

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - [APPROVED](#)
Nov. 8, 2023
Multi-platform Meeting

President Wendy Stasolla called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:03 PM. Also in attendance: Vice President, Jamie Evanini, Treasurer Denny Rodgers and Secretary Colleen McCourt; Trustees: Karen Kent, Michael Waas, Maria Baratta, Michelle Zechner; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang and Ministerial Intern Lisa Schilansky. Absent were Trustees Michelle Zechner and Gina Turner, and Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh.

First Hour

Consent Agenda (no vote)

Trustee Maria Baratta had 1 question about the Capital Campaign but deferred to discuss it under the next agenda item.

The Capital Campaign

Congregational Administrator Susan Irgang reported that letters about the third phase of the fundraising campaign went out at the end of October; so far we've gotten 6 new pledges. People may be waiting to pledge more until construction gets further underway.

Executive Session

The Board entered executive session for approximately 15 minutes.

Stewardship & End of Year

- Rev. Kim, Treasurer Denny Rodgers and Susan reported that the EOY campaign is well under way; planning is done, materials are at the printer and should be done this month. The Stewardship team will have a stuffing party by Nov. 19th, and the EOY campaign launch will happen from the pulpit.
- The current Stewardship team continues to be very invested and well-organized. Susan has started taking on more administrative tasks such as being the point person for ICON database tracking, statements, etc. so the team can focus on visioning.
- This year we are launching a shared theme for all financial and fundraising efforts, based on feedback from the Financial Sustainability Task Force. This year's theme is Gifts of Our Faith.

which will carry across Stewardship (both EOY and annual pledge campaign), Capital Campaign and Auction. Each of the appeals have a key word for their campaign, and a logo created by Lori O'Neill.

Concert Update

President Wendy Stasolla reported that she, Susan, Denny, Jim Sanders and Lynne Quinto met with Nick Mellis to discuss specific information about a planned concert fundraiser, which would be an all-day event with food, 2 stages, etc. There are many creative ideas, and now that the scope has been laid out, the discussion centered around figuring out the details, and how to execute the event according to UUCWC rules and policies. There will be a lot of logistical work, and we need to consider potential impacts of construction on timing. Jim had some good suggestions and recommended that Nick submit a budget to Finance and consider raising ticket costs as needed. The Board appreciates that Nick has volunteered to fill the vacant role of UUCWC's Fundraising Chair, and believes the hands-on learning from planning these events will benefit future fundraising projects. Nick is also looking ahead to proposing another major concert fundraiser that would be an overnight event. The Board agreed that while it may be a promising idea, we cannot take on any new significant projects until after construction.

2nd Hour

Personnel

Rev. Kim provided overall updates as a check-in to the Board regarding current staff operations. She named that while each staff member is a strong member of the team and adds value, the overall team structure makes management and organization challenging. This is largely due to the fact that Rev. Kim is the only full-time staff member, which creates challenges with meeting times and scheduling, since staff members do not have much overlapping availability. As a result, planning and discussions happen individually and iteratively, not collectively and collaboratively. This creates inefficiency and in some cases, energy drain. This impacts everything from Sunday service preparation to programming. Rev. Kim indicated that she was not expecting the Board to go into problem-solving mode; mainly acknowledging that this dynamic is happening in the spirit of proactive communication.

The Board expressed gratitude for Rev. Kim's insights and further discussion followed, with key points including:

- Part of the reason we have so many part-time staff members currently, including staff members with other responsibilities outside UUCWC, is a reflection of budgetary needs. While that is a reality we are dealing with, we need to acknowledge the impact, since we have never operated with this part-time dynamic to such a degree, and the implications are being felt.
- Another factor driving this dynamic is that within the current make-up of church leadership and volunteers, more experienced leaders are stepping back (largely due to fatigue), and there's a longer learning curve for new leaders. This directly affects the staff's workload, mostly notably

Susan and Director of Faith Engagement Robin Pugh, as they put more time into training and onboarding volunteers.

- The Board strongly affirmed concern and support for the staff and all the necessary and meaningful work they are doing, and thmultiple spaces they are all being asked to occupy. There was general agreement that:
 - As a church, we are seeing the results of our collective budget decisions play out and we need to pay close attention to them.
 - We may need to look at what staff tasks and activities we can let go of this year and think strategically about next year.
 - We need to continue discussion and potential solutioning around this.

Accessibility (& Council Mtng)

Wendy reported that Congregational Engagement recently held a retreat for people stepping down from leadership roles, and while overall it was lovely, an individual with hearing impairment left early due to experiencing limitations and frustration in the space. The person spoke with Marianne Alt about the experience. She provided some suggestions on how to better anticipate and serve these needs going forward, and the Board agreed that we should try to model and implement them at the upcoming Council meeting. Suggestions included having people raise hands before speaking, identify themselves by name and describe their appearance, as well as having meeting organizers reach out ahead of time to proactively ask people what types of accommodations they might need. **ACTION:** Susan will send an email to Council meeting invitees ahead of time, and Vice President Jamie Evanini will model these practices at the meeting.

Other items to be discussed at the Council meeting include an update on the Capital Campaign project, as well as fundraising campaign efforts.

Board Goals Update

Rev. Kim and Susan reported that this is still in progress. Rev. Kim is reviewing the current draft to pull out essential messages and we will formally review them together at next month's Board meeting. Rev. Kim suggested 8 draft statements as a template that could encompass all that's been suggested:

- UUCWC is a community that is counter-cultural, non/anti-capitalist; radically welcoming and hospitable
- We are known in the larger community as partners, collaborators and advocates for justice.
- We are counter-cultural, modeling ways of being that are non and anti-capitalist.
- We are radically welcoming and hospitable.
- Our multigenerational, multicultural, in-person and online communities are woven tightly to each other and the wider whole.
- We are spiritually grounded, motivated by joy in a wounded world, and honor authenticity.
- We lead with citizens rather than for consumers.
- Our obligations are taken seriously, communicated transparently and are living commitments that require our ongoing flexibility and investment.

Housekeeping & Action Items

- CrossCurrents - should be centered on generosity and giving - reinforces the financial theme; Secretary Colleen McCourt will write it.
- We need to start looking for an incoming finance chair to start shadowing Jim Sanders, ideally in December.
- Next month's meeting will be Zoom only.
- Process observations: it was harder for people online to participate, and harder to hear when multiple people are talking. We can test with different monitor positioning and greater awareness.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Colleen McCourt

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Jamie Evanini

Vice President and Scribe, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive, Staff and Treasurer Reports

Executive Team Meeting-November 2, 2023

In Attendance: Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Wendy Stasolla, and Lisa Schilansky

The retreat for past leaders held at the church this past Saturday was beautifully executed by Congregational Engagement, and Wendy enthusiastically encouraged them to repeat this event in the future. One action item that came out of this gathering was to communicate the need for meeting leaders to identify and aid members with accessibility issues. For example: A hearing impaired person would benefit from the speaker asking those who CAN hear them to raise their hands thus also identifying those who did NOT hear. People with sight impairment will feel more included if speakers identify themselves by describing their appearance, gender identity, and/or any other visual information they want to point out. We discussed the fact that we've had accessibility discussions before but have never formed a ministry or committee to address this.

On Monday, November 6th, Wendy attended the webinar "Why We Cannot Turn Away: Resources for UU Leaders Engaging on Israel and Palestine." She'll share the resources when she receives the follow up e-mail. There were a number of speakers with a range of backgrounds and perspectives. It was at once healing, provocative, and extremely informative.

Wendy and Denny met with Nick Mellis, Susan Irgang, and Jim Sanders to discuss questions and concerns about a concert Nick is planning, in either June or September of 2024. (depending on construction).

The updated board goals continue to be a work in progress.

November 2023 Board Report
Ministers Report
Rev. Kim Wildszewski

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

Sunday mornings have continued to be rich and thematic.

October closed out our theme on Heritage and an Acorn earth teacher. November introduces Generosity, pumpkin seeds, and a new song written by Erin and me called Teach Me. It was a real joy (and surprise) to see the investment in the earth teacher this past month, as well as the song, and I hope to see this spiritual practice and relationship grow throughout our year.

Our Intern Minister, Lisa, preached twice in the last four weeks, giving us all an opportunity to learn more about her and the gifts and questions she brings. I kicked off our auction sermon series by asking What is Real and Who Gets to Decide this for Barbara Jensen. Our annual All Souls service invited us to remember our beloved dead by completing thoughts like “In the days of their flesh ...”. We will have another multi-generational service on November 19th; Julie and I have a shared goal of offering a multigen service once every other month.

Technology has given us a challenge in worship for the first time in a long while, and we are needing to hard wire the projector in order to ensure full interaction between the two communities (online and in person). The mix of humidity and cell phones in the sanctuary are breaking down the wifi communication. Additionally, MJ Hansen has decided to step down from a leadership role on the worship tech team; an absence we will all feel.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

The Pathways (path to membership) class is serving 9 potential new members and 4 long term members. Interestingly, of the 9 potential new members, 4 are born and raised or long term Unitarian Universalists. Other demographics: 1 of 9 identify as queer; 6 are women; 1 is permanently remote; 2 are estimated to be 45 years old or younger.

The Council meeting will be this Sunday after church from 11:30-1pm. I will be leading the program portion of the afternoon and, after noticing a sharp post-covid shift toward a more obligatory relationship to serving, I am hoping to engage our leadership on why we give so tremendously to the congregation.

October's Welcome Table Wednesday was a joyful success with the significant help of the entire staff team, most notably Susan Irgang who once again takes on all the behind the scenes details. We are now turning toward November's WTW (the last Wednesday of the month) where Erin

will lead a sing a long; Robin or I will offer spaces for deep conversation; and a team will help folks decorate (Hang the Greens) the sanctuary for December.

Lectio Divina continues to grow as a consistent weekly, mid-day ministry.

I am finding there is a growing need for more, and more spacious, in-person pastoral care. Visits with elders have been scheduled more frequently; tender topics are again in my office rather than zoom. This shift feels both very healthy and also potentially a signal of a smaller system. I am actively asking myself: What are the consequences and invitations to lead a program-size congregation from the perspective of a pastoral ministry (150 people or less) rather than from a mission perspective (400 or more) as I have been doing until covid?

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

Last month I restructured our Personnel Committee and we welcomed new leadership and participation. The committee is now: Lynne Molnar as chair, Sue Saddlemire & Scott Drew as schedulers; Andi Ferrenz as notetaker; Maria Baratta as Board Liaison; Jim Sanders continues as Finance Chair representation, and there will also be a rotating process observer. This month we will turn our attention to recreating a covenant for this specific group, matching our mission with the bylaws and clarifying role and responsibilities. I am hoping that with new health, this committee will once again serve as a support to the minister, rather than be led by the minister.

Additionally, the Personnel Committee is assisting me in thinking through the continued challenges of working entirely with a part time staff. One new area of challenge is the gap that exists between the culture of our volunteer teachers, and the capacity of a half time director of family ministry role.

Turning to the larger world, as noted in last month's report, as part of the NJ Faith Allies, I spoke with the NJ Lt. Governor on reparations, with disparity, and racial justice accountability. I'm grateful to Regina Zilinski for her involvement and leadership in this space as well.

With gratitude for our shared ministry,
Rev. Kim

Susan Irgang

Administrator BOT Report for November 2023

Create Community

I am happy to report that, having followed up on Kim's initial reach-outs, UUCWC's Task Force is in place for the Boy Scout project! Bob Alt, Justin Roth, Andy Damato and Pete Rafle have all agreed to contribute as they can to the group who will support William Kalb in his project. They will meet with Denny Rodgers, who began initial conversations on this project, on 11/14.

Welcome Table Wednesday (10/18) was attended by approximately 50 people. I handled all the logistical aspects from invitations to set up, photographing the event, and resetting the Sanctuary, while Julie, Robin, Lisa and Kim handled the post dinner programs. Those who attended enjoyed the evening and more are hoping they can join us for the next one on 11/29, an evening of singing, crafts and readying for the holiday season.

Other logistical support I provided last month was for the Green Amendment book signing by Earth and Climate Ministry, the Breathwork retreat sponsored by Pastoral Care, and Congregational Engagement's Saturday retreat, all of which occurred in a 3-day period. While this can be challenging and stretches resources, it's good to see the church so active.

I met with Stewardship to discuss testing a change in how database work is handled. Previously, a Stewardship team member had to learn our database system in order to enter pledges, extract reports, etc.; this involved training every year or two of volunteers who may not be familiar with databases. This year we are testing if I, as both church and database administrator, can support the team by doing all ICON related work; so far issuing statements posed no real issues. I also assisted the Stewardship Team as they prepare for the End of Year Contribution campaign: proofreading, preparing labels, return envelopes, postage, etc. in preparation for their 11/19 launch. These supports to this essential group will allow the team members more time to do visioning and reach out work.

Celebrate Life

Our current membership is 276 Church Members, 25 Friends (those who pledge but haven't signed the book), 23 Participants (active and/or on the path to membership) and 26 Attendees (attend worship only). There are also currently 34 registered children/youth.

Change the (UUCWC) World

Attending the preconstruction meetings for the Capital Project, being onsite during the subsequent work laying the new walkway, acting as a resource for the subcontractor dealing with electrical work prior to demo of the front garden, and organizing preparation for use of our new entrance took much of my time in the last two weeks of October. Construction has been paused due to contractual disputes; updates are coming daily and the latest information will be shared at the Board meeting.

Additionally, in preparation for the official launch on 10/24 of the Capital Campaign's third phase of fundraising, I collaborated with Lori O'Neil to create new pledge forms and return envelopes; prepared materials for the mailing (preprinted labels, purchased postage, printed forms, letter to members). The letters were assembled by the team and mailed on Friday 10/27; to date 6 pledges (new or extended) have been received in advance of the Dec. 1st deadline.

Other work this month including:

- procuring the November and December Earth Teachers used on Sundays
- consolidating and organizing a shared drive for the Personnel committee
- logistical preparation for the Nov. 12th Church Council meeting
- preparing a new directory to be sent the week of 11/13;

The cover email for the directory, which is sent to Members and Friends, can include any announcements or information the Board may wish to share with the congregation.

Rachel Hansen and Roberto Santiago continue to support our work behind the scenes. Notably Roberto has been asked, often with little notice, to support a church event in which kitchen support is needed; as always, he says yes, and offers cheerful and skilled assistance at church events.

November 2023 Board Report
Ministerial Intern's Report
Lisa Schilansky

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

This month brought a lot of important advancements in my experience with worship at UUCWC. I preached for the first time on 10/15, delayed from 10/1 due to COVID. This was an opportunity to offer an "About Me" sermon to help the congregation better understand who their new ministerial intern is. This required a deft hand navigating preaching just one week after the terrorist attack in Israel and the subsequent war in Palestine began. I offered various components of the liturgy on 10/22 and 10/29, receiving feedback about the worship after each service.

This past Sunday, 11/5, was my first Sunday in the pulpit without Rev. Kim being present, as it is important for the congregation to have opportunities to connect with me directly on Sunday without Rev. Kim as an intermediary. This was also an opportunity for me to offer a more pastoral care sermon and to craft all elements of the liturgy, except for the Story for All Ages. This was also the first opportunity I had to collaborate with a worship associate, communicating with him throughout the week.

After the service on 10/15 and 11/5, I have received a lot of engagement from congregants both in person and over email, resulting in continued conversations on the themes introduced in my sermons.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

This past month involved the first iteration of *Breathe: the world needs you whole*. This is my new initiative, a monthly drop-in event for those engaged in social justice or direct service work, or those who are feeling taxed by the political state of the world. Each month I will offer an in-person gathering in the morning and a virtual one in the evening to make it as accessible as possible. Four people attended the morning session and it quickly became an opportunity for pastoral care and grounding in a group setting. The evening session was attended by an additional five people. I have received positive feedback about this event and will be taking the suggestions I received into account as I plan for the next iteration on the 9th.

On November 28th, I had the opportunity to attend the leadership retreat. After meeting with Marianne Alt to assist with planning, I offered a chalice lighting, grounding prayer, and chalice extinguishing. This event was an important opportunity for me to offer pastoral support to the members of the community who were looking for restoration following their most recent leadership positions.

This past month I also had the opportunity to meet with Barbara Schroeder Jensen, at her request, to help her brainstorm activities to complete her three-hour breathwork retreat on October 27th. While I was not able to attend the event due to it occurring on a Friday evening, I was able to speak with Barbara after the event to debrief with her.

I am currently collaborating with Jen Rehbein to plan the Trans Day of Remembrance and Resilience vigil. This will be held at UUCWC in mid-November. We are intending for a vigil

that is primarily pastoral and secondarily awareness-raising. I have been informed that this vigil has been poorly attended in the past causing some hurt, so I am working to establish a plan to spread the word about this event and its importance to the UUCWC community.

Finally, this past month I was able to establish multiple formal pastoral care relationships with congregants who currently have acute needs. This is in addition to continuing to maintain casual connections with individuals in the receiving line, in coffee hour, over Facebook, and during the week when they attend other events at the church.

Change the World

As I continue to get involved in the justice and direct service ministries of the congregation, I had the opportunity to attend the Food Ministry meeting on October 10th. Due to my specific interest in social justice ministry, I will be attending the Racial Justice Ministry meeting on October 7th and hope to make those meetings monthly as my half-time schedule permits.

On October 25th, I went to DC with IfNotNow, a progressive Jewish organization. This was an explicitly Jewish action calling for a ceasefire and the release of the hostages. Recognizing the complexity of this conflict, and the immense pain caused by intergenerational trauma from communities sympathetic to either side, I have worked to communicate this effort to the congregation in a thoughtful, intentional way while keeping an ear out for pain emerging from the congregation. On November 4th, I joined a national mobilization of approximately 30,000 people again in Washington DC. I intentionally showed up with visible symbols on my person of both Judaism and Unitarian Universalism. I engaged in multiple conversations with fellow marchers about the chalice symbol on my necklace and bag and discussed what the faith is and how the broader movement is trying to respond to the war in a compassionate way.

In addition to taking to the streets, I am participating in UU/Jewish clergy healing spaces and will be attending the Side With Love event on the night of the 6th called “Why We Cannot Turn Away: Resources for UU Leaders Engaging on Israel and Palestine.” I am also collaborating with Unitarian Universalist leaders looking to respond to this conflict and am doing my best to offer a pastoral and awareness-raising response on my social media, while recognizing that nuanced discussion is very hard in that medium.

Treasurer's Report for October 2023

October Actual vs budgeted

Total gross revenue for month was \$2,700 under budgeted amount, primarily due to \$4,352 pledge shortfall. Quarterly statements have recently been mailed and folks often wait until the end of Tax year to pay from RMDs.

Expenses were \$3,330 less than budgeted amount.

Net cash flow was -\$4,235, but net revenue was \$629 over budgeted amount.

Investment income totaled \$1840 **and exceeded budgeted amount by \$527**

July - October Actual vs FY24 Budget

Net revenue \$33,245

Cash Analysis

\$312,356 Non-restricted/Reserve Cash Available will cover 6.63 months budgeted expenses.

Our goal is to maintain that at 3 months or better.

Endowment is at \$297,076

As liaison to Finance

We are fortunate to have new member co-chairs on Stewardship in Jane Root and Scott Blaydon. They bring fresh ideas and great energy to the Committee. New EOY gift packet is designed based on the whole church theme of "Gifts of our Faith" and mailing will take place on the 19th. Ron Iacone is enjoying remaining as a valuable resource on Stewardship.

Notes for October 2023

Gifts / Conts to general income: Donation made by member in memory of grandmother

Fundraising / airport: Received two donations in October; reactivated this line in income to facilitate tracking donations.

Office / subscriptions: Includes the annual renewal of \$792 for the ICON membership database

Service fees – filings: For the annual report we are required to file with the state of NJ

Trash collection: more this usual this month – getting caught up with change in billing plans due to change in our needs. Going forward, will be \$100 per month.

Caring Ministry expense: Negative amount due to registration fees for Breathwork retreat held on Oct 27. Expenses will be paid in November.

Worship expense: New ritual stations

Exchange: Amount represents donations deposited at end of month for which more information is needed.