

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



**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - FINAL**  
**NOVEMBER 15, 2025**  
***Multi-Platform Meeting***

*Co-Presidents Bob Alt & 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: Patty Mikes. Guests: Carmen Diggs-Pinto, Jim Sanders, Joe Schenk, Sandee Steinberg and Klaus Zechner*

## **First Hour**

**Consent agenda (no vote):** A brief overview of the reports was provided.

**Financial Health Task Force Report:** Joe Schenk made a presentation on behalf of the task force. The financial task force presented recommendations to the board regarding the church's financial situation. They discussed reducing the operating reserve from 3 to 2 months of expenses, which would free up \$100,000 for other uses. The task force projected a \$50,000 deficit for the upcoming year, which they deemed sustainable if the reserve is reduced. They also addressed potential increases in health and building insurance costs. The board reviewed the "mortgage" costs (which is in fact an adjustable-rate commercial loan) and asked questions regarding options such as paying it off or refinancing. The task force also discussed potential ideas for bringing in additional income and members including fundraising and grant applications. The board was advised to consider these recommendations in conjunction with the finance committee.

The finance committee presented recommendations to address the church's financial challenges, including making budget line items contingent on income, reducing operating reserves to two months, hiring a replacement minister if the deficit remains under \$50,000, focusing on membership growth, and pursuing grant proposals. The committee emphasized that these suggestions are not definitive solutions but rather options for the board to consider. The board expressed appreciation for the thorough analysis and requested time to

reflect on the recommendations before deciding whether to seek further clarification or explore additional areas of focus.

## Second Hour

**Upcoming Events:** The group discussed upcoming events, including Rev. Lisa's November Vespers on the 19th and Washington Crossing hosting the Transgender Day of Remembrance and Resilience on the 20th. They also planned a 20s and 30s brunch after church on the 23rd, organized by Lisa. They reviewed plans for a young adult social event on December 5th featuring a movie and pizza, as well as holiday services and Robin's retirement celebration on January 11th.

**Aesthetics Committee:** Trustee Wendy Stassolla discussed the formation of this committee. She has identified several potential members and will be speaking to additional members to dream together of a diverse aesthetic that represents the congregation that we have and that we want to have. This potentially will include displays of art from the UUCWC members and from the community at large. The group will also be asked to make suggestions for the aesthetics of Rooms 201 and 202. It was noted that committee will be asked to inform the board of all suggestions prior to changes being made.

**Mid-Year Board Retreat:** Board co-presidents Bob Alt and Chris Marietti discussed the potential of holding a mid-year board retreat in January or February to assess progress on their goals, with the executive team planning to coordinate details. Bob and Chris will send a doodle poll to identify potential dates.

**External Signage:** Assistant Minister Rev. Lisa Schilansky and Senior Minister Rev. Kim discussed the need for clear signage on external facing doors identifying public spaces and internal doors to identify private, non-public church office spaces. The board was asked to vote on posting signs on external and internal doors which identify public and non-public spaces. The vote passed unanimously.

**Housekeeping & Action Items:** Discussed CrossCurrents assignments. Treasurer Denny Rogers agreed to write a piece for November on the quarterly finance report. Secretary Michelle Zechner agreed to write a piece on the upcoming transitions relating to DRE Robin Pugh's retirement and Rev. Lisa's departure in Spring. The January CrossCurrent article will focus on mid-year progress.

The Board was asked to respond to Joe Schenk's email regarding strategic planning. It was noted that a new member is needed for the Financial Audit, and Denny will ask for suggestions from Rev. Kim.

An update from Congregational Engagement indicates that a follow-up to Pathways seems to be helping new members engage in church leadership activities.

**Open Forum & check-out**

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

***Michelle Zechner***

Secretary, Board of Trustees

## **Appendix: Executive, Staff and Treasurer Reports**

Senior Minister Board Report  
November 2025

### **Create Community, Celebrate Life & Change the World**

*It has been an eventful month since we last met. As such, it's hard to decide what belongs in which category of our mission statement. Please note the normative work load, mixed with the deep adaptive and technical changes congregational life is requiring this fall that will follow us into the winter and spring.*

### **Worship**

October included what we thought would be a guest preaching, community-wide, event on reparations, that unexpectedly turned into a sermon-on-fly. Deep thanks to Regina Zilinski and the generosity of our community for making it a purposeful and powerful morning.

I am, in truth, grateful for how this Sunday pushed me to launch a series of monthly speakers on the diversity of reparations. This will include: Jim Johnson in December, Darren Freedom Green in January; returning citizens from recent incarceration in February; member, Lauren Shallish, on Disability Studies and Eugenics in March; and Lenape Chief, Bluejay, in April. It would have been easy to have one Sunday on this topic from an 'authority'. Instead, we've found ourselves in congregational year-long conversation.

In October we also gathered for our annual All Souls service, creating an intentional, additional, ritual for our online community that Rev. Lisa was able to facilitate from their office. Focus on separate, rich online participation is a focus for staff and Worship Associates alike. Of course with fewer staff this spring, this will be more challenging as the WAs are, generally, less ready to offer such facilitation.

With the start of November, and the anticipated work on the chancel, Holly Bussey, Jim Sanders and I moved the sanctuary into the round (thanks also to Roberto for finding a

home for the chairs we removed) and held our first of 5 Sundays in this format, by weaving joys and sorrows and collective singing.

Under Julie's leadership, children and youth were moved from age-specific classroom experience, to topic-focussed. I commend Julie's out-of-the-box thinking and her commitment to the program as it continues to ebb and flow.

Additionally, I'm grateful to Julie and Erin for leading service on November 9th; a sensory rich music service to help us reconnect to our bodies during a time of ongoing political and worldly stress. To make clear: this service was planned intentionally, as we were unsure of the level of civic unrest following Tuesday's elections.

### **Care and Change**

I've onboarded 4 new Worship Associates: Colin Robinson (youth member), Susan Mitchell, Jo Wiedman, and Sarah Del Costillo. I am excited by bringing on (or back) these unique voices and perspectives to the pulpit; our quarterly meeting was rich and different with their presence this month.

The Pastoral Care Ministry sent fall care packages to 6 UUCWC college students. I've heard from the parents that they, and the students, were touched to be thought of by their community.

Thanks to Rev. Lisa's availability, we are offering a 20s and 30s brunch next Sunday after a small influx of this age demographic.

I will be meeting with the Worship Tech Ministry this month in an attempt to help the team prioritize the hierarchy of needs on Sundays, smooth out some ongoing challenges, and generally check in on and address the health of the group.

I am working with Robin to hand off work to Rachel Hansen and me. Robin and Rachel are working one hour per week on training and sharing information. Robin and I have a goal of transferring most of her most important information to me by the end of November.

I've asked Rev. Lisa to prepare the Council for Faith in Action and Pastoral Care Ministry for the upcoming transition from her leadership back to me. I anticipate that Rev. Lisa will share some of what they've learned already from these groups' reflections.

I am working with Heather Edwards to create a standard right relations covenant for our small groups and to be disseminated with the help of Right Relations. While this originated

out of a need to help people have clear expectations and best practices around using pronouns, it also includes an acknowledgment of many different needs among our congregants including family dynamics, visual assistance, making space and providing pre-reads, and more. I will share this with you at the December Board meeting if I am not able to finish it in time for this meeting.

I am spending a *significant* amount of time creating and/or reframing congregational systems ie: Adult Religious Education; an in person Community Building Ministry; an online Community Building Ministry; Small Group Facilitator Ministries, and a Community Outreach Ministry.

Through this effort I am also learning a lot about what areas of congregational culture need tending to, resetting, or which are already models for how we wish to lead and connect. Things are going slower - and more complicated - than I anticipated, but it is purposeful learning, though at times overwhelming.

Additionally to note: from these early conversions and organizing, there are already in person community building events planned including a late night move in the sanctuary in December, the chili cook off when the Big Band returns in December, and more. We know that community-building is a requirement.

### **Outward Facing and Inward Change**

I will be creating small (mailbox size) care packages for our neighbors on Old Washington Crossing Road in an attempt to better our relationship and create safety, as we approach the holidays.

It was also during this last month that we reconsidered the Council Meeting, pivoted to encouraging our community and its leaders to join the Trenton Walk (many thanks to Loren McAlister for her leadership with this) and I created, instead, a Council Video and follow up Q&A zoom meeting. The walk was a huge success with UUCWC being the largest team, and I received many positive comments about the format of the Council Meeting. It creates an interesting new model for us to consider for the spring.

I shared the outcomes of the Committee Fair with each committee and ministry and have learned of new and immediate connections.

MJ Hansen, Marilyn and I attended a session hosted by the UUA General Assembly planning team, to discover what it would mean to be a host site for GA this spring. While MJ

encouraged us to consider it, believing the tech would be manageable, I responded that we could not take something of this magnitude on with a newly, smaller staff.

Next Thursday evening, November 20th, we will once again host the Transgender Day of Remembrance and Resilience service for Hopewell Valley.

I am in discussion with Rev. Lisa, Robin and others to explore our participation, again, in the Building the Beloved Community Beyond the Binary in April. Given that neither Lisa nor Robin will be with us then, it's important for me to know what is required for this to be successful and purposeful.

Lastly, I am grateful for Rev. Lisa who is doing a lot of pastoral care while I'm needing to do more than usual big picture work. For Marilyn who continues to meet the needs of the facility, and the pressures of the congregation. Chris and Bob, also, who are navigating more than their fair share of conversations around the chancel renovations with poise and clarity. And for each of you who are a part of safety, rental, personnel, and so much more. We need your leadership right now and I am grateful it's each of you in these roles.

Respectfully,  
Kim

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

**Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)**

Since we last gathered as a Board, I have had the honor of accompanying the congregation in a variety of roles in Sunday worship. As Rev. Kim offered various spiritual balms, I supported her ministry through liturgical elements, complementing the message.

In the service I led on October 12th, we engaged the question of prayer, a question that can be loaded for Unitarian Universalists. This service resulted in the most feedback I have received in my twenty-seven months at the congregation, providing a path to stillness for Humanists and Theists alike.

It is a time of heightened anxiety and uncertainty in the world. Recognizing that this past Sunday both Rev. Kim and myself were supposed to be off and recognizing that there was a chance that Election Day events or aftermath might elicit pastoral care needs from the congregation, I offered to leave the conference I was attending early and come in for this Sunday. As such, I was primarily available as pastoral support for a service brilliantly co-led by Julie and Erin. Rev. Kim and I were also in regular communication about the possibility of planning a vigil or other ritual space for the congregation last week if needed. Considering the worship and ritual needs of the congregation at this time of heightened tensions is at the forefront of my mind and it was a great asset to be able to have two ministers this past weekend.

My preaching has not been limited to UUCWC this past month. In an effort to build stronger community relationships, I expanded on a new relationship with a local rabbi and was invited to offer what is called a *dvar Torah* for the Saturday Shabbat service at the New Hope Reconstructionist synagogue, Kehilat HaNahar. A *dvar Torah* offers Biblical exegesis on the specific Torah passage of the week in addition to a personal reflection. I spent three hours with this delightful community, many of whom were learning about Unitarian Universalism for the first time and were excited to learn about our geographic proximity. I hope that future collaboration with this community will be possible. I personally invited our congregants who are both UU and Jewish, but sadly none were able to make it.

The October Vespers, considered a testing ground for whether or not to continue this offering, was vibrant and reasonably well attended. I am very excited to share that Rev. Kim and I have decided to continue this ministry for the time being, recognizing that even as a smaller offering, it is an incredibly important and powerful ministry, one that we hope will continue to grow. The reality of a church of our size is that not every program will reach the largest numbers and some of our most powerful offerings are in smaller settings. I am incredibly grateful to Rachel Hansen who has volunteered her time as musician and pianist to play for these services outside of her position as Office Assistant.

## **Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)**

Two weeks ago I met with Rev. Kim and the co-chairs of the Caring Ministry team for the annual review of the membership director to highlight the pastoral needs of our community. This important and time intensive effort highlighted the pastoral needs of our congregation and the benefit of two ministers to share the most sensitive pastoral care calls, deftly supported by our incredible Caring Ministry Team.

A good portion of my ministry continues to be focused on providing one-on-one pastoral care to congregants, both formally and informally. As relationships build more deeply and I become more established at the church, I am being sought out more directly.

This past month, I had the great joy of joining sixteen UUCWC members and friends at the Revolutionary Mile walk, reconnecting with our Trenton Roots. This was a great blend of veteran and newer members, providing important connection across the generations. At the walk we were honored with the prize for the largest team for the historical walk portion, a great credit to Loren McAllister's and Mary Lou Dahm's organizing efforts.

In my ministry I am also working to ensure that our congregants who are members of marginalized communities are familiar with the incredible national resources available to them, especially Sister Source for Black women and the UUA's monthly Woodlands program for trans kids, teens, adults, and parents.

As noted in a past board report, I am looking at the church through the model of a community of communities. With this, I have been forming informal cohort groups to create support through initial clergy introduction but without ongoing formal facilitation. Currently this involves dual-faith Jewish/UUs, parents of trans teens, adult children of aging parents, and parents and grandparents of young adult trans people. I am giving a lot of thought to how our community members can support each other as we potentially move away from a two minister model and as we prepare for Robin's departure.

In more formal support, I have officially launched the Caregivers' Support Group into its peer-facilitated stage. After facilitating this group for the past several months, I provided support to two of its members who volunteered to step forward to lead from a peer leadership position. I am available for ongoing consultation and support to the group, but barring urgent matters, will not be facilitating the monthly gatherings going forward. The second formal initiative that I am working on is enacting Rev. Kim's vision for a 20s and 30s group. I just launched the marketing for this in last week's weekly and already have received some enthusiastic responses. It is exciting to have growth at the church in this demographic and we hope to be able to fill the unique needs of this group through multiple offerings and opportunities to connect, starting with a post-service brunch on the 23rd that I will be facilitating.

## **Change the World**

A good deal of my hands-on support went into Earth and Climate Ministry's and the Council for Faith in Action's co-hosted event on November 2nd. This event was a great success, well attended, and will provide clear next steps for the Earth and Climate Ministry Team in their

work towards Green Sanctuary 2030 and in fulfilling the congregational hope established in the Climate Justice Revival and Climate Justice Dialogues.

I continue to provide a lot of support to our various CFA ministries, helping with leadership and communication structures. In our recent quarterly meeting, I led them in a discussion on the observed benefits of a dedicated 2nd minister position with half of the portfolio focused on justice. Their feedback was helpful in the consideration of this position's future and also in the realities of what will be considered and how best I can support lay leadership structures if it is not continued, in preparation for my taking leave in April.

Looking ahead, the "lame duck" session of the New Jersey legislature is a time of exciting possibility. Two organizations that we are a part of, UU Faith Action NJ and the NJ Faith Allies for a Reparations Task Force, will be doing lobbying work around their respective bills. I am gearing up for lots of communication with the congregation to help them feel excited and prepared for these important opportunities.

On October 27th I responded to a call from Garden State Equality to come and support a trans educator who was being targeted at a school board meeting in Springfield, NJ. After learning about this opportunity from NJ UU colleagues, I mobilized our congregants and while four had initially planned to attend, one joined me for the event and shared that it was incredibly meaningful for them to both be able to attend this action and to be there with their minister. I am happy to report that the supporters showed up in droves and the school board voiced their support for the educator. While Springfield, NJ is far outside of the service area of UUCWC, this felt an important enactment of our church's ministry knowing that the transphobic risk tends to have a contagion effect, and wanting to respond to a call for clergy to show up in order to help ensure that their local clergy would arrive for us if a similar issue arose in Mercer or Huntingdon County. I recognize the ways that in my public theology congregants are not always able to join me in large numbers (for example, I was out of town a few weeks ago and attended the No Kings Protest in Ithaca, NY), but I always make a point of making these actions visible, hoping to inspire hope and courage in others and inspire action that works for any body types (for example letter writing) if direct action protesting is not physically possible.

Focusing on changing the (UUCWC) world, David Thomas and I have been spending a lot of time focusing on the creation of a new ICE engagement policy for the church. The creation of this policy has involved multiple consultations with clergy colleagues and research into the Fourth Amendment Workplaces project, material from Side With Love, the ACLU, and others. In your pre-reads you will see a proposed new external sign for all exterior doors at the church. This clear sign declares our legal rights and our values and is posted by many of our sibling congregations.

An additional element of changing the UUCWC world is around efforts of trans inclusion. I have now met with the Right Relations Committee twice, at their invitation, and am in discussions with this important body about how we might best integrate education and pastoral care, ensuring that as we meet the congregation where they are, harm is not being done to those who do not identify as cisgender. This will include offering an additional Gender 101 workshop on November 16th. A large focus of my ministry at UUCWC is welcoming and inclusion across the board and I have been working closely with Rev. Kim in exploring the ways that we can best implement change in a healthy and congregationally-driven way.

## **Personal Development**

This past month, I have engaged in quite a few training opportunities that I wanted to inform you of. I concluded the six-week class with Deborah Pope-Lance that I included in last month's report and also engaged in a one-on-one consultation with her. While my limited remaining Sundays and the appropriate liturgical considerations of those Sundays make it unlikely for our church's misconduct history to be a sermon topic, I do intend to write a newsletter article and to disseminate the appropriate information from this class in other ways.

From November 6th-9th I dove deep into UU history and theology with scholars from the UU Studies Network, a professional organization of which I am a part. The triennial Convocation was held this past weekend and involved ten hour days of rich scholarship with a special focus on reparations and our faith's history (savory and unsavory) with UUs of color. Finally, I am taking part in a year-long monthly new minister's seminar offered through the UUA's Office of Professional Development. Here I gather with colleagues in similar stages of their careers to help with formation and the typical groundwork of new ministries. I mention these three offerings as they are all rich opportunities to deepen my work with UUCWC.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,  
Rev. Lisa

To: UUCWC Board and Kim Wildszewski  
From: Robin Pugh  
Date: November 12, 2025  
Re: Monthly DCL Report

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### **Celebrate Life (Worship and Rites of Passage)**

- Every Sunday, I assist with worship as needed

### **Create Community (Small Groups)**

- I continue to welcome visitors, follow up with them, and connect them to groups at UUCWC. I lead 2 chalice circles and the parent group. I'm recruiting for HomeFront (food and tutors) and chalice circles.
- Kim and I are working together to transition my duties to a combination of volunteers and staff. Kim is doing a lot of recruiting, encouraging and leadership development. I am teaching my administrative duties to Rachel Hansen. Finalizing templates for the chalice circle facilitators so they can run monthly facilitator meetings on their own and orient new chalice circle members. . I am meeting with congregational engagement next week.
- Unfortunately, we did not offer our Pathways to membership class this fall. Not enough people enrolled to make the class worthwhile for the effort involved, despite having 10-12 people express interest in membership. Fall is a very busy season for people. Last year we cancelled the fall pathways and had 2 groups in the spring.

### **Change the World**

- A new member, Amy Toole will share leadership responsibilities for HomeFront with me this coming year.

*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. I am on the UU Wellspring Board.

**Marilyn Gonzalez**  
**BOT Report for November 2025**

**Create Community**

In the last month, we have gone live with Realm and Constant Contact. With the switch to Constant Contact, our primary objective was to make sure that the newsletters, caring notes, and CrossCurrents went out on time, which they all did thanks to a lot of work from Rachel Hansen and Scott Cullen.

The Realm data conversion date was moved up from November 10 to October 27, so Lynne Quinto and I have been spending a lot of time doing some clean up in the new database. Unfortunately, moving up the conversion date meant we didn't get enough time to clean up the ICON database prior, so Lynne and I have been spending a good portion of our time doing post-conversion clean up. We are now only working in Realm as the contract with ICON is up on November 15 which was the other reason we wanted to take advantage of the earlier conversion date.

Along with the database management, I've been working with the Safety Task Force to help our office become more familiar with the local authorities in the area. Dave Thomas and I met with Lt. Gino Vastola from the Hopewell Police Department last week to look at our church and tell us about any vulnerabilities we might have in terms of safety. It was a great meeting, and I feel that we were able to establish a good foundation with the Hopewell Police Department.

I'm also continuing to work with Stewardship and helping to design the End of Year greeting card. We asked for the Creativity Matters group to submit artwork and I've been working on the layout for the card. We have some very talented artists amongst our congregation!

I have had several people ask about communications and how our office can do a better job at marketing events at the church. I've assured everyone as best as I can that right now, my priority is getting the church management system up and running. The communications piece is on my radar and the next big project once this current project is done.

**Celebrate Life**

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

Attendees.

## **Change the (UUCWC) World**

We continue to wait for a solution for the water issue. The short story is we need to replace a part in the water heater that is causing a chemical reaction due to the sediment in the water. The reaction is not detrimental to anyone's health but causes a sulfur smell and taste in the water. We need to purchase either an aluminum anode rod or a powered anode rod to see if that fixes the problem.

The counters were finally put into the lower-level bathrooms today. Mizu needs to install the shroud that goes underneath the countertop and then the bathrooms should be done. I'm not sure of the status of this part but I'm really hoping they will be done this week.

Construction has started on the left railing of the chancel and is scheduled to continue this whole week, and next. I met with the contractors to discuss the need for the chancel to be cleaned and orderly for Sunday service and next week's Vespers. Hopefully, we don't have too much disruption.

I've also been in conversation with Earth & Climate Ministry regarding plans that are being made for plantings. They had an opportunity to obtain fourteen baby trees that they plan on planting near one of the berms. My understanding is there will be more trees coming in later for a total of forty trees. Facilities is working with Earth & Climate to make sure that the trees do not interfere with mowing or the lines of sight for any security cameras we may be putting up with the Safety Task Force.

## Treasurer's Report for October 2025

### October YTD Actual vs October YTD Budget

Plate is still at almost 119% of budget.

Pledges for '25-'26 are at 113%. '24-'25 pledges are at 251% of budget.

As a result , Operating pledges are at 119% of budget.

Merrill Lynch income is only at 90% of budget. This is expected after the \$57K HVAC reduction from ML balance.

Total revenue is at 120% of budget.

Expenditures are currently at 100% of budget.

### Cash Analysis

#### Projected '25-'26 final balance

\$86,000	Unrestricted Cash Reserves (savings) <b>conservative est.</b>
\$14,000	Endowment grant to Board which <u>WAS NOT</u> included in Budget
\$5,000	State PFAS contamination refund
\$4,000	Contractor's Insurance rebate
<u>\$56,000</u>	Reduction of Operations Reserves (from 3 to 2 months)
\$164,000	
<b>\$81,000</b>	Anticipated deficit (\$99K - \$18,000 personnel savings)
\$83,000	Unrestricted Cash reserves (savings).

#### Projected '26-'27 final balance

\$83,000	Unrestricted Cash Reserves (savings)
\$25,000	Cap Campaign pledges due in 2026.
<u>\$14,000</u>	Endowment grant

\$122,000

\$60,000 Anticipated deficit (assistant - less personnel adj.)

\$62,000 Unrestricted Cash reserves (savings).

### **Report as Liaison to Finance**

Sandee's financial audit team has been reduced to 4 because one member dropped out..