

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - FINAL
FEBRUARY 11, 2026
Multi-Platform 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: Bob Busch, Joseph Goldfedder, Wendy Stasolla, David Thomas, Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski; Assistant Minister Lisa Schilansky; and Congregational Administrator, Marilyn Gonzalez.

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote):

The board reviewed reports. There was discussion about a facilities issue regarding the water filtration system (POET system) that needs maintenance, with Congregational Administrator Marilyn Gonzalez describing issues related to the filtration system and an unpleasant odor from the water. More assistance is needed to negotiate with the system's installer. Co-President Bob Alt suggested requesting the Facilities Team assist with the matter. Treasurer Denny Rodgers volunteered to coordinate with the Facilities Team.

Denny reviewed key points from the Treasurers Report, noting pledges are at 113% of budget, total revenue is 112%, and the end of year campaign has raised over \$26,000. Denny also noted that a member of the Finance Committee proposed an in-house eBay-style marketplace to raise funds. This would be person-to-person sales using existing software and not be managed by church staff. The board discussed and suggested that this strategy could be a strategy to raise donations, but would require member organization and maintenance.

BUDGET DISCUSSION FOLLOW-UP:

The board discussed the draft budget choices and efforts to cap the budget deficit at \$50,000 using a variety of strategies. Denny noted that one suggestion proposed by the Financial Health Taskforce was to consider keeping a greater percentage of plate funds for operating budget. The board discussed the pros and cons of this perspective. While pledges have remained at the same amount, the plate contributions have continued to increase.

SPECIAL EVENT COSTS: Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildzewski noted that a recent retirement event exceeded the budgeted amount by more than 75%. The board discussed strategies to ensure that future special event costs stay within budget.

Second Hour

Upcoming Events: Multiple events were identified in the upcoming month.

2/14/26 - Ritual for Return organization, a special service with storytelling from people returning to communities from prison systems.

2/24/26- The first interview for a candidate for the Assistant Minister position, Membership council meeting

2/27/26 Hopewell Together meeting

3/17/26- The final Pathways meeting, 17 people taking the course

3/18/26 - The last Vespers is scheduled

STAFFING UPDATES:

Rev. Kim reported four applicants for the Assistant Ministry position, 3 were dismissed with thanks, and 1 interview is scheduled February 24th.

Staffing Positions and Transitions

Rev. Kim discussed the status of several staffing positions. She discussed the Assistant Minister position. There have been 4 applicants so far, with 2 dismissed, a 3rd will be interviewed 2/24, and the 4th materials just received. The search committee will be convened to review. She explained the process of matching ministers with congregations occurs for everyone at the same time every year. This means that there may be additional applicants for the Assistant Minister position in early March as other candidates realize they are not matching their initial preferences. Rev Kim noted that newer ministers often apply for solo positions before considering assistant roles.

Rev. Kim noted that Ariel Schwarz will be leaving his staff role due to reduced availability. The tech coordinator position will be posted next week, offering \$20-25 per hour for 7 hours per week and mandatory Sunday morning shifts. It was noted that finding someone for the post before mid-April would be helpful. The group also discussed training plans for the tech team and the possibility of hiring an external sound technician for upcoming rentals. Marilyn also mentioned reaching out to local universities for potential candidates.

CHURCH COVENANT REVIEW:

Rev. Kim discussed a new church covenant for UUCWC. She explained the background and purpose of the covenant, which aims to establish shared expectations and standards across the congregation. The group discussed potential improvements to the covenant. Trustee David Thomas suggested adding language about spiritual and ethical growth. Bob Alt raised several questions and suggestions about specific language and implementation, which Rev. Kim agreed to bring back to the Right Relations Committee for further consideration. The group decided that after refining the covenant, it would be introduced through listening circles rather than presenting it again to the board.

Housekeeping & Action Items:

There were some discussions about the new church management system Realm. Marilyn explained she had made global changes to privacy settings but some information was still missing or incorrectly displayed. The group discussed plans to create training materials and guides for users, with Marilyn working on documentation despite having limited technical support.

The meeting adjourned at 9:04

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Zechner

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive, Staff and Treasurer Reports

Senior Minister Board Report

Kim Wildszewski

February 2026

Friends, please accept my apologies for a brief overview of the last month. Unfortunately this is all time allowed!

Stewardship season has launched with a lot of good energy and engagement from both the Stewardship leadership and congregants. I am looking forward to moving this campaign forward and believe it will be successful!

Though it was not widely attended, I believe the State of the State conversation following the Stewardship sermon was a good addition and should be considered each year to deepen people's understanding of our needs and the good work we're doing.

Pathways, our path to membership, has 17 potential new members and 1 long term member participating. 7 of the 17 identify as queer. 5 of the 17 are BIPOC. I would guess that 7 or 8 out of the 17 are under 50 years old.

For the first time in many years, I will be facilitating the Tending the Flame parent group again; one piece I am taking on after Robin's retirement. This parent group meets once a month and offers our parents a facilitated space to consider the convergence of their spirituality and parenting – and how it impacts, shapes and forms their children's spiritual lives, too.

The Assistant Minister Search Committee will be interviewing our candidate on February 24th at UUCWC. Offers are made by the last week of March and, if we plan to move forward with a candidate, we should expect to do the same.

Please find more information about the Communications meeting that was discussed at the Board retreat in the pre-reads. I want to add that John Harvi was able to get our lobby monitor up and running; it is currently displaying the stewardship slides and information and will do so for the rest of the month.

I am working with:

- the Hosts to better learn their process and introduce some new hopes / expectations.
- Online Community Building to consider best practices during and outside the Sunday morning experience (please see the pre-reads for a recent report from Susan Irgang). This includes my need to recruit and train online hosts, and separately, online facilitators for the after church reflection space.
- RRC on finalizing the covenant I believe we're voting on this meeting

- Worship Tech Team to redistribute responsibilities and prepare for John Harvi's departure (for 3 months to Japan) in mid April.
- Worship Associates to grow the team (welcome to Sarah DelCostillo this month!) and grow the team's capacity and confidence as the professional worship team shifts.

Speaking of, I am thrilled that we are hosting the Ritual for Return organization and guest speakers this Sunday. I am grateful that our last minute worship services (Thursday night's zoom Pray Their Names and Friday night's co-hosted Vigil, in honor of the horrors in Minneapolis) were well attended and served the greater NJ Unitarian Universalists.

I will be providing an update on our worship tech staff position at the meeting.

Leadership Leaves is asking us to consider reentry into the NJ program. Please see more detail in the pre-reads; we can perhaps discuss this at the March meeting after it is also shared with Finance, too.

In general, underneath the day to day, for myself and the staff – I am trying to focus on strategy; the why, why not, and what; clarifying values and vision; communicating outcomes and standards of behavior (effective, responsive, etc). This feels like an especially important time that the paid and lay leadership feel clearly and deeply rooted.

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

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

Sundays continue to be vibrant at the church. We had the opportunity to exercise flexibility when two weeks in a row we pivoted virtually due to snow and ice. For the past four weeks I participated in the services, providing liturgical support in different roles. On January 25th I invited our congregation to consider the power of togetherness and collective witness-utilizing a pastoral lens rather than a justice one. This set the stage for an all-virtual Joys and Sorrows service with a chat-only format rather than out loud sharing. I received feedback after the service that permitting a high number of people to share and witness for each other was actually deeply powerful.

The third week in January I led or co-led four services in one week. On January 21st I led the monthly Vespers service in a very well attended service which included seven new attendees. This was an exercise in true shared ministry as laryngitis prevented me from being able to sing at all and the entire service was song-led by our 4-member pop-up choir. The next night, Rev. Kim and I co-led an online vigil for the 225 UU clergy who answered the call and went to Minneapolis to respond to ICE violence. The night after that I participated in the "In Witness and With Them" vigil planned by Rev. Kim in collaboration with Rev. Jennifer Kelleher and Rev. Bill Neely of UU Princeton. The week closed out with leading the service on January 25th.

Finally, I was honored to be present for Lydia McMorrow's Celebration of Life on January 31st. On this day I offered logistical support to the Caring Ministry Team and pastoral support to Nancy and other congregants.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

This continues to be a season in the life of the church of high pastoral care needs. During Rev. Kim's week of study leave, my hours doubled to meet the needs of the church. This is something for the system to be acutely aware of, whether there will be a gap of four months between Assistant Ministers or a more long-lasting decrease back to a one-minister model.

In this area of church life, I continue my focus on creating a community of communities. With that being said, I successfully launched the new Caring Cohort this month for adults caring for their older adult parents with an evening Meet-and-Greet. It was a wonderful blend of new and veteran members of the congregation and two additional people who were not able to make the gathering are interested in being connected to the cohort. In the next few weeks, I will create the communications infrastructure for this group to independently run.

On February 1st I hosted the second gathering of our new 20s and 30s group, attended by five people. There I was excited to learn that community connections were happening between official gatherings, especially among those newest to the church. This past month I was also

contacted by current members of the congregation hoping to connect their young adult children, one of whom attended the lunch and hopes to make future events. I have implemented intentional communication to the congregation around this possibility and hope to expand the group with other young adults who grew up in this congregation and are still in the area even if they are not actively attending at the moment. After polling the group, I created a Discord server (a non-Meta communications platform popular among the under-40 crowd) on February 9th to allow the group to stay connected with each other between gatherings. Currently I am the moderator of the group and Rev. Kim will take over once my leave begins.

In mid-January, I met with those involved in our church's memorial services to debrief earlier services and prepare for future ones. In doing so, we collaboratively edited a procedures document last edited 13 years ago. There is now a new system in place for the memorial services ensuring less staff time and attention will be needed going forward, freeing up Rev. Kim from this task and permitting her to focus on the liturgical and pastoral needs of the day.

Change the World

On January 25th I held a very well attended Loaves and Fishes information session. Over the past several months I have been restructuring this program to relieve the longstanding leadership of volunteers who have asked to be relieved but are generously offering their historical knowledge. This year I am leading the endeavor with six sub-leaders while also training my successor. Some of the subleaders are newer to the church and deepening their involvement at UUCWC through Loaves and Fishes. Our church has participated in Loaves and Fishes for over thirty years and each year it involves over sixty church volunteers, including kids as young as eight. It is a wonderful intergenerational opportunity that also blends newer members with more veteran ones.

As possible, I have taken to the streets to act on our UU moral values, always being sure to advertise these opportunities to the congregation and to report back after the fact. After a march against aggressive immigration enforcement action, I immediately filmed a video for the congregation regarding action everyone could take that week to lobby their legislators.

This past month, I also provided the congregation with a more abridged video of my Activism 102 training- speaking directly to them and this moment. Offering congregants both a pastoral response and direct information for how to keep themselves and others safe in this rapidly changing time is a vital part of my ministry.

Rev. Kim and I continue to prepare for the inevitability of immigration enforcement action coming to the Hopewell Valley (knowing that it has already been in Trenton and Princeton). I have worked with our Building Safety Task Force on the Immigration Enforcement Engagement Policy, but we are exploring more holistically how to prepare our people and also settle the nerves and spirits. It is the balancing act of ministry in 2026, how to watch what is

happening in Minneapolis and across Maine and to prepare ourselves for this time while also regulating our nervous systems.

Within our walls, I am hard at work supporting our CFA ministry teams. I am attempting to meet with each team in the near future to obtain an accurate pulse check of their ministry and encourage them to use me to the best of my ability in order to lighten the load on Rev. Kim once my leave begins. These meetings, thus far, have been incredibly helpful and have uncovered lots of independence and confidence and also lots of systemic anxiety independent of the justice ministries.

Looking ahead, I am preparing to mobilize our people for the No Kings Rally on March 28th and for my final Gender 102 offering on March 1st.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,
Rev. Lisa

Marilyn Gonzalez
BOT Report for February 2026

Create Community

The Realm rollout is under way and so far, we have 140 people who have created accounts and 158 who have

not created an account. I am sending out weekly reminders to people who have not created accounts. The goal

is to get as many people onto Realm as possible so that we will be able to use it for more than just a church

database. There is a lot of incentive and potential in using Realm for communication and congregational engagement, so we'd like to have as close to one hundred percent participation as we can get. There have been a handful of people who have complained and a couple who flat refuse to use it but for the most part, people see the benefit of the new system. We are prepared to create some 'Realm 101' classes on Sunday or

via Zoom to help get the numbers up. I am also in the process of creating Realm "How To" videos for signing on and pledging.

February brings pledge season, so Lynne Quinto and I will be busy fielding questions and entering pledges.

Lynne and I have been working on shifting pledge and financial duties away from the church administrator role

and to the controller as much as her part-time schedule will allow. The entirety of the church office is still trying to figure out responsibilities in the wake of Robin's departure, so moving duties around to accommodate

workloads is an on-going event.

In addition to pledge season, the auction team has started to advertise and prepare for the auction in May. Initially, there is a good deal of administrative work that must be done to help get them started. The work then

subsides until April when it ramps up again in preparation for the event. The auction kick off is scheduled for

May 2 with the auction scheduled for May 3 through May 9.

We are also beginning to look at church communications. Several committees and ministries are asking us to

ramp up our social media presence, clean up our website, begin direct mail to the local communities, and generally ramp up our marketing presence. To this end, we had an initial Communications meeting where we

invited people to come and tell us what they were thinking communications at UUCWC would look like.

Unfortunately, we didn't have a great showing, but we took time to speak with Rab Bell, Martha Bell, and Justin Roth. It was a great meeting where we discussed both internal and external communications. As you all

know, Rab Bell has come up with a marketing/communications plan that he is testing with the stewardship

campaign. This marketing plan will be the beta for the larger plan. A follow up meeting is scheduled for March

5, after Stewardship is over and we have some feedback from the campaign.

As mentioned in my last report, I'm also heavily involved in other projects – Aesthetics, Building Safety, Congregational Engagement, and Facilities. Time and workload are still an issue and will be for the foreseeable

future which is forcing us to hold stronger boundaries in the office. We are asking that any petitions for changes to the website come with at least two weeks' notice – this includes handing in materials – to give me

enough time to schedule time to make the changes.

Celebrate Life

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

Change the (UUCWC) World

We are, again, facing facilities challenges. The winter and snowstorms have been difficult on many levels but it

is significantly costly for the church. We have now paid \$10,000 for snow removal.

I recently discovered that the odor problem in our water is linked to the POET system we installed last year. In

trying to address the issue, we had Messick Plumbing come out to shock the well with chlorine. When I contacted the company that installed the POET system to arrange for filter changes after the shock, I learned

that several other customers in our area have reported similar complaints. It appears that the hard water is reacting with the system's filters, resulting in the sulfuric smell we've been experiencing. Unfortunately, the

installation company is no longer working with the New Jersey State Spill Fund due to the volume of complaints. Since we financed the system through the NJ Spill Fund, we are now reliant on them to find a solution. Currently, I am not receiving any assistance from either the installation company or the compliance

firm we used for the spill fund application. We are exploring alternative options, but the ongoing issue remains

unresolved. I am keeping track of the amount of money that we are spending on water in the hopes of getting

reimbursed by the state.

Treasurer's Report for January 2026

January YTD Actual vs January YTD Budget

Operating pledges are at 113% of budget.

Merrill Lynch income is only at 82% of budget. This is expected after the \$57K HVAC reduction from ML balance.

Total revenue is at 112% of budget.

Expenditures are currently at 102.8% of budget.

Cash Analysis

Projected '25-'26 final balance

\$148,303	Current Unrestricted Cash Reserves (savings)
<u>\$14,000</u>	Endowment grant to Board which <u>WAS NOT</u> included in Budget
\$162,303	
<u>\$81,000</u>	Anticipated deficit (\$99K - \$18,000 personnel savings)
\$81,303	Unrestricted Cash reserves (savings).

Projected '26-'27 final balance

\$81,303	Projected Unrestricted Cash Reserves (savings)
\$25,000	Cap Campaign pledges due in 2026.
<u>\$15,000</u>	Endowment grant
\$121,303	
<u>\$60,000</u>	Anticipated deficit (assistant - less personnel adj.)
\$61,303	Unrestricted Cash reserves (savings).