

Unitarian Church of Lincoln
Minutes of Spring Congregational Meetings
Sunday, June 8th, 2025

NOTE: The meeting agenda, background materials, and reports are in the Annual Report 2024-2025 prepared for this meeting.

Welcoming Remarks:

- Board of Trustees President, Judy Hart, opened the meeting at 11:30 am.
- Due to problems with the office copier, only a few copies of the annual report are available and anyone wanting a hard copy of it or the agenda for today's meeting will have to wait until the copier can be fixed later in the week.
- Judy expressed thanks to all the church leaders that have gone before us and have gotten us to where we are today.
- She reminded us, going into the meeting, that there would be no time available for comments, questions, or concerns during the meeting. Anyone who has a question should contact a Board member or come to the Board meeting Tuesday, June 10th, at 7pm.

Opening Words:

- Reverend AJ Galazen read opening words, "Song for the Unsung", while Board member Allison Starr lit the chalice.
- Karen Heafer led us in singing "Sing When the Spirit Says Sing".

Winter Congregational Meeting Minutes:

- Secretary of the Board of Trustees, Floyd Wickenkamp, asked that if anyone had found any errors in the minutes of the winter congregational meeting, that they contact him so that we could ensure that the minutes were accurate.

Treasurer's Report:

- Jason Slaughter, Church Treasurer, gave a brief status of the church's finances as of May 15th. Some of what has been accomplished in the last six months includes:
 - The completion of this year's budget
 - Pledge income is where we want it to be at this point in the fiscal year, and ahead of where it was as of this point last year.
 - Expenses are behind where they were last year.
 - We have filled three new Coordinator positions.
 - The Treasurer worked with the Capital Investment Committee to update our investment "mix". Since making changes, our portfolio has outperformed the S&P 500. He thanked everyone on the CIC for their efforts.
 - He asked us all to consider enrolling in the "Anniversary Fund".
 - Under the leadership of Karen Heafer and Barbara Pearson, and all who participated, our spring auction raised over \$13,000. Gene & LaVonne Hanlon solicited over 75 donations from outside the church for the raffle. Last year, 45 tasty treats were donated; this year, we had over 100 donations.
 - We have written a new Gift Acceptance Policy.
 - The Program Council has diagrammed a "path" to follow to request funds from the Board for expenditures.
 - We have a new playground and shade structure on the west side of the building.
 - We have completed the installation of the Hearing Loop.

- Alysa Haack has been approved by the Board as the church's new Vice-Treasurer and Karen Heafer, currently Vice-Treasurer, will become the new Treasurer as Jason's term ends.
- Elle Straatmann & Christine Davis have already begun planning for the 2025 Giving Campaign.
- Jason thanked everyone with whom he'd served during his terms as Vice-Treasurer & Treasurer.

Voting Instructions:

- Michael Straatmann of the Board of Trustees, described the requirements to vote in the annual election:
 - Anyone who signed the membership book more than one month ago is eligible to vote.
 - Online ballots will be sent at 11:30 today to all members who have registered their email.
 - Those who do not have access to email or who would simply prefer, may pick up a paper ballot at the office. All ballots, paper or electronic, must be received by the office before 11:30 am on Tuesday, June 10th, to be counted. Those voting on paper are reminded that the church is scheduled to be closed on Monday, the 9th, due to summer hours.
- Voters will be asked;
 - to approve the minutes of the winter 2024 congregational meeting;
 - to approve the selected slate of nominees for Board of Trustees;
 - to approve the slate of nominees for the Ministerial Search Committee;
 - to vote for up to ten of the listed nominated organizations for "Share the Plate".
- Any questions as to voting procedure should be referred to Michael or to Jean &/or Wendy in the office.
- Results will be announced in the June 13th eblast and at the June 15th Sunday service.

Nominees:

- JoAnn Lanning of the Nominations Committee, along with her fellow committee members: Erica Birky-Rios; Elle Straatmann; and Shelly Fowler, announced the nominees for the Board of Trustees: Charles "Wooly" Wooldridge; Jeanne Brooks; and Pam Wakeman.
- Board member Sue Goebel announced that there were 35 nominees for the Share the Plate recipients that will appear on the ballot. Votes can be cast for up to ten recipients and the ten receiving the highest number of votes will be chosen.
- Melody Vaccaro, Vice-President of the Board, asked everyone to vote for the slate of seven nominees previously selected by the Board for the Ministerial Search Committee: Kathy Disney, Deb Hope, Gillian Toland, Shelly Fowler, Colleen Kadleck, Sandra Washington, and Allison Starr. She then asked nominees who were present to stand and be recognized.

Unsung UU Award:

- Board member Leslie Ryan announced that the recipient of the Unsung UU award for the 2025-2026 church year was Shelly Fowler.
- Karen Heafer presented Shelly with a hand-drawn sign for the parking space proclaiming her as the Unsung UU and explained that once the copier is fixed, she'll receive a wonderful laminated version. Karen led the congregation in singing "You Have Done Marvelous Things".

Program Council Report:

- Marcia Cederdahl, Council Chair, said the purpose of the Program Council is to address the operational issues of the church. The Council is comprised of six liaisons to clusters of committees, activity groups, and task organizers with similar functions. This year the clusters and their leaders were:

Youth Programs – Abby Lemburg McDowell and, when Abby joined the staff, Kim Zieman

Facilities – Barbara Pearson

Outreach – Angie Fass

Congregation – Kathy Disney

Sunday Services – Bob Haack

Adult Programs – currently vacant

- Barbara, Angie, and Kathy will be finishing their terms so four clusters will be choosing new leaders.
- Marcia acknowledged the kitchen cleanup crew, Kathy who filled in as Council Chair when needed, the cluster leaders, and the members and leaders of the committees and task forces.
- Early on in the year, the Council decided to focus on five goals, four that the Council is still working on:
 1. Act with a clearer understanding of what the Council does and how it should operate.
 2. Spend more time in meetings on broader topics and problem solving.
 3. Re-examine the Council policy to see if it is still accurate and relevant for 2025.
 4. Make the organizational chart more accurate and simplify the visual structure. This one is almost done.
- A fifth goal, to complete the required self-evaluation, will be done by the end of the summer.
- A joint retreat was held with the Board of Trustees to focus on the ministerial search.
- The Council coordinated a workshop this spring with the liaisons, cluster members, Board of Trustees, and others to talk about the Council structure, moving forward, the coming church year, and the organizational charts and policies.
- The Council approved a funding paths document to be added to the Council policies.

Minister's Report:

- Rev. AJ Galazen titled his report, "The Luster of My Novelty is Diminishing,"
- He said we have been re-imagining the future of the Unitarian Church of Lincoln and thanked the many people who worked together this year, including Board President Judy Hart, Worship Associates Chair Kathy Disney, and Administrator Jean Helms who "co-operates" the organization with Assistant Wendy Hestermann and the Dazzlers.
- Some of the year's accomplishments are included in his written report.
- The congregation made difficult decisions to reorganize the church staff and right-size the budget, to prepare for stability and future growth, and hired three new staff members.
- He looks forward to working this next year on a new set of goals.

President's Report:

- Judy Hart, Board President, noted that she has served as President twice in the last three years and quoted correspondence from Rev. AJ, "Voluntary leadership in a voluntary organization is a shared and cooperative enterprise, not a personal exercise in religious ambition." She expressed immense gratitude for the members and their volunteer leadership, the Board of Trustees, the Program Council leadership, and the staff.
- Referring to the highlights of church activities from June to December that she presented at the winter meeting, she provided more highlights covering the whole year that are listed in her written report, many focused on the volunteerism that accomplishes so much in the church. A few of the highlights were:

- We agonized over justifying our priorities with our staffing and reimagined our program areas.
- Financial gifts were received from the Maxcy, Speidel, Singasaas, Furgason, Weymouth, and Braziel families.
- The LGBTQ+ welcoming committee is active again.
- A hearing-loop system was installed.
- The west-facing playground was resurfaced and a shade structure created .
- UCL organized 165 people to show up at the May 1 Justice in Action Assembly.
- We continue to ponder the question, “What is the right size of our church?”

Closing Words:

- Closing words were read by Melody Vaccaro and the chalice was extinguished by Allison Starr at 12:29 pm.

Addendum (from the June 13, 2025, eblast):

Spring Congregational Meeting Results

There were 87 online voters and 5 paper ballots. Results are listed below.

1. Winter 2023 Congregational Meeting Minutes—**approved**
2. Board of Trustees Candidates **Jeanne Brooks, Pam Wakeman & Charles "Wooly" Wooldridge**--all approved
3. Ministerial Search Committee Slate—**approved**
4. Members voted for Share the Plate organizations for 2025-2026 Church year:
 - OutNebraska
 - Planned Parenthood
 - ACLU Nebraska
 - Center for Legal Immigration Assistance (CLIA)
 - ECHO Collective
 - Malone Center
 - Fresh Start Home
 - Indian Center
 - Otoe Missouri Educational Fund
 - Food Bank of Lincoln & Great Plains Camp Bold--TIE

Please note that there was tie for 10th place. The decision has been made to have one extra Share the Plate month for the next church year.