

**Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing
Board of Trustees**

268 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road
Titusville, NJ 08560



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes -APPROVED

October 9, 2024

Multi-platform 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: Bob Busch, 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. Absent was Trustee Maria Baratta.

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote): Rev. Kim Wildszewski reviewed board process, staff reports and consent agenda list to orient new board members. Treasurer Denny Rogers provided a verbal update of the Financial Reports, noting plate pledges are at 108% projected income. Additionally, the Finance Committee will borrow \$100,000 from church reserves to cover final construction costs to avoid bank loan costs. Discussed the percentage owed to the contractor and the current status of payments. Trustee Bob Busch asked about use of 10% contingency funds that may arise as construction ends.

Shift in Congregational Engagement Committee Philosophy

Board President Wendy Stasolla led a discussion about the shift in philosophy of the Congregational Engagement Committee, focusing on engagement at all levels and developing leadership positions. Trustee David Thomas confirmed that Pam Shadzik, Chair of the Congregational Committee, has been invited to discuss this at an upcoming board meeting.

Council Meeting and Budget Timing Discussion

Rev. Kim noted these should be held twice a year, in fall and spring, as per the bylaws. The upcoming council meeting on October 30th will include discussions on the budget season, which has been moved from spring to fall, and the board goals. The Finance Committee will be responsible for determining the financial needs based on the budget season. The change in budget season is aimed at proactive budgeting and visioning, allowing the Finance Committee to set financial goals for the upcoming year.

New Jersey Board Resolution and Reparations Discussion

Rev. Kim noted UUCWC active participation in requesting Reparation Discussions in Ewing Town Council. David Thomas is advocating with Hamilton Township on the topic. Denny suggested that the board consider a resolution regarding reparations in New Jersey, which could be drafted with support from CFA. The resolution aims to publicly support a reparations task force and encourage other churches to join. The group discussed the importance for communication and transparency of process with the congregation on the topic. Rev. Kim clarified that Assemblywoman Sumter's bill on Reparations is to create a legislative task force researching reparations holistically. Ministerial Intern Lisa Schilansky met with CFA to discuss this.

- *Vote:* Wendy requested a vote of Affirmation to support this initiative. Board voted in the affirmative: *UUCWC supports the NJ bills (Assembly and Senate) to form a legislative taskforce to complete a study on the topic of reparation.*

Endowment Funds

Denny reviewed the history and purpose of the establishment of the Endowment Funds. There is some confusion about the policies for application for funds and use of funds. Discussed the need for clarity, communication and transparency in the management of these funds. Discussed the relationship between Endowment Committee and the Finance Committee.

2nd Hour

Personnel Discussion

This portion of the meeting was a confidential discussion.

Housekeeping & Action Items:

- Crosscurrents articles needed: Wendy will send out a notice of upcoming dates for CrossCurrents and topics needed. She will confirm with Scott. Quarterly report from finance is appropriate for the next issue. Denny volunteered to offer a piece on financial health of UUCWC.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Zechner

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive, Staff and Treasurer Reports

Executive Report

Executive Team Meeting-October 3, 2024

By Wendy Stasolla

In Attendance: Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Wendy Stasolla, Denny Rodgers, Karen Kent, and Michelle Zechner

I gave a brief update on a meeting I attended between Farzad Shadzik, Barbara Drew, and Mark Pokryska to discuss concerns that were outlined in the extensive Solar Panel report that was written by Mark and put forth by the Earth & Climate Ministry. (ECM) Marilyn Gonzalez, our new administrator joined us to become informed and help with note taking. Our combined notes are in this month's pre-reads labelled "Notes from Solar Facilities Meeting". I saw this as a positive and productive meeting where we parsed out action items for our construction electrician, Building and Grounds committee, and Facilities Manager to look into.

In the meeting above, Farzad mentioned the need for additional funds for the pathway to the memorial garden which sparked a conversation about Endowment grants and how they might be more flexible. An endowment discussion is an agenda item for our upcoming board meeting so keep this in mind as a small part of that topic.

Staff Reports

Minister Report

Create Community

What joy to be so thoroughly in a new church year! Since Water Communion, we have welcomed, on average, 157 people online and in person to our Sunday services. Our Children's Fatih Engagement is growing with new families and consistent attendance; we have focused our energy on ritual, music and invitation; and though our visitor attendance is significantly lower than in years past, those who are coming are returning.

Further things to note: Since we met last, I officiated Susan Colket's memorial service; a whole community gathering of grief and love. The ministry the choir provided during that service cannot be celebrated enough.

The Climate Justice Revival was a congregational effort and one to be celebrated. Leslie McGeorge's leadership and perseverance helped create opportunities to move our commitments from speech to work.

Susan Irgang's retirement Sunday was an opportunity to introduce the long-referenced *citizen versus consumer* conversation, while celebrating Susan's incredible work and tenure. Thank you to the planning team and all who contributed to this Sunday. I know Susan felt loved, appreciated and seen.

In addition, Lisa's vespers service, accompanied by Rachel Hansen on piano and a pop-up choir, was a gorgeous offering.

If it is not clear from this summary: the creative energy needed by each member of the worship team in the last 5 weeks has been considerable, and I am grateful for each of them.

In mid-September I began facilitating two parallel conversations on the book *Getting Good at Getting Older* to the oldest folks in the congregation. I meet with an in person group every other Thursday, and an online group on the alternating weeks. The participants range in age from 81-91 and are participating fully, vulnerably and with care. I am deeply honored to be in this space with these beloved people.

From mid-November to late January, John Harvi will be in Japan with his wife, Toshimi, after many many years of pushing their travels off. While I am celebrating their travel and time together, this will certainly create some (likely needed) new systems on the tech team. Send us all good wishes as we have relied on too few people for too long!

Celebrate Life

As you all know, there has been a significant number of significant needs in the congregation lately. From unexpected deaths and procedures, to very scary diagnoses and the ongoing physical and mental health challenges across the generations. Susan Colket's memorial service

seemed to wake up the fragility of many in the congregation; the election, election results, and the behaviors of our neighbors and strangers is causing serious concern and anxiety.

At the same time, it is college season, and I am writing letters of recommendation; officiating weddings, and I've relaunched Lectio Divina, weekly, for UUCWC.

Change the World

Of course one of the largest changes in our UUCWC world is the retirement of Susan Irgang and the joyful onboarding of Marilyn Gonzalez. Marilyn has hit the ground running, already feels like an essential part of the team (in personality and capability) and (and!) it will take her time to feel and be fully capable in the role. Please continue to welcome Marilyn, check in with her, and ask for patience among congregants and especially leaders.

I am in conversation with a potential intern for the 25-26 church year – drawing our attention to the need to make some decisions with regard to being a Teaching site and /or potentially investing in an Assistant Minister.

Through my connection and friendship with our Kalamazoo Church's minister, our Racial Justice Ministry will be consulting with their team to further and expand their understanding of how to do and be an anti-racist organization.

I continue to be a presence – though limited this month – on the NJ Faith Allie's Group, whose effort is to get the legislature to create a Task Force to study Reparations in NJ. CFA has voted to allow Wendy and me to make a public statement, on behalf of the church, in support of this effort.

I have met with the Right Relations Committee to help them create a vision for this church year. We agreed that much of their effort will be on growing the congregation's understanding of trans and non-binary identity and experience – *as a right relations issue in the congregation and larger society.*

A reminder that, beginning this fall, our budget season will be moved from the spring to the fall. This means all budgets and potential changes to our congregational needs, will need to be imagined, articulated and planned for in the immediate future. These will be adjusted in the spring, after discovering how much money we were able to raise through the stewardship campaign and setting a stewardship goal *based on the fall's budget.*

There is not insignificant stress and pressure coming from some members, whose work and projects are passions but not entirely aligned with the immediate needs of the church or profiles of the staff. We are each working hard to set fair expectations and still provide support when and where we are able.

On a personal note, this September I began a 2-year Spiritual Direction certification. This winter I will begin a 1-year leadership program called The Shape of Leadership "for clergy who want to renew their leadership so they can make a significant impact on the future of the church." I am excited about both of these new spaces of learning and connection and believe they will deeply inspire and impact my ministry with UUCWC.

With thanks,
Kim
Director of Congregational Life Report

To: UUCWC Board and Kim Wildszewski
From: Robin Pugh
Date: October 8, 2024
Re: Monthly DCL Report

Celebrate Life (Worship and Rites of Passage)

In the past 5 weeks, there have been 6 services that required extra attention and creativity from Kim and the rest of the staff. (Mostly from Kim). The services were water ceremony, start of church year and Faith Engagement program, climate justice, vespers, Susan Irgang goodbye and Susan Colket memorial). All the services were excellent (and necessary).

Create Community (Small Groups).

- Four Adult Faith Engagement classes got underway in September. Adult faith Engagement continues to meaningfully connect people who do not always know each other.
- Eight people have joined our existing chalice circles. Most folks are long term members looking to get more connected.
- Kim and I decided not to offer the Pathways class this fall and rescheduled it for this winter. The frequent visitors that want to take this class were not available in October/November.

Change the World

- Homefront tutoring on Monday nights began on Sept. 30th. It is inspiring to see our members bowing heads together with young children as they encourage them to read or do one more math problem. I applaud everyone's flexibility while we have the program upstairs until the crossings room is ready. The food prep volunteers have been making do with providing simple meals. This is different from the robust nutritious meals that they are proud of providing. We hope to be "back to normal" in the crossings room by 10/21.
 - I spent a lot of time getting ready for the Homefront program, recruiting, training, and buying supplies. The preparation work is done, and I hope the tutoring program will be smooth sailing for the remainder of the year.

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.

Administrators Report

Marilyn Gonzalez

Administrator BOT Report for October 2024

Create Community

I'd like to start by thanking the wonderful Susan Irgang for all of the hard work she put into preparing me to take over as the Church Administrator. I've officially been 'flying solo' for one week and continue to work on building relationships with staff and all of the amazing volunteers. I'm so impressed with the professionalism, commitment, and genuine care that everyone brings to the table and am happy to be part of it all. Following up on Susan's report from last month, we continue to build our relationship with Westrick Music Academy, as well as the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum and Dr. Mahan Rishi Khalsa, all of which are looking to rent space at our church over the next several months.

Celebrate Life

Our membership numbers are 276 church members, 26 Friends, 12 Participants and 29 Attendees. The memorial service for Mary Kay will be 11/23.

Change the (UUCWC) World

The construction is moving quickly now with progress happening every single day. In the one month that I have been at UUCWC, we have gone from framing and dust to a close to completion office space, kitchen, and Crossings Room (and dust).

We received a report with significantly improved well water numbers and hope to continue this trend with PFAS testing which is scheduled to happen this week. Once all of the kitchen and construction plumbing is done, we will schedule re-chlorination of our water.

Painting in the building should be completed by the end of this week and our elevator/lift, which was delayed in transit, arrived on Friday and was being installed over the weekend. Some final kitchen supplies are en route and expected to be delivered this week. Cleaning of all stored kitchen equipment and supplies will need to be completed over the next few weeks and we look forward to having this area ready for use soon.

Director of Family Minister Report
October 2024 Board Report
Director of Family Ministry
Julie Rigano

Celebrate Life (Children Faith Engagement & Rituals)

Our summer program this year was a success as many members of our community shared their passion with the children. We learned about everything from baking to voice over acting to comic books and so much more. We had multiple new families visit over the summer and begin attending regularly. They even signed up for our fall programming.

Since our program year began in September, we've had steady attendance in most groups and active engagement from all present participants. The children and youth know their rituals to begin each session- a centering chime, lighting the chalice, and interpersonal sharing. These rituals mimic the ones we use to start our worship service and reasserts this spiritual grounding.

Our 1st-6th graders are using the new Lego ValUUes curriculum. This program not only teaches our children the new UU values voted into our bylaws at the last General Assembly, it also reflect the actual needs of our families. For example, the covenanting process which used to only happen in the first session happens over two weeks in two different sessions. This recognizes that not every family might have been able to be present on the first day of programming, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be involved in the covenanting process. Also, it helps show our children that covenants are living documents that can and should be updated.

Our 7th-9th graders will be doing Our Whole Lives sexuality education course this year with youth from UU Princeton and UU Somerset Hills. Not only is this life affirming and vital information for our youth to have, they will also be meeting other UU youth outside of our congregation. We have 17 youth signed up for this program so it will be a robust group. The parent orientation was on Sunday, October 6th and the first day of class will be October 13th at Princeton. We will rotate locations on a monthly basis.

Finally, our youth group is doing a racial justice program this year using the Paul Tuerff fund culminating in a trip to Philadelphia to visit the Underground Railroad. They will be learning about Black Unitarian Universalists, white supremacy culture, and more. The youth are so far very engaged and invested in this program.

Create Community (Family Ministry)

Our Family Ministry Team has dwindled to just one member, Andy Snyder. Victoria Locane needed to cycle off at the end of last year and sadly, Susan Colket passed away. Now that the program year is underway, I can spend more energy building up this team again. With just one member, we do not have the capacity we did last year.

Our playground and activity table are still huge successes. While last year we mainly used coloring pages and activity sheets at the activity table, this year I am looking into getting more creative with the crafts. During Water Communion, we had watercolors on the activity table and they were a hit. I am looking into using clay and other quiet crafts we can supply the table with.

Change the World

I want to delve deeper into something I mentioned earlier in my report- the OWL class meeting together with other UU youth.

After March 2020, our children and youth did not get a chance to see one another for many years and we have felt the effect of that in our space. Our youth do not have the close knit relationships they might have had if they had been able to see each other weekly at church and grow together. By having our middle school youth connect with other youth groups, it helps reestablish those bonds that we can make as a community. The youth will see that even though they only know a few other UU youth at their church, there are actually lots of other kids out there just like them in UU congregations across the nation.

My dream is that this experience in OWL will not only strengthen our own youth group in years to come, but will also strengthen the bond between the youths at neighboring congregations so we can do more programming together. I am specifically thinking of youth conferences, weekend long events where youth from the area do workshops, have worship, and spend time together. As someone who was raised UU, I know how important these events were and I hope to be able to share them with our youth in years to come.

**In faith,
Julie Rigano
Director of Family Ministry**

Director of Music Report

Erin Busch

Despite some cuts to the music ministry budget this year, we are still able to bring in quite a few musical guests through some different means. We budgeted for two guest musicians per season to come from the music ministry budget: our fall musicians are flutist Chelsea Meynig (who visited us a few weeks ago) and bassoonist Zachary Feingold (who will visit in November). Due to the funds set aside to celebrate Susan, we are also able to bring in musicians for the service on October 6th in celebration of Susan Irgang's retirement. Finally, due to a generous donation of \$1k from a congregant in honor of my wedding, we are able to hire a string quartet for Christmas Eve. I've decided to hire just 3/4 of the quartet (it's a more expensive night to hire musicians, and \$1k only covers three people) and have confirmed that Stella Evanini can play the second violin part. I am working on hiring a cellist rather than performing myself so I can be free to play piano & direct the choir.

We have also commissioned Wildflower alum Addison Hill to compose a new piece for the choir, in keeping with our annual commission project, which is underway and will be done by November 1. We will perform it sometime in March/April 2025.

I'm also hoping to find more ways to get additional congregants involved in music here at UUCWC. The performance of Madeline Cheng's "Love Loved Love" at Susan Colket's memorial featured a few non-choir congregants on wine glasses, and it was meaningful for all involved & also very easy for people to jump in. I'd like to brainstorm more ways of bringing additional congregants into the music-making outside of congregational singing.

Ministerial Intern Report

October 2024 Board Report Intern Minister's Report Lisa Schilansky

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

September to October held lots of opportunities for rich celebrations of life. On September 22nd I had the honor of providing staff and liturgical support to Marianne Alt as she led an incredible service. On the 29th we joined over 350 other congregations worldwide for the Climate Justice Revival. This service required lots of staff planning and pre-implementation and I was delighted to fill various roles morning of as well. Finally, our month of rich and unique worship services led to this past Sunday's honoring of Susan Irgang. While planned family commitments called me out of town this Sunday, I assisted with the planning and construction of the service as a member of the staff worship team.

On September 21st, we joined together as a community to remember the life of Susan Colket. As is true with all elements of the internship, this service was a blend of learning and service for me. To participate fully as a member of the clergy team was an honor, offering support for the staff and Susan's family in whatever way was needed that morning and in the days leading up.

Finally, September brought the exciting launch of our new Taize-inspired, candlelit Vespers services. Offered multiplatform, there was a small but highly engaged group who attended. We anticipate in the future when construction permits us to bring back the full Welcome Table Wednesday programming that attendance will increase. While I have led Vespers services online and in person, this was my first time offering it simultaneously multiplatform and there were great learning opportunities in collaboration with the tech team for what to consider in the future. It was such a delight to have such a great showing from the pop up choir. It must be said as well that this service would not have been as successful without Rachel's incredible playing as she generously volunteered her time. Rachel is excited to participate again this next month. There are hopes for this to be a monthly endeavor, but November's date coincides with the International Trans Day of Remembrance and Resilience and December occasionally requires other commitments, so we are holding these hopes lightly, knowing that they might change.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

September had moments of familiar and new opportunities for small group engagement and pastoral care. My monthly initiative Breathe: the world needs you whole continues with a small, but committed group and as is true most months, we continue to have new participants. I anticipate this group will become even more important in October and November when pre- and post- election anxiety will be highest.

On September 26th I offered an in person listening circle for UUCWC community members who self identify as Jewish. This was an opportunity for affinity group cohesion, for mutual grief and support and rage and for naming and honoring the complexities of what it means to be UU and Jewish in the backdrop of the violence in Gaza. Two people attended and named hope for additional connection in the future. In October I will be offering a virtual-only gathering for those who were unable to attend in person.

Change the World

Much of my energy in our commitment to Change the World has been directed towards Get Out the Vote efforts. For me, this is as much a justice initiative as a pastoral one. I am excited to report that our September 22nd in person phonebank was incredibly successful. There were 18 people affiliated with UUCWC in person, with about $\frac{2}{3}$ engaging in phonebanking and the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ exclusively writing postcards and letters. National Side With Love organizers Rev. Cathy Rion Starr and Nora Rasman were incredibly excited to have such a large group in attendance and celebrated us during the national call. That evening I provided technical and emotional support to our members doing the hard work of voter outreach as we paired with the organization Supermajority, a PA-based group working to empower women of color.

We will be offering another phonebank on October 22nd. My schedule this month does not permit me to be present during the phonebank itself but Maria Baratta will be providing on site support and I will be doing the recruitment and publicity leading up to this time in addition to supporting Maria as well. I also continue to create infrastructure to help connect UUCWC folks with Get Out the Vote opportunities through my weekly emails and engagement with our broader Faith in Action community.

I am delighted to share that I have been asked to sit on a panel with five clergy members at the National Mosaic Fall Conference in Bethesda, MD speaking on a faith-based response to the national rise in fascism. This is a great honor and I am humbled by the opportunity to represent UUCWC on the national stage. A few members of our racial justice ministry team will be attending virtually and seats remain for anyone who wishes to attend virtually or in person.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,
Lisa

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer's Report for September 2024

September YTD Actual vs September YTD Budget

Plate is at 108% of budget.

Pledges for '24-'25 are at almost 98%.

Merrill Lynch income of \$6,520 exceeds budget by 15%. (\$2,204 for Sept.)

Expenditures are currently at 91% of budget.

Cash Analysis

Cash reserves are at \$344,231.

We budgeted for \$37,207 operations deficit and agreed to pay \$7,200 in unbudgeted construction expenses. Allowing for both and also holding \$150,000 to cover 3 months budget we have \$149,824 as OPPORTUNITY RESERVES (AKA Non-Restricted/Reserve Funds)

The Board has approved financing up to \$100,000 construction costs vs taking a bank loan. This will be paid back as Cap Campaign pledges are received into 2026.

That still leaves us with almost \$50,000 Opportunity Reserves.