

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - [APPROVED](#)
DECEMBER, 11 2024
Zoom Meeting

President Wendy Stasolla called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Also in attendance: Vice President, Karen Kent, Treasurer Denny Rodgers and Secretary Michelle Zechner; Trustees: Maria Baratta, David Thomas, Chris Marietti, Colleen McCourt; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Marilyn Gonzalez, Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh and Ministerial Intern Lisa Schilansky. Board Trustee Bob Busch was excused.

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote): President Wendy Stasolla and Rev. Kim Wildzewski briefly reviewed their monthly reports. Treasurer Denny Rodgers provided a summary of the church's financial health. The church income remains above projections. There is a budget deficit due to covering the remainder construction costs without a bank loan. Current capital campaign payments are being used to pay back the construction costs.

Board Liaison Updates: Trustee Maria Barratta gave a brief update on Personnel, noting that this fiscal cycle the board is asking for aspirational budget requests, e.g. what would each church committee like to have. This will be communicated to Stewardship to help Stewardship craft a message to the congregation. This strategy of asking what committees are requesting before the Stewardship campaign is new this year.

Safe Congregations Report: Wendy reviewed a recent UUA report which reviewed safety practices and policies. Director of Congregational Life Robin Pugh discussed the current safety measures in place during services. Discussion about potential updates needed for service hosts. Discussed the need to review and re-write the Safety Policy by a taskforce for review by the board.

Financial Updates: Sandee Steinberg: Finance Committee Chair Sandee Steinberg presented a draft budget for the 2025/2026 fiscal year. This was developed in cooperation with staff, committee chairs and personnel. She noted that the current year's budget was predicted to have a \$35,000 deficit, but this could be reduced due to increased income and potential cuts in expenses. The team agreed to continue refining the budget based on future pledge estimates and potential cuts in expenses.

The Personnel Committee is recommending an Assistant Minister given the size of the congregation and the growing Pastoral Care needs. Discussed the current income from pledges and strategies to increase income. In the 2019/2020 fiscal year the congregation approved hiring an assistant minister. Board discussed this potential and how to responsibly sustain this new position. The board noted pledge increases over the past two years, which helped pay off previous deficits.

2nd Hour

Congregational Survey: • The 11/24 planned workshop on UUCWC Strategic Plan was postponed. Taskforce member Loren McAlister has drafted something to share with the congregation to renew interest and excitement about strategic planning.

ACTION - Kim & Wendy will work to identify a future date for the workshop.

Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary (BBCBB) event:• Wendy summarized a recent Informational event about an event to be held in April. The event created by the Syracuse UU church began in 2017 to hold safe space for meeting the needs of people who are trans and non-binary. They are looking for satellite partner sites for the event. This could mean streaming their live event only or adding additional information or celebration to the day. Training for volunteers and staff will be held in February. Wendy asked board about thoughts. The Board members were in support of this initiative, however the organization needs to be coordinated by a staff person.

ACTION- Wendy speak to Robin so it is part of Adult Religious Life and advertised for broader community.

Fundraising: Reviewed the new process for requesting space for fundraising events when congregants request use of the space which include working with Finance Committee to identify congregational supports and resources for future events. Denny noted that there is a need for additional support to coordinate rentals.

Housekeeping & Action Items:

- A date is needed for the board retreat
- Cross Current articles

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Zechner

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive, Staff and Treasurer Reports

Executive Report

Executive Summary December 2024 by Wendy Stasolla

What a wonderful celebration we had on Sunday for the dedication of our amazing new space! The building was buzzing with excited congregants and guests!

Now that the election is over, the UUA is asking us to consider the risks that might be associated with being a UU congregation and is asking us to think and talk about the need to be vigilant about our collective safety. The article discusses bringing on extra security for public events as they might attract attention from bad actors.

They recommend thinking about the virtual exposure we have with our online presence. How much is too much information that can enable people with bad intentions to harass members, or use program schedules to show up uninvited.

We've already experienced some email phishing scams where they pretend to be members asking for the church directory from us.

There's a pre-read about this but also below is a link to the UUA webpage that talks about safety and also community resilience. I encourage everyone to have a look.

<https://www.uua.org/safe/community-resilience>

A congregant emailed me wondering if we have a drug use policy besides the alcohol use mentioned in the rental agreement so we'll likely be discussing this at a future meeting.

Michelle Zechner and I were joined by Jo Wiedman in attending an information session to consider being a satellite congregation for the Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary (BBCBB) event in Syracuse NY on April 26, 2025. In their words: Satellite Congregations will create and hold space for trans people in the community to come together and connect with each other. They will also create and hold space for allies who want to learn how to better support transgender people in their families and communities.

There will be a training session in February for as many members as want to attend and much of this will revolve around learning how to be pre-emptively radically inclusive (PRI) and not accidentally cause harm to attendees by being taught how to avoid obvious mistakes. They gave us an idea of how this works and it sounds truly worthwhile and powerful.

And then, we can decide how to create our event by either streaming all of their workshops (everyone at least streams the keynote address) or coming up with our own and partnering with the greater community.

Lots of stuff to ponder!

STAFF REPORTS

Minister Report

Create Community

November was of course a full and charged month here at UUCWC and in the larger world. With the anticipation of the election, its devastating results, Thanksgiving, Trans Day of Remembrance, a memorial service, and of course the 11th hour construction work to get us to December 8th, I'm not entirely sure how any of us are upright – but we are!

In addition to the above, we also hosted our annual Poinsettia Fundraiser, put up the Mitten Tree, collected Turkeys for TASK, decorated the sanctuary lightly for Christmas, hosted the Princeton BoyChoir, and are preparing now for the return of our Chili Cook Off, family crafting event, Big Band concert, children's pageant and Christmas Eve evening services.

Our attendance has been wild but strong: averaging 192 people on Sunday mornings in the last 4 weeks. This includes the addition of our OWL parents and children (in December we are the host congregation) but also post-election and grand reopening services. It will be fascinating to see what happens as we move into the winter months.

To note: It was also during this last month that Mike Muccioli had his hip replacement and was thus out of commission to help with kitchen and rentals; and Jon Harvi traveled to Japan leaving our tech team to really step into leadership positions they haven't had to.

Celebrate Life

We hosted the Hopewell Valley Hope Rises Up Transgender Day of Remembrance and Resilience service, bringing in members of UUCWC and many more from the larger Hopewell community. Some attendees have begun visiting on Sundays.

Days later, we celebrated the life of Mary Kay Mitchell. It was an important service to remember her fierce and lovely spirit.

This week I conclude the two separate Getting Good at Getting Older class. There is a significant request from the 60 & 70 year olds to offer this for them in the spring.

I was privileged to help Lisa prepare for her Ministerial Fellowship Committee by serving on a mock panel, and then of course celebrate her this past Sunday for her recognition and invitation into Fellowship.

I continue to offer Lectio Divina, weekly.

Individual Pastoral Care needs continue and, as I've recently shared with the Personnel Committee, there is quite a bit of conversation among UU ministers about a growing concern around ministerial capacity as congregations age. How does a minister of a program size church attend to the pastoral needs of those living through grief after grief; illness after illness; and also the time commitment for memorial service after memorial service? We've discussed the concern around the financial impact of long-term high pledgers passing away, but we've not yet discussed the pastoral / personnel needs.

Change the World

It's not Christmas yet but Stewardship is calling. The fall fundraiser is wrapping up and I'm meeting with the Stewardship team to discuss January and February's plans. Unfortunately, Scott Blaydon had to step down from the team, leaving Jane Root, who just moved to Indianapolis, as the singular chair. I am recruiting for this team while also trying to help plan for a new way to do our annual drive. We welcome your support.

Personnel has offered the Finance Committee our proposed 2025-26 budget, including a half time minister. I am requesting time during our meeting to discuss this more in person.

With gratitude,
Rev. Kim

Director of Congregational Life Report

To: UUCWC Board and Kim Wildszewski

From: Robin Pugh

Date: Dec. 10, , 2024

Re: Monthly DCL Report

Celebrate Life (Worship and Rites of Passage)

- Our building is finally fully open. It was a joy to welcome members, friends and visitors at our new entrance for the service and celebration on 12/8.
- I am reworking hosts responsibilities given our new welcoming space. There will be a new host training in January that will go over new tasks and re-emphasize safety in our new building.
- I've been cleaning out office, HomeFront and AFE storage spaces so as not to move clutter to our new spaces. This is taking longer than expected.

Create Community (Small Groups).

- 19 people have filled out a visitor form since the election. I've been busy welcoming them and answering questions.. Kim will be offering Pathways in January.
- Chalice circles and Wellspring small groups are ongoing. I support the facilitators and lead 3 groups.
- In January I will meet with congregational engagement to discuss ways we can support each other and not duplicate tasks.
- In January, Kim and I will meet with the Food ministry to discuss ways for it to continue its mission into the future. New volunteers may need smaller discrete tasks.

Change the World

- Homefront tutoring on Monday nights is going well. We continue to tutor about 27 kids with as many tutors. I'm organizing the Homefront Holiday party which is on 12/16. There will be good food, carols, mittens and hats from UUCWC's Mitten tree, a visit from the Santa Shapiro's and \$25 gift cards and small gifts.

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

I attend the UUAMP, (the Association of Membership Professionals) weekly meetings when time permits. I see a Spiritual Director monthly.

**December 2024 Board Report
Intern Minister's Report
Lisa Schilansky**

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

Offering and supporting worship this past month has been a true joy. On November 17th we gathered together for our monthly Joys and Sorrows service. Not yet two weeks after the election, this was an important opportunity to realize the power of collective care and to turn towards supporting each other. I preached about the wisdom that lives within each of us and how we can follow that guidance.

I was grateful for the Sunday off on the 24th permitting rest and recuperation. The following week it was a delight to welcome Nick Sanchez into our pulpit. Nick is the ministerial intern at Wellsprings UU in the western suburbs of Philly. I was glad to be on sight to be able to welcome and orient Nick and to take some of the liturgy off of his hands (Welcome, Call to Worship). His message was a powerful one that the congregation deeply connected with.

Finally, this past weekend was a dream realized. In the great saga that is UUCWC's Capital Campaign I am aware that I have only been present for the last sliver, yet it was still such an honor to support worship this Sunday for our 220 attendees, honoring the hard work of the capital campaign, the determination and resolve of the congregation, and everyone's commitment to making UUCWC a more accessible place.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

Since my last report, I had the opportunity to offer a second November Breathe program, this one independent of the election. It was strongly attended and participants shared deeply. It has been such an honor to offer this program monthly and has been a delight to see it grow as more people find meaning in it.

In the month since the election I have been providing targeted and proactive pastoral care to individuals who are most impacted by the election results and by the violent rhetoric that soaked this election season. In addition, on November 21st I held the second Jewish Listening Circle, this time online. Five people attended including two who had been at the in-person offering in late September. This was an important and healing conversation and also indicated a hunger for deeper connection among those in attendance. There has been a request for future Jewish/UU congregant meetings. I am currently in conversation with Robin Pugh about what this might look like and am working to ensure that this would be an offering independent of my support due to my tenure at the church quickly coming to a close. I also want to note that I heard from at least one individual that he was not sure his perspective on the conflict would be welcome at this gathering. This is something I am working to keep in mind in navigating the nuances and deep pain around this ongoing conflict and violence.

As a note, I am currently providing parental leave pastoral care coverage for one of our neighboring congregations. I will only be called upon in emergencies and Rev. Kim and I do not anticipate that this will impact my time and focus at UUCWC.

Change the World

In the wake of the election, the need for prophetic calls to justice and for collective action are even greater. With that in mind, it has been a busy month in this area of our mission. On November 20th, I had the honor of supporting Rev. Kim as we hosted Hope Rises Up for their annual Transgender Day of Remembrance and Resilience Vigil. We decided to put our energy and the congregation's energy to joining the community event rather than hosting our own. This powerful night was a mix of reflections, naming and honoring those whose lives were violently cut short, song, and ritual. It was important that we were able to live into our values and open our doors to this integral community partner. I was delighted to see a large number of UUCWC congregants there as well.

From the pulpit, in Breathe, and in one-on-one conversation I continue to talk about ways we can respond to the changing political climate. This is a time of limbo preceding what promises to be a time of overwhelm. I am committed to helping the congregation through pastoral holding and calls to justice to find ways to stay engaged rather than shutting down. We will need each other now more than ever.

Finally, this past Thursday, December 5th, I returned to Mercer County Community College to present on Unitarian Universalism in a World Religions class. This is UUCWC's third appearance as I presented there last spring and Rev. Kim the April before. This was a delightful and delightfully challenging experience, helping students who have never even heard of Unitarian Universalism understand our religiously pluralistic, non-creedal faith (delivered with much more accessible language, I promise you). The students were engaged, some wrestled more than others, and I had a great assistance from a UUCWC congregant who is a student in the class and was excited to add on to what I was sharing and to share her own perspective.

On a personal note, I wanted to thank the Board for your incredible support and guidance during the first sixteen months of my internship. I have learned a wealth of information from you and it has permitted me to grow immensely in my ministerial formation. I do believe that you all played a role in my successful appearance before the Ministerial Fellowship Committee this past weekend, and for that I am grateful.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,
Lisa

Treasurer Report

Treasurer’s Report for November 2024

November YTD Actual vs November YTD Budget

Plate collection is at 113% of budget.

Pledges for '24-'25 are at 96% of budget.

2023-2024 pledges exceeded budget by over 21%. Now at \$423,805 vs \$424,340 budgeted.

Merrill Lynch income of \$10,644 exceeds budget by almost 13%. (\$2,048 for Nov.)

Expenditures are currently at 94% of budget.

Cash Analysis see report

CHANGES:

CAP Improvement Reserve Fund has been changed to Facility Improvement Reserve Fund to align it with spread sheet by that name.

We now list \$150,000 to cover 3 months budgeted expenses as Operating Reserve Fund in order to designate that we should maintain that amount separate from Non-Restricted Reserve Cash Available total. Gives us a better picture of opportunity money available.

After Reserved amounts and Restricted amounts are subtracted we are left with Non-Restricted/ Reserve Cash Available of \$199,268.

We budgeted for a \$37,207 operations deficit and agreed to pay \$7,200 in unbudgeted construction expenses.

Current projection is that the Cap Campaign will only need to borrow \$70,000 from Operations (vs \$100K Board approved) vs taking a bank loan. This will be paid back as Cap Campaign pledges are received into 2026.

After these amounts are subtracted we are left with

\$84,861 Non-Restricted Reserve Cash Available
+\$83,000 Est. Cap pledges to 2026

\$167,861 Opportunity Money

More than enough to cover '25-'26 budget with Assistant Minister