

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - FINAL
August 11, 2021

Zoom Meeting due to Covid-19 Virus Social Isolation

President Maria Baratta called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:04 PM. Also in attendance: Vice President, Jamie Evanini; Secretary, Colleen McCourt; Joe Schenk, Treasurer; Scribe and Trustee Heather Edwards; Trustees: Michael Waas, Wendy Stasolla; Jim Sanders; Michael Howe-Smith; Senior Minister Reverend Kim Wildceskwi; Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang; and DLFE, Robin Pugh.

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote)

- **Treasurer's Report: General discussion included:**
 - Treasurer Joe Schenk reported on the PPP loan being forgiven; clarified that his notes indicated that this would be recorded as July incomes but bookkeeper Mary Baltycki is going to spread the amount out across the year vs. one lump amount.
 - Joe shared a concern about planning for the next fiscal budget which is projected to have a \$75,000 deficit; he suggests that the Board start talking about this soon rather than waiting for April. He noted that over the last few years we have run a surplus each year, but this is still concerning because it will catch up to us. Fundraising will likely not cover the amount so we will need to look at pledges. **ACTION:** Joe requested an agenda item at a future board meeting to discuss in more detail.
 - Rev. Kim asked about Finance processes, noting that it's helpful when the treasurer can make note of times throughout the year when we typically run surpluses vs. neutral times or periods of greater expense. Per Joe, Mary has enhanced budgeting to be more in real time and reflect the specific expenses for each month. This should provide a truer picture throughout the year; the budget is not just divided by 12 but will ebb and flow as expenses/ income vary by month.

Reopening Plan Update

- Rev. Kim shared a new draft of the reopening/regathering guidelines as well as a letter acknowledging that we are now in a state where we can no longer keep the church building open to small groups.
- On a weekly basis we will be tracking local risk levels.
- Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang also developed a survey to be prepared whenever we are ready to welcome people.

- There was general discussion of how services might look going forward (e.g. potential outdoor and online options for 9/12 water service) and the need to allow for flexibility.
- Currently there is not much use of the church by small groups; while small groups might be independently meeting elsewhere, that is not an official part of UUCWC's policy considerations.
- **There was a pulse check** to affirm the staff's guidelines and messaging and enable them to communicate such to the congregation; there was unanimous consent.
- **ACTION:** The staff will communicate current updates to the congregation.
- The Board recognized the challenging work undertaken by the staff and expressed appreciation for their intentionality in considering logistical and safety factors while also acknowledging emotional and spiritual factors in their communications.

Capital Campaign Update

As liaison to the committee, Michael Howe-Smith provided an update, with key points including:

- The team has changed their method of working with contractors to make it more efficient and accountable; they are asking contractors to provide proposals within specific work scope and budget parameters. Farzad Shadzik is working with two contractors and his target is to get a status report to the Board next month. He will work with the Capital Campaign committee before he comes to the Board.
- The main challenge recently has been around the elevator which everyone agrees is a must; progress is being made on these plans.
- Regarding the Crossings Room wall, we currently don't know if work needs to be done and will not know until the work begins - some money should be held in reserve for repairs to this wall if needed.
- Joe raised a concern coming in as treasurer about fiduciary oversight of Capital Campaign funds, and noted a need for more transparency and alignment regarding specifics of spending against the budget. **ACTION:** Joe will consult with George Faulkner to ensure clear and open communication. General discussion focused on the need for the congregation to get a sense of progress and momentum. A challenge is that the low-hanging fruit has already been completed: the parking lot was funded by the Capital Campaign, and IT improvements, acquired through an Endowment Grant overseen by the Tech Team, were conceptualized by the Capital Campaign team when considering upgrades to UUCWC . Other plans are taking much longer.

Process Observations

- As the meeting's designated Process Observer, Trustee Jim Sanders commented that this portion of the meeting moved quickly over a lot of complex information, and people who don't process as quickly might need more time to be ready to share their feedback.
- There was a request to enable closed captioning since sound quality varies throughout the meeting depending on who is speaking.

Second Hour

Regina Podhorin Zilinski arrived to speak on behalf of Racial Justice Ministry (RJM) regarding contract minister Rev. yadenee hailu's term with UUCWC. RJM is interested in hearing about congregational feedback (though not necessarily formally gathering the feedback directly). Discussion included:

- General need to consider sensitivity and solicit insight from Worship Associates, Pastoral Care and those involved most closely with ministerial work.
- Rev. yadenee expressed to RJM and to Rev. Kim in her debriefs that the congregation made her feel welcome and affirmed. Rev. Kim notes that there was consistent high attendance throughout Rev. yadenee's term.
- Based on overall discussion of logistics, intent, etc., it was identified that going forward, we should initiate a more consistent process in general for capturing feedback for guest/contract/intern ministers. **ACTION:** Rev. Kim will look into developing a method for this in the future. There was a pulse check to affirm this action; it passed with unanimous consent.

Statement of Conscience - 8th Principle

Jim and Trustee Heather Edwards presented the Statement of Conscience and Actions of Immediate Witness from the 2021 General Assembly. Discussion included:

- The SOC calls on UU congregations and individuals to actively engage in undoing systemic white supremacy, and mentions the intersectional nature of white supremacy; within our congregation this relates to our 8th principle work.
- In discussions about GA among those who attended, Heather had asked where our 8th principle work as a whole resides within the congregation - the 8th principle refers to other oppression as well as race - does all of this work/ oversight fall within RJM?
- Rev Kim noted that within the 8th principle more than race is lifted up. In its current form, RJM is focused specifically on the lens of race - we don't currently have a group that is looking at the whole of the 8th principle.
- We discussed putting this as a retreat conversation. Joe recommended that this not be a primary initiative for the Board but something that should be delegated to RJM as an existing group with a lot of foundational knowledge and groundwork. It was noted that the work of the Board is to uphold and practice or to infuse the values of the congregation into the work of the Board, spending time on these areas but not in direct oversight. RJM encompasses a significant 8th Principle foundation upon which we could seek to build out a "council" of which they (RJM) would be a part."
- **Action Item:**
 - Rev. Kim will speak to the Council for Faith in Action as a first next step. Will review at the next Board meeting.
 - Heather and Jim will look into what other congregations are doing.
 - Regina will get more information to the Board after the RJM September meeting and share RJM's working document of expectations of individuals, committees and

congregation concerning racial justice work, which may be able to be used as a similar framework for the rest of the 8th principle work at UUCWC.

- Regina will put this on the agenda for the next RJM meeting.
- Board President Maria Baratta thanked Regina and she left the meeting.

Housekeeping and Action Items

- Board Retreat 9/25; location TBD with a virtual option; can potentially consider some of the 8th Principle SOC imperatives as part of the Board goals for the coming year.
- Rev. Kim's contract is in progress.
- Council meetings TBD
- Board liaison gaps need to be filled.
- Trustee Wendy Stasolla will write the next CrossCurrents article.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heather Edwards

Scribe, Board of Trustees

Colleen McCourt

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive Team, Staff and Treasurer's Report

August 2021 Board Report Rev. Kim Wildszewski

To the incoming Board members, I am so glad to be working with you this year and in service to the Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing, and our larger faith. If you have questions about any staff reports, please feel free to raise those before the Board meeting or, if beneficial to the whole, at the Board meeting. We try to keep these reports informative and high level. If you feel like there are aspects missing or being given too much attention, we welcome your feedback.

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

It is good to be back with UUCWC since July 18th. I have received an overwhelmingly positive response to rev. yadenee's ministry and have asked the Worship Associates to teach and hold me accountable to the deepening some of the work she introduced.

Over the last three Sundays I have asked the congregation to focus entirely on what it will mean to begin this congregational year; still in a pandemic, still experiencing trauma, still with uncertainty around how we will gather.

Since August Robin and I have been leading worship from the sanctuary, allowing our tech folks to get used to the new technology they've purchased and installed, and also allowing the congregation to feel a sense of movement toward reopening. It should be noted, I am committed to always having one worship leader (musician or speaker) not in the sanctuary as a way of clearly including our remote attendees. I want to show that we can all lead & participate from wherever we are; the remote folks will not just be watching an in-person congregation.

Following this 5-week sermon series on trauma, I will introduce a 4-part sermon series on congregational life (mission, community, spirituality and hospitality) that will lead us into November. For the first time, I am offering an Auction sermon once per quarter this year; the first will be in October.

I have begun to do some pastoral care in person, masked and outside. I will be officiating two weddings this fall (I officiated both via zoom last fall). I am working with Kevyn Malloy on celebrating Tony Panzetta's life, both at Pennswood Village and at UUCWC. I will also be officiating Richard Knight's committal this October. I have had to turn away numerous non-member requests for rights of passage due to scheduling.

Create Community (Small Groups)

Robin and I will be facilitating two parent meetings this month. In order to plan for any sort of children's faith engagement, we need to better understand who plans to attend in person, if given the opportunity; if we are bound to Sunday participation; etc.

Robin, Susan and I are considering holding an Open House in the early fall. The invitation would be for folks to get a tour, reintroduce the kids to the building, and perhaps have the Capital Project leaders offer an onsite conversation on the proposed building changes.

Robin and I are planning out the first two cycles of the Pathways (previously Path to Membership) sessions. I am hoping to offer one cycle specifically targeted to our parent group, who has bonded during this pandemic time; the other would be open to the larger congregation.

Change the World (Service)

Much of my time since returning has been in planning meetings around regathering in some capacity (or what it means to remain remote). Every part of UUCWC has been up for discussion and required decision making. As you know from emails and the pre-reads, Susan, Robin and I have worked diligently at creating a first regathering document, to be edited as more information unfolds. Susan has also created a brief survey so that we might better understand who wishes to come back on campus – and therefore what support systems we may need, again if given the opportunity to return in some limited capacity. **We ask for your affirmation of this document so it can be sent out with a letter from me, this week.**

There are a number of new members who have not yet pledged. I will be working this week and next on reaching out to them for education, reminder or pastoral care.

Caryl Tipton, Robin Pugh, our two Worship Associate co-chairs Lauren Shallish and Jen Couchoud, MJ Hansen and I attended a 3-hour zoom discussion with other UUs on multi-platform worship. Two take homes from that time:

Firstly, the discussion mostly served as a pat on the back. It is clear that UUCWC is significantly further along than many of our sister congregations (of all sizes) – from technology to how the liturgy flows to welcome and inclusion. We are in the position once again to be leaders, but not necessarily benefit from the wisdom of others. So much credit goes to our tech leaders and staff for creating an environment in which the congregation could dream and build during these incredibly challenging months.

Second, the leader was clear that this reimagining would require different and more work / people. I said it during the discussion and offer here that I am resistant to this. I want very much to ask less of our people during this year. I am going to work hard at finding a balance and hope as leaders you will model this, as well.

Professional Development and Support

This primarily serves as an FYI about ways I do ministry outside of UUCWC, that benefit my leadership at UUCWC.

Each month I meet with two different clergy groups – the NJ UU Ministers and a small group of 5 from all over the country who support one another in pastoring, parenting, activism and accountability.

This year I will also be taking Wellspring for Religious Professionals (beginning in October) and re-introducing a Spiritual Director to my practices.

Susan Irgang

Administrator BOT Report for August 2021

Create Community

I have been working with Kim and Robin on the details and logistics of reopening to small groups and for Sunday worship. We continue with this plan while watching the COVID statistics for Bucks and Mercer, and I have taken over tracking of rates and risk levels previously done by the Reopening Team. Information on risk level and related plans will soon be published in the weekly email and on the website, in conjunction with the regathering information to be shared.

I continue to work with the Communications Team on website content updates, including an updated landing page reflecting Simple Church initiatives; we expect completion/sharing of the new look by September. We have also compiled, edited and published the [2020-2021 Annual Report](#) and will add the financial information that is shareable when it becomes available.

Celebrate Life

Our current membership is 284 Church Members (includes 7 Virtual Members), 19 Friends, 36 Participants and 27 Attendees. For those who may not know our classification system, Church members are those who have signed the book and pledged; Friends have not signed the book but pledge; Participants are actively engaged and may be on the Path to Membership but do not pledge; Attendees are entering the system and are not fully engaged in regular church life. As the numbers show, while our membership is officially 284, we are actively serving a system of 366, not counting children or visitors.

Change the (UUCWC) World

Thanks to the efforts of MJ Hansen and Michael Hodgkin (consultant), our new wifi network has been installed with new wireless access points, a firewall and 1G service throughout the building. This upgrade makes streamed services and everyday use faster and more secure. Sanctuary technological improvements for live streaming continue.

Preparations, including deep cleaning, sanitizing, creating spaces for socially distanced congregational use, etc. continues in anticipation for a potential August reopening for groups and September reopening for in person services. Many adaptations made during closure are being continued while others change; for example, we have not reinstated regular garbage/recycling pick up as a cost savings measure (on-call service only); I have begun looking into a replacement copier lease, as our previous equipment was removed when the lease ended August 2020 and closure continued. It continues to

be an ongoing balancing act or what is needed and what can be altered to maintain functionality while containing costs.

To: UUCWC Board and Kim Wildszewski

From: Robin Pugh

Date: Aug 10, 2021

Re: Monthly DLFE Report

Celebrate Life (Worship and Rites of Passage)

- I've been working with Kim and Susan on what reopening looks like (see Kim's report.)
- I've been working with Kim on Multi-platform worship (see Kim's report)
- I continue to track and welcome visitors in our Sunday services. Our weekly number of new visitors has declined this summer, but those that find us continue to attend.

Create Community (Small Groups)

- It is vital that we continue to offer and promote opportunities to connect our members and friends virtually and in person in small groups as the pandemic continues. Planning these opportunities is a large part of my work in the summer.
- Adult Faith Engagement will offer approximately 7 offerings in the fall: Wellspring (3 sections) , Chalice Circles (9 sections) and Racial Justice as a Spiritual Practice will continue with new participants welcome, Beloved Conversations and Date With Death Club are virtual offerings from outside UU organizations that will be promoted at UUCWC, Additionally, Pathways (Kim's new membership class that old and new members are encouraged to take), and 2 other potential classes are in the works.
- Kim and I have a very tentative draft plan for Faith Engagement for families to start 10/3 which is very likely to change. We have 2 meetings with parents this month to share our ideas about the children and family's program (in person and virtual) and to hear individual family's plans for engaging with UUCWC this fall. There will also be a Faith Engagement survey this month. The information we receive will likely alter our plans. Generally, we are thinking of a virtual 30-minute children's chapel twice a month at 9 AM on Sunday. A program for 3-11 year olds outside with several groups and hired teachers and a 2x month evening outdoor program for teens.
- For parents, we will continue meeting with parents monthly. This time with parents is one of the wins of the pandemic. I am currently offering Owing Your Religious Past, Kim and I will follow it with Pathways then "Tending the flame", the UU parenting class Kim and I offered last year.

Professional Development and Support

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

Twice a month I meet with UU religious educators in the metro NY area to share information about programs and offer support.

This fall, I'm taking Beloved Conversations "within" for religious professionals and Spiritual Direction for Children

I see a Spiritual Director monthly.

Treasurer's Report

August 10, 2021

Statement of Income and Expense was provided to Board in pre-reads.

Summary: All financial indications are positive!

Financial highlights are as follows:

1. The Government PPP "Loan" has been forgiven – the income is recorded in July as "Grants Received" (\$30k)
2. Income for the month is positive to budget by \$6k (more income received than budgeted)
3. Expense for the month is positive by a total of \$8k (less expense recorded than budgeted)
 - a. Staff: positive variance of \$4.5k
 - b. Operations: positive \$1.5k
 - c. Program: Positive \$1.8k
4. The Overall Budget Year to Date (July) is positive \$14k

Steve Saddlemire (Finance Chair), Mary Baltycki (Bookkeeper Plus) and myself (Treasurer) are meeting this week to strategize major items we will focus on for the year:

1. Addressing a looming budget deficit for the next fiscal year – 2022-2023 based on current and increasing staffing plans including the Bookkeeper role
2. Hiring plans for a Professional Bookkeeper/ Comptroller
3. Bookkeeping software upgrade to Quickbooks Online
4. Financial oversight and management for UUCWC Operating Funds, Endowment Fund and Capital Campaign Funds

Summary of Exec Team meeting on August 5, 2021

In attendance: Maria Baratta, Jamie Evanini, Joe Schenk, Colleen McCourt, Rev. Kim

Basic agenda was:

1. Reopening plans - status/updates - Rev Kim reported that staff are continually working on and revising reopening plans to address changes as they are happening. She will be bringing the updated plan to the Board for review and, hopefully, approval so that she can share it with the congregation.
2. RJM wants to run past the Board ideas they have for soliciting feedback from the congregation regarding gauging congregational engagement during rev. yadane's interim minister term. As there are some questions regarding the intent of gathering feedback and what would be done with information gained, Regina Podhorin-Zilinski will be invited to discuss the topic at August's Board meeting. (Updated - Regina has agreed to attend.)
3. Statement of Conscience and the 8th Principal request from Jim and Heather - They have shared a primary question about where the work outlined in three 8th Principle-related Action of Immediate Witness proposals (AIW) belong within the structure of UUCWC. Regina PZ will be asked to stay for this discussion as well since there may be some insight offered through some of the work already being done within RJM.
4. Capital Project - Joe raised questions regarding how much \$ has already been spent on various drafts/plans and delays in moving forward. The Board has a fiduciary responsibility to make sure that capital project funds are being spent wisely. There are questions about the rate or lack of progress with the capital project and when/if the Board should insert itself in the process. As the Capital Project will be on the Board retreat agenda, Maryanne Alt will be asked to attend that portion of the retreat to provide insight to the history of project and hurdles the Board dealt with in previous terms.
5. Board retreat in September - Mark calendars - the retreat will be held SEPT 25th. Place is TBD. It might be Gravity Hill Farm.
6. Scheduling the next Board chat - probably later in October.
7. There was a very brief discussion regarding what's ahead for our Music Ministry following Carol's retirement. This topic will be addressed in more detail in the coming months.