CrossCurrents
CREATING COMMUNITY BY KEEPING YOU INFORMED
Monthly Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing

October 2026



Finance/Board 2025-2026 Deficit Reduction Update

By Denny Rodgers, Treasurer

At last year's annual meeting, we approved a budget with a $98,000 deficit to cover an income/expense gap and to hire our first Assistant Minister. Then, several factors helped reduce that deficit significantly:

- The Endowment Task Force approved a new policy that transferred over $14,000 from the fund to the operating budget.
- Robin Pugh, our beloved Director of Congregational Life, retired early, returning $18,000 to the operating budget.
- Our Worship Tech also departed, which reduced the deficit by an additional $5,000.
- Jane Root, the Stewardship Committee's Chairperson, recovered over $12,000 in overlooked pledges from the 2024-2025 pledge campaign by making follow-up calls.
- The Finance Committee allocated 100% of the Auction surplus over the budgeted amount this year, which meant an additional $4,500 for operations compared with last year.
- Plate donations grew to 125% of the budget, resulting in $4,300 in additional revenue.

- Gifts exceeded the budget by over $25,000.
- The Capital Campaign repaid over $28,000 of the $70,000 “loan” from our operating savings, with pledge payments through 2026.

As a result, our deficit fell to about $20,000, which we could absorb easily, with over $184,000 in non-restricted/non-reserve cash available as of June 30th.
First Quarter 2026-2027 Financial Picture

Income is exceeding our budget projection, and expenditures are on target. As of September 30th, we had approximately $199,000 in non-restricted/reserve cash available. We anticipate an additional $7,300 from Capital Campaign pledges.

Our budgeted deficit for the year is only $5,213, so even with unanticipated new spending, I project we will still have $175,000 in non-restricted/reserve cash (savings) available at the end of the year.

Please contact me with any questions.



Shedding New Light on the Sanctuary Part 2: The Design

By Andrew Kidd

*(Editor's note: This is the second in a three-part series about the new lighting in the sanctuary. In the **first installment**, Andrew Kidd explained the reasons for this upgrade and its potential impact on the church.)*

I spent the latter part of my career designing and implementing audiovisual systems for museums. This gave me access to people who could help. Although I didn't design or install lighting systems, I worked with lighting designers. One of them, Ted Mather, lives in New Jersey. I called him for advice, and he volunteered to come to Titusville to take a look.

An hour and a lunch later, I learned that a full theater-stage system would cost a lot, require much more power than we had available, and need a skilled technician to operate it. That ended that idea, but Ted told me about an LED bulb made by Soraa that he used in museum exhibits. It offers a range of brightness levels, color temperatures, and beam angles. The latter was especially important because it would allow us to control where the light landed. He also told me that the "magic" angle for theater lighting is 45 degrees down.

Armed with this information, I bought three bulbs with different beam angles—9, 25, and 36 degrees—and tested them in my basement. They seemed well suited to our purpose.

The bulbs also had to be easy to reach and replace. The existing pendant bulbs in the sanctuary are 16 feet off the floor, which seemed like a good height, as long as we purchased a suitable A-frame ladder. We did, and Roberto Santiago used it and approved it.

Next, I needed a way to hang the bulbs so they would illuminate the stage while remaining as aesthetically "invisible" as possible. The bulbs would be mounted on a lighting track, supported by a steel bar called Unistrut and suspended from the ceiling by threaded rod.

Then came power. Four lighting tracks installed over the stage when the sanctuary was built in 1996 were each fed by a separate switched/dimmed electrical circuit. Although the tracks themselves would become redundant, reusing their power feeds would save considerable time and money.

So, I had the product, the installation method, and power. Now I had to put everything together to illuminate the stage at the ideal 45-degree downward angle.

After studying the architect's drawings, taking measurements, and thinking it through, I determined that two tracks were needed—one to light the back of the stage and another for the front. The four existing power branches would provide lighting for the center of the stage, the front wings for the choir, the rear wings for a large band, and the curved wall.

That completed the design portion of the project. Next month, I'll discuss implementation.



Becoming Together: How UUCWC Architects Joy

By UUCWC Staff

On Sunday, August 30th, Rev. Kim asked the congregation: What might someone become by participating in and investing in this place? Congregants documented their answers, reflecting on who they are becoming through their presence at UUCWC. We analyzed the raw responses, bucketing them into core themes, which helped us generate an intuitive sociological picture of the shared identity that has emerged right under our feet.

The accompanying word cloud displays the forces driving our communal growth. Our strongest support beams are connectivity and belonging, followed by openness and vulnerability. From the congregation's perspective, the UUCWC journey encourages us toward openness, authenticity, and compassion. By journeying through our shared spaces, congregants find a home.

Our deep interconnectedness provides a structural foundation for another defining trait of this congregation. As Rev. Kim observed, "...when I think of you – of this congregation's unique personality and culture and way of navigating the world – I think of how I do not know a people who are more joyful — more joy-seeking – than you. In the midst of pain and cruelty – in a time of distrust and isolation – there is something about this place and these people that does not let go of beautiful things."

This resilient joy is not an accident; it is a direct byproduct of the profound social capital UUCWC provides. Joy flourishes here because members feel safe enough to shed their armor, open their hearts, and belong to one another – even amid ongoing hard moments.

To highlight specific ways this process of becoming together occurs at UUCWC, we constructed statements that capture the core themes the congregation reported:

- **Connection and Belonging:** Members express that they are no longer walking alone, having moved from feeling like solitary observers to being truly held, supported, and woven into a loving community.

- **Openness and Vulnerability:** Congregants are becoming braver in their vulnerability, opening their hearts to others, and allowing themselves to fully feel and express their emotions.
- **Wholeness and Authenticity:** Individuals report finally feeling comfortable in their own skin, feeling seen, accepted, and empowered to live as their authentic selves.
- **Healing and Forgiveness:** Within this community, members actively seek healing paths and forgive people and events that hurt them.
- **Continuous Evolution:** The process is ongoing; members recognize their stories are still being written as they constantly learn, unlearn, and evolve into something even greater.

The responses paint a picture of a congregation intentionally choosing to be "no longer singular" in a world defined by isolation and division. By actively participating in this space, we are not just finding a place to gather but becoming a more open, whole, and joy-seeking collective.

There is, of course, always work to do to ensure everyone feels welcome in our space. We still face many social hurdles. But for now, UUCWC's internal self-report card offers something to celebrate.



Auction Co-Chairs (Jayme Trott and Barbara Drew), along with the leaders for party food and Boutique, met to don special shirts reflecting this year's theme. Left to right: Jayme Trott, Penny Rodgers, and Debbie West (Boutique, back row), Lori O'Neil, Barbara Drew, Susan Vigilante, Marcia Wittmann, and Kim Bacso.

Announcing Auction 2027!

By Barbara Drew, Co-Chair, Auction Committee

While Auction 2026 participants continue to enjoy wonderful auction events that help us connect and share our interests, Auction 2027 is already scheduled, and we've announced a theme!

We are pleased to announce that UUCWC will be "Living Our Joy!" at the spring 2027 Annual Auction! The Kick-off Party will be held on Friday, May 7, featuring fabulous food (coordinated by Susan Vigilante and Kim Bacso) and a fun Live

Auction. This party precedes the opening of the online auction on Saturday, May 8, at 9:00 a.m. Mark your calendars and plan ahead!

Another feature of the auction is the Boutique, where you can find amazing bargains on jewelry, accessories, and small décor items. The 2027 Boutique, organized by Penny Rodgers and Debbie West, will be held on two Sundays, April 25 and May 2, so HomeFront children can select Mother's Day gifts the following Monday. This year, one child expressed joy in giving to tutor Kim Bacso, exclaiming, "My nanna and mom loved the necklace and purse I gave them!"

UUCWC's annual auction began in the early 1990s and has grown to include well over 250 items, including skilled and custom services, handcrafted or unique physical items, and a wide variety of events. The auction is more than a fundraiser that supports our annual operating budget; the social gatherings provide opportunities for connection, making it the FUN-raising success it is.

You can count on popular annual events hosted by congregants, ranging from arts, cultural, and musical gatherings such as holiday or campfire-style sing-alongs, to beer or wine tastings, movies or podcast discussions, and games with snacks or a meal.

Special themed meals hosted at homes or restaurants are always extremely popular and reflect our members' diverse skills and interests. UUCWC Board President Bob Alt shares, "I love hosting events for the auction. It's a great way to meet new people, deepen relationships, and have fun while raising money to support our UUCWC mission."

Auction personnel are available anytime to help with your ideas and plans for potential offerings in Auction 2027. Believe it or not, it's never too early! Find inspiration in past auction items, including arts, Zooming, yardwork assistance, cooking demos or tutorials, custom knitting, or workshops to explore spirituality or a new craft.

Many event hosts offer an item that fulfills their wish list. Maybe you've been meaning to explore the Hindu temple in Robbinsville, NJ, or check out the Michener Museum in Doylestown, PA; Why not consider hosting this kind of outing yourself? Auction offerings don't need to be expensive and can give you a chance to get to know other UUCWC members. Newer members Bruce and Gayle Allen share that: "The auction opened paths to connection, just a few weeks after we visited for the first time!"

Watch the UUCWC Facebook community-building page for highlights from hosts' and winners' experiences, including Party Like a Pirate, Bald Pate Mountain Hike, and even a visit to the Vampire Museum! Please continue to post auction experiences and contact auction personnel at any time: **auction@uucwc.org**



Sylvia Light (right) and her sister Betsy with the pinwheel quilt they recently finished, originally begun by their grandmother in the 1940s.

UUCWC Meet & Greet: Sylvia Light Says "Yes" to UUCWC

By Scott Cullen, CrossCurrents Editor

When Sylvia Light moved to the area in 2025, she was living alone for the first time and looking for community. A cousin suggested she try a Unitarian Universalist church, which eventually brought her to UUCWC. A year and a half later, Sylvia has embraced church life with an enthusiasm best summed up by her admission that, as a newcomer, she "said yes to almost everything and [has] rarely regretted it." Along the way, she has found what she was seeking: a community filled with genuinely friendly and welcoming people, and plenty of opportunities to connect, contribute, learn, and create.

What religion were you raised in?

Sylvia: Methodist.

If you had to describe your faith journey in one word, what would it be?

Sylvia: Seeking meaning.

What committees/ministries at UUCWC have you participated in during your time here?

Sylvia: It's so embarrassing, but I said yes to almost everything and have rarely regretted it: Earth & Climate Ministry, Creativity Matters, Lectio Divina, Loaves & Fishes, singalong, Science Conversation, nature walks, potlucks, Food Ministry, church grounds cleanups, and Worship Associate.

What's one thing about our church community that makes you feel at home?

Sylvia: The many genuinely friendly, welcoming people.

What's a favorite hymn or worship song that brings you comfort?

Sylvia: "Silent Night."

What do you do for fun when you're not at UUCWC, attending an online service, or at a UUCWC-related meeting?

Sylvia: Drawing and painting, quilting with my sister, crosswords with my daughter, and nature walks.

What's one piece of advice that has stuck with you throughout your life?

Sylvia: Keep your hands at 10 and 2 on the steering wheel.

What's one skill or talent you have that most people don't know about?

Sylvia: I love to mend things. My niece once split open the back of her jeans at our house, and she was tickled that I mended them with a heart-shaped patch. 💙

What family tradition do you cherish?

Sylvia: My Grandpa Boyer's much-loved homemade doughnuts. He always made plenty!

What one activity always brings you joy?

Sylvia: Anything related to the arts—drawing, dancing, singing, writing, quilting, painting, attending live performances, going to museums, reading the great authors, playing puppets with kids, or making stuff with popsicle sticks. A counselor once told me, "The arts nourish you."

What song do you always crank up the volume for when it comes on the car radio?

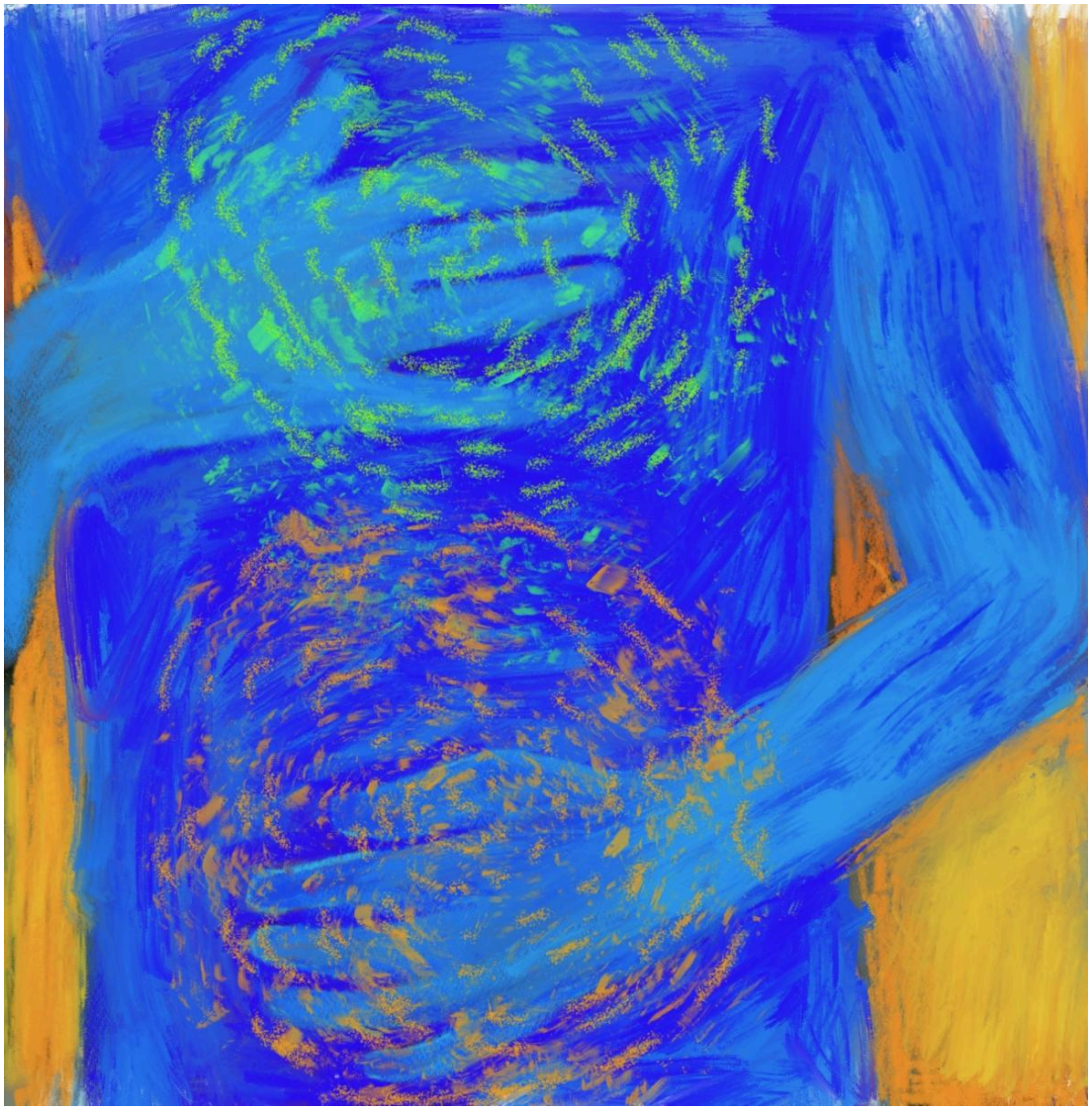
Sylvia: "On Broadway by George Benson.

You're having a dinner party; what four people (celebrities, authors, historical figures—past or present) would be on your guest list?

Sylvia: Jim Henson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Pete Buttigieg, and Michelle Obama.

What's one thing you're grateful for this week?

Sylvia: My hip is not aching!



Voices from UUCWC | Courage: An Inside Job

By Brian Tucker & Joseph Goldfedder

Isn't it interesting that the word "courage" is embedded within two other important words: "encourage" and "discourage"? Like the match used to light our chalice each week, the spark of courage we carry inside us can become a flame that encourages others.

Viewing courage as an inside job helps us realize that we can create an inner landscape, like a garden, where courage can flourish. The word "courage" traces its roots to the Latin cor, meaning "heart." Ancient cultures understood the importance of cultivating the heart as a pathway to building courage.

With all that's going on in the world, we are challenged daily to choose courage over fear. It's easy to slip into fear, even unconsciously, as we are bombarded with what's happening around us. But tending the garden of our hearts reminds us to trust that seeds of courage, when consciously planted, can thrive through all the seasons of our lives.

Here's a simple practice you can try, inspired by scientist and author Gregg Braden and by research from the HeartMath Institute on the relationship between the heart and brain.

1. **Focus**: Place one hand at mid-chest, at the level of the heart, and the other near your belly. Bring your awareness to the hand at your heart.
2. **Breathe:** Slow your breathing, feeling your belly rise and fall. Make your exhale slightly longer than your inhale—for example, inhale for four counts and exhale for six. This can help signal safety to your nervous system.
3. **Feel:** Imagine warmth spreading through your body, from your toes to the crown of your head. Bring to mind a positive emotion such as gratitude, appreciation, or love for someone you care about.
4. **Embody:** Hold this practice for at least five minutes.

Like lighting the chalice, this practice can spark a small, intentional act that helps shift our inner state. The daily practice of tending our inner garden can invite courage to take root in our hearts.

And perhaps when that inner spark grows, it becomes visible to others. Our courage can inspire another person to find their own. Isn't that how we create community, celebrate life, and begin to change the world?

Join the Journey.
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