

2025.05.06 Committee of the Whole (LC) All Hands Meeting June)

- Minutes from previous meetings. [Ministry Meeting Minutes Archive](#)
- [Join Zoom Meeting](#), Meeting ID: 825 8167 0394, Passcode: 487224, by phone: 309.205.3325 US
- **In attendance:** Rev. Wendy Miller Olapade, Doug Weeks, Jackie Kerstner, Terri Bracy, Aaron Olapade, Ginny, Fraelean, Paul Roberts, Erin Sennott, Paul Sennott, Ray Santiago, Christy Miller

Agenda

1. **Recruit Meeting Clerk:** Aaron Olapade
2. **7:00 pm: Opening Prayer:** Terri Bracy
3. **7:05 pm: Check in - [State of the Church](#):** Key Insights for Our Conversation (contextualizing this moment for our future)

Listen for the one word or phrase that you hear as God's word for Sanctuary in this moment

- a. **Grounded in Grace:** We are already loved by God. Wholeness—spiritual, emotional, physical, and social—is God's hope for us.
- b. **Cultural Pressures:** The world's trauma touches us all. Compassion fatigue is real. Churches must be safe, grace-filled spaces for recovery and renewal.
- c. **Post-COVID Landscape:** Worship is ~80% of pre-COVID attendance. Digital reach (especially midweek) is growing. Giving is down, but decline may be leveling off.
- d. **Changing Structures:** Post-Denominationalism; closing churches and redistributing resources. There's a push toward mergers, microchurches, and mission networks responding to local needs.
- e. **Evolving Leadership:** More pastors are bivocational and entrepreneurial. Training is shifting to online and contextual formats. Leadership now includes virtual and remote roles.
- f. **Redefining Engagement:** It's not just about attendance—spiritual depth matters. AI tools are being used to clip and share messages more widely. Innovation (steady and bold) is encouraged.
- g. **Generational Gaps & Gifts:** Young people engage through nature, art, and digital space. Older adults want to grow spiritually too. Intergenerational inclusion is essential.
- h. **Vision & Hope:** There's potential for revival rooted in justice and spirituality. Churches that are multicultural, experimental, and open to change have real momentum.
- i. **7:10 pm: Your One Word or Phrase:**
 - a. Wendy - Justice and Mission networks
 - b. Terri - Grounded in Grace/Love
 - c. Erin - Fatigue, managing the family, etc.
 - d. Jackie - Grace filled spaces for recovery and renewal

- e. Ray - God will show us the way
- f. Charlene - Compassion Fatigue
- g. Doug - mission networks
- h. Aaron - fatigue, where we are, it is tough to move forward with anything, yet still a Springtime of youth aligned with call
- i. Fraelean - Changes to churches, the ones that last are the multicultural, multigenerational, multifaceted
- j. Gini - nothing to add now, still listening and discerning
- k. Paul S - Not sure if its feeling overwhelmed, or a combination of all the things to focus on; I don't feel like its insurmountable
- l. Paul R - not responding to anything positive - Feeling a sense of a long and dusty road; not sure where its going, or if the trip is worth the effort

4. **LC Vote to Welcome New Members:** Jackie Kerstner, Doug Weeks

Motion to welcome and approve the new membership by: Rev. Wendy; Second by: Paul
All in favor: Unanimous

5. **7:20 pm: WMO Presents Options for Sanctuary's Next Chapter**

- a. **Dissolution of Sanctuary Mission and Ministry:** distribute assets to like-minded institutions/endowments; not necessarily faith-based (ie: Arts Collaborative Medford, BU-STH, Immigration Support, Food Mission, SNEUCC).
 - i. Legal considerations beyond desire to match values, some assets have restrictions, impact of pastor's benefits contract on dissolution, etc.
 - ii. + no need for lay leadership capacity beyond making the decisions; we can all move on
 - iii. - no control over outcomes once done, uncertain impact on the gospel
- b. **Continue with Sanctuary Arts, Love, Justice Mission and Ministry** - lean into current and new partnerships to reboot lay and leader capacity, worship, and community gathering
 - i. Current Mission and Ministry include:
 - On Line Worship Circle - grow and decide when
 - Media Based Gospel Messaging - grow and add functionality
 - On line Spiritual Formation Groups - grow books and recovery group
 - Art&Soul (in person) / Faith&Film (Hybrid) - grow to monthly with Arts Collab
 - OWL & am2pm - with partners Grace and UUM
 - ONA & Justice work - in Medford and on media
 - + deeply spiritual microchurch experiences (all); expressing love and justice across networks; alternative to Xian Nationalism
 - - missing capacity for in-person connection; ie: gathering like Backyard Breakfast Church needs Lay Leadership setup/cleanup and currently we don't have that except for Aaron
 - ii. Current partners include faith-based and non-faith-based:

- Arts Collaborative Medford - Art & Soul / Faith&Film / Facilitate Merger
 - Safe Medford - Community Organizing to support equity and safety for all in Medford
 - Interfaith Clergy Community - ie: Medford Pride, Supporting Shiloh's transition and vision to hold Black history of West Medford
 - Grace Episcopal - am2pm program 2025 (June 26 - July 2)
 - UUMedford - OWL 2026? Space for meeting and operating? TBD
 - + these partners love having our network and presence
 - - non-faith based partners not a direct line to Sanctuary sustainability
 - - need \$ sustainability model
- iii. Pending partnerships include:
- Boston University School of Theology Grant Partnership Proposal - [Creative Grounds: Encounters in Art, Film, Music, & Word](#) - immersive, audacious project to build-out Sanctuary ministry and become a flagship Contextual Education Center for building pastors for the future (2026)
 - Shiloh Baptist, Medford - option for rental for physical presence for food mission, office space, worship/dinner/brunch church, maybe more (they proposed more \$ than expected for permanent space; a couple hundred per occasion for room rental - including for pop-up pantry)
 - Intern ? to help with reboot (12-18 months as associate pastor), to gain UCC experience, "does not need salary"
- c. **Seek a Merger** with church/organization that has shared values, purpose, programming and people capacity to continue Sanctuary's mission and purpose for the long term (3 options so far)
- i. Myrtle Baptist, Newton - Has brainstormed with us about a merger with Sanctuary to grow their presence in Medford, leadership and worship capacity mentoring; shared congregational polity/values, with different culture (Historically Black and Baptist worship culture)
 - ii. UU Medford - healthy lay-led congregation with shared congregational polity, shared ONA/social justice values, shared cultural makeup, with different theology and worship life (UU). *Have not discussed with them yet but several community members have made the suggestion.*
 - iii. Boston University School of Theology has an interest in presenting a proposal for a Sanctuary UCC Endowment for Contextual Education "Center" that provides mentoring and experience of community and arts-based mission and ministry. This option would not focus on Sanctuary as a local church in Medford, but build progressive, creative pastors for the future.
- d. For Reference see [2023 options](#)

6. Decisions (7:40 pm)

- a. Are we ready to develop a proposal (mission, ministry, budget) for an annual meeting before the end of June? *See practical Questions Item 7*

- i. **Paul S.** - Tough to make a firm conclusion on what to do now knowing there may be other partnerships that could be strong. All I would be looking for is more clarity; can we delay the meeting for a month? It would be helpful.
- ii. **Fraelean** - Questions about BU Theology, want to better understand what this would look like
- iii. **Aaron** - multicultural, multigene, church - so important, noted when we attended the UU church, there was a multigenerational, multicultural, multi-lived experience of the members. Being in conversation with lay leaders. lean toward wanting to know if there is a way for us to continue Sanctuary's mission, recognize that fatigue points to dissolution; but worries about loss of our legacy of mission and service. IN a perfect world, we probably want to continue...let's give it a go, with boundaries about how long we take. Not a rebound decision, but we should give ourselves the chance I believe on the impact of sanctuary
- iv. **Terri** - Similar opinion as Aaron; I would like to see how our ministry/legacy could continue. The mission deserves the chance to continue if an opportunity were to become available.
- v. **Christy** - I feel like the more important the decision, the more important that vote, and as such we need to reimagine how this could be a new possibility.
- vi. **Paul R.** - I think we need to postpone the meeting, but short-term only. How many active members/voters do we have? Do we have a church beyond employing Rev. Wendy? I appreciate the work Wendy invested in preparing these materials.,
- vii. **Charlene** - Either Dissolution or Merger; that's where I'm at. I don't know how the UU merger would work with a difference in Doctrine
- viii. **Ray** - Agree with Aaron and Terri; whatever we get called to do I'm with it.
- ix. **Jackie** - I don't know enough about each of the decisions; I need to know more
- b. What is the process for getting us there? Do we need more meetings? Do we need help?
 - i. **Christy** - develop some gatherings where we can tighten the options to those that have legs, so that the work of figuring out what the implications are is reduced.
- c. We are not ready to have Annual Meeting and/or make this decision - Vote tonight to delay and schedule a Special Congregational Meeting ([a la 2020](#)) to delay and develop a plan; **see proposed text below**

7. Practical Questions for 2026 mission and budget (depending on option/outcome) (All Items Tabled)

- a. Sanctuary gathering & worship - circles, film, potluck - do we need a space to gather, operate the church, and express our mission?
- b. Food mission this summer - from Shiloh? UU? Tent in the Square? Or let go???
- c. Divest from Hillside? Wait for a decision/rental space?
 - i. Sanctuary Property (see list below)
 - ii. Staff - Charmaine work location
 - iii. Printer Contract (2 more years, no early release option)

- iv. WMO personal items
- v. New computer being used by Danny
- d. Storage Space at the Parsonage Backyard / storage, gathering, add value to property?
 - i. Costco 1500-2000 resin ([ie: 10x7 + install](#))
 - ii. Costco 5-10K Wood Storage and office space? [See options here](#)
 - iii. [Reeds Ferry Sheds](#) (5K to 20K installed for storage and possible office/meeting space)
 - iv. SNEUCC storage/meeting space?

8. Business (All Items Tabled)

- a. Rev Wendy preaching Shiloh Baptist (June 15 & 22)

b. Clerk's Report

- i. Approve February, April & May Meeting Minutes (**No Mtg March**)

[2025.02.04 All Hands LC Meeting \(February\)](#)

[2025.04.01 All Hands LC Meeting \(April\)](#)

[2025.05.06 All Hands LC Meeting \(May\)](#)

Motion by @ to approve meeting minutes, seconded by @; In attendance members vote (*TBD: in favor, no nays, no abstentions*)

- c. [Trustees Draft Report 2025.05.15](#); [2024.06.24 Trustees Report](#)

- d. [Back of the Napkin 2026 Budget](#) to maintain online Sanctuary Mission and Ministry with current partnerships; no rental space, no storage space; 10K legal, no change to staffing, maintain most program budget, add social media support

\$235,846.28	Expense				
-\$46,800.00	Revenue				
\$187,046.28	Difference				
\$142,470.35	5% draw of 6 year average (2020 - 2025)				
\$44,575.93	Deficit = 1.5% of 6 year average				

e. Treasurer's Report

- i. [2025.06.03 Budget Versus Actuals](#) (YTD)
- ii. Do we need to adjust "draw"?
- iii. Closing of 2024 Books and Audit - Pending/Update?

For Reference:

- [2023 Discernment Options w/Today's Lens](#)
- [2024/2025 Sanctuary Property \(moved to Hillside - see column C/D\)](#)
- [2025.04.01 Message to Hillside re: decisions](#)
- [Rev. Darrell Goodwin's State of the Church Address \(see Video and Summary\)](#)

LC Votes to bring the proposal of the Delay of the 2025 Congregational Meeting to a Special Congregational Meeting:

Given the unexpected ending of the Hillside/Sanctuary Partnership and Merger negotiations on March 23, 2025; and the need for further spiritual discernment as well as practical negotiations about our mission, ministry, and operations the Sanctuary LC proposes the following:

1. Vote to move the 2025 Sanctuary Annual Meeting (normally held “no later than the first Sunday of July”) to be held no later than the first Sunday of November;
2. Vote to extend the monthly budget allocations in place for FY2025 through the six month period of July 1, 2025 through Dec. 31, 2025 for the purpose of Sanctuary operations.
3. Engage in further planning and discernment through this period so as to complete the Annual Meeting and decision making called forth from that process.

Christy moves this action; Jacky seconds, Voting was unanimous, Paul S, Paul R, Erin S: were absent.

Rev. Wendy will confer with Christy about scheduling a special congregational meeting in late June to allow for this decision to be made by the congregation, and for an initial discernment discussion that allows for sharpening the focus of/reducing the options listed above.