

UUCSC Board of Directors Meeting

February 11, 2026

Present: President Amber Collins, VP Russell Stokes, Treasurer Karen Ellsworth, Clerk Mary Fulton, Directors Donna Caldwell, Chris Johnson, April Ruedaflores, Rev. Denis Paul

Guest: Barbara Beckwith

Call to Order: 10:05 am by Amber Collins

MOTION: Karen moves to ratify the January minutes.

PASSED unanimously.

MOTION: Donna moves to accept the staff reports.

PASSED unanimously.

MOTION: April moves to postpone the treasure's report until the March Board meeting.

PASSED unanimously.

Staff reports are appended.

Nominating: Barbara Beckwith verified that the terms of Russell Stokes (VP), Mary Fulton (Clerk) and April Ruedaflores (Director) will expire in June. April indicated that she is willing to be nominated for a 2 - year term to begin in June and end in June, 2028.

Office Administrator (OA) position: Sara Kaplow will be retiring soon. The Personnel committee is informed and prepared to do a search for a new OA.

Facilities Use Policy: Rev. Denis and Karen will prepare a seating diagram of the Sanctuary that will be included in the Facility Use Policy as Appendix B. The revised Appendix B will be submitted to the Board for approval at the March meeting. The hallways needed to be cleared for fire safety reasons. The Fire Marshall will be scheduled for a visit on June 1 so the building needs to be well prepared for his inspection. Russell will coordinate, with the assistance of Amber, Donna and Mary, the work of stowing things properly or having them removed from the building.

MOTION: Russell moves to accept the policy as written with the exception of Appendix B.

PASSED unanimously.

Clerk's Job Description: This document has been updated. The revision will be posted on the UUCSC website.

Bylaws changes: Michael Bilecki proposed a change that the Board deemed unnecessary. The proposed amended version allows Friends of the congregation to serve as chairs on Program and Administrative committees, but not the Congregational committees. This distinction is noted in the sections of the bylaws that address each type of committee.

Publicity: The Communication committee has designed a palm card to advertise our congregation. Etta Zasloff asked for feedback on the design. The Board was very pleased with the concept and asked April to offer some feedback based on her marketing expertise.

NEW BUSINESS

Sabbatical for Rev. Denis: Definite plans are not possible at the present time but preparation work can be done.

MOTION: Karen moves that the Board recommend to the Finance committee that they add three months of pulpit supply and per diem for pastoral care to the 2026/27 budget.

PASSED unanimously.

Adjourned 11:07.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Fulton, Clerk

Staff reports appended.

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

February 8, 2026

Dear Members of the Board of Directors,

Following are my thoughts on different areas of ministry since my last report:

Worship Life

1/4 "The Power of Myrrh"

1/11 "Ovipositors and Other Forms of Resistance," with Kerri Lynn

1/18 "Roots and Wings"

2/1 "Yearning for Forest Leaves," with Barbara Nowicki

I want to start by thanking members of the Board of Directors for being flexible in your participation in Sunday services. Having you lead the Reciting of the Covenant feels natural and meaningful, so please remember to introduce yourself before beginning.

Sadly, Michelle Stage, who has been a member of the worship Committee for two years now, will be leaving us in May for research fellowship at Rutgers. We'll miss her cheerful presence and great ideas, and we'll miss having a younger voice on the Worship Committee.

After three years of mild winters with so little precipitation, we've (re)learned a valuable lesson: during the winter, never plan a big service whose success requires a big, embodied, physical presence. Save those for the spring! Several congregations around us have canceled or gone to Zoom-only for most of the services since Christmas. We haven't had to do that, but the lesson still stands.

Congregational Life

The Committee on Ministry has been working hard to come up with a plan for a meaningful and productive "Roots and Wings" conversation on 2/15.

Part of that work has been framing communication — speaking thoughtfully and actively listening to— as a series of important tasks that are an integral part of the whole project of caring for our congregation and each other. Communicating is Work. Another part of the work is coming up with a program that addresses needs and expectations expressed during and after past listening sessions. As we do this work together we've become more certain that it will require big cultural shifts to address the three perennial and interconnected issues of leadership development, upstairs/downstairs, and sustainability for the future. The fundraising Gala on January 31 is a great example of how those three issues are interconnected. The folks who led the efforts (and did the lion's share of the work) pulled it off, despite the challenges of the weather, the time of year and the change in format. People showed up ready to enjoy the evening and give money, and the organizers adapted their plans for the silent auction, so that it can be as successful as the evening. All of this is proof to me that our members and friends are committed and open to change.

Community Life

Since the inauguration of the republican president, the constant chaos and casual cruelty have forced me to rethink a lot, including how I do the work of ministry. As UU ministers talked about and planned for a gathering in Minneapolis as a response to the murder of Renee Good, an Episcopal priest in New Hampshire shifted the conversation when he stated that the job of justice-seeking ministers is now to “get our affairs in order” and to show up “ready to be martyred.” It sparked a lot of heavy conversation in our household, and no small amount of sadness when we realized we couldn't go because of my mother-in-law's surgery planned for that week. Just a few days later, the Executive Director RI council of Churches, at a gathering of 45 or so interfaith clergy from around the state made another observation I'd been trying to articulate. In the past, ministers have accompanied congregants in the work of community organizing, to build long-term relationships to address local issues. Now, ministers are going to have to take the lead and hope that congregants follow, as we risk our lives to stop the imminent demise of democracy and our liberal religious values. We're all going to have to prioritize showing up to fight back as the regime sends troops into states like ours, which they see as their enemies.

Housekeeping

Monday is my regular sabbath.

My next furlough week is February 17-22, when I will be in California with our Gabby and her new son, Archer, born on 2/22.

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

In Peace,
Rev. Denis Paul

**Director of Faith Exploration, Lee Cowan
Report to the Board of Directors
UU Congregation of South County**

February 8th, 2026

Dear Board,

Sundays continue to feel lively in RE. We've been focusing on community building with theater improv games and interactive games. We've also been working on our identity collages to get to know each other better. Having Julien and Jenny Rebecca with us is such a blessing. They're such gifts to this program.

All Ages Choir is also a lovely part of our Sundays. I want to emphasize that it's designed to be for anyone, not just kids! So if people want to get a taste of learning songs together but can't make it to the adult choir on Thursday nights, come on a Sunday from 11:30-noon.

My Reflection Circle has been such good nourishment. We have 10 people in it and are creating a really deeply connected sharing circle together. We've met twice now and have 6 more circles.

Coming of Age began with our first meeting last week. We have four teens and four adult mentors participating. Rev Denis and I led a conversation about "what is sacred" and then made altars together. Coming of Age is all about the youth diving deeper into what they believe and learning more about the Unitarian Universalist faith. They will be creating their own personal credos and also helping lead service on May 31st.

We're hoping to run OWL for Kindergarten and 1st graders this spring. We have a few kids in that age group, but I'd love to reach out to our local community to see if other families are interested in joining. Please have people get in touch with us if you know anyone!

Dungeons and Dragons continues to thrive under the dedicated leadership of Andrew White. We are planning to have monthly DnD for elementary aged kids during the *Dawn of Everything* book club. So the first younger kid DnD will be Feb. 24 at 5:30

I was grateful to be part of the last COM meeting to plan the Roots and Wings service. It's really important work we're all doing together, learning to be better humans and build resilient loving communities.

Thank you for all that you do and for how you show up
Lots of love,
Lee