

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

June 9, 2021

Zoom Meeting due to Covid-19 Virus Social Isolation

President Nathalie Edmond called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:01 PM. Also in attendance: Vice President, Sue Saddlemire; Treasurer, Jim Sanders; Secretary, Colleen McCourt; Scribe, Michael Howe-Smith; Trustees: Michael Waas, Jamie Evanini, Patrick Kahney; Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang; and DLFE, Robin Pugh. Also present were incoming Board members Maria Baratta, Wendy Stasolla, Joe Schenk, Heather Edwards, along with Loren McAlister (representing the Right Relations Committee along with Maria). Absent was Trustee Jeffrey Lang.

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote):

Treasurer's Report:

Board Treasurer Jim Sanders outlined key points as follows:

- Positive YTD change was \$85,000.
- Moving to Zoom services has reduced plate income and we should consider ways to “grow the plate.”
- A process error with some items not getting put into ICON is being resolved.

Liaison Reports:

- Reopening Task Force
 - Trustee Michael Waas gave a report at the annual meeting on behalf of the Reopening Task Force, who are crafting a plan with an outline for phases for reopening and proactive mitigation plans for staying open in the event of changing circumstances.
 - Congregational Administrator Susan Irgang has had interest from outside individuals to rent the church for a small memorial service in late summer for 20 - 30 people. The proposal meets the Task Force's established criteria (timing, compassion, immediate need, etc.). The family will follow the Task Force's guidelines. **There was a consensus poll via Zoom** for the Board to approve this one-time use of the church - there was unanimous consent. Susan will also coordinate with Rev. Kim upon her return.

- Finance Committee
 - Jim will connect with Joe Schenk (incoming Board Treasurer) and Steve Saddlemire (incoming Finance Chair) ahead of the July Board meeting.
 - Trustee Michael Howe-Smith served as an additional (non-treasurer) liaison to Finance this year but indicated that he didn't need to add much to Jim's updates; he did observe a gap in connection between Personnel and Finance.
 - Incoming Trustee Wendy Stasolla will serve as the Board's liaison to Finance going forward.
- Personnel Committee
 - As outgoing Board liaison to Personnel, Board Vice President Sue Saddlemire reported that the committee has condensed the personnel handbook and is trying to better define the role of the committee. Sue pointed out that the personnel committee responsibilities overlap many other areas. There was general discussion of how to balance the goals of the Board, Personnel and staff, and maintain effective communication so that there are no surprises. It was agreed that liaisons have been helpful in funneling info both ways.
 - Going forward, Sue will serve as a member of Personnel, and Joe Schenk will serve as the Board's liaison to the committee.
 - Susan is in the process of hiring someone for the A/V/tech position. 5 people have applied for the job with 3 qualified for consideration. Because her parental leave prevents her from participating, Rev. Kim has asked that a member of the board act in her place as an interviewer. **ACTION:** Robin and Board Trustee Jamie Evanini will participate in the interview process in Rev. Kim's absence.
- Stewardship Committee
 - While there hasn't been a recent meeting, Board Trustee Jamie Evanini, the committee's liaison, has been in touch with the committee, who report that next year's pledges are in good shape, with only a few households pending a response.
 - The committee faces a challenge since several members are leaving and only one new member is joining over the next fiscal year.
- Nominating/Leadership Task Force
 - Per Patrick Kahney, liaison to the task force, they did a great job of embracing the task they were charged with, and establishing a repeatable process; It's unclear how the team will be structured going forward but the process will remain intact regardless of the team's structure.
 - Nathalie Edmond and Pam Shadzik will be leading the team; there is a current opening for a Board liaison to the team.
- Capital Campaign Committee
 - Board liaison Michael Howe-Smith reported that despite the many changes and challenges the committee has faced along the way, they are currently in good shape with a working plan for revising the project scope (see additional details below under second hour discussion).

Parking Lot Items:

The Board reviewed the status of ongoing parking lot items in preparation for transitioning to the new Board, including:

- Fellowship hour donations and how they should be coordinated
- Congregational survey proposal
- Ministerial evaluation process; a policy might need to be developed
- Policies and procedures that need to be developed- e.g. "journey of a gift"
- Continued tracking of how the leadership/nominating team/process evolves
- Policing as it relates to church policies (see below under second hour agenda) for more detail on current status
- Mary Baltycki will serve as transitional bookkeeper.
- Audit report accountability is tentatively every 5 years; current team recommended not to do a full audit since there were still open items from the 2016 survey; Finance is holding this.
- Capital campaign: general discussion of revised project scope and processes, communication, Board involvement, congregational input, impact of Delaware Valley River Authority, etc.

Girl Scout Silver Award

- A youth member of the congregation, together with her father, presented her Silver Award project for Board approval according to church policy.
- Robin Pugh summarized the policy and the history with similar projects, as well as the overall project needs, Girl Scout parameters, etc.
- The youth member presented her needs related to communicating with the congregation for solicitation and fundraising purposes; project involves working with Homefront to develop cookbooks, organizing a spice drive, and raising funds through bake sales. She answered questions from the Board related to the project scope and processes. The Board provided positive feedback.
- The project was reviewed and sponsored by the Family Ministry Team prior to the Board meeting.
- **There was a motion via Zoom poll to approve the project,** with unanimous consent. **ACTION:** The youth member will coordinate with staff to advertise the project to the congregation.
- Nathalie thanked the youth member and her father and they left the meeting.

Second Hour

RJM/RRC Policing listening Circles

Loren McAlister joined the meeting at 8:30 to provide an update, along with Maria, on the relevant policy discussions related to calling the police.

- Loren and Maria reviewed the history; this process was initiated a year ago at the beginning of the current Board term, when the Board reviewed the language within the Disruptive Behavior Policy in the context of current conversations about policing.
- Rev. Kim asked the Right Relations Committee (RRC) to review and revise the policy, working with the Racial Justice Ministry (RJM).
- Maria and Loren explained the proposed addendum to the policy, and provided insight into their research and discussion, including confirming with Hopewell Township that calling 911 will automatically bring police regardless of the situation.
- A listening circle was held with the Safety and Pastoral Care Committees and their feedback was incorporated.
- Actions/recommendations: There will be more listening circles before a vote is held. Once RRC has more feedback, they will determine specifically where/how to execute the policy revisions before presenting them for a vote by the Board. There should be opportunities to educate and support the congregation around the changes, and provide de-escalation training for as many members as possible to promote and empower this culture shift. Further, additional existing safety policies (as well as the Removing a Board Member Policy) also require similar changes and are being reviewed.
- Nathalie thanked Loren and she left the meeting.

Capital Campaign Discussion

Jayne Trott and Susan Vigilante were scheduled on the draft agenda but were unable to attend. The Board discussed the revised scope as presented by the Committee at the Annual Meeting and in email correspondence. **There was a motion to approve** the revised plans and enable the project to go forward. After initial discussion there was not unanimous consent (1 no vote) due to questions/concerns about the next steps involved. Upon further discussion of the general process, it was determined that the Board would agree to the proposed scope but would anticipate working with the Committee to establish caveats and checkpoints for ongoing communication. **There was a second motion to approve** the revised Capital project scope, with the understanding of providing caveats as needed. This motion passed unanimously.

Ministerial Evaluation

Patrick Kahney will connect with Jim to transition this task. **ACTION:** They will review and revise the form as needed, and send it out to the Board. In March, Jim will remind the Board that the process needs to restart.

Annual Meeting Recap

General discussion including:

- Virtual format is tighter than in-person, but there is some feedback that people don't have as much opportunity for asking questions/discussion. For the future we can include a time-limited section for questions, solicit more questions in chat, etc.
- Slightly less attendees than in previous years; we were 10 people over quorum but usually are closer to 100.

Rental Update

Susan is working with Mike Muccioli, Steve Saddlemire and Mary Baltycki to come up with a formal proposal for Har Sinai based on rental rates, specific hours, etc. They're not looking to rent until spring but would like to have a plan by July or August.

Housekeeping and Other Action Items

- The current executive Board will meet with the incoming team; we need to establish a new vice president. At the next meeting we will need to vote on the incoming executive team.
- Nathalie will organize a lunch for current and future board members and staff over the summer.
- Susan will let Chris Piatek know that we will not be submitting a Board article to the July/August CrossCurrents but will talk about reopening in a future issue.
- Board Secretary Colleen McCourt will work with Sue Saddlemire to create a new Google drive folder for Board onboarding resources. Colleen will also update folders and establish access for new Board members.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Howe-Smith

Scribe, Board of Trustees

Colleen McCourt

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive Staff Report

UUCWC EXECUTIVE STAFF REPORT

June 6, 2021

REV. KIM WILDSZEWSKI, Minister:

Before we get to the business piece of this, I need to begin with gratitudes that are truly too large and numerous for words. It is an understatement to say that this congregational year stretched every single one of us in different ways. For some of us, it was a time of growth and health that we won't relinquish when things "return to normal." While for others, it was a time of disconnection and loss, and we would gather up "normal" in a heartbeat. But for all of us, it was a time unlike any other—and in that uncommon, uncomfortable, uncertain time, UUCWC was a holding. You, for others—and others, for you—were a people who made and *make* this time possible.

Nathalie Edmond, every President has different challenges and things that have to be learned on the job. But you have ushered this congregation through intentional and unexpected lessons that required the enormity of *your* heart, *your* skill, *your* clarity, and *your* leadership. As the first person of color serving as Board President, we know that your time could have gone otherwise; that it has for other people of color in other congregations. I honor your bravery, your commitment, and your trust in your congregation to say yes to this service.

And an equally quick word about our staff: I am constantly telling our Worship Associates that we are striving for connection, not perfection. But this team that I am lucky enough to work alongside has been flawless. Committed, creative, persistently finding ways and working out ways to keep this congregation connected and healthy, while they were also within the trauma of this time.

I could say this about each space: The way the Council for Faith in Action ministry teams continued to serve. Food Ministry's hundreds of meals made in cold garages. And Faith Action Ministry's thousands of postcards—Jamie Evanini, let us sing her name!

The way the Right Relations Committee reminded committees and ministries of the faithful and theological ways and whys of doing work in a church. The Leadership Development Task Force, who creatively revamped how we invite people into the work of the congregation, and also set out a new vision grounded in relationship (rather than in positions to fill). The Personnel and Finance Committees, who worked tirelessly to reimagine sustainable and responsible volunteer and paid positions. The Capital Project leaders, who continued to work relentlessly to imagine and reimagine and rework our dreams into something that will soon be tangible, despite all of the hurdles.

And let's just pause so that we might erupt with applause for the Worship Tech Team. These volunteers who learned and learned and helped us learn how to connect with one

another in this time. On Sundays, yes, but also for memorial services and committee meetings—and also when the Capitol was being taken over, and the night after the election, when it was all still uncertain. I may have given the words, but *they* gave us the platform, the building we didn't otherwise have.

I could go on and on. You will hear from some folks today who I haven't lifted up. You won't hear from others. There was so much that happened this year, and every single piece of it has been remarkable.

Celebrate Life

Let me say just a bit more by the numbers:

This year, we welcomed (on average) 166 people to worship each Sunday—a celebration that we continued to welcome visitors in this pandemic virtual time! Our congregation consists of 285 Members, 19 Friends (people who financially commit to the congregation, but who have not signed), 38 Participants, and 27 Attendees. You come from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, but also Long Island, Minnesota, Ohio, Maryland, and Oregon.

This year, we welcomed 14 new Members, 3 of which are official Virtual Members, and 10 waiting to see what virtual or hybrid congregational life will mean.

And we celebrate those among us who have been members of this congregation for over 40 years: Jo Millner, 63 years; Mary Ann Sprenkle, 57 years; Betsy Young, 56 years; Terry Caton, 54 years; Beverly Railsback, 51 years; Bernie and Bonnie Ruekgauer, 45 years; and Ruth Samsel, 43 years.

But it hasn't all been growth. We lost Richard Knight and Tony Catanzaro this year, and we have yet to memorialize others.

ROBIN PUGH, Director of Lifespan Faith Engagement:

Create Community

In August, the Board affirmed my request for a change of title to Director of Lifespan Faith Engagement. "Faith Engagement" is the name of the UUA office that supports faith development for children, youth, and adults. And it better describes how UU's grow in their faith: by engaging with it. Additionally, "Faith Engagement" does not limit where faith development occurs. It is not only in the classroom. We engage with the Unitarian Universalist faith in all that we say and do in our congregation.

In this pandemic year, our Board and Rev. Kim encouraged us to practice “Simple Church” to clarify and simplify how we engage with UUCWC. They named three areas that are essential to congregational life:

1. **Celebrate Life** through worship.
2. **Create Community** by joining a small group.
3. **Change the World** by serving in a deeply purposeful way, one that is inspired by our experiences in worship and small groups.

As Director of Faith Engagement, I worked especially hard this year encouraging people to join small groups. Small groups form relationships and create community—so important in a year where we had to be physically distant.

I'll place in the chat many of the small groups that have been meeting this year:

- *Lectio Divina* class and weekly practice
- Chalice Circles
- Wellspring
- Racial Justice monthly forums (information emailed)
- *Coming into Connection* pairings
- Theme-based Reflection Groups
- Family Chalice Circles
- *Tending the Flame* UU parenting class
- Crossing Chorale
- Racial Justice as a Spiritual Practice

For our adults, we tripled the number of Chalice Circles this year. We now have nine groups with 72 people in them—that is 25% of our membership. The growth of Chalice Circles has been a silver lining during this year of virtual church.

Numerical growth is good, but what we're really aiming for is measurement of a different kind. Not only do the circles offer a reflective and caring space, they teach us to practice our covenantal faith. You don't pick who is in your small group, yet everyone remains in right relationship because the Chalice Circles have a structure and a covenant. Thus, Chalice Circles let people experience what it means to be in a covenantal community—a crucial part of being a Unitarian Universalist.

For our families, we offered two programs:

1. Family Chalice Circles, where families were paired or tripled up for the year, and together on Zoom, celebrated a mini-worship service and learned a lesson.
2. A monthly parenting class called “Tending the Flame.”

Faith Formation begins at home. I've been wanting to offer programs that offer parents tools for practicing UU at home for years. Our closed church building, and the postponement of our regular children's program, gave me an opportunity to do this. I had some videos of parents to share during my presentation, but we had to cut them in the interest of time. I will post them on the UUCWC Facebook page this week. But I want to quote from some of the videos about these two programs.

This is what Anne Godlasky, one of our virtual members, said about the parenting class:

“I signed up for *Tending the Flame: The Art of UU Parenting* not knowing how on Earth I'd make room for it—worn out from working, schooling, and parenting under the same roof, with no end in sight; already feeling behind in every arena without the weight of a new commitment. But how to be the kind of parent I want to be, a UU parent, was need-to-know information. I raised my virtual hand immediately, for my children's benefit. But it ended up being for my own.”

Later, Anne continues: “I told my wife: I love these people. I chose to invest time, attention, energy, and emotion. I got back so much more. *Tending the Flame* was a way of tending to myself, as I, like many moms, seldom do. And my teachers/classmates had a way of renewing my faith in the goodness of people, as UUCWC always does.”

Jess Tavlaris, a parent with three children under 8, shared in her video about her time in a Family Chalice Circle with the Ciccolini family. She says: “Family Chalice Circles connected me to another church family on a deeper level, in a way that is difficult when we meet in person.” The words her children used when they were asked to describe their time in the circle were, “Love and Laughter.”

These two classes were a gift during our time of not being able to meet in person. We will continue to offer ways for parents to connect virtually in the future.

For our teenagers, thanks so much to Scott Drew and Barbara Jensen, who made it possible for our teens to complete the OWL class that was started in 2019-20 on Zoom.

The title change to “Faith Engagement” also reflects my new additional role in working with Kim on Membership Ministry (connecting opportunities for long-term and new members.) This role is a natural extension of my work promoting adult learning opportunities. It is all Faith Engagement.

On Sundays, I am in the background of our Zoom services, noticing who is in the room. What I've learned is that frequent visitors need to be nurtured like a seed. So I personally encourage our visitors to get to know us and themselves better. After attending services, they are invited to a small group that is designed for visitors.

Kim revised the *Path to Membership* class. It is no longer a lecture (albeit a good lecture) on UU history and theology. Instead, the class focuses on what it means to be a modern UU. All long-term members who took the class shared that modern UU is different from what we all once learned. Next year, I will encourage all of you to do some meaningful continuing education and take this class.

As I finish up my twelfth year at UUCWC, I want to thank you for showing up week after week with so much love during a very tough year. UUCWC was, and is, a lifeline for me and many others. You make that lifeline real.

SUSAN IRGANG, Congregational Administrator:

Change the World

In this year like no other before, I continued to have the privilege of collaborating with many teams, whose efforts dovetail with my work here at the church. I'd like to lift up some of what we have been doing, during and despite the building's closure:

- Our Building Team kept our facility clean and secure, tending plants and keeping systems running. Roberto Santiago stepped in as Acting Sexton to help with this work.
- Our Grounds Team, working with Earth Ministry, enhanced our property with new picnic tables, new plantings, and a clean-up day.
- Our Capital Campaign Team (from whom you will hear later) were creative, flexible, and undaunted in their work to improve our space—seemingly against the odds.
- Our Reopening Task Force met regularly to review the criteria, statistics, and protocols required for a safe return, using both science and our UU values to inform our work. Board Trustee Michael Waas will give you more information about Reopening later in the meeting.
- Our Communications Team continued to connect us with emails and newsletters, slides and website posts. I've also been working with a special team to give our website its first major update in over four years, to be unveiled later this summer. Rachel Hansen returned, and now collaborates with me on social media postings and website maintenance and updates.

- The Treasurer Transition Team consolidated dispersed financial tasks into a single accountable role of Bookkeeper, which next year will be refined into a future staff position.
- Our Worship Tech Team worked with other experts and advisors on upgrades and purchases for the Sanctuary, which will enhance and expand our ability to offer multi-platform services (Zoom and live).

This is just a sampling of the work of our community to “change the world,” inside as well as outside our walls. The official Annual Report about the accomplishments of all our teams and ministries is a work in progress, and a working draft is available on our website.

After 11 years here at UUCWC, my work continues to grow and change and challenge in new ways; and it is collaboration with others that transforms the journey into an adventure.

REV. KIM WILDSZEWSKI:

There’s of course more. There’s always more. I’ll close by reminding everyone that you are in the excellent care and leadership of rev. yadenee, who is another celebration of this year. Our first minister of color, and a skilled, caring, presence.

In a bit, members of our community will receive awards for their service this year. You likely know that Board members are not able to be nominated for, or to receive an award, while serving. But as a staff, we felt it was imperative that we named two Board members who served this year in ways that deserve bending the rules.

The first is Jamie Evanani, who through her work on Faith Action Ministry gave us a meaningful way to serve and stay connected during this last election. Inviting people to Zoom parties where they could write postcards, distributing and collecting thousands of postcards to Georgia and other essential states—Jamie was creative, committed, and persistent. Jamie, for you, we are bringing back the Big Cookie from the days of Rev. Charles. You deserve so much more!

And the second: Nathalie Edmond. I’ve already spoken a word of praise for Nathalie earlier, but I want to reiterate that the time that you have served as Board President is truly unprecedented and cannot be repeated. My sabbatical, the pandemic, Malcolm’s death, saying nothing of the way you led us in visioning work before and after. Rewriting the bylaws, consensus voting, shared leadership... There is so much more that you leave as a legacy. It could have gone otherwise—but it didn’t, because of you.

This upcoming year, like this last year, will be a learning year. A few weeks before my leave began, Nathalie asked the Board to check in with a hope that we had for the congregation for the coming year. Each of us said something of the same: patience, generosity, kindness. Check-ins such as this express hope, but also concern—how will we navigate this next season, and will we do so together? I believe we will. I ask that you help make it so.