

UUCSC Board of Directors Meeting

September 11, 2025

Present: President Amber Collins, VP Russell Stokes, Treasurer Karen Ellsworth, Clerk Mary Fulton, Directors Donna Caldwell, Chris Johnson

Absent: Director April Ruedaflores

Call to Order: 10:00 am by Amber Collins

August minutes were not ratified.

Staff reports are appended.

Amber shared information about coffee hour/hospitality and the Coordinating Council meeting that was held on 9/10.

Karen addressed the ad hoc rental committees need to clarify how Church Mutual Insurance covers various group meetings. Based on this information, a proposed revision of the facilities use guidelines will be offered at the October Board meeting.

Karen gave an extensive treasurer's report. It was decided that the date of the Board meetings will not be changed because the delay of a few weeks will not significantly impact the value of the financial information that is provided every month. A one-page template for these monthly reports is being developed. The transition to a new treasurer and bookkeeper is progressing.

Michael Bilecki is concerned that committee responsibilities seem to be changing, specifically in regard to cleaning the building. The professional cleaners began taking over the Clean Team tasks this summer and the expense is significant. Russell will speak with Michael about how the cleaning tasks or expenses might be restructured so that the chair of Facilities does not have to assume onerous additional jobs.

Donna gave suggested updates for the Members Handbook to Mary Finnegan, chair of Membership.

Fundraising and Capital Campaign:

A yard sale is being planned for October 11. The Holiday Fair will be Saturday December 6. An in-person auction is possible in late January. Other fundraising events are being discussed.

A capital campaign to address building maintenance will probably be necessary in 2026/27.

Regional Opportunity:

It was decided that the Leadership Retreat in Northampton did not meet our expectations.

Board communication with the congregation:

Board members doing the Welcome and announcements for the Sunday services:

October 5 – Probably April – Fire drill scheduled

October 12 – Mary

October 19 – Amber

October 26 – Karen

Rev. Denis will provide a standard welcoming template.

Chalice Days will be celebrated December 7-14. A congregational dinner will be held Tuesday December 9.

New business:

A Board retreat will be held some time in November. The topic will be restructuring the committees and revising the bylaws.

Adjourned 11:30.

The next Board meeting, on the second Thursday of the month, will be October 9.

The next Coordinating Council meeting, on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, will be November 12.

Staff Reports

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

September 10, 2025

Dear Members of the Board of Directors,

Following are my thoughts on different areas of ministry:

Worship Life

Since returning from vacation during the month of July, I have led the following worship services:

8/10 "Every Little Thing" with Michelle Stage

8/17 "The Paradox of Priesthood," with Michelle Stage

9/7 "Frog Wisdom," with Lee Cowan

Worship in the new congregational year started with a bang. The Water Communion/Ingathering had record attendance and Henry Penelope Sunflower, the giant protest puppet created by participants of the Wunder Academy of Metamorphosis made a splash.

The Worship Committee did a great job presenting services during the summer that were informative, spiritually grounded, and musically inclusive. Special thanks to Adria who held it together as she moved house, Kerri Lyn for jumping in with both feet, and all of the musicians who brought their instruments, voices and skills to the sanctuary to make it special.

After a lot of discussion and feedback from parents, children and other adults in the congregation, Lee and I have scheduled the first Sunday of each month to have children present in the sanctuary: sometimes for the whole service, but mostly for the beginning of the service for a time for all ages. Children will still be present in the sanctuary on other Sundays throughout the year for special events and services. The hope is that by setting aside consistent Sundays we'll have more participation and it will be easier for everyone to plan.

Congregational Life

Sally Barney will be joining Lee and me to facilitate three different Reflection Circles during this congregational year. Mine will be once per month; Lee's will be once per week; and Sally's will be twice per month. Each group will be made up of 8-12 people committed to meeting 8-10 times. The point of the groups is to encourage personal growth and community health through deep sharing and deep listening, in facilitated conversations on spiritual topics. If these work this year, we hope to continue into next year and beyond changing meeting times each year.

Congregational Dinners have been scheduled for October, December and March, plus Breakfast Church (again) on the last Sunday before the summer "break." Lee and I

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Congregational Dinners have been scheduled for October, December and March, plus Breakfast Church (again) on the last Sunday before the summer "break." Lee and I hope to continue using the "task basket" to divvy up the clean up, and to get even more help with cooking the buffet-style deconstructed meal that accommodates all diets and limitations.

Community Life

This month I begin hosting some of our weekly gatherings for Beverages and Banter beyond South Kingstown, hoping to include more members and friends. I'm open to suggestions for new locations.

In October, we'll be working the Hera Gallery to present in our sanctuary a screening of "Grains of Sand," by filmmaker Sarah Gross. It's the story of her mother, UU Rev. Margot Campbell Gross, her dear friend Barbara, and the art they both make. But really, it's a story about aging gracefully, facing the challenges head-on.

The resistance to fascism continues, as do the planned protests around Southern RI. Henry Penelope Sunflower will be making appearances at these events. Everyone is welcome to learn how to be a puppeteer, so Henry can make more appearances and stir up more of the pond water in his signature BIG way.

Housekeeping

Monday is my regular sabbath.

My next furlough week is September 23-28

Since my last report, I have made one disbursement from the Agape Fund, \$655 to help out a beloved member of our community in a time of need.

In Peace,

Rev. Denis

Office Administrator Board Report, September 2025

New Church Year

I have resumed "winter" hours and am getting used to the increased workload the new church year brings. Rev. Denis and I decided to try an adjustment to my hours so that I will come in later and stay later on Tuesdays to give him more time to get the newsletter items and the order of service ready before I need to start working on them.

Working with Facilities

I worked with Mike Bilecki to coordinate with the new cleaning service and schedule their work. We are also working on updating the keyless entry system.

Ongoing

I continue to work with Etta on the newsletter and website, and to take care of the mail, email, phone messages and writing checks in response to special requests. I continue to produce the weekly order of service, and to deliver the food donations to the Johnnycake Center.

Best,

Sara Kaplow
Office Administrator

Report for September Board Meeting 2025
Director of Religious Exploration

Dear Board,

We've had one Sunday back for this congregational year: water communion, a multi-gen in the sanctuary. We had many kids come back for this ingathering service!

The Wunder Academy of Metamorphosis was a great success. We had 20 kids and 17 volunteers, plus five staff people (including myself and Rev. Denis). We decided that we will have our first planning meeting for next year's Academy in January and continue to have regular planning meetings in the new year, January through June. We had a debrief meeting of volunteers yesterday and some great ideas came from it. One suggestion was for volunteers to spend some time in RE during the congregational year. This way volunteers and kids get to know each other a little better before spending time together at the Academy.

We plan to have a Time For All Ages on the first Sunday of every month. This way everyone knows what to expect and we have a time when we know we will all be together as a whole congregation.

We are welcoming Jenny Rebecca back to the nursery this year! She will begin in October. We also have Suzelle and Elise available to work in RE again as well. I'm asking if our budget can include three staff people for some Sundays.

We will continue the Breakfast Club for our youth group. This will be the last Sundays of the month with a different discussion each month and a walk around Peacedale. We would love folks from the congregation to join that group for their monthly discussion and outing.

We have an OWL training November 7th-9th for the 7th/9th and 10th/12th grade curriculum. We have space for more members of our congregation to join!

We've set dates for our congregational dinners for this year: Oct. 17th, Dec. 9th, and March 27th

Our first RE Visioning meeting will be Sept. 28th at 11:30, after coffee hour. It's a time to gather ideas and feedback for the future of RE. It's also a time to sign up for tasks and projects to help RE. We will also have a sign-up sheet this coming Sunday to volunteer in RE on upcoming Sundays.

Thanks to all of you for your love and commitment to this congregation
Much love,

Lee