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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH AT WASHINGTON CROSSING

May-June 2026



End of Fiscal Year Board Update

by Marcia Wittmann on behalf of the Board of Trustees

As we reach the end of our fiscal year, there's much to look back on and be proud of as a congregation. We've energetically pursued our mission to Create Community, Celebrate Life, and Change the World through our committees, ministries, and events, including our community potlucks, and by showing up for social action in our communities.

The Board has worked diligently to meet the goals we set for the year, and I'll highlight just a few here. As a reminder, these goals are:

- **Create Community** - We offer creative, meaningful ways to be part of community life, strengthened by mutual care, honest communication, and a spirit of covenantal connection that unites us all. We actively welcome and are hospitable, while embracing learning and growth to being a truly inclusive community. We build multigenerational, multicultural, in-person and online communities; they are woven tightly to each other and the wider whole.

- **Celebrate Life** - Each of us shares and lives our Unitarian Universalist identity in our daily lives. Together, we grow spiritually as individuals and as a congregation.

- **Change the World** - We actively engage in the larger community as partners, collaborators, and advocates for justice, guided by their needs and voices.

We have a financial plan for the next one to three years to ensure financial stability and set realistic goals.

We sponsored several task forces this year to help us make progress toward these goals, including the Financial Health Task Force, the Strategic Plan Implementation Task Force, and the Safety Task Force, as well as the creation of a new Communications team and an Aesthetics team. The Financial Health Task Force provided recommendations to strengthen our congregation, with some actions we've already taken and others you'll hear about in our proposed FY26/27 budget.

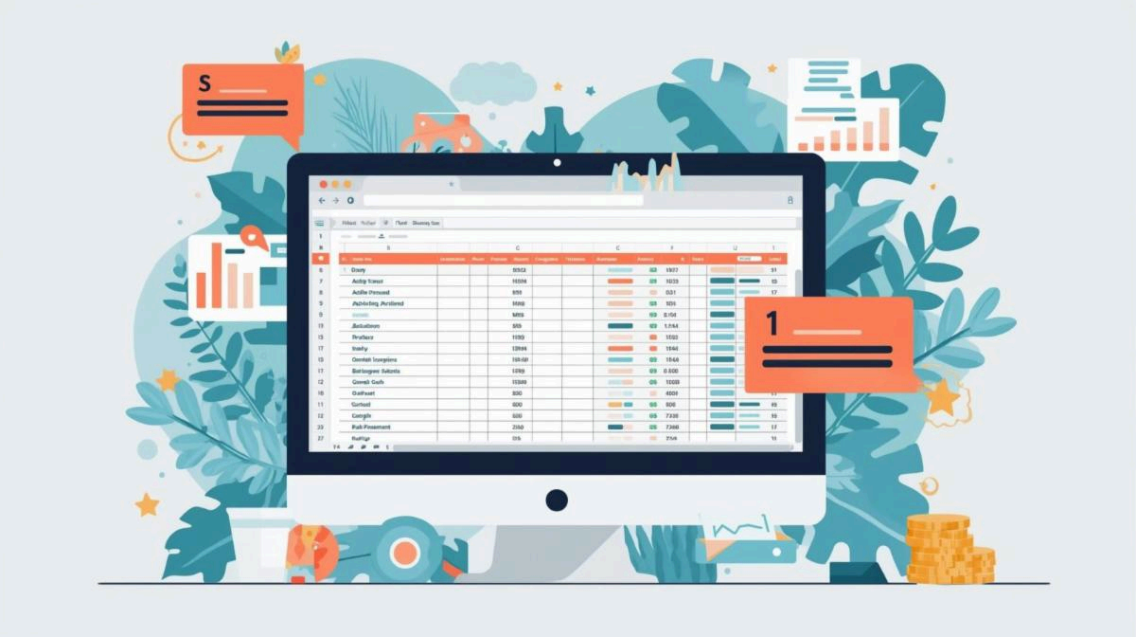
Last month, the Strategic Plan Implementation Task Force shared its recommendations with the Board, which we're currently assessing to inform an updated strategic plan. These recommendations included examining our strategy for growth and community engagement, assessing our existing programs with respect to both current and new members, and evaluating the financial choices we make in relation to our priorities and focus. This task force will share its recommendations at our upcoming annual meeting.

We've worked with Rev. Kim and Marilyn Gonzalez, our Congregational Administrator, to assess our focus areas as our staffing changed with the retirement of Robin Pugh, our Director of Congregational Life, and with the end of Rev. Lisa Schilansky's tenure. This has required us to rethink our priorities, roles, and responsibilities within the congregation to stay strong and focused on what matters most.

Through generous donations, we sponsored and oversaw the construction of our new chancel and accessibility ramps in the sanctuary to make our congregation more welcoming.

And, of course, the Board continues to help manage our congregation's ongoing operations by guiding priorities and goals for our stewardship campaign and annual operating budgets.

The Board has focused on our goals and on making progress against each goal. I appreciate all the Board members for their commitment of time, the energy and diverse thinking they bring, and their passion for making UUCWC a welcoming, caring religious community.



Finance Committee Update June 2026

By Sandee Steinberg, Chair, Finance Committee

As we near the end of our fiscal year, I'd like to thank the members of this year's finance team for their hard work and helpful input: Donna Miller, Barbara Drew, Denny Rodgers, David Schumann, Jane Root, Karen Damato, and Lynne Molnar.

On Sunday, June 7th, as part of the annual meeting, Denny and I presented the church's current fiscal state and the proposed 2026-2027 budget to the congregation. The proposed budget was voted on and passed. We are projecting a slight surplus of about $3,000 for next year. Part of that surplus is due to your generous donations to the church during pledge season, the end-of-year drive, the auction, the plate, and the many other ways you fund the church. Thank you all!
In other Finance news, the UUCWC audit team has completed its internal audit of our church's financial processes and procedures. Martha Bell, John Unger, Ron Iannacone, and Jayme Trott worked diligently over the past several months, interviewing staff and church members, reviewing documentation, and researching best practices. I'd like to thank them for their work. The team produced an audit report and recommendations for the Finance team to review over the next few months. The team will present its findings to the board in the Fall.

This will be my last article as Finance Chair. Next year, Karen Damato will step up as the new chair of the committee. Thank you, Karen! In the meantime, please reach out to me with any questions or concerns regarding the budget. You can contact me, Sandee Steinberg, at **finance@uucwc.org**, or Denny Rodgers at **treasurer@uucwc.org**.



Community Outreach Fund Ministry Update

By Holly Bussey, Facilitator, Community Outreach Fund Ministry

It's been an exciting year for the Community Outreach Fund Ministry, full of twists and turns and excitement. Here are a few key highlights:

- We continue to be good stewards of 50% of the plate funds. These funds support congregational programs and reach into the world to make a difference in justice and equity. You've been so generous!

- Part of these plate donations, an excess of $9,000, has helped fund the Council for Faith in Action efforts, including (but not limited to) the Food Ministry, HomeFront, Racial Justice, and Earth/Climate Ministries.

- By the end of the church year (June 2026), we will have contributed more than $16,000 to outside organizations, including but not limited to (in no particular order) Urban Promise, I Am Trenton, Interfaith Food Alliance, Trenton Microloan Collaborative, New Hope Pride Parade, LGBTQ401 events, Bucks County Housing Group, Mercer Street Friends, Hopewell Food Bank, Chubby's Food, Bucks County Opportunity Council—SNAP Crisis, TASK, Loaves and Fishes, Snipes Farm and Education Program, UU the Vote/Side with Love, and more!

UUCWC is an incredibly generous congregation, as evidenced by plate donations. We are grateful for this kindness. We welcome new interest. You can reach us at **faithfunding@uucwc.org**.



Spotlight on Food Ministry

By Pam Shadzik, Congregational Engagement

If you hang around UUCWC long enough, you're bound to run into a Food Ministry food drive or other outreach to those in need in our area. This amazing group of people has so much going on throughout the year that it's impossible to fit it all into one short article. Their vital work lies at the core of UUCWC's mission to Change the World.

How Can You Participate?

A core group of members meets regularly to coordinate the ministry's projects, evaluate potential partners, and plan fundraisers; however, many others volunteer for one or more events or programs. You can work on a major single event, such as cooking for the annual Loaves and Fishes meal in Trenton. Or you can choose a smaller project, such as volunteering at a food drive, making nutritious snack bags for children in Mercer or Bucks counties, or cooking on the Food Ministry's monthly meal team for UUCWC's HomeFront tutoring program, held on Monday evenings at UUCWC.



More About Food Ministry

You don’t need to cook to be part of the food ministry. There are many opportunities for those with a wide range of skills, including point people to liaise with other UUCWC ministries, drivers to deliver food, and people with Excel or graphic arts skills, among others.

For more information, contact **foodministry@uucwc.org**.



Racial Justice Ministry Sponsors Juneteenth Concert Fundraiser Featuring Baritone Keith Spencer

By Marcia Wittmann, Racial Justice Ministry

Juneteenth (June 19) commemorates the end of slavery in the United States, marking the day in 1865 when enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, learned of their freedom — more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. This Juneteenth, UUCWC's Racial Justice Ministry (RJM) is sponsoring We Shall Not Be Moved: Songs & Speeches from the Civil Rights Movement, featuring dynamic baritone vocalist and concert entertainer Keith Spencer.

From the mournful call of the Negro spiritual to the cry of protest and purpose that truly signifies the African-American experience from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s, We Shall Not Be Moved is an hour-long concert presentation focused on the music that captured the essence and call of the Civil Rights Movement. Keith weaves together popular songs associated with the Civil Rights cause with poignant readings from leaders, activists, and spokespersons of the time, evoking the struggle and promise of what was to come. You'll hear Keith perform "Oh, Freedom!," "People

Get Ready," "Go Down, Moses," "The Times They Are A-Changin'," "Lift Every Voice and Sing," "A Change Is Gonna' Come," and many other celebrated songs.
A portion of the proceeds from this event will benefit the I AM TRENTON Community Foundation, which awards grants to grassroots projects led by Trentonians for Trentonians.

The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. (doors open at 7:00 p.m.) and will be followed by a reception with light refreshments in the Crossings Room.

Tickets are $20 Adult, Children $10. To purchase tickets, visit **uucwc.booktix.com**. Depending on availability, tickets may also be sold at the venue.

Learn more about **Keith Spencer**.



UUCWC's River-Friendly Mission in Action

By Geri Koblis, Earthy & Climate Ministry

Did you know that UUCWC has earned a River-Friendly Certification through The Watershed Institute? Their River-Friendly Certification Program promotes clean water and a healthier environment for us all. The program educates and supports

residents, businesses, golf courses, and schools in adopting practices that make them better land stewards by reducing pollution, restoring wildlife habitat, and conserving water resources.



As part of the certification process, a Watershed representative, Davis Bush, visited UUCWC on Sunday, April 26th, 2026. He began by presenting a children's faith engagement activity. The children were enthusiastic and actively participated in the lesson. Their questions showed their value for nature, aligning with our UU principle: respecting the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. They demonstrated how much they have learned about recycling and reusing, as well as other ways to work toward a healthy environment.



After Sunday service, Davis opened his work to the congregation and brought it outdoors. We collected a water sample from UUCWC's "backyard," Jacob's Creek. Davis tested for pH, turbidity, salt content, and the presence of pollution intolerant and pollution tolerant aquatic animals that live on the bottom of the stream, called macroinvertebrates. The pH was found to be good, about 6.5. With the help of visual reference guides provided by Davis, the group identified some macroinvertebrates present in the water sample.

Based on these test results on a scale of Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor, the water quality of the Jacob's Creek sample is GOOD. Davis demonstrated to us how the State's water quality is evaluated by the NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection, other government agencies, and watershed groups. The findings from Jacob's Creek now contribute to a database used to monitor water quality.

UUCWC's River Friendly Certification was initiated by UUCWC's Earth and Climate Ministry as part of the ministry's goals. The process began in 2017 and was awarded Gold Status in 2020. It has since been renewed and is being maintained.

This year, UUCWC youth members chose to focus on animal rights and care, especially on church grounds. They learned about the presence of bird and bat houses on our grounds and about planting pollinator-friendly natives.

Information brochures on becoming a River Friendly Steward have been placed in the upstairs lobby for our members and friends to take and read. Further information about the Watershed Institute is available at **https://thewatershed.org/**.

This is your Earth and Climate Ministry at work. If you are interested in participating, contact us at **earthclimateministry@uucwc.org**.



Above: Penny Rodgers, Debbie West, Lynda Shapiro, Stacey Metzler, and Jackie Thomas are ready to sell Boutique bargains during our annual auction.

2026 UUCWC Auction Recap: More Joy to Share!

by Barbara Drew, Auction Co-Chair

“Create community, celebrate life, change the world” captures the essence of UUCWC’s mission. These words also apply to our annual auction, a fundraiser and a fun-raiser. Through the generosity and ingenuity of many congregants, the auction offered opportunities to share our joy, connect, learn, experience activities together, share interests, and benefit from each other’s skills. We were pleased that newer members joined the fun as donors, team members helping with setup or food prep, and as bidders and buyers.

The range of events offered something for everyone at various price points, from a nature journaling workshop led by new member Molly Shaner to a lunch followed by a visit to the Ellerslie Museum in Cadwalader Park in Trenton, led by Pam Shadzik, representing Congregational Engagement, and Regina Zilinski, representing Racial Justice. There were brunches, lunches, dinners, biking, hiking, and cultural outings, house and garden cleanups, health care advice, and handcrafted items, just to name a few. New members Chelsea and David Gardiner offered yard work. What a great way to contribute time and talent! One of the popular offerings was a set of dark and amber honey by Karen Polis for 8 lucky winners, along with a jar included in a raffle basket.

Nearly 100 attendees enjoyed the Kick-off Party in the Crossings Room, with food prepared by Susan Vigilante and a kitchen crew of new and longer-term members. To encourage mingling, a bingo game was circulated to help discover the joys we share as members of UUCWC. Completed cards were drawn to determine the four winners of door prizes donated by Board of Trustees member Michelle Zechner, featuring UU swag (cap, mug, stickers) and publications (books by UU Minister Robert Fulghum and a UUA collection of rituals, including one piece by Rev. Kim).

Meanwhile, the Boutique offered bargain prices on jewelry, accessories, and small housewares, organized by Penny Rodgers, Lynda Shapiro, and Debbie West. Surplus items were provided to HomeFront children for selecting Mother’s Day gifts, much to the children's delight!

Our Emcee/Auctioneer Roger Shapiro presented 13 items and services at the Live Auction, with our own Vanna Whites—Sara del Castillo and Nicole Robinson—who played their parts elegantly! There were several one-of-a-kind, must-be-seen (or heard!) items, handcrafted by Roy Vogel, whom we affectionately call Mr. Auction for his many donations over the years. His adorable teddy bear that propels a cart when the string is pulled, a beautifully carved walking stick of sturdy oak, and a set of impatiently tapping hands operated by a crank all contributed to the $1,000 in proceeds from the Live Auction.

With 291 total items, including three raffle baskets, live auction and online items, and donations to the auction fund, we raised $40,000! This year, the Finance Committee and Board of Trustees elected to allocate all proceeds beyond the budgeted $31,000 to the operating budget as a fiscally responsible measure to offset the projected deficit.

We are grateful to everyone who participated in the Kick-off Party and the online auction! Rev. Kim has asked us to consider one way to support our community’s health, and you answered by supporting the auction, enabling us to fund our programs and services that “change the world.” In expressing her gratitude, she said, “You brought joy and sustainability to our community in a meaningful way. You made a difference!”

Auction co-chairs (Lori O’Neil, Jayme Trott, Marcia Wittmann, and I) thank those who answered our three-part prayer: Help. Thanks. Wow!



Summer Time Means Reading Time!

By Maria Barrata

On the third Sunday of each month, you're encouraged to check out new and old books from the borrow collections of our Racial Justice Ministry and Earth and Climate Ministry.

In addition to books, the RJM collection includes several DVDs. Maybe you're spending time at the beach or by the pool and want to brush up on African American history, or you want to learn more about the social impacts of climate change. Perhaps you love a good work of literary fiction that is thought-provoking and helps expand your understanding of the challenges immigrants in this country face. Maybe you're looking for a family-friendly movie to watch that both inspires and encourages engaging conversations. Maybe your children have summer reading assignments, or they just love to read for the fun of it. There is something for everyone in our collections.

Borrowing is easy. Just look for the title card on the front page (or cover) of a book or on the back of a DVD case. Neatly print your name and either an email address or a phone number on the card (just like your old school library days!). Then leave the card with the library volunteer. Please return the materials as soon as you have read them, keeping them no longer than two months.

Returning materials is even easier! Return any borrowed items on the next Library Sunday (the third Sunday of each month). Even easier, drop your item in the drop box on the top step at the side door of the church. That's the door that faces Allie's Garden and the side parking area. You can drop things off on a Sunday or any day you are in the neighborhood. It's just like dropping off books at your local public library's book drop.

Once you've read a book or watched a movie from one of our collections, we would love to receive a review. Send your book or movie review to either **racialjustice@uucwc.org** or **earthministry@uucwc.org**.

Starting in fall 2026, we plan to be open on multiple Sundays each month to provide more opportunities to browse and borrow.

Join the Journey.
Open to You.

Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing | 268 Washington Crossing Pe Rd | Titusville, NJ 08560 US

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