

## **UUCSC Board of Directors Meeting**

April 30, 2025

via Zoom

**Present:** President Nancy Richman, VP Russell Stokes, Treasurer Mary Alice Kimball, Clerk Mary Fulton, Directors Kelsey Briggs, Chris Johnson, Trish Hindley and Rev. Denis Letourneau Paul

**Guest:** Amber Collins

**Call to Order:** 10:33 am by Nancy Richman

**MOTION:** Nancy Richman moves to ratify the March 26 minutes approved via email. **PASSED** unanimously

**MOTION:** Nancy Richman moves to ratify the email vote to appoint Lisa Richter, Rob Carter, Brian Maynard, Pat Keefe and Mary Fulton to an ad hoc search committee to hire a Financial Administrator, **PASSED** unanimously

**Staff reports are appended.**

### **Old Business:**

Rev. Denis Paul reported that staff evaluations have been completed.

### **Finance report and draft budget review:** Mary Alice Kimball

Currently there is no chair of the Finance committee. Personnel has worked on staff salaries but there is confusion as to which committee determines the minister's contract. The UUA has confirmed by letter that UUCSC is a 501.C3 nonprofit. Planning for a sabbatical leave next year for Rev. Denis Paul will begin now with a line item in the 2025/26 budget proposal. The summer Wunder Academy has received a \$2500 Hurdis Fund grant. The new UUA hymnal will be available only through a digital subscription. This would require new technology and volunteers to be trained and scheduled to run the projector, etc. Rev. Denis is seeking members for an ad hoc committee to research what would be required to implement digital hymnals.

Each line of the proposed budget was discussed and a few changes recommended. The proposal will be presented to the congregation on May

11. The Coordinating Council will review it on May 14. The Board will approve the final budget on May 14 at 7:00pm after getting all of the relevant feedback.

**Bylaws:** Tabled until May 14 meeting. Small changes may be voted on at the Annual business meeting.

Coordinating Council: Wednesday May 14, 1:00pm via Zoom

Next Board meeting: Wednesday May 14, 7:00pm via Zoom

Annual Business Meeting: June 8, following services

## **Staff Reports**

### **Office Administrator Board Report, April 2025**

#### **Stewardship**

I assisted Jeff Berry to keep a record of pledge forms received and pledge totals. I took on responsibility for sending thank you emails to people who returned pledge forms

#### **Membership**

I worked with Val Follet to create materials for the New Member ceremony April 6.

#### **Special Events**

I provided support for Charlie Donnelly's film series and for the "Beyond the Binary" program.

#### **Shout out to Mary Fulton**

Mary started the ongoing process of creating order out of the chaos of "stuff" in the OA office. As a result, I have also been doing a great deal of shredding of old papers!

#### **Ongoing**

I continue to work with Etta on the newsletter and website, and to take care of the mail, email and phone messages. I continue to produce the weekly order of service and the monthly announcements insert, and to deliver the food donations to the Johnnycake Center.

Best,

Sara Kaplow  
Office Administrator

**Minister's Report to the Board of Directors**  
**UU Congregation of South County**  
**Rev. Denis Paul**

April 16, 2025

Dear Members of the Board of Directors,

Following are my thoughts on different areas of ministry:

Worship Life

Since my last report to the board, I have led the following worship services:

3/16 "I Can't Hear You," with Taryn Hart

4/6 "The Heterodoxy Club," with Barbara Nowicki

My preaching schedule was so dense from September through February that it will be quite light through the end of the congregational year. I'm assisting the worship committee in planning summer services. On April 5 we had another of our Worship Assistant Grounding sessions, this time focusing on the art of preaching, with the hopes that they'll have a bit more facility with writing homilies for services they lead.

Music Director Ami Pienknagaru begins tomorrow with a choir rehearsal. We've already been talking about upcoming services, and they already have access to hymnals, the worship planning spreadsheet, and worship documents on Google Drive, including drafts of upcoming services.

Lee, Ami and I have been talking about experimenting with rearranging the sanctuary for worship, so that the choir is in the same space as the rest of the congregation, allowing them to see and hear better. We'll be reserving the chancel for the altar, artwork, Joys and Concerns, and other events that would benefit from being elevated. This change is intended to be more reflective of the congregation's values and hopes of making music and worship together, rather than attending a performance. Like everything we try, this is an experiment.

Congregational Life

On April 6, the Committee on Ministry (COM) hosted the first of a series of regularly scheduled Listening Sessions after Sunday worship to talk about the biggest issues we face. Honestly, I expected that finances and leadership development would be the biggest issues, but it turns out that the divide between "upstairs and downstairs" took precedence. My takeaway is that the issues that leave RE families feeling separated from congregational life are so complex and deeply engrained that they are difficult to explain to anyone who hasn't experienced it first hand. Given the conversations that members of the nominating committee have had with RE parents,

inviting them into leadership (on the board, nominating committee and COM) it seems clear to me that the division is at the root of the leadership vacuum we're feeling.

Communication, which seems to be the source of tensions in all relationships, has been named as a problem. The good news is that simply having time to talking about our concerns, reporting back what we've heard and said, and planning to continue the discussion is helping many to re/connect. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but it's clear that for everyone this congregation is important, and we have a lot of love, respect and mutual care in our midst.

Meanwhile, I've been working with the nominating committee and the board, to rethink the roles of president and treasurer, so that their responsibilities can be broken down among multiple people working closely together so that neither feels like a overwhelming (unpaid!) full time job. They are getting lots of positive feedback, including from the board, so thank you for your expansive thinking!

Staff evaluations are completed, signed and in the personnel files of Lee and Sara. The COM will be conducting the annual evaluation of ministry on May 8 at 9:30AM.

### Community Life

On April 13 I attended the spring forum of the UU Legislative Ministry of RI (along with Cathy, Sarah, Sue, Mary Alice and Sky), hearing confirmation from the speaker of the house and other legislators in terms of national politics, we are on the right track focusing on being allies to queer and immigrant communities. They also suggested picking one (or maybe two) topics and giving them all of our attention. I took that to mean all of the collective attention of UULMRI, but apparently I was alone in that understanding. The group will continue to only host spring and fall forums for discussion as we all do our work separately. I'm glad our congregation has focus, even if the RI congregations can't do it together.

At invitation of the Social Justice Advisory Board, I'll be making opening and closing remarks at the Beyond the Binary conference on April 26. I want to encourage everyone to be there, for this important time of listening, sharing resources and most importantly learning how to better support a community under attack. We'll also be present at South County Pride on June 14, with the goal of meeting people where they are. As usual, I will be offering blessings — and a bit of chocolate — to festival attendees.

### Housekeeping

My next furlough week is April 22-27.

Since my last report, I have made no disbursements from the Agape Fund.

In Peace,  
Rev. Denis Paul

Report for April 30th Board Meeting  
Director of Religious Exploration

Dear Board,

My work continues to feel fulfilling and full. Sundays are very vibrant and they work well when we have activities coordinated and facilitated for each age group. I now need more adult help on Sundays, because the age groups are big enough that they often need to be in their own space with their own activities. I will have a sign up calendar this Sunday for folks to sign-up to volunteer in RE! Please contact me if you're interested.

We met with our 9-10 yr olds again this month for our Wunder Explorers program. We visited the Giant Trolls at Ninigret Park and had a fantastic time really sitting with them and observing both them, the people around them and our own responses and feelings about them.

We had our first planning meeting for the Wunder Academy last Sunday with some great discussions about how to support the middle schoolers' fascination with weaponry, while also creating a peaceful and inclusive environment in RE. We have a plan to discuss the ethics of having play weapons and what we can make this summer to incorporate their desire to create with things that are a little friendlier. We also began to discuss how to make the Wunder Academy more expressly focused on social justice.

Our Wednesday potluck gatherings are in transition as the DnD campaign came to a close last week. We are discussing what the next phase will look like. I would like to have drop-in community time from 3:30-5:30 for all ages.

I met with the Committee on Ministry last week to discuss next steps after the listening session that they facilitated. We are bringing in an outside facilitator on May 18th to lead us in some communication exercises so that we can continue to better understand each other.

Beyond the Binary was such a success. I created the art wall and coordinated child care for it.

The middle school youth groups from UUCSC and Westminster Unitarian met together last week for a beach clean up. I'm meeting with the DRE from First Unitarian Church in Providence and Westminster to talk about more collaboration. I'm meeting with the CE at Peacedale Congregational about a joint youth group event with Peacedale and Kingston Congregational.

The Wunder Revels of Beltane is this Sunday after service and I am also leading service.

We will be cleaning and organizing RE on May 20th from 9am-2pm. All volunteers can contact Mike Bilecki to sign up for a timeslot.

Thanks all!  
Lee