

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lawrence
November 20, 2025 DRAFT

Our Mission is to **love** inclusively, **nurture** spiritual growth and connection,
freely **explore** life's big questions, and **act** for justice.

Goals for 2025-2026

6:00	Chalice Lighting- Board Member Check-In - What is on your heart/mind?	
	Congregational Comments: (3 minutes per person)	
6:20	Approval of Consent March <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October Minutes • Treasurer's Report and Financial Reports 	
Information Items/Reports		
6:30	Board Member UUCL Updates Minister RE Report Refresh and Renew October Follow up review	
Discussion/Action Items:		
6:45	Stewardship team: Commitments from Rilie, Bill and Sheyda Credit Card selection - approval to apply and begin process Day/time for holiday lights - shoot for 2:00 on 11/29 Potential process for space utilization and changes Founders Hall acoustics Other Items Awards - request for board member lead, process should begin Februaryish	

	Executive session	
	Process review, follow up and Board Member Closing Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is there anyone you would like to give appreciation to for tonight's meeting?</i> • <i>Is there anything you would like to repair/resolve from tonight's meeting?</i> 	
Next Board Meeting: December 18 (with planning session) Topics/Agenda		

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Important Dates:

- November 23 Harvest Lunch after service
- November 24 (time?) Rev Nori's sister's memorial service
- November 29 Holiday lights
- December 13 Finance Meeting
- December 18 Board meeting (includes planning session)

Minutes

- **Business Credit Card Approved:** Board approved a cash back card from Interest Bank to improve expense tracking and reduce costs.
- **Health Insurance Premium Increase:** A 19.5% hike starting January will impact the 2024 budget; monitoring required for effective planning.
- **Vendor Transition Challenges:** Departure of a key contact at SSC raises billing concerns; the board is actively managing the ongoing relationship.
- **Space Utilization Issues:** The office move lacked board awareness; a formalized decision process for space changes is now necessary.
- **Minister Evaluation Process:** Instituting a minister evaluation will align expectations and facilitate accountability tied to congregational goals.
- **Community Engagement Initiatives:** Events like holiday decoration and game night are aimed at fostering community involvement and connections.

Notes

Financial Management and Budgeting

The board approved moving forward with obtaining a business credit card through Interest Bank, choosing a cash back card with no annual fee to simplify rewards and reduce expenses by a percentage on all purchases.

- Brad Wertz confirmed the card program includes an administrator role and individual logins, similar to corporate cards used at KU or Washburn.
- Interest Bank's customer service was described as responsive with no major complaints, supporting smooth implementation.
- Brad will lead the application process after his upcoming medical stress test, with the option to reverse the decision if needed.
- The decision was guided by minimizing costs, avoiding carrying balances, and preferring straightforward cash back rewards over complex reward portals.
- The credit card implementation is expected to improve financial operations and expense tracking without adding financial risk.

The board noted a 19.5% increase in employee health insurance premiums effective January, which will impact the 2024 budget and require monitoring.

- Brad explained budget approvals occur in June, but insurance rates change in January, creating a timing gap.
- Mary Holm emphasized keeping the increased insurance costs on the board's radar for future financial planning.
- There was clarification that the health insurance is provided through the UUA, not Church Mutual, which covers other insurance lines like property.
- The insurance increase was described as significant but not doubling, with no immediate plan to reduce benefits or change coverage.
- This cost increase will be communicated in the upcoming finance committee update to maintain transparency.

Concerns about vendor transitions were raised as Brent, a key contact at SSC, has left, complicating billing and support processes.

- Brad is actively managing the relationship during this transition to maintain service continuity.
- The board is monitoring the situation, recognizing that organizational changes at vendors can affect operational smoothness and responsiveness.
- No current impact on work quality was reported, but billing and communication require extra attention.
- This vigilance is part of broader financial risk management to avoid disruptions.

Space Utilization and Facilities Planning

The office move into the former religious education (RE) office space was discussed as having occurred without clear board awareness or a formal process, raising concerns about transparency and oversight.

- Board members expressed surprise and confusion about who authorized the move and the rationale behind it.
- William Hagel noted that UU offices are commonly near the main entrance for accessibility, questioning whether the new location supports operational needs.
- Mary Holm highlighted missing considerations like HVAC adequacy, electrical capacity, and ADA accessibility, which had not been assessed before the move.
- The board agreed that Reverend Nori, as Kristin's supervisor, must be involved in clarifying the decision and providing context to the board.
- Mary committed to communicating with Nori to understand the decision process and to research or develop a decision tree for space changes to guide future moves, aiming to present findings by the February board meeting.

Discussions stressed the need for a formalized process for space allocation decisions, similar to financial oversight, ensuring strategic use aligned with mission priorities.

- Chris Brown recommended a simple decision tree or framework to assess if space supports the mission before approving changes.
- The board noted that clear communication and coordination would prevent confusion and ensure employee needs and operational realities are balanced.
- Brian Vancil pointed out that zoning remains consistent, but practical concerns like electrical and ventilation must be addressed to avoid issues.
- The board sees this as an opportunity to improve operational governance and reduce surprises in facilities management.

The board also addressed acoustic challenges in Founders Hall and the lobby, recognizing these spaces hinder conversations and newcomer engagement.

- There is an intention to include acoustic improvements in the Refresh and Renew initiative starting in January.
- William Hagel emphasized gathering cost estimates before any remediation, aiming to understand potential investment and fundraising needs.
- Brian Vancil cautioned that expensive acoustic panels should be a last resort after exploring other materials or design changes.
- The board acknowledged that better acoustics could enhance community building and inclusivity, especially for introverted or new members.

Program and Community Engagement

The auction team led by Elle, Martha, Denise, and Sara received praise for successfully organizing events that generated strong community participation and financial support for UUCL.

- Mary Holm committed to forwarding relevant resources like Mid America's leaders call to keep the board informed on peer congregation activities and trends.
- The receptions team, under Sara's leadership, is using SignUpGenius to improve volunteer coordination and event participation, aiming to increase community engagement.
- Mary plans to create a weekly E Blast spotlight featuring different teams and committees to boost volunteer recruitment and visibility across the congregation.
- This ongoing communication effort replaces a traditional volunteer fair with continuous engagement touchpoints to reach more members.

The board agreed to focus the December meeting primarily on retreat planning and RE program planning, with minimal business to allow deeper discussions on long-term vision and priorities.

- A spring retreat will also be added to the agenda, supporting strategic reflection and community building.
- The Refresh and Renew team will present a preliminary plan in January, giving the board time to prepare and integrate those insights into planning.

The board discussed institutionalizing the minister evaluation process to create shared understanding of priorities and progress.

- Mary proposed introducing this topic in spring, ideally March, after the mission work advances.
- Rilie Kafer noted this would follow naturally from December's planning discussions and help align board, minister, and congregation expectations.
- The goal is to establish ongoing measurement of ministerial success tied to congregational mission and goals, improving accountability and clarity.
- This would leverage UUA resources and best practices while respecting the congregation's unique context.

Operational Improvements and Communication

The board recognized the importance of clear communication and process clarity across operational areas, especially after challenges with the office move and E Blast formatting.

- Brian Vancil acknowledged missing follow-up on E Blast improvements, and Mary confirmed working with Kristin to resolve formatting and accessibility issues, especially for digital viewing.
- Mary will distribute approved minister housing allowance documentation to Kristin as part of compliance and transparency efforts.

- Kristin was tasked with ordering the AED, but follow-up is needed since communication slipped during staff transitions; Mary suggested board members could assist in reminding staff.
- The board emphasized the need for better coordination and documentation to avoid confusion and ensure smooth operations.

The board committed to convening the stewardship committee post-holidays with Bill and Sheyda confirmed as members, aiming to plan fundraising milestones based on prior year learnings.

- Mary volunteered to join the party planning subcommittee to support events supporting stewardship and community.
- Rilie Kafer is sketching initial milestone plans to guide committee activities and timelines.
- This structured approach should improve fundraising effectiveness and volunteer engagement.

Board members agreed to assign responsibility for soliciting and managing awards earlier in the year, starting around February, to avoid last-minute rush and ensure quality recognition.

- There is currently no standing awards committee; the board will explore forming one or assigning the task to a small group.
- The goal is to have nominations, selections, and plaque preparations ready well before the annual meeting.
- This improvement will strengthen community appreciation and formal recognition processes.

Leadership and Personnel Updates

Reverend Nori is expected to return for the upcoming harvest lunch service on Sunday and will be present for her sister's memorial service on the 24th, supporting congregation continuity and pastoral care.

- Rilie Kafer praised her interim pulpit leadership efforts for maintaining momentum and welcoming newcomers during Nori's absence.
- The board acknowledged the emotional and operational challenges faced and expressed appreciation for team collaboration.
- The minister's report highlighted challenges with inconsistent attendance and volunteer shortages in religious education, with hopes to have volunteers ready by January.
- Nori is pursuing professional development focused on measuring success in religious education programs, which should improve program evaluation and effectiveness.

Brad Wertz shared a personal health update, which the board supported empathetically, pausing non-urgent task assignments until after.

- The board emphasized care and support for Brad during this sensitive time, recognizing the importance of member wellbeing for leadership stability.
- Brad agreed to report back after the test and resume tasks such as credit card application steps thereafter.

Event Planning and Community Building

The board scheduled holiday building decoration on Saturday, November 29th at 2 PM, combining light hanging with a social gathering including snacks and cider to encourage participation. [This did not happen because of weather.]

- Mary Holm will coordinate with Kristin to publicize the event via Sunday slides and other communications.
- The date was chosen to avoid conflicts with other events and maximize board and community involvement.
- The event aims to foster fellowship and joy while preparing the space for the holiday season.

Game night continues monthly with a core group of approximately six attendees, featuring diverse board and community members playing various games like trivia and dice.

- Brian Vancil manages reminders and volunteer sign-ups but noted some members are missing from communications lists.
- The event is seen as a key community builder and recruitment tool, with snacks and informal play encouraging relaxed interaction.
- Board members encouraged expanding outreach to increase attendance and volunteer interest.

The board will continue tracking important upcoming dates including the holiday lights event, finance committee meeting, and year-end wrap-up to maintain operational rhythm and community engagement.

Action items

Mary Holm

- Communicate with Minister Nori regarding recent office move decision and clarify process concerns
- Research and develop a draft decision tree or checklist for space utilization and changes to present at February board meeting
- Work on scheduling weekly committee and team spotlights for E-Blast to promote volunteer recruitment
- Follow up on securing a board member to lead the awards solicitation and committee formation process starting February

- Put minister evaluation/self-evaluation discussion on spring (March) meeting agenda

Brad Wertz

- Proceed with application process for Interest Bank business credit cards following board approval after health concerns settled

Rilie Kafer

- Save and distribute minister's Religious Education report to all board members
- Follow up with Kristin about holiday decorating event and arrange for inclusion on Sunday service slides
- Transfer Interest Bank credit card documents to board drive and share relevant info for review
- Coordinate with key members (like Kylie and Jeff) for holiday decorating participation
- Add awards solicitation follow-up to future meeting agendas until owner found
- Discuss minister reports to include operational/tactical updates to reduce board confusion on decisions like office moves

Brian Vancil

- Connect with Kristin to follow-up on E-Blast formatting and accessibility improvements [Failed again]

Decisions

1. Approval of October Minutes

- Motion: Chris Brown
- Second: Mary Holm
- Outcome: Approved unanimously

2. Approval of Treasurer's Report

- Motion: Not specified (the approval was part of the consent agenda, but based on the transcript, this was approved alongside the October minutes)
- Second: Not specified
- Outcome: Approved unanimously

3. Selection and Application for Interest Bank Business Credit Card (Cash-back Option)

- Motion: Mary Holm
- Second: William Hagel (Bill)
- Outcome: Approved unanimously

4. Scheduling of Holiday Decorating Event

- Motion: Discussion/consensus (no formal motion or second; agreement reached to schedule event for Saturday, November 29th)
- Outcome: Agreed by consensus

5. Go Into Executive Session at End of Meeting

- Motion: Chris Brown
- Second: William Hagel (Bill)
- Outcome: Approved unanimously