

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

Annual Meeting Minutes

June 5, 2016



**Join the Journey.
Open to You.**

Acting Board President Mike Hanson called the meeting to order at 11:46 am. 110 members were present. Board Secretary Michael Dalzell confirmed that the necessary quorum was established.

Jim Sanders moved that the minutes of the 2015 Annual Meeting be accepted. Sparky Morrison seconded. **Motion carried unanimously.**

SERVICE AWARDS

In our centennial year, we are pausing to honor all who have received UUCWC's Service Awards in past years. Trustee Pam Shadzik invited past winners to line up in the front of the sanctuary. Emma Lambert offered a song as a gift to those who have served our congregation.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Board of Trustees

Acting President Mike Hanson recapped accomplishments of the Board of Trustees during the 2015–2016 church year and looked ahead to 2016–2017:

- The board commissioned a task force to examine the feasibility of purchasing the property at 4 Old Washington Crossing Road. During and after the completion of the task force's work, it became apparent UUCWC may be able to expand its footprint on its own property rather than by purchasing another; thus, the board chose not to recommend a purchase to the congregation. Though this process was time-consuming, it was positive in that it allows us to engage the congregation in a conversation about dreams and possibilities for our own facility.
- Short-term improvements are in the works for our own property. These include parking improvements and restroom renovations. These two projects will be carried out using funds from a donor and the building reserve, respectively, and are outside the scope of any future capital campaign.
- The board worked with the Centennial celebration team, which organized a successful party on the eve of our 100th anniversary.

- We are working with facilitators of the racial justice initiative to provide support for the next phase of this initiative in 2016–2017.
- We have begun the process of becoming a teaching congregation to provide support for a ministerial intern.

Minister's Report

Rev. Kim Wildszewski shared observations from her second year in our pulpit:

- The story of the last five years of this congregation were about hard work: selection of a settled minister, a balanced budget, and a majority white congregation learning about the truths of race, privilege, and power. We planted the seeds for what we want.
- Now, we are beginning to reap the harvest. This church year, we welcomed 25 new members (Rev. Kim acknowledged those in attendance). As of the date of the annual meeting, UUCWC is up to 267 members and 31 pledging friends.
- We have walked through 10 monthly themes, linking sermon topics with social justice efforts and RE programs. Rev. Kim recognized Mary Kay Mitchell, who is stepping down as Social Justice chair, saying that Mary Kay has “made this ministry strong.”
- Creating community: Kinship circles have launched; the ROMEOs have worked on social justice and fellowship projects; widows are meeting to know what is helpful and hurtful when offering support to others who grieve. Life's transitions are held at UUCWC; during the year, we had child dedications and said goodbyes to pillars of our community.
- Rev. Kim thanked the congregation for the support that allowed UUCWC to hire Roberto (Sunday Steward) and Katie (office assistant), allowing the staff to do more work and remain healthy while doing it.

Director of Lifespan Religious Education

DLRE Robin Pugh reviewed the 2015–2016 church year in RE:

- Robin thanked our RE program's 36 teachers — one fifth of whom don't have kids in the RE program. Two teachers — Keelan Evanini and Becky Lang — teach every Sunday.
- The RE program serves 101 children and youth. This year we taught OWL.
- The Youth Group did service work in New York City. On their first night, they played games with homeless men. The next day, on their own volition, they made PBJ sandwiches for men sleeping on the sidewalk in Times Square.
- Adult RE sponsored seven programs, several with more than one section.
- Robin thanked Katie Bergin for helping to organize programs, freeing Robin to engage in programmatic activity.

In addition, during the year, Robin remained active in the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA), the professional organization of UU religious educators.

Facilities Management

The Facilities Management Team (FMT) is dedicated to the safe and green upkeep of our church building and grounds. FMT comprises Building and Grounds Committees; the Earth Ministry;

and the Audio-Visual, Memorial Garden, Technology, and Safety teams. Office Administrator Susan Irgang recounted major projects she has been involved with in her role as FMT leader during the 2015–2016 church year:

- Improvements to cellphone reception in the building for safety purposes
- Installation of an energy-efficient water heater
- Planning internally and with external authorities on parking expansion plans
- Stucco repairs
- Creation of emergency contact list
- Purchase of assisted-listening devices through contributions to the Deb Couch memorial fund

Susan thanked the FMT members for their work on these projects and Katie Bergin for managing regular office communications, which enabled Susan to be engaged in these projects.

Early in the 2016–2017 church year, Susan and selected members of the FMT will meet with the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission – the next milestone in our parking expansion project. During the rest of the year, FMT will oversee efforts to:

- Install a pilotless stove in the kitchen
- Improve lighting near the Crossings Room
- Replace lobby carpeting
- Install fencing and related aesthetic improvements in the Memorial Garden
- Boost cellphone reception in the building and on our grounds
- Plan for renovations of our restrooms

Denominational Affairs

Standing in for Bernice Husk, DA chair-nominee Holly Bussey reported on UUCWC involvement at the congregational level:

- At last year's GA in Portland, Ore., there were lively discussions on the Black Lives Matter movement and UU Climate Justice coalition activities. These discussions resulted in DA working closely with CFA in supporting initiatives for UUCWC for the church year. This support included offering book discussions on the Common Read.
- GA this year will be in Columbus, Ohio. Several delegates from UUCWC will attend.
- 4 UUCWC members attended the NY Metro District meeting. The district voted to approve a new structure of denominational governance at the regional level: The Central East Regional Group combines the Metro New York, Joseph Priestly, Ohio–Meadville, and St. Lawrence districts. We have one contact at CERG who will be our UUA liaison. At district meeting, Robin Pugh was chosen as educator of the year.
- We support the UUA as an "honor congregation." We have held this distinction for more than 25 consecutive years.

Council for Faith in Action (CFA)

Through CFA, UUCWC donates 50% of Sunday plate collections to organizations and causes the church elects to support. According to CFA Chair Sallie Dunner, donations totaling \$13,500 were made to a variety of organization, including:

- Morrisville Food Kitchen
- HomeFront
- Trenton Area Soup Kitchen
- Interfaith Housing Visions
- Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
- UU Service Committee
- UU–United Nations Office
- Equal Justice Initiative

The full list and more information can be found in CFA’s section in the 2015–2016 Annual Report. Sallie encouraged congregants to contact CFA if there is an organization you would like to be considered for support from CFA.

In the first year of the church’s racial justice initiative, 90 participants have explored what it means to have white privilege. This has challenged us to face assumptions about who we are. Congregants have participated in reflection circles, discussion groups, movie nights, and common reads. A handful of members have participated in the “Houses of Healing” curriculum led by Pris Gaver.

Next year, we will continue this work. An 8-session course called “Beloved Conversations” will run from fall through spring. We are also exploring ways to reach out to groups in the larger community, evaluating proposals for working with ISLES and/or One Simple Wish (a foster care organization); a yoga program in Trenton schools; and partnering with a black church in Bucks County.

Many of those involved in the racial justice initiative have discussed placement of a Black Lives Matter banner in front of the church, as has been done at several neighboring congregations. Sallie emphasized that such a display does not mean unqualified support for the actions of some people within the Black Lives Matter movement; it would mean that we stand for decency and human rights. There will be an inclusive process for determining whether a banner is placed in front of the church, including information sessions and small group conversations. The decision as to whether or not to hang a banner will not be made by the Council for Faith in Action or by Rev. Kim Wildszewski but by congregational vote at a specially called congregational meeting.

Stewardship

Chair Lou Csabay contrasted the plight of some other UU congregations with our own financial situation: Many congregations have merged; several more cannot afford a full-time minister. In these congregations, there is a pattern of decreased giving that does not allow for building upkeep, requires use of endowments to make ends meet, and forces staff reductions. In contrast, UUCWC has enjoyed an increasingly successful stewardship campaign over the last four years.

This year's campaign total netted 36% more than four years ago. We are a financially healthy congregation.

This year's campaign had an ambitious goal of \$355,000 — \$20,000 above last year's collection. In the end, this year's campaign exceeded the goal by \$22,000. Lou acknowledged Rev. Kim's active involvement in the campaign as a catalyst for the stellar results. Some statistics:

- 191 households participated
- Average household pledge was \$1,974, a \$317 increase from just 2 years ago

Treasurer's Report

[Editor's note: This presentation accounts for the first 11 months of the 2015–2016 budget year. Please refer to the Treasurer's Report in the minutes of the August 2016 Board of Trustees meeting for final 2015–2016 financial information.]

Treasurer Lynne Quinto presented a status report on the 2015–2016 budget year. Eleven months into the current budget cycle, highlights include:

Income

- A surplus >\$20,000 in excess of projections (this is not an end-of-year final calculation)
- Plate collections have increased; 100% of Centennial service collection (\$1600) went to CFA
- Auction income continues to increase — \$49,600 in 2016
- Rental income is declining because of a loss of long-term renters but is still above budget

Expenses

- Staffing: We follow UUA compensation guidelines, and we have added office and Sunday sexton support. A 5-year staffing plan is being completed
- Centennial celebration: Careful management of expenses and fundraiser kept the operational deficit (\$2,802) low
- Snow removal after the 30-inch snowstorm in January accounted for the majority of Grounds expenditures
- A "cleaning service" expense line was added when our sexton took disability leave
- Utility costs were lower this year
- Program expenses, on the whole, are on target

Other

- Account balances (not including reserves) total \$246,000
- The largest reserve fund is the Building Reserve, which totals \$55,109.34 as of this presentation

Commented [MD1]: May be "September" BOT minutes if final numbers are not yet ready for August

- We have 5.2 months of operating reserves in the bank; the standard for not-for-profit organizations is 3 months, so this reflects the financial strength of our congregation

PRESENTATION OF THE 2016–2017 PROPOSED BUDGET

Finance Committee Chair Joe Schenk presented the proposed 2016–2017 budget, which includes a \$9767 surplus. Some highlights:

- Operations costs are lower, owing to lower projected expenses (eg, Centennial celebration line item was considerably higher in 2015–2016)
- Building Reserve is funded at \$20,000 this year, significantly higher than the \$12,000 level of recent years (Joe is working with Andy and Susan on a plan to responsibly maintain this facility for next 20 years)
- A \$500 expense line is included for a ministerial intern search
- Income from ARE is down; this reflects the end of the yoga program

Joe discussed the annual auction. The line in the budget is for \$35,000, though the auction has consistently netted far more than this in recent years. This, in conjunction with the projected budget surplus, allows for a discourse on what to do with excess funds from the auction.

The Finance Committee recommends giving net auction revenues that exceed budget to charity. This would be a step away from depending on the auction for budget support — a goal of the church for many years — and an intentional step toward supporting our mission.

Steve Fishbein moved that the budget be approved as presented. Elliott Dunner seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

In response to the Finance Committee recommendation that auction revenues that exceed the budgeted amount be donated to charity, Mike Dalzell moved that net revenues that exceed the amount shown in the budget approved at the 2016 Annual Meeting be transferred to the Council for Faith in Action for dissemination to social justice programs, organizations, and causes that the church supports. This would apply only to budget year 2016–2017. Elliott Dunner seconded.

The motion was amended such that 10% of net excess auction revenues would be transferred to the church Endowment. The remainder of this amount will be transferred to the Council for Faith in Action for dissemination to social justice programs, organizations, and causes that the church supports.

A considerable amount of discussion followed. The following is a condensation of questions and comments:

The Auction Committee mentioned in its Annual Report, which was distributed to the congregation prior to the Annual Meeting, that this was a possibility for use of excess revenue.

Can the excess could be transferred to address unexpected external needs, such as those related to the building? The bylaws give the board leverage to adjust line items in case of unexpected issues.

This discussion speaks to our priorities. Should those priorities be internal or external?

How CFA directs the excess funds would hinge on a conversation with the congregation.

Reducing reliance on the auction for budget revenue allows for others to benefit from the auction while bringing new energy to the auction. Many UU congregations in N.J., including Princeton and Paramus, use auction proceeds for charity.

Motion should be tabled to give the congregation time to consider this, or until we are certain that auction funds exceeding budget targets exist.

The church is not yet where it needs to be in terms of paying for the operations of the church (ie, fully nondependent on auction revenues).

If we do not do this this, the *budgeted* surplus would not change. However, the *actual* end-of-year surplus would be affected by auction revenues that exceed the budget.

This discussion is healthy; it is better than talking about what to do in the face of a deficit.

By a vote of 109–1, the congregation **voted to table the motion**. The board will engage the congregation in further discussion about the auction surplus as the year progresses.

PRESENTATION OF THE SLATE

Dianne Ross presented the slate of leadership nominees.

In keeping with the governance structure presented at the 2014 Annual Meeting and formalized through policy by the board in November 2014, the slate lists individuals in two categories:

Nominees for election to governance positions (Board of Trustees and governance committees). Nominees for these positions are forwarded by the Nominating Committee, though nominations are also accepted from the floor. Candidates are elected by the congregation.

Leaders of ministry teams and other groups. Ministry teams are encouraged to develop their own leaders from within. These positions are not filled by the Nominating Committee, nor are Nominations for these positions taken from the floor. As a check and balance, the congregation is asked to “affirm” ministry teams’ selections of leaders.

Holly Bussey moved to accept the slate as presented. Jim Sanders seconded. No discussion or questions were offered, and no nominations were received from the floor. The **motion passed unanimously**.

Adjournment

Rev. Kim offered closing words. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael Dalzell", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Dalzell, Secretary, Board of Trustees

