

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - FINAL
October 8, 2025
Multi-Platform Meeting

Co-President Chris Marietti called the multi-platform Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Also in attendance: Vice-President Karen Kent; Treasurer Denny Rodgers and Secretary Michelle Zechner; Trustees: Bob Busch, Wendy Stasolla, David Thomas, Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Director of Congregational Life Robin Pugh, Assistant Minister Lisa Schilansky, and Congregational Administrator, Marilyn Gonzalez, . Excused: Co-President Bob Alt, Trustee Patty Mikes

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote):

Treasurer Denny Rodgers noted that there are upcoming changes and decisions needed for the building insurance. There will be some increases due to the recent renovations. He volunteered to coordinate between the Finance Committee and the Controller and assist in making recommendations for a new plan. Additionally, the board was informed of a 19.5% premium increase for UUA health plans in 2026 which will impact the budget as of January 2026. Denny presented the treasurer's report, highlighting that income is at 111% of budget, plate income is at 122% of budget. Savings decreased due to the new \$56,000 HVAC system purchase. Currently, there is an anticipated deficit of \$78,000 for 2026-27, which may be reduced through grants and capital campaign pledges being paid.

Finalizing 2025/2026 Board Goals: This topic was tabled for future discussion.

Upcoming Events: Assistant Minister Lisa Schilansky outlined several events in October, including Vespers, Revolutionary Mile, a historic walk in Trenton, No Kings Day, and a Council for Faith in Action meeting.

Council Meeting Scheduling: It was noted that the Council Meeting is scheduled at the same time as the Revolutionary Mile walk. The group debated whether to hold the council meeting as planned on October 8th or move it due to scheduling conflicts with the Trenton walk and other events. Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski proposed creating a video to disseminate council meeting information and holding a Q&A session to accommodate those unable to

attend. A vote was held to have a video presentation by Rev. Kim with a follow up discussion meeting in lieu of a meeting on 10/8/25. The vote passed unanimously.

Safety Task Force Updates: The Building Safety Task Force is being led by Trustees David Thomas and Bob Busch with additional congregant members Steve Saddlemire, Mike Toole and Congregational Administrator Marilyn Gonzalez. The first meeting was held on 9/28/25 to discuss the mission and covenant. They established a mission to protect UUCWC from external threats while supporting the congregation's ideals. The group has developed a three-tiered approach to safety, including prevention, active event response, and post-event procedures, with specific tasks assigned to members. Marilyn and David have already met with local police, while Steve is working on exterior camera placement, and Bob has addressed nursery security concerns. The task force aims to create a written safety policy by spring, which will inform insurance requirements.

Trustee Wendy Stasolla discussed the need to establish a similar safety group for digital and online threats. The group discussed potential members who may have skills in this area. Director of Congregational Life Robin Pugh offered some potential members who may have expertise in this area.

Chancel/accessibility/lighting congregational communications & fundraising: Co-President Chris Marietti discussed the chancel expansion and ramp work construction project, with a funding shortfall of \$2,000 to \$7,000. Co-Presidents Bob Alt and Chris discussed this with the Stewardship Leadership who expressed discomfort with blanket congregation fundraising and suggested targeting specific donors instead. Bob Busch inquired about the status of the lighting project, Chris and Marilyn clarified that the lighting project, originally funded by an anonymous donor, is on hold due to accessibility issues and higher-than-anticipated costs.

Conversation about power and authority: This was an internal board discussion.

Open Forum & Checkout

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Zechner

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive, Staff and Treasurer Reports

October 2025 Minister Board Report

Create Community

Attendance on Sundays continues to be consistent and strong. Since the Water Ceremony, we are averaging around 105 people in the sanctuary and 56 people online, or 164 total.

Many thanks to Linda Hahola and Rab Bell for making the new time for reflection, following the service, into a reality. Members and friends, online and in person, have expressed deep appreciation for this space to reflect and connect more easily.

I have so much joy over the success of the in-person Committee Fair on October 5th. Huge thanks to all who participated and did so with such thoughtfulness and creativity. We are now in the process of capturing the interest expressed and disseminating it back to the committee and ministry leaders. I am now shifting to organizing the leaders for the online fair in the coming weeks.

In addition to Erin's music series, this fall we will have 3 phenomenal guest preachers: NJ Activist Larry Hamm in October, longtime political leader Jim Johnson in November, and Trenton youth organizer and political leader, Darren "Freedom" Green in January.

The next round of Pathways, our path to membership, begins later this month.

Celebrate Life

The last month included two memorial services and ongoing health transitions for many of our members. We remember Kerryn Brandt and Rev. Linda DeSantis, and give thanks for their decision to be a part of our story.

I continue to lead Lectio Divian, weekly, and hope to begin expanding this simple ministry with an evening offering, too.

I am working with key lay leaders to make sure Robin is celebrated properly on January 11th!

Change the World

Much of my time this last month has included preparing for Robin's retirement. After discussion with Personnel, I am redistributing Robin's position (see below for details) which has meant one-on-one recruitment, and also exploratory meetings with the Chalice Circle Facilitators, Congregational Engagement and an open forum with folks interested in Adult Religious Education, Community Building and Community Growth.

I am thrilled that Rachel Hansen is moving up 4 hours a week to take on the administrative tasks that Robin currently holds, and that a number of skilled and energetic congregants are willing to move into these needed roles.

For example:

With the help of Susan Vigilante and Wendy Stasolla, monthly social opportunities (from movie nights in the sanctuary, to chili cook offs and more) have been scheduled monthly beginning in November. Recruitment to oversee each event is underway with the help of Jo Weidman and Lynne Molnar.

With the help of Susan Irgang, Anne Godlasky and Jane Root, we will be scheduling online community building opportunities that are specific to the needs and capabilities of our remote participants. To note: this is such an important moment as we engage with our online community *as a community*. We are asking: do they have a shared identity? Do they wish to? Tell us what it means to be a member of UUCWC remotely. We are listening and creating from this place of curiosity/

Kathy Frey, Eileen Spedding and others have expressed interest in helping lead the Adult Religious Education ministry in a new form.

In addition, I continue to work on, and with hopes to standardize:

small group covenants; use of pronouns in the worship service and small groups, and the use of visual cues. Thank you, Michelle Zechner, for the resources!

Council meeting is right around the corner, which I am trying to organize and balance the needs for connection and information, as well as honor that many of our leaders will be at charity run in Trenton nearly at the same time. More on this at the meeting or in the days to come; I am hoping we don't have to change the date of the Council meeting but I am looking to see who we will be missing.

Lastly, I continue to work with Personnel, congregants who are doing good, hard and creative work regarding democracy, and I have already had numerous meetings and email exchanges with Stewardship leadership as we prepare for the End of Year Fundraiser and more.

With appreciation,
Rev. Kim

Overview of Distribution of Robin's Position

Robin's position as Director of Congregational Engagement is currently 20 hours / week.

Much of her time is spent doing administration and building relationships, including trying to get folks to say yes to some point of connection.

Some of her work can be handed off. Some will take a particular creative approach.

Below is an overview of her tasks and, highlighted, my plan for how to redistribute her work.

Visitors and New Members, Administration **Move to Rachel**

- Record Keeping of those who are not yet in our database, and therefore not yet receiving our Weekly emails. This includes looking at the zoom report from Sunday mornings and reaching out to those we do not yet know.
- Creation and sending of a curated weekly email to visitors that highlights what's happening on Sundays, and one opportunity that invites visitors to sign up for or participate in. It also includes a "What Is" portion which describes different elements of our Sunday gathering or congregational life (pebble bowl, joys and sorrows, etc).
- Connecting staff and lay leaders to visitors who have expressed interest in particular ministry or effort (Erin for choir, etc)
- Prepare member packets including order chalices and UUA pamphlets, etc.
- Schedule Hosts via Sign Up Genius – 4 schedules, 3 months at a time. Additionally, check that all host positions are filled each week and, if not, send email to hosts

Small Groups **Create a Chalice Circles Facilitators Leader Group**

- Shared responsibility to attend and distribute information gathered from Scott Taylor's Leader Chalice Circle and report back
- Attend Facilitator meeting at beginning of each month where the report back and conversation happens
- Share responsibility of creating healthy circles by debriefing or sharing challenges; by making space for spiritual care by way of the leader circle
- Track participants as they move in and out of circles
- Facilitators will orient new chalice circle members

● Tending the Flame **Move to Kim**

Hosts **Move this to Kim**

- Recruiting
- Training
- Addressing week-to-week concerns or needed changes

New Members *Move Congregational Engagement*

- Welcome Letter to New Members
- Interview of New Members
- Organize and Facilitate a lunch for new members 6 months after joining
- Encourage New Members into Chalice Circles

Home Front *Looking for a partner now, but Robin is committing to continuing this leadership for the church year (through June 2026)*

Adult Religious Education *Move to 2 or 3 Lay Leaders*

- Map out classes per quarter / season and per theme, making sure we offer 4 offerings per season. Listen to the needs of the congregation.
 - justice related (Racial Justice book group; Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary, etc.)
 - spiritual practice (Lectio Divina, Wellspring)
 - theological education (On Tyranny book group; Getting Good at Getting Older)
 - one addition (Activism 101; online security classes, etc)
- Meet with Congregational Engagement to ask what themes they are hearing from new members, leaders, etc.
- Connect with ongoing facilitators and recruit within the congregation to fill other slots
- Advertise in Weekly, Cross Currents, and from pulpit
- Manage class signups and needs
 - Do they need to be multiplatform? Do they understand how to use the OWL?
- Set expectations with the Facilitator about how to run a class in a UU community
 - eg lighting chalice, pronouns, etc.
- Check in with facilitators at conclusion of class for some sort of debrief and lessons learned
- Formalize learning what the facilitators learned about the people who signed up

Community Building *Create New Ministry*

- Sunday Reflection Space
- Welcome Table Wednesdays (potlucks & programming)
- Chili Cook Offs, Board games, pizza nights, Friendsgiving, T Shirt Sundays (easy one offs)
- Online gatherings
- Opportunities (Committee) Fair
- Communal laptop for in person people to say hi online folks

Community Growth *Create New Ministry*

- Values card with contact info
- FaceBook & Instagram
- Community Gatherings (Pennington Day; Pride; Hopewell Fair; TCNJ etc)
- Events (movie /date nights for parents, art show, etc)

October 2025 Board Report
Minister for Justice and Pastoral Care's Report
Rev. Lisa Schilansky

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

Since my last Board Report, we pivoted from the excitement of the Water Ceremony into the launch of our new church year on the 14th. On the 21st I offered a service on lifelong identity exploration and transformation. This service was conceptualized over the summer when my own identity underwent a transformation. While I changed my pronouns on my email signature, Zoom, and the signage in the lobby, it felt important from the perspective of church culture and the trans inclusion work I have been striving for, to overtly name this from the pulpit as well. As such, I came out as genderqueer and explained to the congregation what this means and how it would be most correct and most affirming to use my pronouns. In consultation with Rev. Kim afterwards, we decided to disseminate this service via an all-church email the following week. Due to the typically lower attendance on the weeks when I preach, it felt important to help ensure that this change was shared with the congregation in the pastoral way it was intended, rather than just through a cold administrative announcement.

This past Sunday I had the best of both worlds. I was delighted to begin worship in the sanctuary, liturgically supporting Rev. Kim in the welcome and Call to Worship before departing to join our youngest kids in CFE. It was originally planned that I would be presenting to the Neighboring Faiths class on Judaism, but low enrollment in that class led to the staff decision that my time was best spent elsewhere.

On September 20th, Rev. Kim and I co-officiated the memorial service and internment of the ashes for Kerryn Brandt. I had the honor to accompany and support Kerryn and his family at the end of his life and was honored that he requested that I take part in the service rather than the more traditionally Kim-led service. At the family's request, this was a private and closed service, capped to about thirty attendees and held outdoors in the memorial garden per Kerryn's wishes.

This past month also brought the relaunch of Vespers, returning after a four month hiatus. Unfortunately the return was not as triumphant as we had hoped, with nine people in person and nine online. We know that this is an incredibly important ministry for those who attend and we also know that the same small group is attending month after month. In preparation for October's Vespers service, Marilyn Gonzalez provided technical support to edit a video clip of a service from the spring. I am hoping giving people just a small taste of Vespers might make it less intimidating. We will also be newly offering a congregational testimonial from the pulpit this coming Sunday. While I implemented quite a few new marketing strategies leading up to September's service, we know that our congregation tends to travel a lot in September so hopefully those strategies plus the application of a few more will lead to growth in October. It has been previously decided that if attendance does not increase in October we will be permanently sunseting Vespers.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

Much effort was spent in this area this past month that unfortunately did not elicit a great deal of response from the congregation. Invitations for connection have gone unanswered and the

Common Read Book Discussion I was going to begin this month has been cancelled due to lack of enrollment.

I believe we are seeing a byproduct of overwhelm in the state of the world. While our community would undoubtedly benefit from greater connection with each other, sometimes the effort (or even the perceived effort) that that can take can feel insurmountable. I remain hopeful, however, and will be trying some new efforts in the month to come and am also giving serious consideration to where the needs of the congregation lie, where my hours and effort can be best spent, and how best to bolster the lay structures of our congregation as we begin to prepare for a time without a Director of Congregational Life and potentially without a Minister for Justice and Pastoral Care.

Pastoral Care remains a primary focus for me and continued this past month in both formal and informal ways. In the next few weeks I will be meeting with the co-chairs of our Caring Ministry Team to do a deep-dive into the pastoral needs of our congregation.

Change the World

I have been working closely with the Earth and Climate Ministry around their November 2nd event intended to further the Climate Justice Revival and Dialogues. I am excited to announce that after much work we have a newly recruited liaison from our congregation to UU Faith Action NJ as Jo Wiedman has volunteered to step into that role and re-engage what had become a dormant ministry. I met with them to provide support and brainstorm ideas and they have already dived in, eagerly getting started. On October 16th, a group from UUCWC, organized by Racial Justice Ministry, will be walking in Trenton to reconnect with our roots in the capital city as part of the Revolutionary Mile.

Leading up to the October 18th nationwide No Kings March, which our UUA is participating in, I will be providing infrastructure support to help our congregants connect with each other and keep themselves safe. Unfortunately, my parents happen to be visiting from across the country that same weekend (a very rare occurrence) so I myself will not be able to be among the marchers.

This past week I prepared and attempted to facilitate an Activism 102 class. When only one person arrived, the class was canceled. Many people did approach me on Sunday expressing disappointment that they hadn't been able to make it and hoping that the training had been recorded. It was my intention to record the training, so in lieu of rescheduling and likely having another low attendance/no attendance time, I will be pre-recording the training from my office and making it available to our community to watch at their convenience. I intend to provide a pre-recorded training on Gender 101- a compilation of some of the submitted questions across the three previous trainings I have done- as well.

In the realm of changing the (UUCWC) world, I am taking a class with Rev. Deborah Pope-Lance, a past minister (from the 1970s) of UUCWC on "Serving Congregations with a History of Misconduct." This six week class will provide me with a wealth of resources for the ways that UUCWC has patterns that uniquely express itself due to the misconduct that occurred here in the 90s.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,
Rev. Lisa

Marilyn Gonzalez
BOT Report for October 2025

Create Community

As always, the beginning of the church year is a busy time. We have signed a contract with Realm and our planned data conversion date is November 10. Our contract with ICON runs out on November 15, which is a tight turnaround, so we may see if we can extend that contract out one month just to have a safety net. We are also going to be moving from IContact to Constant Contact which I would like to see go live in the next couple of weeks.

I am also now part of the Stewardship team and helping to prepare for the 2025-26 giving campaign. I'm not sure what this will look like just yet, in terms of how it will affect the office staff. We will be working in Realm for the first time, so there will need to be some education for the staff as well as the congregation.

Insurance - I am looking for guidance regarding who 'owns' insurance decisions for the church. I have received emails regarding our insurance policy being marketed and am asking who would be making those decisions.

Celebrate Life

Our membership numbers are 272 church members, 30 Friends, 16 Participants and 27 Attendees.

Change the (UUCWC) World

Construction continues on the lower-level bathrooms. We were able to open up the gender-neutral bathroom this past weekend, although it isn't in ideal shape. A slop sink was put in for handwashing until the new vanities arrive for both bathrooms. We are really hoping for that to come in sometime soon but I'm not sure on timing.

Our roof leaks will be addressed this week by Mike Brock, a former colleague of Farzad's, who was able to stop the major leaks in the skylight during the summer. Unfortunately, when the new HVAC was installed, the footprint was smaller than the one that was removed. This revealed a number of cracks and rot under the old unit that are now exposed.

The chancel project is due to begin at the end of October. We are also in the process of finding a snow removal contract and signing a contract for an HVAC maintenance plan.

Treasurer's Report for September 2025

September YTD Actual vs September YTD Budget

Plate is at 122% of budget.

Pledges for '25-'26 are at almost 108% of budget

Income is at 111% of budget.

Merrill Lynch income is under budget at 94%. **As expected, lower returns as HVAC expenses reduce ML balance by \$56,700.**

Expenditures are currently at 100% of budget.

Cash Analysis

Unrestricted Cash reserves (savings) are at \$86,731.

The anticipated deficit of \$78,000 (reduced as a result of Robin's retirement) will reduce savings to \$8,731.

However:

New Endowment policy will grant us around \$13,000 for operating expenses.

\$30,000 is expected from Cap Campaign pledges due through 2026.

Around \$5,000 is due from the State for PFAS (water contamination) remediation.

We can safely reduce the Operating Expense Reserve Fund by up to \$50,000.

