

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - FINAL
JANUARY 14, 2026
Virtual Meeting

Co-Presidents Bob Alt & Chris Marietti called the multi-platform Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Also in attendance: Vice-President Karen Kent, Treasurer Denny Rodgers and Secretary Michelle Zechner; Trustees: Joseph Goldfedder, Wendy Stasolla, David Thomas, Congregational Administrator, Marilyn Gonzalez, and Assistant Minister Lisa Schilansky. Excused: Bob Busch, Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski
Guest: Sandee Steinberg

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote): Co-Presidents Bob Alt and Chris Marietti reviewed the executive report. Discussed the rationale for an all-virtual meeting tonight was to encourage full participation in the budget discussion. Noted that all future meetings will be held multi-platform with Rev. Kim Wildszewski at the church, and others may join where they can. It was also noted that a new Board Trustee, Joseph Goldfedder, has been appointed. Bob Alt noted that member Rab Bell has a proposed communication plan that he would like to discuss with the Board. Given time constraints the group decided to invite Rab to a specialized ad-hoc board meeting that will be scheduled for 2/4/26 at 7 p.m. This ad-hoc Trustee meeting will only cover the communication plan. Staff reports were briefly reviewed. Treasurer Denny Rodgers noted that the fiscal reports are still in process as it is the end of the fiscal year. When the final reports are received they will be shared.

PRELIMINARY BUDGET DISCUSSION: Member and Chair of the Finance Committee Sandee Steinberg discussed the preliminary budget for next year. She noted that preliminary planning began in November when she reached out to all committees and lines who had a budget. The largest percent of the budget is comprised of personnel costs, and this is impacted by staffing changes and cost of living increases (2.8%). She is projecting a deficit budget again this year, however it is not projected to be as large as last year's. The Finance Committee is recommending a review of the policies about plate contributions as these have been increasing significantly in the past year. It was also noted that changes have been made

to the Endowment policies to allow for distribution of interest above \$10,000 to be utilized for church operations. Additionally, investment income has been reduced related to the decrease in capital campaign funds that were used, and because of the HVAC costs. There were decreases in staff expenses as the Director of Religious Education position will not be filled.

Operations costs are also a significant portion of the budget. There has been some discussion about reductions in facility reserves, but this may not be wise given the age of some of the church HVAC systems and leaks in the roof. It was noted that non-kitchen maintenance contracts have increased this year. There have also been recommendations by the Financial Health Task Force to consider reducing UUA contributions or develop a contingency budget for this item. Other cuts to consider are reducing the guest musicians, and keeping all auction proceeds beyond the budgeted amount. The current budget will remain with the Assistant Minister position. After discussion, the Board requested that Sandee develop a budget proposal with a maximum \$50,000 deficit.

Second Hour

UPCOMING EVENTS: In the upcoming Sunday Darren Green will be a guest speaker and will host a discussion following the service. ON 1/25/26 there will be a kick off of the OWL class for 5th and 6th grades. Additionally, there will be a memorial for Lydia McMorrow held on 1/31/26. There is a Board Retreat on 2/7/26. On 2/8/26 there is Stewardship Sunday with a Chili Fundraiser, followed by an Informational Congregation Meeting.

NEW PROPOSED CHURCH COVENANT AND VOTE: Bob Alt shared, on behalf of Rev. Kim Wildzewski and the Right Relations Committee, that there has been interest in considering a church-wide covenant be developed and used for committees in order to be more welcoming at church. Rev. Kim Wildzewski has drafted a version. The group reviewed the covenant together. Trustee David Thomas noted that a commitment to spiritual growth should be added to the proposed draft. Trustee Wendy Stasolla noted that more education about being welcoming may be needed. The group requested more time to review and make a recommendation about where spiritual growth should be included. It was also noted that the language of “but and what if” is confusing. There was also a question if this covenant is meant to be applied in all small teams or will be a church covenant. More clarity about how this will be used in the future. Additionally, how to address the next steps when the covenant has been

broken. The Board agreed that this should be a future topic for deeper discussion at a Board meeting.

CONGREGATIONAL PULSE CHECK-IN: Discussion about some comments from members about roles and responsibilities. Minister of Justice and Pastoral Care Rev. Lisa Schilansky clarified that there are questions about lay led responsibilities versus staff responsibilities, and how we might envision a shared ministry of roles, expectations and how things get done as a church. The group discussed the need to continue discussing this as staff hours are reduced, and committees will need to take additional ownership of projects to get the work done.

BOARD LIAISONS: David met with Congregational Engagement who are working to connect people with committees, and leadership there feel there is an overlap between this committee and communication. There is interest in website development to increase member engagement in church processes. Congregational Engagement will be advised that they can write a grant to the Endowment Committee to hire a consultant and that Secretary Michelle Zechner may have a possible candidate for this position. Realm is being introduced. Denny noted that Endowment is putting out requests for grants in the next month, and that there is a new paper brochure to raise awareness of the Endowment fund.

Housekeeping & Action Items: Bob Alt will be sending an email to all committee chairs to get an update for the board retreat. The co-presidents will author an article for February. There will be an ad-hoc Trustee Meeting on 2/4/26 at 7p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Zechner

Secretary, Board of Trustees

UUCWC Executive Meeting - 1/8/26

In attendance: Bob Alt, Karen Kent, Dennis Rogers, Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Michelle Zechner

- Fundraising topics
 - Triaging of questions: For various fundraisers, questions often come up from the sponsoring member related to the fundraiser and are directed to various members of the Board or staff. We discussed and agreed that all questions related to a fundraiser should be directed to the chair of Fundraising to facilitate a single point of contact and efficiency.
 - UU Boogie / Fundraising events where funds are donated to external organizations: We discussed and agreed that all new fundraising events, such as UU Boogie, should be directed to the chair of Fundraising to review, assess and approve in-line with Fundraising guidelines. In the case of a fundraiser where the raised funds are donated to external organizations, the proposer/organizer of the event must solicit input/advice from CFA (Council for Faith in Action) on whether or not the selected recipient organizations are in-line with UUCWC values. The final decision making to approve or not the event lies with the chair of Fundraising.
 - Use of the kitchen for fundraising events: We discussed that UUCWC is currently losing potential rental opportunities due to not having a well-defined kitchen use plan and when it would be available for rentals. Recent examples include the Sourland Bakery, which wanted to rent the kitchen for 5 days/week, and a personal chef rental. We discussed that we need to have defined hours from the Food Ministry of when they need the kitchen so that it can be rented outside of those hours to help generate rental income. The Board (co-Presidents) will discuss an approach to meet with the Food Ministry to ask for defined hours for use so that parameters can be established for rental purposes. The discussion also needs to include a solution for shared use of the refrigerator.
- Assistant Minister search process
 - Rev. Kim has completed the UUA paperwork to have a preliminary listing of the Assistant Minister role on the UUA website. Kim is completing the additional details for the role (such as benefits information) with the assistance from Personnel and will then submit to UUA to complete a full job listing with the details. This is expected to occur next week.
- Robin retirement send-off / luncheon
 - Update: Cost is expected to be ~\$3000 vs. the \$2000 budgeted.
- Thank you notes on behalf of the Board
 - Bob will take lead in writing thank you notes to Susan Vigilante for organizing the retirement luncheon and to the chancel donors. Rev. Kim will provide UUCWC stationary/cards for this purpose.
- Finance
 - The salary for the future Assistant Minister will be the same as the existing salary of Rev. Lisa (i.e., it will not include the 2.8% adjustment for cost of living).

- Denny reviewed topics that will need to be discussed for Board input next week related to the preliminary 2026/2027 budget. These topics are being raised since we expect to not have a balanced budget for next fiscal year. These topics (choices) include:
 - Are we willing to consider not paying 100% of the UUA Fair Share for our congregation should we not have a balanced budget?
 - For plate donations, CFA currently receives 50% of the plate. Are we willing to change this?
 - For any excess funds raised from the Auction fundraising event, 50% of the excess is donated to external organizations. Are we willing to change this?
- Board meetings
 - We decided all Board meetings will offer a multi-platform option (i.e., both in-person and virtual), with the caveat that the upcoming Board meeting on 1/14 will be virtual only.
- Stewardship roles and responsibilities
 - Rev. Kim discussed that the Stewardship campaign results in significant work load for office staff (so much so that little else can be progressed while Stewardship is in full force). We discussed options for how to better manage this workload demand. As a next step, Rev. Kim will host a meeting with Marilyn Gonzalez (Office Manager), Rab Bell (Stewardship), and Jane Root (Stewardship), to ask them to assess the current workflow, roles and responsibilities, and identify if improvements/changes can be made to better balance the workload.
- Aesthetics task force
 - The task force is currently working on defining an aesthetics policy and vision for the church and rooms. We are expecting that this task force, once completing this task, will evolve into an Aesthetics Committee, which would be responsible for implementing and executing against the vision.
 - We discussed decision making authority and who should approve aesthetic task force (or future committee) recommendations. We agreed that the Aesthetics Task Force (Committee) would need to present recommendations to the Board, which would have authority for approving or not approving the recommendations. The Board has the right to request the task force (committee) to solicit congregational input if/when appropriate.
- Board agenda
 - We agreed we don't have sufficient time to have two guests (draft budget discussion by Sandee Steinberg and communication plan by Rab Bell), and so the agenda for 1/14 will keep the budget topic on the agenda and a separate ad-hoc Board meeting will be scheduled to review the communication plan. Bob will follow-up with Rab.
- Board retreat
 - Bob will send notes to Committee chairs for mid-year updates and 2nd half of the year priorities.

Senior Minister Board Report
Rev. Kim Wildszewski
January 2026

My apologies that I am not with you tonight. Tobias's 5th grade orchestra and choir concert is tonight. I will be enjoying the sounds of over 100 string instruments and sweet voices!

Create Community & Celebrate Life

If there has been anything in the last month, it is community.

The sanctuary and zoom spaces have been filled since our last gathering. From Christmas Eve, to Sue Saddlemire's memorial service; a recent ritual to honor the divorce of two of our beloved members, and then of course Robin Pugh's retirement service and luncheon.

There are times when it is clear just how unique this congregation is, and how much it cares for each other. We are certainly in such a season now.

A few words on some of these recent services:

- Big thanks to Scott Cullen for leading another lovely Generations Service!
- Sue Saddlemire's memorial was not only standing room only in the sanctuary, but filled the two overflow rooms where we zoomed the service into, as well. Roberto, Marilyn (who was not supposed to be working) and Susan Irgang (in her volunteer capacity) showed leadership beyond what should be expected. Marilyn and Roberto left the reception twice to get more food and coffee. We served the larger community and congregation well - but experienced where the behind the scenes gaps exist and need to be addressed. Rev. Lisa, Susan Irgang and the Caring Ministry are preparing a debrief meeting.
- Thank you to Susan Vigilante for overseeing Robin's luncheon. The food and environment was perfect. Her team was excellent, joyful and hard working. And, the cost of the event exceeded our budget by \$1000, which does not include the flowers and cake that were gifted by Susan and Lori Hoppman.

Separately, considering our online attendance: from the quarter of September- December 2025, including Christmas Eve,

18% of online attendees attend about half of the services
29% attend 3-7 times
52% attended 1-2 times

While $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Sunday morning attendance occurs online, it is only about 10% of the congregation who relies on remote access in order to be a part of the congregation. If I were to make meaning of these numbers, I think it is a testament to our community and Sunday morning offerings, that people who are traveling, ill, busy or otherwise unable to come in person still choose to sign on and stay connected through Sunday morning zoom.

To note: This Sunday we welcome Darren Freedom Green to our pulpit for King Sunday. On January 31st, we will celebrate the life of Lydia McMorrow. I will be offering a blessing of our new and current leaders in mid February. Pathways, our path to membership, also begins in early February – giving Rachel Hansen and I a great opportunity to test our systems without Robin / a Director of Congregational Life. Stewardship, Endowment *and* Auction are all busy preparing for the winter and spring, with Auction Season beginning on February 1st, and Stewardship Sunday planned February 8th; the chili cook off and State of the State directly following.

Change the World

Unfortunately (frustratingly) I have completed our search packet for an Assistant Minister but, due to some tech issue on the UUA side, I am unable to upload and submit our packet. I will certainly let folks know when this changes.

Having met with all members of the Worship Tech Team, I will be working with them on a safety plan, and some reorg of their roles and responsibilities.

I attended, and somewhat helped facilitate the Facilities Management Team meeting. It is a healthy, passionate group of leaders who have the opportunity to work together in new and collaborative ways – if we can continue to see that each groups' interests and priorities are for the good of the whole. Thank you to Justin Roth for leading the meeting and keeping our mission and vision center.

The Aesthetics Task Force is meeting and clear about their next steps. There is a question of authority and speed that the Committee (that would be born of the Task Force) needs answered. This was discussed at the Exec meeting and should be clarified and then communicated to the group.

I am trying to get my head around:

The small group ministry portion of Robin's portfolio;
Creating a quarterly Membership Council in order to connect Community Building, Online Community Building, Pathways, CHalice Circles, Adult RE, and Hosts
Practicing the systems that Rachel and I will share;
and navigating the requests coming from some ministry teams who would like to *change* those systems during this transition time, all while Marilyn and Rachel begin to learn and incorporate Realm.

Lastly: I would like everyone to be mindful of the amount of work that Marilyn, Rachel and Roberto are taking on right now.

Marilyn, especially, is navigating a database shift; the start of Stewardship; Auction will be around the corner; a lot (a lot) of disparate and urgent conversations about communication - and so much more including (but not at all limited to) UUA certification, facilities, memorial service prep and serving as the onsite rental coordinator.

Rachel is also learning the new database and Robin's admin work - and working with me, and lay leaders, for the first time.

Every additional luncheon, and memorial service, and rental adds to Roberto's very few hours, and very human body.

I hope we can be grateful, and also protective, of these employees we value so deeply!

January 2026 Board Report
Minister for Justice and Pastoral Care's Report
Rev. Lisa Schilansky

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

Since we last gathered together, I had the honor of contributing to two Sunday services. On December 14th, after the snow and ice pivoted us to an all-virtual service, I invited us into an exploration of hope on the eve of Hanukkah. This past Sunday an unexpected family need kept me from in-person attendance for Robin's send-off, but I was still able to join virtually and spend some good time with our online attendees after the service, including many members of Robin's family.

In between, I held the grief of the holidays in the monthly ritual of Vespers, leading our annual Blue Holiday service in a liturgy created by Rev. Kim and had the honor of providing liturgical support on Christmas Eve.

As we turn into January, I am excited for our vibrant community and the worship that is to come.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

This continues to be a season in the life of the church of high pastoral care needs. I am happy to be able to share the role with Rev. Kim in supporting our congregants during their most tender moments. In the ever present balancing act of ministry, the pendulum has decidedly tipped towards the pastoral care side of my position this past month.

As minister I am providing hands-on support to congregants in addition to structural support to ensure strong connections can be made in other networks as well. I am preparing to debrief with those most involved in Sue Saddlemire's January 3rd memorial service as we also begin preparations for Lydia McMorrow's service at the end of the month. I am supporting the two peer facilitators of the Caregivers' Support Group and am in close communication with those who are interested in joining the newly formed Caring Cohort- an informal network of adults caring for older adult parents.

As the world beyond our walls grows more dire, informal pastoral care has been a focus as well, working to cater to the spirits of our congregation in this soul-draining time. This past week, I provided Julie with language and resources to offer our congregation's parents about how they might talk with their kids around the heightened tensions and current events. This will be distributed in this week's "Taking the Learning Home" email.

As I enter the final three months of my time with the church, I am approaching my position through the lens of healthy transition, this will be a focus of this week's Caring Ministry meeting.

Change the World

My focus continues to center on Council for Faith in Action ministry structural support, particularly the relaunch of Loaves and Fishes. A family emergency required me to cancel the December 21st information session, but lots of valuable one-on-one recruitment conversations have happened over the past five weeks and there is great energy going into the rescheduled info session on January 25th.

As noted above, I am operating with a transitory lens in this area of my ministry as well. When I first entered as your Minister for Justice and Pastoral Care, I sat down with each of the CFA Ministry Teams to meet with them and see how best I could be a support. I intend to do the same in the next month, understanding their needs, curiosities, and, perhaps, anxieties, as we prepare for my parental leave in April. My mission is to bolster the existing structures to help streamline the systems that are in place and to help ease the load for either a four month gap in the position or a transition back to a one minister model.

In a section on Changing the World, it must be noted that our people continue to take to the street to respond to this moral crisis. I am offering logistical and pastoral support and hope to join them soon. It is also vital that in this time of heightened tensions that the lessons shared in my Activism 101 training be disseminated more widely (how to recognize permitted vs. unpermitted protest, how to keep oneself safe at protests) and I am exploring avenues for the best means to distribute this information in the near future.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,
Rev. Lisa

Marilyn Gonzalez
BOT Report for January 2026

Create Community

January is typically a very busy time in church life! Since returning from the holidays, we have had three large weekend events. Sue Saddlemire's memorial saw approximately 300 people in our church. This past weekend, we celebrated Robin's retirement with another full house followed that evening by a rental that saw about 235 people in our sanctuary. I'm happy to report that all three events went well considering how many people were at each event.

Now that those events are over, the focus turns to rolling out Realm to the congregation in preparation for Stewardship season which kicks off on February 8. Lynne Quinto and I have been meeting to work on getting end of year statements and the upcoming pledge drive ready on Realm. My hope is to get an email out to the congregation this week that will give them information on how to sign up for Realm. Depending on the number of questions that I receive, I may plan a 'Realm 101' class after Sunday service for anyone who needs help.

Last week we held a multi-committee Facilities meeting with several committees and ministries so that we can all be on the same page when it comes to our physical plant. Led by Justin Roth, the meeting included Facilities, Earth & Climate, Aesthetics, Safety Task Force and Food Ministry. I feel like it was a successful meeting where we all got to speak on our current and future planning so that we can all be aware of what each committee is doing. The emphasis was on interconnectivity and a reminder that all plans need to be considerate of each other's committees. The idea is to have this meeting on a quarterly basis going forward.

Right now, the office staff is being pushed to the limits of their allotted time. Rachel has just increased her hours to take over some of Robin's work. There will be a learning curve for her there as well as learning the new Realm system. Roberto has also had his hands full with all the weekend events, so his time and duties during the week has taken a hit. I have been working on the weekends and evenings to help cover events. My goal is to get every one of us back to a manageable schedule soon. It's been busy and will continue to stay busy with upcoming memorials, events, and general goings on at the church but to avoid burnout, we will be more mindful of not taking on too much and trying to delegate wherever we can.

Celebrate Life

Our membership numbers are 269 church members, 34 Friends, 15 Participants and 38 Attendees.

A celebration of Lydia McMorrow's life is scheduled for January 31.

Change the (UUCWC) World

Our water issue still has not been resolved completely. Although our water is safe to drink, we still have an aesthetic issue (smell, taste). We also are experiencing a problem with a nasty odor from the bathrooms. The problem is that these issues happen intermittently so it's hard to pinpoint the problem. Next steps are to inspect the septic system and call a plumber. Stay tuned.

We changed insurance companies recently to Church Mutual. Church Mutual offered us two free water sensor monitors which I installed in the mechanical room and gender-neutral bathrooms. Church Mutual also offered us a free 'police pull' which is a one-time use device that is now located inside the pulpit. If an armed intruder gets into the building or any other emergency that requires immediate police attention, the pull can be activated by Rev. Kim or Rev. Lisa can use the pull to contact the police by just pulling the blue tag on the unit. This doesn't change the host's job of also calling 911.

Director of Music Report

Dr, Erin Busch

Music ministry has been thriving at UUCWC! I'm excited to note that we've had some new members join the choir over the last few months:

- Noah Lee and Bina Shaikh (will start with us in February)
- April Bross (will start with us in February)
- Carol Schoenleber
- Caitrin McLean
- Rab Bell

We also just selected the 25/26 winner of the Wildflower / Crossing Chorale commission competition, and will premiere a new piece by winner Anika-France Forget (based in Canada) this April or May.

The choir itself has been strong. Members are rehearsing the music at home and coming in prepared, and are growing more confident in singing a capella music (an example being the piece *Ubi caritas* that we sang for Christmas and Sue Saddlemire's memorial, which is quite a challenging piece!). The choir is dedicated to the work of bringing music to the congregation, and it seems like they're excited about their growth, too - both in member count and in their own abilities.

I've also booked a bunch of great guest musicians for this spring, including two of my Temple students - horn player Will Czartoryski and harpist Medgina Maitre - as well as Josh Quillen's rescheduled date (steel pan) and the rescheduled big band concert, now on March 29th. We'll also welcome a small group of musicians for the flower ceremony, although personnel is still TBD. This is a total of five special music Sundays this spring.

Lastly: I've been spending a good amount of time cleaning out the music office - which, to my understanding, has not been cleaned out... ever. There was a lot of old music in there that we will never sing again: some that was very God or Jesus-forward (but not appropriate for Christmas or Easter), some that didn't match our values or language anymore, and some poor copies that were not possible to read. In addition, our filing system for sheet music was very inefficient: we have been using boxes to hold music, which contain a lot of dead space. We had also run out of room to store them! At this point, I have finished "the big purge" and am moving on to filing the remaining pieces. Elizabeth Berkowitz assisted in obtaining an additional filing cabinet, so the music library will now live in three filing cabinets (two were previously here at UUCWC). This system will make it much easier to (a) add new repertoire; (b) find existing repertoire; and (c) for choir members to refile their music after performances. As our music library grows, we can easily get another filing cabinet if needed. It should be noted that there are still many items in the music office and back room that I cannot identify, and we should consider reevaluating our use of storage and labelling in that area at some point to maintain a clear system.