

ANNUAL MEETING

The 75th Annual Meeting
of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport
SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 2026

MEETING MINUTES

Opening & Minutes Approvals

- Call to Order (B Cliff, Board President and Moderator) 11:28 a.m.
- Opening Words and Chalice Lighting (M-C Bue and K Roberts, Pastoral Care Associates)
- A Covenant Perspective (D Carreau, Committee on Ministry, "COM") – reminder of covenantal behavior
- Quorum Report (F Keeton, Board Secretary)
 - 75 members present (minimum required: 58; 67% of 384 members)

Approval of Member Meeting Minutes

- June 08, 2025: Annual Member Meeting
 - Motion: Tom Hearne
 - Second: Joanne Orenstein 2nd
 - No discussion
 - Motion passed unanimously
- October 05, 2025: Special Member Meeting to Amend Constitution
 - Motion Joanne Orenstein
 - Second: Sam Somashekar
 - No discussion
 - Motion passed unanimously

The Very Fine Lifetime Volunteer Service Award (D Brownstein, Trustee)

- Honored **Lindy Hennessey** for her longstanding contributions and spirit.

Sharing 2025-26 Reports (full reports in annual report)

Transition Ministry (Rev Carlton E Smith)

- Sue O'Meara transitioned from staff to contracted role.
- TUUCW serving as a satellite site for UUA General Assembly this year. Rev. Carlton provided a brief description of events.
- His last service is on Sunday July 12 and his final day with UU Westport is on August 14th.
- He expressed gratitude for serving as Transition Minister.

Minister Search (E Rockman-Blake, Settled and Contract Minister Searches)

- Reviewed the process: cottage meetings, congregational input, UUA guidance.
- Settled search was not successful; pivoted to a Contract-to-Call search.
- Successfully secured Rev. Terri Dennehy for a 3-year term, with option to convert to a called ministry.

Board of Trustees (B Cliff)

- Reaffirmed Board purpose:
 - Financial health – strong position
 - Good governance – significant progress
 - Mission alignment (Inspire • Connect • Act) – strengthened
- Reflected on stabilizing after years of ministerial transitions and other challenges.
- Highlighted Board focus areas:
 - Establishing **Ends**
 - Supporting new minister
 - Strengthening internal systems so the minister can focus on spiritual leadership
- Emphasized volunteers as the “engine” of the congregation.
- Noted organizational improvements (Ops Council, Treadwell, etc.).
- Expressed gratitude to Rev. Carlton, staff, and volunteers.

Committee on Ministries (S Dumery, incoming COM Chair)

- Recognized outgoing co-chairs Melanie Allen and Shahan.
- Reviewed COM activities:
 - Floor Choice process
 - “Cupcakes with COM”
 - Compassionate Communications workshop series
- Recognition of all COM members.

Social Justice Council and Vote on Future Share-the-Plate Recipients (L Cenci, Social Justice Council Co-Chair)

- Presented 18 local nonprofits for Share-the-Plate consideration.
- Members asked to select their top 10; results to be announced in Soundings.
- Requirements: 501(c)(3); nominations accepted year-round.

#MeToo Resolution (B Cliff)

- Required reporting through 2023; now beyond the mandated period.
- No further reporting obligation, but work remains ongoing.

Anti-Racism Resolution (B Cliff)

- Annual reporting required.
- Highlights from Black Lives Matter Committee:
 - Awareness-building on historic racism
 - Support for UU the Vote and legislative advocacy
 - Reproductive justice support
 - John’s Street Bridge partnership
 - Banned book cart initiative

Constitutional Amendments (J Norman, Trustee)

MOTION 1: Revise Article VIII: Board of Trustees, Section 2. Composition, to reduce the size of the Board from nine members to seven.

- Motion: Julyen Norman
- Second: Tom Hearne
- Discussion:

Context:

- Board examined governance structure; concern about resourcing committees; today we have around 70 members assigned to various committees and roles; the desire is to build out a more efficient and effective volunteer structure.

Discussion Themes:

- Concerns about concentrating power and how a smaller size might drive more mistrust (Luke Garvey)
- Need 9 BOT members for adequate representation of congregation and also workload distribution (Michelle Garvey, Nancy McKeever, Rob Zuckerman, Ken Vogel)
- There is value of larger boards for diversity and leadership development (Ken Vogel)
- Clarifications made regarding the new term structure (which is 3-3-3 today) and quorum implications.
- Recognition of Ops Council as a structural change to consider (Beth).
- Use the new decision-making framework to ensure congregation wide input is received and alignment (Ken Vogel).

Outcome:

- Beth recommended withdrawal
- No objections.
- Julyen withdrew the motion.

MOTION 2: Revise Article X: Elected Committees of the Congregation, Section 5 to reduce the size of a Settled Search Team from nine members to between five and seven.

- Motion: Julyen Norman
- Second: Tom Hearne
- Discussion:

Context:

- UUA advised that TUUCW's team was unusually large; typical size is 5.
- Board proposed a range of 5–7 for future flexibility.

Discussion Themes:

- Elena Rockman Blake and Tom Hearne shared their points of view having recently served on the settled search committee. Joanne Orienstein, who served on the search committee that hired Rev. Alan Taylor, agreed with these points. Key themes:
 - Value of diversity vs. manageability
 - Workload distribution and meeting logistics
 - Confidentiality concerns with larger groups
 - Past experiences from multiple search committee members

- Question raised on whether constitution should specify a range or a fixed number like 7 (Cheryl Dixon)

Amendment Proposed: Change motion from a range of 5 to 7 to just 7

- **Moved:** Cheryl D.;
 - **Second:** Michelle G.
 - **Discussion:**
 - Mixed opinions expressed; some felt 7 was too small, others felt 7 is ideal.
- Vote on amending to just 7:** Passed by majority (with 3 against).

Final Vote on Motion Revise Article X: Elected Committees of the Congregation, Section 5 to reduce the size of a Settled Search Team from nine members to seven.

- **Ayes:** 53 (70%)
- **Nays:** 18
- Motion **passes**; requires second vote in 120 days.

Financial Reports and Proposed 2026-27 Budget

Endowment Report – K. Vogel

- Endowment at **\$3.9M** (2nd highest historically).
- Reviewed donor-restricted vs. board-restricted funds.
- General Fund supports annual budget; Treadwell Fund requires congregational decisions.
- Cindy Potter's service on Endowment was acknowledged.

2025–26 Stewardship Report – S. Somashekar

- Year-round stewardship includes holiday appeal (\$29k+, up \$8k year-over-year).
- Consultant support improved messaging and strategy.
- Legacy giving workshop recently held.
- **Pledge results (as of May 25):**
 - \$591,478 pledged (goal: \$580k)
 - \$40k increase over prior year
 - 184 pledge units (increase)
 - Silent donor match: \$90,162
 - 93% of 2025–26 pledges fulfilled to date
 - FY 25-26 fulfilled pledges are at \$514k as of May 25th with 7% of outstanding.

2025–26 Financial Results – J. Gage

- Financial position is strong; third consecutive year of improvement.
- Surplus instead of projected deficit.
- Progress toward goal: pledges = staff costs.
- Clarifications:

- Payroll line includes Sue O'Meara's contracted role.
- UUA dues increased from \$20k to \$26k (UUA request: \$40k).
- Voices Café revenue came in from last year and will go into Social Justice reserves.

Proposed 2026–27 Budget – J. Gage

- Motion to Ratify: Sofia Durmery
- Second: Jerusha Vogel
- Discussion: None
- Motion passed unanimously.

New Committee Members and Installation

Nominee presentation for our Elected Committees (L Hennessy, Nominating Committee Co-Chair)

- Board of Trustees
- Endowment Committee
- Committee on Ministries
- Nominating Committee

Motion to accept slate

- Motion: Kathy Roberts
- Second: Tom Hearne
- Discussion: None
- Motion passed unanimously.

Beth Cliff led the installation ceremony of the new Board & Elected Committee members.

Appreciation and Gratitude

- Ken Vogel, Beth Cliff, Sue O'Meara and Rev. Carlton were recognized.

New Business – none raised

Adjournment 1:26 p.m.