

UUCSC Board of Directors Meeting
May 14, 2026

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

Absent: April Ruedaflores

Guest: Susan Strakosch

Call to Order: 10:00 am by Amber Collins

MOTION: Mary moves to ratify the April minutes.

PASSED unanimously.

MOTION: Donna moves to accept the staff reports and the treasurer's report.

PASSED unanimously.

Reports are appended.

Treasurer's comments: The congregation now has an online QuickBooks account. Previously we used QuickBooks software. The online account enables immediate access to current budget data. The current treasurer, chair of the Finance committee and the bookkeeper need access to QuickBooks but authorization was not set up properly. Karen said that Mary Alice's failure to relinquish her role as Treasurer continues to hamper her ability to carry out her responsibilities, and that if the situation is not rectified, she will resign as Treasurer effective May 31.

Last year's budget projected a deficit of \$19,000 dollars but as of April 30th there is no deficit. Instead, there is a surplus of approximately \$5000. The proposed 2026-27 budget projects a deficit of \$13,000.

Karen anticipates being able to file the application for an IRS determination of Sec. 501(c)(3) status before the Annual Meeting on June 14.

MOTION: Russell moves to approve the 2026-27 budget as proposed by the Finance committee.

PASSED unanimously.

A budget information meeting will be held after the service on May 24. If someone wants to see the budget before the 24th they can contact Karen Ellsworth to get a digital copy emailed to them.

OLD BUSINESS:

Coordinating Council: At the 5/13 meeting there were questions regarding how to support the Helping Hands team since Bethany Sorrentino wishes to resign. Mary Fulton will work with Kelsey Briggs on this. There were also questions about improving the hearing zone during Sunday services. Auracast is an alternative sound system that might be helpful. Education about phone apps that transcribe speech might be part of an ongoing hearing ministry. The Worship committee is soliciting support for the summer lay lead services. Musical support is the most pressing need. The desire for a tech specialist to handle Zooming services was articulated. It was suggested that perhaps the teens in RE would be interested in this role. Ron Forster has expressed his willingness to write specific directions that could be easily followed.

Committee on Ministry: Aline Couture and Sarah Dinklage will rotate off to make room for 2 new members. Rev. Denis has a list of 4 people to contact about these positions. Danille Bilecki is scheduled to complete the second year of her two-year term. Barbara Nowicki will be asked to remain for an additional year.

Fundraising: A quilt raffle will be held in June. UUCSC members can begin selling raffle tickets as soon as the tickets are printed. The winning ticket will be chosen on the last Sunday in June, June 28th which is Rev Denis' last day. Other fundraising suggestions are welcome. There is a need for someone to coordinate yearly fundraising activities. This does not mean actually directing several events, rather it means organizing task forces to do the planning and work.

Adjourned 11:10.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Fulton, Clerk

REPORTS

Minister's Report to the Board of Directors

UU Congregation of South County

Rev. Denis Paul

May 6, 2026

Dear Members of the Board of Directors,

As I work through my last two months serving as minister at UUCSC, following are my thoughts on different areas of ministry since my last report:

Worship Life

4/5 "Inciting Joy," with Lee Cowan

4/12 "Ballad of the Satisficer"

4/26 "Bean Soup Theory"

5/3 "Extinguishing the Flames"

I learned something interesting a couple weeks ago. Cooking on the altar (even when you're just mixing up cold, precooked food) is surprisingly enjoyable, and a great way of making manifest an effective metaphor. I've made a note to myself to do it more, wherever I end up next.

I've been finding myself leading worship alone, without the company of worship assistants, partly out of a lack of time for coordinating, and partly out of a desire to savor every moment with you that I can. I'm trusting that the work we've all done together with worship leaders is enough to equip them for

moving forward. Meanwhile, I've been coaching Adria and the other members of the worship committee through possible approaches to producing worship through the summer, or longer in the event that a new minister doesn't begin in August or September.

Congregational Life

There's a lot going on around here, and honestly, much of it is happening without me! It's an odd feeling. Just yesterday, I was in the building while meetings were going on all around me. I know that I will be winding down with the the Reflection Circle I facilitate, the committees whose meetings I attend regularly, and the members of the congregation who are asking for final one-to-one meetings before my departure. I also have a list of folks I want to check in with before leaving.

At the moment, my exit interview with Art Nava of the New England Region staff is set up for May 27, and the COM is planning an evaluation of the ministry for early June, and inviting anyone in the congregation interested in participating.

I've had a surprising Number of requests from folks to continue a relationship after I leave. I want to say here, and in other venues in the coming weeks, why I can't do that. With the health of the congregations we serve as our primary concern, we members of the UU Ministers Association covenant with each other to not have personal relationships with members and/or friends of those congregations, during our tenure or afterward. For decades, our code of conduct required us to absent ourselves for two years after our departure. Current thinking is that if we have no personal relationships during our tenure, then there is no personal relationship to continue afterward. The reason for this is twofold: It allows congregants to form bonds with the new minister without the presence of the former minister getting in the way; and it allows the minister to move on to the next post able to be fully present and available without a foot remaining in the past congregation. Of course, if anyone has legitimate questions and needs to reach out, I'm available for an answer.

Community Life

I haven't been concerning myself too much with what is going on in the wider

community during these last two months. I want to focus my attention on you, the people I serve.

Housekeeping

Monday is my regular sabbath.

Next week is a study week, during which I will mostly working from home, planning alternatives to the services I had planned before announcing my departure, and changes in the worship schedule caused by having to move the Coming of Age service. I will also be coming in for the board meeting and the congregational dinner, as well is joining the Coming of Age Class via Zoom.

My next furlough week is May 19-24.

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
May 8th, 2026

Dear Board,

Sundays continue to be vibrant in RE. We planted peas in our raised bed! I've told stories of famous UUs from the Soul Matters curriculum and we've had interesting discussions about their lives and choices and how we live into our values.

Wünder Revels of Beltane was such a joy last Sunday. We had a new family join us plus several families who haven't come in a long time. I had a lot of help with set up, food and clean up, which was wonderful. Thanks to all who participated.

And thank you to the congregants who have signed up to visit us! Will Bender joined us on a very sparsely attended Sunday and brought so much joy. Barbara Pagh is making paper with us this Sunday and Barbara Nowicki is planting seeds with us the following. **Please sign up on the clipboard in Oneto room during coffee hour!**

I attended the Kingian Nonviolence Training last month and I'm interested in bringing some of the principles and skills we learned to our congregation. I'm intrigued by how a person can embody nonviolence as a way of life, both in relation to themselves and others. And how that mindset and skills can heal our relationships. I've been attending COM meetings, and I'm excited to discuss how this training weaves into our work together.

The clearing crew did an amazing job on the RE hallway and office! I plan to go through memorabilia in the office with Pam Santos and Sally Barney before the end of May and then organize the office into a functional storage space.

I'm organizing the Everyone Birthday Party dinner for next Friday, May 15th. We have a lot of volunteers signed up, but need a few more. **Sign up sheet for food is in the Oneto Room**

Coming of Age is moving along. We had some scheduling bumps but now have a commitment from the kids to finish what we've started together. I'm so excited to see what they come up with for their service. It is now scheduled for June 7th.

The Wunder Academy has 12 kids signed up so far and I anticipate at least 10 more. That's just from our current families and I know that Jeannette at Westminster has been talking it up to her families as well. Plus there's a few families in my homeschool community who are interested. We're refining our plan for this summer, focusing on quality over quantity. **Please let me know ASAP if you'd like to visit us during our magical week!** It's August 17-21st, 9am-3pm

Thanks all,
Lee

Office Administrator Board Report, May, 2026

New Member Ceremony

I produced the new member ceremony insert with the new member photos and biographies, and provided directories and other printed materials requested by the Membership Committee.

Stewardship and Finance

I continued working with Trish Kelley and Jeff Berry on processing returned pledges.

Social Justice

I produced materials to support various Social Justice programs, including the Kingian Nonviolence Training, Beyond the Binary program, and Observer Training.

Tree of Life

I collected 2 leaves that have been inscribed from the firm in North Kingstown and installed them as directed by the people who ordered them.

Ministry Search

I supported the work of the Ministry Search Committee, producing copies of the draft application to be made available to the congregation for review.

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

Treasurer's Report (By email May 8)

Board Members,

Attached is the draft 2-26-2027 budget. I apologize for not getting it to you sooner. I hope you will have a chance to look at it before the Board meeting next Thursday (May 14). Finance Committee Chair Sue Strakosch was not able to add final notes to it because she has been out of state since last week. I am going to ask her to attend the Board meeting next Thursday to help me answer your questions. I will also have more information on Thursday about the results of the stewardship campaign. As of this date, pledges are still being received.

I had also hoped to be able to send you a budget spreadsheet as of April 30 so that you could compare income and spending to date with what's in the proposed 2026-2027 budget, but unfortunately the information I sought was not immediately available. Although Ame Botus has switched to the new QuickBooks online software, I do not yet have instructions for how to access it, and Mary Alice says she is not yet familiar enough with the system to access it. She asked Ame to send me a budget summary as of April 30. I received it yesterday, but because of the way it is arranged, it does not provide a comprehensive picture of our finances. I have asked Ame to send me another one that has only two columns—the approved budget, and income and spending as of April 30. When I receive that, I will forward it to you.

The Finance Committee has not yet set a date for a budget presentation to the congregation. We should schedule one for Sunday, May 17. Sunday, May 24 is on Memorial Day weekend, so attendance might not be what we would wish. The Annual Meeting is on Sunday, June 14. I will have more up-to-date scheduling information for you at the Board meeting on Thursday.

If you have any questions about the proposed budget and would like to discuss it before the meeting on Thursday, please get in touch with me.