

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - APPROVED
July 10, 2024
Zoom Meeting

President Wendy Stasolla called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Also in attendance Trustees: Maria Baratta; Bob Busch; Colleen McCourt; Karen Kent; Chris Marietti; Dave Thomas and Michelle Zechner; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang, and Ministerial Intern Lisa Schilansky. Absent were Treasurer Denny Rogers and Director of Congregational Life Robin Pugh.

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote):

Rev. Kim reviewed topic of business for discussion and process of meetings for new members. Agenda and pre-reads will be made available by Monday before meeting. Trustees can review and ask questions ahead of meeting as needed.

Discussion around the consent agenda included:

- **Executive Team Report:**
 - Update on Executive Team for 2024-2025: Karen Kent is nominated for Vice President; Michelle Zechner is nominated for Secretary position.
 - One question was posed about the age of congregants and how we compare to other congregations. Rev. Kim will look into this and discuss at Board Retreat. She shared that we have strong participation of congregation currently.
- **Vote on Vice President & Secretary**
 - Votes passed unanimously for new Vice President and Secretary.

Earth & Climate Ministry Presentation

Members of the Earth & Climate Ministry (ECM) (Leslie McGeorge, Barb Drew, & Sandee Steinberg) shared a powerpoint overview on the UUA Green Sanctuary 2030 (GS 2030) & Climate Justice Revival initiatives. Discussed UUCWC participation in these activities. Clarified that the Earth Ministry has changed its name to Earth & Climate Ministry to reflect shifts in understanding, and has re-centered their work to include climate justice. This has also resulted in a new covenant, action statements and goals; and partnership with the Racial Justice Ministry.

The ECM Committee is requesting board support for participation in the GS 2030 & Climate Justice Revival initiatives. UUA has planned a special event called Climate Justice Revival to take place on 9/28-9/29 which will include a day of workshops guided by toolkits furnished by UUA on 9/28 and a sermon on Climate Justice

on 9/29. Participation in this activity would assist the church in seeking UU Green Sanctuary Accreditation and shift actions to a focus on climate justice. ECM members described benefits as intersectional connections between climate and other justice work, work with marginalized communities, cross church silos between advocacy activities, and fulfill needs for church GS2030 requirements.

Discussed current progress in the process. Reverend Kim Wildszewski approved church registration in the Climate Justice Revival, and team has participated in information sessions. Reviewed steps and timelines.

- o The UUA Welcome packet for Climate Revival activities has been shared with ECM and Racial Justice team
- o A toolkit will be shared from UUA on process and procedure in August
- o Volunteers have been identified from both ECM and Racial Justice committee
- o Three potential timeline options are offered for consideration:
 1. Full program: Participate in full program on 9/28 & 9/29 (the rollout date of UUA)
 2. Adaptation: Offer a worship service 9/29, with a workshop later in fall after further preparations
 3. Postpone: Conduct full revival (worship, advocacy, workshop) at a later date

Board discussion

A discernment circle was requested to hear from each board member about the presentation and request. Board acknowledged excitement and energy of UUA and the Earth Ministry and Climate Justice in moving forward this important initiative.

- Concerns identified about timing of Climate Revival in early fall given congregational activities, other Saturday programming and Rev. Kim Wildszewski's availability on 9/28.
- Identified that other NJ congregations would be unable to participate in 9/28 and 9/29 activities, and are interested in combining efforts to hold the climate revival.
- Consider partnering with other NJ congregations for the workshop to build excitement.
- Suggestion to hold the Advocacy service on 9/29 (offered by Rev. Kim) with the workshop later in the year.
- Discussion of connecting the Climate Revival to earth day.
- Suggestion a mini-kickoff on 9/29 with a sermon, with workshops later to be held after. Earth day could highlight all of the work that has been accomplished.
- Discussed election date as cutoff to hold the revival - a time to advocate for vote and get out the vote
- Noted that a specific date for the workshop need to be identified

ACTION: Wendy will share ppt with board in shared drive

2nd Hour

- Vote on ECM request for participation in Climate Revival. Unanimous vote on accepting adaptation of participation in the Climate Revival. The 9/29 sermon will incorporate GS2030 and serve as a kickoff for our participation. Rev. Kim will coordinate with ECM on the topic. The workshop portion will be offered at a date TBD, and possibly in partnership with other local congregations

Board Liaisons

Reviewed role of Board liaisons. Typically, the Executive Committee do not serve as liaisons. Discussed current liaisons and openings. After discussion, new liaisons for 2024-2025 identified:

- Maria Barratta; Personnel
- Dave Thomas; Congregational Engagement
- Colleen McCourt; Endowment
- Bob Busch; Capital Campaign
- Denny Rogers; Finance

Fundraising/Rental Policy

Wendy met with new Fundraising Committee Chair and a congregant to discuss fundraising activities. Church use policies are under revision by a small workgroup led by Rev. Kim.

Congregational Pulse Check-In

Wendy offered update from someone looking to fit in better into the community

- o Clarified directory is sent out quarterly and is aimed at members and friends.
- o People wanting to be connected should be referred to Robin.
- o People need to opt into receiving emails. Friends and members automatically receive information
- o Question on how to connect UUCWC to churches in Trenton, and churches that are predominantly people of color. Rev Kim suggested reaching out to Racial Justice Committee for more discussion.
- o Potlucks are suggested as a way to connect– Robin Pugh has the list and it's in the directory
- o Welcome tables helpful to connect
- Board Minute at Service – do each month during construction. List may need to be re-vitalized. Someone getting up each month to share construction updates.
- Meetings – Alternate Zoom one month, multi-platform next month. Postpone discussion till retreat.
- Board Retreat- communication regarding this will go out. Likely 9-1/2

Open Forum & Check-out

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Zechner

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive, Staff and Treasurer Reports

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Executive Board Brief, July 2024
Wendy Stasolla, Board President

We didn't have an Executive Board meeting in July but the tasks at hand were to fill the two vacant spots on the executive board, start planning the upcoming retreat, and submit a board article to our new editor Scott Cullen for the July Cross Currents.

Michelle Zechner has agreed to step into the role of Board Secretary and has been working with Colleen to learn the ropes. Rev. Kim and I met to flesh out the retreat, and I will write an article about the "changing of the board."

I'm working to convene the group who offered to help revisit our rental and fundraising policies, but it looks like that meeting may not happen until August. In the meantime, I met with Donna Miller, our new fundraising lead, and Nick Mellis about two events/concerts he'd like to have in January 2025. The Cosmic Crossings concerts will also continue as they always have, running smoothly under our current policies.

STAFF REPORT

Ministers Report

Create Community

Following the Annual Meeting, much of my time has been spent focused on creating a strong end of church year and looking ahead to the next:

- a service celebrating and looking back on our earth teachers and centering songs;
- the annual flower ceremony;
- my last auction-won sermon of the year;
- finishing recruitment and leadership transitions (Worship Associate chair, Personnel additions, reimagining a Membership Committee with Robin; staff portfolio adjustments);
- and preparing for the Administrator position transition* (creating and preparing a search committee, cull of our candidates, first round zoom calls and more).

Celebrate Life

Please mark Sunday, October 6th, on your calendars as the expected date for Susan Irgang's retirement party and celebration.

I am preparing for three weddings and a child dedication that will take place within a 4-week span.

I was able to attend some, though not all, of our General Assembly and my religious professional days. The conversations, joy, justice, discernment, dissent and disappointment that took place within those few days are still to be processed and understood. I am proud of our ability to have fair and thoughtful votes for our future and welcome your reflections and questions especially surrounding the new values statements.

Last week I joyfully attended lunch with my search committee to celebrate 10 years of ministry! We have all changed a lot in 10 years.

Pastoral Care has been challenging lately: stalwart members and leaders moving; significant health concerns of members young and old; mental health concerns; fears over the state of the world and our democracy, and more.

Change the World

In June I spoke at a Reparations Rally in Trenton and a week later was honored to be asked and to officiate the blessing of the first ever Pride flag in Ewing, NJ. It must be said how deeply disheartening some of the (online) public dissent was to this beautiful event.

I have spent a great deal of time and thought on next church year's structure and focus, as well as preparation for a strategic plan which I will present to you at the Board retreat on the 20th. Pam

Shadzik and Robin Pugh have been wonderful thought partners as so much of my planning will impact Congregational Engagement and Cong. Life, too.

These two weeks of Study Leave will help me with the Sunday-to-Sunday details but also give me an opportunity to think of the seasons of the year; our adult and children's faith engagement; how we invite folks into justice and action; how we prepare for this incredibly important (scary) year given the election; and live into our new building and staff.

**Regarding the Administrator position:* We had a total of 35 candidates before we paused the job posting on Indeed. The pool included cis and non-binary identified folks, people of color, and significantly more women than men. After an initial cull, there were about 6 potential candidates, 4 who the search committee and I are currently considering. 3 are women, 1 is a man. I believe, but do not know for certain that, 1 candidate is a person of color and the other 3 are white.

As I stated earlier, I am doing initial zoom interviews before candidates go to the search committee (Lynne Molnar, Maria Baratta, Marianne Alt, Justin Roth). Based on resumes and letters of interest alone, we are unanimous on our first choice. My hope is that by the July 15 meeting with the search committee, we will then interview only 2 (perhaps 3) candidates and have a September 5th start date.

Administrators Board Report

Susan Irgang

Administrator BOT Report for July 2024

Create Community

I finalized the contract for a December rental by the Princeton Boychoir for the Holiday Happenings Concert. We are hoping this is the beginning of a relationship with this group for additional concerts for their Boychoir and Girlchoir. Additionally, one of our regular renters used our space for a Celebration of Life for one of their community. They love to use our space, and we enjoy having them here as a highly responsible renter.

Following the Annual Meeting, many groups begin a summer hiatus and have not required much administrative support. My focus has been on updating information sources with new 2024/20205 leadership information, finalizing the Annual Report with editing help from Michael Howe-Smith, and catching up on maintenance tasks (ex. website updates).

Celebrate Life

We currently have 279 church members, 26 Friends, 12 Participants and 29 Attendees. A recent analysis of our age demographic for 96% church members (data not available on remaining 4%) indicates that the average age of a church member is 66; 71% of our congregation is 60 or older. A more detailed summary shows those:

In their 30's: 6%
In their 40's: 12%
In their 50's: 11%
In their 60's: 24%
In their 70's: 32%
In their 80's: 14%
In their 90's: 1%

Special thanks to Rachel Hansen for sleuthing ages that were unavailable in our database.

Change the (UUCWC) World

A major issue that needed my attention this past month has been the remediation for the positive total coliform bacteria well water test in late May. The positive result set off a series of events, including a 6/14 letter from the NJDEP on actions to take: this triggered a Level 1 assessment on 6/18, which indicated a shock chlorination was needed. The well was treated on 6/26, then flushed from 6/27-7/2 until chlorine levels returned to 0ppm. While all this was accomplished, one NJDEP requirement was to have 3 tests within the month, and the final test could not be completed by the deadline

of 6/28, as the well still contained chlorine. This may result in a violation with penalties. We are awaiting a retest on 7/9 to determine if the bacteria level is back to zero and to learn what violation/consequences may emerge. If the coliform levels are not back to zero, we will have to explore other treatment options, such as UV filtration equipment.

I have also been in regular conversation with Farzad Shadzik and others related to the construction, as this month saw significant progress in demolition and framing.

This month I also did the Sunday deposit for Assistant Treasurer Dan Lownie, who was away, and covered for Rachel Hansen who took a week's PTO.

Rachel Hansen, Lynne Quinto and Roberto Santiago continue to support administrative and facilities work behind the scenes.

Ministerial Intern's Report
July, 2024
Lisa Schilansky

Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)

Since Rev. Kim submitted the staff-wide report in June, General Assembly and vacation have pulled me away from the chancel on Sunday mornings. I am grateful for the opportunities I have had this past month to engage with the congregation in worship.

On June 30th I offered various liturgical pieces in the service including a pre-written Story for All Ages. This provided an opportunity to invite the children of the congregation forward and to help them interact with props in this great story. I also held space with the parting words.

This past Sunday, July 7th, I led a service titled "The Gate" exploring the ways self-care is so necessary and also very challenging. This is the first of three services I'm leading this July with the goal of helping folks slow down and bring some introspection and levity into their lives during a tense political and temperature season. Two-thirds of the way through the service, the congregation was led in a guided meditation to help them connect more deeply with the message and to help them formulate their own takeaways.

Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)

This past month has provided more opportunities for pastoral care, especially during Rev. Kim's study leaves. This has included providing post-crisis home-based pastoral care and engaging in in-depth conversations on Sundays which result in later one-on-one meetings. It has been an honor getting to be a more central part of the congregation's pastoral care system and I have been working in collaboration with UUCWC's caring team in this work as well.

My monthly drop in meditation group, Breathe: the world needs you whole, continues to go well. People have adjusted well to the online only format and each month I am greeting new attendees. It is a good mix of regular and new attendees each month. The meditations tend to stir up feelings for participants and then the deep sharing will often provide opportunities for a pastoral response.

Finally, leading up to the four-day-long General Assembly, I was able to provide support for our GA delegation. This was especially important around managing anxiety around the anticipations around disagreement and conflict at the larger assembly. Throughout the week of GA I checked in with the delegation, providing concentrated support to those who found the week especially challenging. GA ended with me streaming the closing sessions up here at UUCWC with any members of the delegation who wished to join me. That provided an important debriefing opportunity. On the afternoon of the 9th there will be a delegation-wide meeting to help debrief and process and I have one-on-one debrief and support meetings planned as well.

Change the World

I am continuing to participate in the meetings of NJ Faith Action (NJFA), including attending their statewide hearings on Reparations in NJ. Preparations are beginning for this group's May lobby day and I will be attending a lobby day training on May 7th. I hope to attend at least part of the actual lobby day on May 20th, but it does conflict with my other job, so timing may be difficult.

I continue to work with Racial Justice Ministry and on July 8th had the opportunity to sit in on a joint FEFT/RJM meeting with a new recipient of funds, the Trenton Microloan Collaborative. Providing a pastoral presence in these meetings focused on changing the world continues to feel like some of my most important work here at UUCWC.

This past month I had the honor of serving our Unitarian Universalist Association in multiple ways at General Assembly (GA). I was a delegate for my home congregation, as noted above I supported the UUCWC delegation, I communicated to UUCWC daily with report backs from GA and ways to access various livestreams, and I served on the GA-wide covenant team. This work was incredibly important and incredibly hard, helping people from a wide array of backgrounds and experiences to stay in right relation with each other while having very difficult and at times painful conversations. Having a front row seat to the complexity of the different decisions made at GA has helped me understand how to best proceed in our work at UUCWC. On August 11th I will be leading a Sunday service reflecting on the work of the General Assembly and the hard growing edges that occurred that week.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,
Lisa