin-Zilinski, Dan Tuft, Chris Marietti and Sue Saddlemire joined on behalf of the Racial Justice Ministry (RJM) to provide an update on their 8th Principle draft covenant for various church constituents, which will be shared with the congregation once finalized.

- Key points included:
 - History of the covenant how it has evolved and been reviewed and edited, and vetted by individuals within and beyond UUCWC.
 - The purpose and goals of the document, which include accountability, involvement, support visibility and commitment for the 8th Principle at all levels of church life, acknowledging that the work of anti-racism is a continuing priority.
 - This is an evolving document and will continue to evolve. Next steps will be listening circles in the congregation to reintroduce the 8th Principle and invite people to join in this covenant, so they will feel invested as co-owners.
- There was a Zoom poll for the Board to affirm endorsement of the covenant, which passed unanimously.
- Future ACTIONS include:
 - RJM will continue to refine the draft language and seek perspective from individuals outside RJM.
 - RJM will work to create/gather resources and materials to support the covenant's goals, including introductory materials, best practices, etc.
 - RJM will continue to grow, and as members leave the group, they are committed to joining other church groups in leadership and support roles to continue sharing and growing 8th Principle work and practices.
- The Board expressed gratitude at RJM's intentional approach, commitment, consensus-building and discernment, while also acknowledging that we as a church have much farther to go in continuing this work. Board President Maria Baratta thanked the RJM guests and they left the meeting.

Second Hour

Capital Campaign Update

The Board reviewed the most recent status reports from the Capital Campaign Committee regarding budgets, timing, plans, etc. and identified potential areas for clarification. ACTION: The Board will meet with the CC team in person for a more detailed discussion of next steps, and continued collaboration and support for the team's efforts.

Housekeeping and Action Items

The Board thanked outgoing Trustee Michael Howe-Smith for his dedicated service, and he expressed blessings for the Board's ongoing work.

Meeting adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heather Edwards

Scribe, Board of Trustees

Colleen McCourt

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive Team, Staff and Treasurer Reports

Staff Executive Report

Given at June 5, 2022 Annual Meeting

Presented by Kim, on behalf of Robin, Susan and Caryl

To tell the story of this past year in any sufficient way would take hours, would take a book of words. The staff and I come to you once again with pure humility and gratitude for the ability to do the work of this church with this people.

If you remember, during the last Annual Meeting, I was on maternity leave and worship and pastoral care was being led by the rev. yadenee hailu. It was the Sunday that I came back that Tony Panzetta passed away. In August I left my basement, Robin left her home study, and the worship team joined Caryl and our musicians to lead Sunday mornings from the sanctuary ... which was totally empty. It was Lonely. Creative. Odd. A yearned for peek into home.

And the only way it happened at all is because the worship tech team (shout out to MJ & John, who are here weekly and also with the expertise of Ariel Schwartz) how they envisioned, built and perfected what is essentially a tv studio in the back of the sanctuary. Other congregations do not have this type of talent or commitment.

As they grew proficient in this new technology, we expected to open the doors to everyone but, as you remember, we were hit once again with another covid wave that kept us apart.

So, we pivoted again.

In September, October and November we held services outside and online. Our tech team streaming the exact same service that some of us were experiencing under the tree on our back lawn. Small groups continued to meet and even grow online:

Over the course of the year we held two pathways (new member) classes, open to the more than 120 visitors and helping us welcome 12 new members, most of whom never stepped foot in this space, never met the people they called community, in the flesh.

Each month, we got the teens together around the firepit, and the parents gathered online to learn and connect around parenting children as Unitarian Universalists. Friendships were made in this space that could not happen in the ways we interacted before the pandemic.

And of course, we are holding 11 Chalice Circles, including one for couples and another that responds to the theme of the month through creative projects. 84 people, including 18 facilitators, including 7 of the 9 board members, are in chalice circles or wellspring. This communal spiritual practice has changed the way we are with one another. It has changed our relationships, our expectations, our depth of conversation.

It was only four months ago that, with masks and vaccination available to people over 5, this space opened again for the larger community, and we've learned a lot since then, too. For one, not everyone is ready to come back. About 2/3s of the congregation continues to gather online each Sunday. And that's okay.

Jamie Evanini shared with the Board at our Spring retreat:

This time feels like we've all been on a plane that has had to wait a long time to finally land. We've been circling and circling at low elevation, just waiting for our turn in the queue. Its been SUCH a long time waiting and circling. Finally we've landed, and everyone is so happy that we're finally on the ground, but some of us are still totally nauseous. While some people are jubilantly racing out of the plane to go get their luggage and hop in a taxi to get to the beach, there are others who need to sit down in the terminal for a bit and just breathe, till the nausea, or anxiety, or sinus pain goes away! And others have very full bladders (they had to wait all that time circling with the fasten seatbelt sign on!), so before they can even think about heading to baggage claim, they need the restroom.

Even now we are all experiencing this time very differently from one another. And this is essential that we each understand. Because the successes that you hear today, our ability to respond to the constant changes, our ability to keep dreaming and moving the congregation forward in responsible ways as if it is business as usual, it should not be taken for granted.

Here in the sanctuary, masked, while others are here online, waving hello from their kitchen tables - we have also been

- Celebrating Caryl and her gorgeous ministry with us – and consequently entering a search, and hiring Erin Busch as our incoming Transition Music Director;
- We've been shifting Robin's focus to Congregational Life – to connecting people with one another and this place as one church – which has meant that we had to enter a search, and we got to hire Sarah Ahrens as our new half time Director of Faith Engagement;
- We've reconfigured the roles of our treasurer, assistant treasurer and finance chair which led to a search, and the hiring Lynne Quinto as our Controller;
- We've dedicated children to this community, strengthened our commitment to liberation, we've fed people and rallied against wrongs, we drove each other to doctors appointments and grew our membership beyond the border of NJ and Pennsylvania.

It is easy to think things should be or feel more “normal” or stable when so much continues with such love and dedication. But we must remember, all of this is remarkable in additional ways this year. Even now, we are still learning what it means to live in a pandemic.

And so, thank you again. For all of you who continue to figure this out with us. We love you. We love you for the work you do of signing on, of showing up, for the meetings, and asking the questions, for sending affirmations, for knowing how remarkable this all is.

Additional thanks of course goes to the indomitable Susan Irgang who never left the building and who makes sure the things that have to happen - despite the pandemic - happen with excellence and care. Like, for example, this multi-platform meeting!!

Rachel, Roberto, Erin, we thank you also for your good work and dedication to this community.

For all who gather today and in the days past and the days to come:

Susan: When there was a need, you came forward. And so we thank you.

Robin: In the nighttime or daytime, on weekends and even in the coldest, darkest part of the year, you helped. And so we thank you.

Caryl: Elected and duly appointed or quietly, anonymously and unbidden, you did what needed doing. And so we thank you.

Kim: Sometimes with the help of many hands, other times alone, you worked. And so we thank you.

Susan: You gave your time, talent and even your treasure for the life of the congregation. And so we thank you.

Robin: Your families and loved ones supported you in your efforts, worried for you when things piled up and perhaps grumbled at you for the extent of your commitment. And so we thank your families and loved ones.

Caryl: For all things great and small you have given this congregation, we take time today to recognize, To thank you and to honor you.

Kim Let us remember how fragile this whole things is, how magical that we are doing this together, by remembering those we lost this year:

Tony Panzetta, Jo Milner, Beverly Railsback, Russ Rollins.

UUCWC Board of Trustees State of the Church Report - 2022

We are entering the third year of a global pandemic and our church is not just surviving, but thriving. This is not to say we haven't had losses or hardship; we have. But overall we find that connections remain strong. Multi-platform attendance levels remain high with people really connecting to the rituals and sermons.

The committees, teams, ministries, volunteers and staff who keep our church dynamic and nurture both our members and communities continue to re-imagine what it means to "Celebrate Life. Create Community. Change the World."

We thank every single person who participates in church life by attending services; being engaged in a small group program or children's RE; volunteering their time; offering their talent; following through on their annual pledge; making an end of year gift; participating in the annual auction; attending events, programs, and sing alongs; or engaging in any of the many vibrant offerings available at UUCWC. Each of you is our church.

And we still exist in a pandemic.

At our spring retreat, one Board member provided a great analogy as to how we can think of life at UUCWC. Think of the first 2 years of the pandemic as like being on a turbulent airplane flight to a vacation spot with a landing that is continually delayed. We keep circling and circling the airport, over and over again. Finally, the plane lands. Upon landing, half the passengers jump up and are ready to run out the gate, start their vacation and have forgotten the miserable flight. Others are a little more tentative and take their time getting off the plane because they are somewhat wiped out from the very unpleasant experience. The last group of travelers are still sitting on the plane with their head in their hands, feeling nauseous and quivering. They will emerge slowly and will need extra time to settle themselves.

We all know which passenger group we belong to in this analogy and need to be mindful of how we view the other groups. Some of us were ready to jump back into pre-pandemic life as soon as the first wave ended in 2020; some have been slowly testing the waters to determine what feels safest for them; while others are still struggling with an overwhelming sense of disruption wrought by the pandemic and its effect on them and their families.

UUCWC's Board has tried to meet the holistic needs of our congregation during this time. We've tried to provide a measured approach to our re-opening that put safety first for all our members, friends and families. And in the process we've learned that many people have truly embraced our multi-platform Sunday services and faith engagement programs.

We have many things to lift up and celebrate this year. This is all possible because of the ongoing commitment of our staff and members. We celebrate that:

- The pandemic allowed our Minister and Director of Lifespan Faith Engagement to put into practice small group programming they've been working on for a few years. Connections among congregants in small groups are stronger and deeper than ever, including new members, virtual members, grandparents, etc. Some of these participants have only experienced church interactions virtually. Of our current membership, 10% have joined during the pandemic without ever having been inside our church building.
- Through our online presence we are striving for better accessibility. Continuing to consider the ways in which multi-platform church impacts our congregation's future is a worthy investment. This is an exciting and hopeful time for us to experiment and create change to meet the new needs of post-pandemic life as well as discover what people desire in congregational life. We are on a threshold, waiting to see how things will evolve over time in a way we can't yet fully envision.
- We are forming and growing new connections, like a root system growing underground that nurtures the whole forest. The church staff, both existing and new, has been key to tracking, fostering, understanding and promoting these connections, and is actively engaged in continual discernment on how to reimagine an inclusive church that serves everyone. With new staff positions, there is a reduction in the demand for certain volunteer responsibilities needed to sustain our core operations. This allows members to volunteer and participate in more meaningful ways with less pressure.
- For the past several years, our leadership has reviewed the internal workings of UUCWC and made appropriate revisions. Thanks to the work of the Right Relations Team, and Racial Justice Ministry we are making headway in addressing and correcting our own internal systems based on white supremacy.
- Our Stewardship Team, By-laws Revision Team, Finance Committee and others and have instituted financial safeguards, including hiring a controller and addressing other vulnerabilities identified in an audit of our processes.
- Our Capital Campaign Team remains hard at work. They've been working through formidable challenges resulting from the pandemic, including major supply chain disruptions, COVID infections stalling the work of engineers and contractors, impacts of inflation and more. The Board is looking forward to seeing the plans along with the rest of the congregation, as well as hearing feedback once the plans are share.
- We thank everyone who responded so generously to the call of our Stewardship team this year. Our pledging households have risen to the the challenge and we saw an average pledge percentage increase. We send a heartfelt 'thank you' to everyone for their continued generosity that helps keep UUCWC thriving and growing. We couldn't do the amazing things we are doing without the love and financial support of every single person in our congregation.

- We have taken the time to celebrate Caryl Tipton's tenure as our Director of music, while preparing for the onboarding of Erin Bush to build on Caryl's legacy. Our choir brings joy and energy to every service in which they sing.
- With an expectation for growth as the pandemic ebbs, we are hiring a part-time Director of Faith Engagement to tend to the needs of our children and youth, while Robin roles back her position to 3/4 time to focus on adult programming.
- The ingenuity and creativity of leaders and their teams has kept their missions going strong during times of uncertainty. This includes our always-amazing Auction Team that continues to bring in our most significant revenue outside of pledges; the lay leaders of Chalice Circles, Wellspring, Creative Matters Studio, and children's faith engagement programs that inspire and engage our members and children to think about their faith and spirituality in new ways; our fabulous Tech Team who make multi-platform services seamless, so that everyone who attends feels drawn in and welcome; our always ready Food Ministry that continues to serve the needs of our neighbors with food insecurity by providing healthy nourishing meals; our Pastoral Care team that continues to support and attend to members who need our love and attention when facing challenging times in their lives; the Friday Night Sing-along leaders, who have kept people's spirits up and offered community when we needed it most. And all the other leaders and volunteers who make up the heart and soul of our church community.

For all the ways in which every single member, friend and staff person contributes to our church life, the Board of Trustees humbly thanks you. We're so glad to share in the journey with you.

Treasurer's Report

June 2, 2022

Statement of Income and Expense as of the close of May were provided in the pre-reads.

Summary:

- Financial indications remain positive with a \$43k positive variance – income to expenses
 - o The positive variance increased from \$400 last month, largely due to auction income
- Pledge income lags considerably to budget - \$40k
 - o Follow-up with the Stewardship Team is in order
- Lynne Quinto is fully immersed in her Controller responsibilities, aided by Mary Baltycki
- Bank Account Balances total \$1.46 million:
 - o \$571k Operating combined balances
 - o \$683k Capital Campaign
 - o \$293k Endowment
 - o -\$67k Exchange

Year to Date Finances as of 5/31/2022

Income		Expense	
Sunday "Plate"	26,393	Staff	296,404
Pledge	356,322	Operations	76,335
Year End, Other Gifts	29,928	Program	24,978
Paycheck Protection Forgiveness	27,500	Denomination	18,914
Fund Raising (Auction)	36,425	Debt Service	23,343
All Other (SRECs, ARE Fees, Misc)	6,108		439,974
	482,676		
Net Income (Loss)	42,702		

Financial highlights are as follows:

YTD Budget Tracking: to budget (\$480 positive)

- Down from \$30k surplus as of December 31, now \$480

YTD Income: **\$23k Negative Variance** to target Budget (\$23k less income than budgeted)

1. Plate Income is tracking to budget within a variance of less than 1%
2. Pledge Income is lower than budget by \$40k year to date at \$356k
 - a. \$39k negative variance is increased from -\$37k in the prior month
 - b. We will be challenged to have Pledge collections completed by June 30
3. Income is offset by a \$10k unrestricted gift from earlier in the year

YTD Expense: **Positive** Variance: \$47k (\$47,000 less spend than budget)

1. **Staff:** \$31k positive variance year to date reflective of sexton and other delayed staff expense

2. **Operations:** \$16k positive variance to budget Year to Date
3. **Program:** \$7k positive variance year to date reflective of reduced spend, most notably Adult & Children's RE and delayed CFA disbursement
4. **Debt & Denomination Expenses:** To Budget (no variance)

Reminder Items:

1. **A budget deficit** of \$38k for the next fiscal year is inclusive of a Board-Approved \$25k legacy gift for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024
2. The deficit budget will draw down Operating Reserves and fully exhaust them in 2-3 years absent substantial increases in income