

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - APPROVED
JANUARY 8, 2025
Zoom Meeting

President Wendy Stasolla called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Also in attendance: Vice President, Karen Kent, Treasurer Denny Rodgers and Secretary Michelle Zechner; Trustees: Maria Baratta, Bob Busch, David Thomas, Chris Marietti, Colleen McCourt; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Marilyn Gonzalez, Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh and Ministerial Intern Lisa Schilansky.

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote): President Wendy Stasolla and Rev. Kim Wildszewski briefly reviewed their monthly reports. Treasurer Denny Rodgers provided a summary of the church's financial health, and noted that the end of year campaign brought in more than anticipated.

Planning for Congregational Meeting (1/12/25): Rev. Kim Wildszewski outlined plan for the upcoming congregational meeting. Two votes will take place with congregational members : The first is to support Lisa Shlansky's upcoming ordination as a full minister. Lisa is asking both her home UU church and UUCWC to vote in support of her ordination. The second is to take a vote from the congregation to use reserve funds to cover the costs of a half-time minister for 15 months (April 2024 - June 2025). Board discussed the process and procedure.

Rev. Kim discussed the congregation's membership and attendance trends. She noted that despite not having grown in numbers, the congregation has maintained its stability and attendance levels are at pre-Covid numbers. However, there is an increased need for increased social justice presence and pastoral care due to the congregation's aging population and the increasing demands of pastoral care.

Endowment Committee Updates: As a follow-up to previous board discussions, the board reviewed the need for increased communication and understanding between the Board and the Endowment Committee. The board reviewed agenda and process for an upcoming shared meeting for further clarification, transparency and to promote open dialogue. Board President Wendy Stasolla will follow up with stakeholders with an invitation to participate.

2nd Hour

Safety & Marketing Opportunities: • Rev. Kim Wildszewski discussed new concerns about physical safety online and in the building as a result of changes in federal priorities. The Board will establish a safety taskforce to revise existing policies and update procedures as needed. Given the concerns regarding safety, Rev. Kim requested a vote about changing the status of the church's Facebook community building page to private. This vote passed unanimously.

On a related matter, Rev. Kim has been approached with a request to use the building in a documentary. There was discussion about this. Board voted that recording could take place without explicit mention of location or church name. This vote passed unanimously. The Board noted that future permission to use church name or location should be reviewed by Safety Taskforce.

Congregational Pulse Check-In: There was suggestion that members of the ROMEO group may be interested in supporting the Safety Taskforce. A question was brought up about the soundproofing in the Crossings Room as the sound absorption tiles are not in place, and it was noted that the materials have been ordered and are currently on back-order.

Housekeeping & Action Items:

- A date is needed for the board retreat
- Cross Current articles

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Zechner

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive, Staff and Treasurer Reports

Executive Report

Executive Summary February 9, 2025

By Wendy Stasolla

The Strategic Visioning workshop was well attended and resulted in some fresh ideas and enlightening conversations between congregants. Michelle Zechner is writing the February board article about the workshop.

We discussed a timeline for more formally thanking the Capital Campaign team by the end of May. We plan to present each of them with the gift we talked, gratitude notes and perhaps in-person accounts of what each is enjoying about the new building. Any other ideas are welcome!

Stewardship starts having cottage meetings on Sunday, February 16 at UUCWC. Members of the board are being asked to sign up and cohost each meeting and enthusiastically participate as well. Denny will provide an overview of the current budget in case we need to field any questions.

The Endowment discussion/meeting went very well and resulted in a Task Force being created to write some formal policy and discuss whether to make any changes that were proposed during the meeting.

I will be meeting this week with Lenore Bajare-Dukes who is our contact from UUA's Central East Region team. We're having a check-in chat and I'll report back on how that went if there's anything I feel would be helpful to share.

I registered to attend the UUA Investment Fund meeting via zoom on Tuesday February 25th. Let me know if anyone else is interested in attending and I'll send you the information.

Lots going on and more that I'm sure will show up in other reports.

STAFF REPORTS

Minister Board Report

January 2025

Create Community

This past month at UUCWC was full and beautiful and full of surprises.

Following the rededication service, I offered an Auction sermon on how to love those we don't like - without heat in the sanctuary. Immediately following, Food Ministry offered their chili cook off to sustain us for the wonderful Philly Big Band concert. The concert brought in more money and people than anticipated! Given this, Erin hopes to be able to pay the musicians a more fair share next year.

The next week, Lisa's evening Vespers service was a gorgeous offering for those in need of more quiet and reflective space. Our family pageant was once again fun and joyful; bringing in new members to light our chalice and into the roles of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. The bake sale that followed was another huge financial and community success.

Christmas Eve service was fuller than in recent years. The music could not be beat. Once again we served our UUCWC community and many non-members, multifaith families, and returning young adults from the Hopewell Valley and beyond. Massive thanks to our tech team; they are each taking on new roles and giving additional (holiday) time to this vital volunteer position.

Scott Cullen offered, for the 9th time, the annual Generations Service. I am so grateful to him for this continued effort that has become a beloved tradition, bringing in new voices and insight each year. This past Sunday we brought in the new year with rituals to toast, boast and consider an oath for and with 2025.

This January begins another 4 part Path to Membership; we are seeing more 30 & 40 somethings, and families come into the church; I hope this is reflected in our new members to come.

Each week I offer Lectio Divina online.

Celebrate Life

Pastoral Care is multifaceted and significant. Mental health crises and concerns are throughout the generations in our community. Couples and parents are in need of support. Our elders are not just aging, but facing new and isolating challenges; conversations around memorial

planning are growing. As mentioned in last month's report, the 80+ year olds are asking for a continuation of the Getting Good at conversation I facilitate. The 60 & 70+ are asking for the opportunity to begin these sessions.

I had the great honor to help officiate the memorial service of Michelle Zechner's beloved grandmother. Imogene Robinson is securely in my heart.

Change the World

I am preparing for the rather urgent January 12th Congregational Meeting - from congregational communications (Marilyn had not yet been trained on this process); to ensuring that we're following right procedure (with thanks to Susan Irgang for catching that we emailed the congregation via icon and not icontact); to thinking through the day-of multiplatform administrative needs; the financial and pastoral implications of the vote; and the interpersonal dynamics at play on staff and in the congregation. This is not a small thing!

On a similar note, the conversations around Endowment have taken up a significant amount, perhaps most, since before Christmas. Later this month I have a consulting meeting with a colleague on this topic. Afterwards, I hope to be able to relay any information on behalf of the UUA and models from other congregations.

For Board Only: *Committee leaders are expressing anger and defensiveness (their words), believing that "someone" is "taking over" endowment now that it has so much money. They are expressing discomfort with money being used outside of the grants (no such request has been made to date). I have explained numerous times that the February meeting is a shared conversation of many stakeholders, and that confusion and/or ignorance around our Endowment has occurred over many years and many boards, indicating a congregation-wide lack of information and need for clarity. I've also explained that new ideas are not mandates or directives, and that while the conversation may be awkward at times, everyone involved is deeply committed to the congregation and its health.*

Thinking again on the Assistant Minister Vote and potential changes to Endowment, how do we prepare for the congregation to feel at odds - with one another and/or leadership - over these two important and necessary topics?

Strategic Plan survey to be relaunched following the January 12th Congregational Meeting. The group offers that while there was a decent engagement from the congregation, no meaningful themes emerged.

Stewardship is in full planning mode with Stewardship Sunday coming up on February 16th. A mix of in person and online Cottage meetings will be the main outreach effort, targeting leadership, top givers, and others. We hope these small group efforts will feel informative and connecting. Rab Bell has joined the committee, gifting us further strong and experienced stewardship leadership. As you know, given the early budget season, we will be able to communicate a goal number rather than do a simple ask, as in all prior years. There is a big effort to explain cost of living increases over the last 5+ years; that we do not pay UUA's most recent salary guidelines; and to bring attention, once again, to how much it would cost if everyone was able to give equitably.

I am working again with the leadership from Earth Climate Ministry to prepare for the second half of the Climate Revival, set for late March. They are also working hard to fulfill the congregational survey requirements that requests historical information and visionary work.

With Lisa's help, a draft statement in support of the Reparations Task Force has been given to the Racial Justice Ministry for editing and a stamp of approval. This leads into the below updates as well:

Ariel is asking to film pieces of a documentary on sexuality, gender and spirituality at UUCWC. Please see his request in the pre-read. Lisa is offering an additional Gender 101 for those interested in engaging more around trans and non-binary identities.

A question is arising about safety and how we advertise who we are (Reparations support, LGBTQ+ support, etc). To note, this excerpt of a recent email from our primary contact in our region highlights our need to consider these questions and creative solutions:

The UUA is making some changes to UUA.org to ensure increased safety for our UUA Staff members, including making our personal contact information less visible on the publicly accessible sections of the website. However, we remain available to partner with you and support your congregation. For any support from the UUA, please contact me directly ...

At minimum, I suggest a task force be initiated so assure the congregation that our attention is on the safety of the community.

Lastly, staff evaluations will begin at the end of January and into February. I am attending a clergy leadership retreat the week of January 20th and will not be available during that time.

Director of Congregational Life Report

To: UUCWC Board and Kim Wildszewski, Personnel Committee

From: Robin Pugh

Date: Jan 7, 2024

Re: Monthly DCL Report

Celebrate Life (Worship and Rites of Passage)

- December Sundays were full with the opening of our building, the chili cookoff and big band concert, vespers, the pageant and the Christmas eve service. Our recent attendees (since election day) were informed of and attended many of these events.*
- I am reworking hosts responsibilities given our new welcoming space. There will be a new host training in January that will go over new tasks and re-emphasize safety in our new building.*

Create Community (Small Groups).

- Kim and Lisa will be offering our Path to Membership class in Jan and Feb. I sent personal invitations to 26 people encouraging them to take the class, 13 people have signed up so far.*
- Chalice circles and Wellspring small groups are ongoing. I support the facilitators and lead 3 groups.*
- In January I will meet with congregational engagement to discuss ways we can support each other and not duplicate tasks.*
- In January, Kim and I will meet with Food ministry to discuss ways for it to continue its mission into the future. New volunteers may need smaller discreet tasks.*

Change the World

- Homefront tutoring on Monday nights is going well. We continue to tutor about 27 kids with as many tutors. A special program is planned for MLK day. Our tutors are asking for more ideas about how to make tutoring fun. I will ask some of our congregants who are elementary school teachers to share some ideas with the tutors at their convenience.*

This primarily serves as an FYI about my professional development opportunities that benefit my leadership at UUCWC.

I attend the UUAMP, (the Association of Membership Professionals) weekly meetings when time permits. I see a Spiritual Director monthly.

January 2025 Board Report
Director of Family Ministry
Julie Rigano

Celebrate Life (Children Faith Engagement & Rituals)

Our program year is going well. Since our program year began in September, we've had growing attendance in our younger age group and active engagement from all present participants. The children and youth know their rituals to begin each session- a centering chime, lighting the chalice, and interpersonal sharing. These rituals mimic the ones we use to start our worship service and reasserts this spiritual grounding.

Our 1st-6th graders are using the new Lego ValUUES curriculum. This program teaches our children the new UU values voted into our bylaws at the last General Assembly as well as encourages the children's creativity with different Lego build challenges which match what they learned that day. Our Lego ValUUES is our fastest growing cohort with six new participants since September. It is not surprising that young families are the fastest growing demographic in our faith engagement space. Our new families have been coming consistently, quickly becoming friends of the congregation and not just acquaintances.

Our 7th-9th graders have been doing Our Whole Lives sexuality education course this year with youth from UU Princeton and UU Somerset Hills. We did have a few students leave the class as they did not feel ready for the information or the commitment of OWL. We also had a tricky group dynamic situation which has since been resolved. The facilitators work together well and we have regular check ins via zoom and email to ensure they are properly supported.

Finally, our youth group has been doing a racial justice program this year using the Paul Tuerff fund culminating in a trip to Philadelphia to visit the Underground Railroad. The group is still engaged with this program and has been learning a lot. We have mostly been focusing on famous Black UUs and how racism has impacted Unitarian Universalism. We've also begun a pen pal program with the UU Cherry Hill youth group to connect the two cohorts before they meet up in Philadelphia at the end of the year.

Create Community (Family Ministry)

Our Family Ministry Team is in hiatus while I search for more members to join the team. This effort has been on the back burner while I have been getting the program year underway.

We've added new soft activities to the playground as mentioned in my last report. I added playdoh and wax fidget sticks. These additions have been very popular with the kids. We

continue to provide rotating coloring and activity pages each month. Our activity binders have also become more popular recently as some children take them to their seats with their family.

Change the World

I want to elaborate on something I mentioned earlier in my report- the growth of our younger cohort with the influx of new young families. Six new regularly attending children in our program is a huge success. It means that not only did the families come to us for what they were searching for, but they also found it. We deserve to be proud of this program and the dedicated volunteers who help keep it running each week.

This is something I have said to Rev. Kim multiple times- when I look at our Lego ValUUes class, I see a large, tight knit youth group in years to come. Many of these families are seeing each other consistently with their regular attendance. These kids are playing with each other after church each week. This is exactly what we want to see from kids this age as an indicator that they will stay engaged with the church as they get older. Having a tight knit group of friends who share your Unitarian Universalist values is a boon during your teenage years. I am happy to see our program growing back.

In faith,

Julie Rigano

Director of Family Ministry

UUCWC Administrator

Marilyn Gonzalez

Administrator BOT Report for January 2025

Create Community

Since the construction is over, I am focusing on re-training myself as the new church administrator. Essentially, I'm re-starting my job. I will be out of the country through mid-January (returning to the office on January 14) on a cruise with my family (parents, siblings, and kids) and hope to come back refreshed and energized to begin Stewardship season and wrap up all of the facilities issues we may still have.

Our current list of facility issues includes a new roof leak which may stem from the skylight, but I'm not really sure. We also need to purchase a new freezer for the kitchen after several attempts to repair the current freezer. [Susan Irgang](#) will be covering the office for me while I'm away. She will be in the office on January 2, 7 & 9 for a limited number of hours to take care of the basic office needs.

Post-construction life has begun and the admin team has been busy settling into our new space. Over the last few weeks, we have been working to make our space more welcoming for visitors. The office will be transformed into a more productive space with the addition of a copier/printer in January.

Building security is also a work in progress with our new keypad system. We are replacing physical keys with a keypad system and changing the locks on all of the exterior doors. We will need to look at our current policy and decide how we will allocate physical keys and keypad codes going forward. Currently, I have been able to assign temporary passcodes to people who need short-term access to the building. I have also assigned passcodes to vendors who need access and have the ability to monitor when those passcodes are used through the app on my phone. So far, I've been assigning passcodes, as necessary, until we have a discussion about policy and who should have access to the building.

Celebrate Life

Our membership numbers are 275 church members, 27 Friends, 12 Participants and 36 Attendees.

Our relationship with Dr. Khalsa continues to flourish as he continues to rent our space for his New Year's event.

Change the (UUCWC) World

Construction has been completed (or is close to completion) on the new ramp leading from the Crossings Room door to the Memorial Garden. The new trex board walkway will make it easier to navigate the bumpy terrain. Railings were also installed on the walkway from the main entrance down to the Crossings Room.

Ministerial Intern Report

January 2025 Board Report

Intern Minister's Report

Lisa Schilansky

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

December is a time like no other for worship at a church and this year was just as exciting as always. Since my last report I was off on December 15th to permit time with family and liturgical support was provided on the 22nd for our annual intergenerational no rehearsal pageant.

It was an honor to get to be a liturgist for Christmas Eve again this year. I had originally coordinated with Erin to assist the choir in two pieces but a chest cold and laryngitis upended those plans. Thankfully the fates aligned and my voice held through the service allowing me to deliver all of the spoken parts, but it would not have been possible to sing as well.

While I missed the service on the 29th because of the staff's week off, I look forward to watching the Generations Service early in January and reaching out to its participants as I did last year. Finally, I will be away visiting one of our sister congregations on the 5th. While I do try to avoid two Sundays in a row away from the church, it just so happened that I will be needed on the other Sundays of January and this week's absence will permit the least disruption.

Rites of Passage continue to be needed in the life of our congregation. On January 4th I am honored to be onsite for Imogene Robinson's memorial service, providing any assistance that is needed, including pastoral support.

Our 4th Vespers service was held on December 20th. This took the place of the annual Blue Holiday service this year. The attendance was quite low and I am currently creating a multipronged marketing plan to implement for the January and February offerings. Christa Olson provided wonderful piano music for the service, stepping in for Rachel Hansen who will be resuming in January, and our dedicated pop-up choir continued to passionately participate. I have heard from many people that they wish more people came and that they are grateful for its existence. Vespers are a rich offering that require a lot of staff and lay effort. It is my hope that in the new year the attendance grows to allow its benefit to touch more people.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

Breathe continues to be a vibrant offering and December's session had the highest attendance yet. This includes individuals who are not very active elsewhere in the church and those who live geographically far from the church. There is a small dedicated group who come most months and each month there has been at least one new attendee. After consulting with Rev. Kim, we have decided that Breathe will be ending with my internship, even if I continue at the church in a different capacity. I have begun to make this publicly known so that those who hope to attend again have the opportunity and those who have been tentatively and curiously on the sidelines might join before it is too late. I foresee this offering being especially important in January and February as people work to adapt to a torrent of policies that will likely be in opposition to our UU values.

My pastoral care offerings increased this past month as I was able to step in to assist Rev. Kim when her scheduling needs required it. I am grateful for the opportunity to connect more deeply with more members of the congregation and look forward to serving in this capacity, or in however I am needed, in the remainder of my time.

Parental leave pastoral care coverage for one of our neighboring congregations will continue through January 17th. I have yet to be called upon and am only contracted for emergencies. To reiterate what I said in my last report, Rev. Kim and I do not anticipate that this will impact my time and focus at UUCWC.

Change the World

I am continuing a multipronged approach to helping the congregation hold their anxiety and prepare for the upcoming political changes. This includes social media, CrossCurrents, one-on-one conversations, and messaging from the pulpit. Safety concerns are a very alive conversation in UU congregations at this time, and I hope that the board can continue to ascertain how we might best publicly respond to this moment while also keeping our community safe. As I prepare for the next iteration of my Gender 101 program (offering on January 14th for those who were not able to attend the first time) Rev. Kim and I would love the Board's input on balancing public publicity of this event with safety considerations.

Justice for the trans and non-binary community (both at UUCWC and more broadly in the world) continues to be a focus of my ministry. This is aligned with the Right Relations needs of UUCWC.

I am offering coordination for UUCWC members who wish to attend the National People's March in DC on January 18th. I have also been in communication with our colleagues about possible satellite events that might occur closer to home. If I learn of a feasible local event, I intend to offer accompaniment for any interested congregants so that there might be a UUCWC presence. I am aware of at least two congregants who will be heading to DC and who I am connecting with DC-area UUs for support and to meet up.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,
Lisa

Treasurer Report

Treasurer's Report for January 2025

January YTD Actual vs January YTD Budget

Plate collection is at 122% of budget. Even with "snow" zoom Sunday

Pledges for '24-'25 are at 96% of budget.

2023-2024 pledges exceeded budget by over 21%. Now at \$423,805 vs \$424,340 budgeted.

Merrill Lynch income of \$12,559 exceeds budget by over 9%. (\$1,917 for Jan.)

Expenditures are currently at only 96% of budget.

Cash Analysis

After Reserved amounts and Restricted amounts are subtracted we are left with Non-Restricted/ Reserve Cash Available of \$198,281.

After subtracting:

\$37,207 operations deficit

\$7,200 in unbudgeted construction expenses.

\$64,000 Cap loan

\$12,750 to pay Lisa April-June 2025

We Are left with \$74,124 Non-Restricted Reserve Cash Available
+\$65,000 Est. Cap pledges to 2026

\$139,124 Opportunity Money

**After paying Lisa \$51,000 in fiscal year '25-'26 we will still have
\$88,124 in reserves**