

January 2026 Congregational Meeting Minutes

Subject: Spring Congregational Meeting

Date: May 17, 2026

Attendees: Rev. Amanda; Rev. Sam; Peter Tracey (Moderator); Michael Enseki-Frank (Assistant Moderator); Abigail Cipparone (Clerk); Erin Williams (At-Large); Courtney McCaffrey; Lucille Dickinson (Treasurer); Ellen Bushmiller (Facilities); Chris Byrne (Worship); Kristy Goodfellow, Dennis Turner, Thaddeus Elliott, Patrick Darling LaGamma, Joseph Darling LaGamma, Nick and Nan McConnell, Meg Maguire, Abby Johnson, Diane Brenneman, Jim Riker

#	Topic	Notes	Next Steps
1	Approval of the Congregational Minutes	23 Yeas, No Nays	
2	Moderator's Report	• We are engaged in a vibrant community but have faced some challenges. • Ulung will not be joining as Music Director anymore, we are searching for a new music director. • Dennis's contract as Interim Director starts tomorrow, I want to express gratitude to him. • The Council has now approved the formation of a search committee for the director of music ministry position. • Dwan and Andrew are leading that committee, and the participants have been selected. • Our building is in its 15th year of operation. We are reaching the end of the natural life of some of our systems, particularly the HVAC. We have been maintaining a capital reserve fund for these expenditures. ◦ The facilities commission will work with finance to create a replacement schedule with minimum obstruction to our tenants and congregation. ◦ We want to emphasize this will not be a financial crisis: we've been adding to the capital reserve and	We will list who is on council in the next newsletter or worship folder and it is already in the directory. Please review this list.

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		have prepared for this, even if the numbers are going to be big. - You're going to be hearing more from our outreach and membership commission. - Last year our sustainability task force asked: how do we preserve our financial stability and grow our membership, and what path do we need for that? - We need to think about this holistically: how do we build a program that fits our needs and fits with our now electronic society? - Over the summer and into the fall, we hope to have some good discussions with you about moving forward. - For me, I find our church to be a refuge and place of comfort in difficult times. - I thank you for trusting the council with this work. - If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.	
3	Senior Minister's Report	- Deeply moved by the testimonies of our youth this morning. - We are in a time of moral crisis, which is no surprise to anyone. - We are blocks from the White House and not far from Capitol Hill, in the midst of all of it. - The UCC views us as one of the primary churches poised to speak truth to power. - There is a growing spiritual hunger for moral and ethical communities that say everyone is welcome, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey. - Beyond seeking to grow, people's spirits and hearts desperately need communities that can spiritually ground them in these times.	Please extend invitations to attend worship to people in your midst. Please sign up to offer a call to worship or a piece of music for the summer by letting Amanda or Dennis know.

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		○ Our hope for the people of the DMV is that they find communities that feed them spiritually and are about the values of justice in the world. ● Ways we have lived out our mission: ○ A member of our congregation was detained by ICE. We visited and prayed with him and visited his wife. She and her son came to service. We were a source of spiritual grounding for them through something extremely difficult. ○ We have accompanied our youth through confirmation, engaging in discussions on gender and sexuality throughout their lives. ○ We have packed and handed out food boxes from Tommy's Pantry. ● Every Sunday we make worship available, with a shout-out to Michael on percussion today for extraordinary gifts. ○ Every Sunday we reiterate that the gospel of Jesus Christ is about love of God and love of neighbor. ○ Our sanctuary committee hosted an art exhibit as we remember that Jesus was a refugee in the early stage of his life. ● Thanks to Dennis, who really got this going, and through Ulung, we are living into our shared vision of what music means in this church. ● We understand antiracism as at the very core of our spiritual practice and a spiritual commitment we make. ○ Thanks to all who usher on the outreach and membership commission for that. ○ We regularly stand up for justice in the streets and advocate for policies that honor the struggles of the least of these. ○ Thanks to Jim Riker and Sandy Sorensen for standing in for us at many public rallies for justice. ● Today something called Rededicating America is	Continue to show up to worship.

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		happening, which is the next step of Christian Nationalism. ○ Redirect America is an answer to this: an invitation to submit sermons and prayers, streaming live right now. ○ The sermon I submitted will stream at 1 pm, and you've heard it before. ○ We are taking part in a response saying that is not the faith of Jesus Christ. The faith of Jesus Christ is not a golden statue of our president; it's a commitment to love of God and love of neighbor. ● We are continuing to nurture our relationship with the wider UCC body. ○ We hosted the spring meeting right here. ○ Rev. Jason Carson Wilson gave a really moving sermon for that meeting. ○ Kristen Wheeler, Jamie Orr, and others attended as delegates. ○ Care of Parish hosted the meals. Thanks to Nan, Fredda, Susan, and Kristen Wheeler. Dennis served as the musician. ○ It means something to be connected with our UCC siblings across the district, the DMV, and the Central Atlantic Conference. These relationships are meaningful, and we must continue to nurture them. ● We are aware there will be constant messaging for the 250th. ○ The theme of the summer for us will be unsung heroes, taking a note from last summer's theme, Freedom Summer. ○ We will explore unsung heroes in the Bible and in the life of the United States. ○ Thanks to Thaddeus for creating this theme. ○ We will set up the sanctuary in a more intimate	

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		arrangement for the summer months. • Everyone here plays a part. ◦ Judith is doing crucial work back in the archives. ◦ Chris came in early this morning to put up our Pentecost banner. • We are in this moment loving God and loving neighbor and living out the gospel together. • Thank you, and happy to take any questions.	
4	Associate Minister's Report	• Amanda is a hard act to follow. • At the fall congregational meeting, we built up the main activities strengthening faith formation for children and youth. ◦ We had the pageant, the talent show, and Easter. ◦ We were at Tommy's Pantry six or seven times. ◦ We had OWL and the confirmation journey. ◦ We were very thoughtful about faith formation in all of these events. ◦ None of it could have happened without the full commitment of children and youth, who always say yes since they don't know they can't say no. • I also want to acknowledge how important outreach and membership is to the life of faith formation in my world. ◦ We are not in a silo; we are all ambassadors to this church. ◦ On Friday, a parent who has been visiting the church came up to me and said they're not going anywhere. ◦ I also got a lovely email from another church family saying they'll be coming again next Sunday and are not going anywhere. • The idea of cohorts is getting in better and better shape. ◦ This group of six confirmands has been doing service trips and Sunday school for years.	

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		○ We get to see their friendships form, and to look back at how friendships among the children and youth grew just because they are members of this church. ○ They giggle, laugh, and have fun, which is a real blessing. ● We really value everyone for showing up, teaching Sunday school, and being part of what we're trying to do here. ○ It is rewarding to see young people talk about the strength of their faith and about going out of their way to help those in need, and I'm grateful for that. ● We're going to Detroit! I've never been and I'm really excited. ○ Hopefully we'll see Lindsey and Katrina out there too. ○ We will be working and serving in the ninth precinct of Detroit. ○ We will be serving at the Arab American Museum. ○ We will come back as beginners in Arab dance, and we will show you when we return. ● Last week the college kids shared how important the service trips were. ● A huge thank you for helping us make these trips possible financially.	
5	Treasurer's Report	● Our income is coming in very well. ○ Compared to 33% of the year, pledges are coming in at 43% (line 4). ○ The next major income category, building use (line 28), is at 36% for 33% of the year. ○ I'm told Byron told Karen that he has bookings through all of the year, so we will meet our goal for building income in May. ○ Building use is 32% of our income. ○ These are the two main income streams: the	

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		congregation and building users. • In expenses, the first thing I want to highlight is our contract with Lincoln Properties. ◦ Line 98 and several lines before it cover Lincoln Property Companies' expenditures on the building. ◦ Some of those items are a little high, like gas and trash, and we are looking into why. ◦ We're not sure whether usage or unit cost has gone up; that will be investigated. • We are running a planned deficit, and we have the resources to cover it. ◦ We don't want to increase that deficit this year. ◦ The Outreach, Membership, and Messaging committee will work to increase membership and giving to cut into deficit spending. • All the other expenditures are in line, with no surprises. • I did check how our investments are doing. Sometimes I want the stocks to go down, but they're not. ◦ Our investments have been up 5.6% since December. ◦ That benefits the capital reserve fund. • Amanda raised her hand: Table Church used to be in the space on Sunday afternoons and has moved out, which created a hole in our budget. ◦ We are beginning to see bookings for Sunday afternoon concerts, which is really good news. ◦ That means Ines is working overtime. ◦ This weekend was extremely busy for our building, with the Potomac Association and Heritage Signature Chorale. ◦ We are tracking Ines's hours and need to be mindful that we may need to increase her hours at some point. ◦ Overall it benefits us to max out our space use, in a way that is thoughtful of our income. • David Greer asked whether we are at pre-COVID levels for bookings.	

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		○ Lucille said yes, we are. ○ Amanda said maybe even exceeding it. ● Peter said Ines is one of our unsung heroes: she was here at 6 am this morning getting our building ready for worship.	
6	Direct of Music Ministry Search Committee	● We had an energizing, positive discussion on May 3. ○ Several things rose to the surface: strong appreciation for diverse musical styles, instrumentation, and arrangements. ○ There were affirmative responses about congregational involvement, providing lyrics on the screen, song leaders, and different ways to experience music overall. ○ For those of us who have been on the previous search committee, we are on the right track and have real direction and guideposts as we move forward with finding a music director. ● Andrew and Dwan are the co-chairs. ● As we begin the search, we want to continue with diversity of musical styles and find a music director committed to that vision. ○ We are looking for better alignment between the music in services and other content in services, to create a more unified experience. ○ People really value wider participation of the congregation in music while it's happening. ○ We want to do all of this while maintaining a blend of diversity and pairing it with tradition: traditional, contemporary, and music from different countries. ○ We think we are in an excellent position to do a serious search and find the next director of music ministry to lead our congregation.	If you have any questions please reach out to Andrew, Dwan, or the committee members.

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		● We've pulled together a great committee, thanks to those who volunteered and expressed interest: ○ Patrick Darling La Gamma ○ Lucille Dickinson ○ Michael Hopkins ○ Jim Riker ○ Reshmina William ○ Reverend Amanda ○ We have a mix of people who are newer, musicians, non-musicians, and more experienced, who will represent us all very well. ○ One thing really rose to the surface for me: we want someone who is interested in and loves working with the congregation. ● Proposed timeline: there is no definite end date. ○ The search committee will hold a kickoff meeting in May. You will receive an email as soon as we get home; fill out the Doodle poll so we can get a Zoom meeting on the calendar. ○ We need to spend time on the job position announcement and job description, making sure what we communicate to potential candidates matches where we are and where we think we're headed. ○ We will evaluate the compensation package. The personnel committee will convene very shortly to review compensation at similar churches in the DC area and see if adjustments are needed to bring to Council. ○ We will do antiracism training in preparation for the committee itself. ○ We expect to post the position in July, interview in August, and hope to have someone hired in the fall, but we believe we need to find the right person. ○ Dennis, thank you so much! ■ The leadership Dennis has been providing is	

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		already in the spirit of our vision, which gives very good continuity. ■ Having Dennis in an interim position also gives us breathing room to make sure we have the right person. ● Meg asked that there be a really serious look at candidates' commitment to remain here and make this their home. ○ We have had people who have been here for short terms. ○ That can change over time, and the dynamic with the congregation could be off, but it's a little unnerving when we put all this work into a search and then people, for whatever reason, are not staying or can't stay. ● Andrew shared that Dwan was on the search for the last hiring of the music director, and Andrew was on the one before that. ○ We have learned the key questions to probe in the interview process so candidates understand who this congregation is and what we're called to do. ○ This supports discernment on the committee's part and helps the candidate do appropriate discernment. ● Amanda said no one is more motivated than she is to get someone into this position. ○ Dennis can help us with the tough questions. ○ Amanda said Dennis told us that we need to ask this question and drill down into the fact that we've had some turnover in this position. ○ Our community deserves longevity in this position; that is our goal, and it's a clear goal for us. ● Polly asked about comparing our church with similar churches. ○ She is concerned about this and would like us to be compared to a church one step above, not two or three. ○ She wants us to look forward to where we want to go,	

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		to get the person we'll want for the future.	
7	Path Forward After Antiracism Series	• The antiracism committee is made up of members of the congregation who help us find ways to cultivate antiracism in our community. • We started antiracism as a spiritual practice, with about 35 people participating over 6 weeks. ○ In general, participants felt it was a really worthwhile experience. ○ They wished they had more time to sit with the information and discuss the material. • These results have led to a couple of next steps. ○ We are standing up at least two antiracist affinity groups, which provide space for honest reflection, identity processing, and deeper internal work. ○ In two weeks we'll have a Nurture on the future of antiracism at our church, focusing more on practical opportunities for all of us to engage in this work. ○ This summer we'll read <i>Stamped from the Beginning</i> by Ibram Kendi. ■ There is a young adult version, a youth version, and a graphic novel adaptation. ■ The book is accessible at the library in all of these forms. ■ We'll hold a book discussion at the end of the summer. ○ In the living room, back in the corner on the other side of the TV, there is a little short rolling cart for our antiracism library. Please check out books. • Someone asked: why separate groups? ○ Kim responded that it is sometimes difficult for people	Reach out to Kim and Latayna to participate in antiracism affinity groups. Please participate in our summer read.

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		to be free with their experiences, good and bad. ■ For example she is less willing to be open if family members are present, because something she says might harm them. In a group, she feels freer to share. ■ From her discussions with members of color, they have the same experience, and are often unintentionally harmed by what people say or by expectations placed on them. ■ In another book discussion group, her co-leader was asked to speak for all Black women everywhere. Kim has also been in situations where she was asked just to speak as the representative woman. ■ The hope is that separating into these two groups allows people to be in conversation. ● Amanda said there was an article in April's Horn with Latayna's reflection coming out of the Lenten antiracism training. ○ If anyone wants to read it and hasn't, they can email her and she will send it. It has a more robust explanation. ○ That is one place where we wrestle with these concepts, along with Lenten circles that everyone in the congregation wanting to participate can join. ○ The antiracism committee often wrestles with these ideas in a mixed-race setting. ○ If there is not a desire for these groups, we will learn that very soon. ● Meg raised a concern about bringing the groups back together to somehow bring reflections or suggestions to the congregation. ○ We should benefit from these groups in some way, but it will depend on their nature. ○ She asked whether anyone had participated in a white	

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		○ privilege group or program. ○ Kim responded saying maybe general learnings could be shared with the committee, but it is very much individual processing in a small group setting to help us all grow. ● Thaddeus shared his experience in the Lenten learning circles. ○ The training seemed to be about proving how antiracist we were, with reactions like “wow, you must have been so oppressed.” ○ Most of the material was not new to him. ○ It was hard to find the motivation to go through it every night and to experience microaggressions. ○ He recognized that as a Black person he still has his own work to do, including his own internalized anti-Blackness. ○ That work can’t happen all the time in a mixed race environment, where white guilt takes dominance or white repression of people of color takes center stage. ○ He asked how we create space for everyone to work through things in their own ways. ○ Offering separate groups is not meant to be exclusive, but it is important. ○ He asked when we will offer 201 and 301 opportunities so we don't have to start from ground zero every time we have this conversation. ● Polly asked if she could attend the BIPOC meeting to listen. ○ It would be more meaningful to her to hear what she might be doing wrong. ○ Kim said she is sympathetic, and that this puts the weight of growth and development on our BIPOC members. ■ She doesn't know what will come up, it's a different type of experiential thing. ■ This is not something these groups can bring	

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		to the congregation. ■ We have to commit ourselves to this individual journey as part of the process. ■ She asked how we can enable each member of the church to go within, create a community of trust and listening, accept these things, and work through them. ● Polly made one more comment: years ago she thought about becoming a single mother and asked if she could join a group of single mothers to see what it was like and listen and learn. She said she totally understands. ● Casey read Latayna's section on affinity groups in the Horn outloud for the group. ● Amanda suggested having a rich conversation in a congregational meeting.	
8	Regular Business		
a.	Assistant Moderator's Report	● The sanctuary and SAC committees are adding an event on Thursday, June 4. ○ There will be a screening of a really wonderful performance by Alaa Shehada, who uses humor to discuss his experience as a Palestinian. ○ There will be a live introduction by Shahada, who was not able to come into the country, so he will stream in from the Netherlands. ○ We will ask him some questions, and there will be a panel afterwards. ○ All proceeds go to CAN.	

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		● We've formed an archive committee. ○ Judith has done a heroic job of keeping things together and organized. ○ There are a bunch of ledger books, documents, artifacts, and recordings dating back to the founding of the church in 1865. ○ We have two main asks right now. ■ The first is to ensure what is in the archive is properly catalogued. ■ We are currently working on processes for managing the physical and digital archive, to ensure all our documents are easy to find. ○ We have a couple of other priorities we may talk about down the line, but we'll keep you posted.	
b.	Diane's 80th Birthday party	Come to my birthday party, we will have "The Indictments" a band of retired judges, playing. 5-7:30 at Knollwood. 6200 Oregon Ave NW, behind St. John's, June the 6th.	
c.	Closing Prayer	Amanda gave the closing prayer.	