

2025.10.07 Sanctuary UCC Special Congregational Meeting — Summary Notes

[Call to Special Congregational Meeting here](#)

- (22) Member Attendees: Jackie Kerstner, Branwen Cook, Jim Silva, Charlene Carle, Terri Bracy, Aaron Olapade, Sue D'arcy Fuller, Sara Medrano-Palmer, Anita Nackel, Annamarie Ross Shu, Tom Gerstenlauer, Christy Miller, Bem Jacques, Becky Jacques, Liz Douglass, Carvina Williams, Ray Santiago, Erin Sennott, Paul Sennott, Gini Berthiaume, Fraelean Curtis, Wendy Miller Olapade
- (2) Members not connected to the Meeting due to technical issues: Paul Roberts, Julie Roberts
- (3) Non-Member Attendees: Dyanne London, Ivy Tiillman, Jojo Bercusette

Opening

Wendy welcomed participants into the Zoom gathering with gratitude and grounding. She acknowledged the weight of the moment—grief, uncertainty, hope, memory, and deep care for Sanctuary. She offered a pastoral prayer centered on breath, calm, God's abiding presence, and openness to the Spirit.

Purpose of the Meeting

The focus of the gathering was spiritual discernment regarding Sanctuary UCC's future:

Discernment Question: Should Sanctuary UCC pursue the Church Legacy & Closure Process now, or continue ministry in its current form (including exploration of new partnerships)?

The meeting sought clear input to guide next steps.

Framing for Discernment

Rev. Don Remick

Don framed discernment as a spiritual practice rooted in Scripture and the fruit of the Spirit. He reminded the group that:

- Holy discernment moves us toward relationship with Christ and one another.
- It draws on the qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and gentleness.
- It aligns with Scripture, tradition, and Sanctuary's core identity.
- It may call us beyond comfort but toward our truest selves and God's work.

He explained the Legacy Process as a faithful, spiritual, and legal pathway for churches that can no longer sustain their mission. It includes:

- Caring for members.
- Naming and honoring the congregation's core values.
- Meeting Attorney General requirements for nonprofit dissolution.

- Stewarding assets toward mission-aligned partners.

Rev. Katie Omberg

Katie clarified that voting to pursue the Legacy Process **is not a vote to close today**. Instead, it begins the legally required process, with another congregational vote needed later to formally close.

She emphasized:

- Ministry continues during the process.
- Budgets and timelines will return to the congregation for approval.

Sharing on the Question

All participants offered up to three minutes of reflections on how Sanctuary has impacted them and whether the church should continue or begin the Legacy Process.

Themes from Those Who Want to Continue Ministry (8 members + 3 non-members)

Common themes:

- Deep gratitude for Sanctuary's community, support, and spiritual care.
- Strong identity around arts, food justice ministry, hospitality, and radical welcome.
- Desire to explore new partnerships (e.g., Myrtle Baptist) before closure.
- A sense that the Holy Spirit may still be working through Sanctuary.
- Importance of Sanctuary's presence in unsettling social and political times.
- Appreciation for Wendy's leadership and unique pastoral gifts.

Non-members also expressed strong connection to Sanctuary's transparency, values, justice focus, and inclusive ministry.

Themes from Those Who Support Pursuing the Legacy Process (14 members)

Common themes:

- The congregation is too small to sustain ministry or leadership demands.
- Multiple merger attempts over 12 years have not secured long-term viability.
- Many long-time members feel tired, burnt out, or unable to maintain current commitments.
- Recognition that much of the ministry rests on one leader.
- Belief that assets could bless mission-aligned organizations meaningfully.
- Sense that the faithful choice is to allow Sanctuary's legacy to carry forward rather than struggle to survive.

Individuals expressed grief but also clarity that “it is time,” while honoring Sanctuary’s significant impact on families, children, and generations.

Voting and Clarifications

Two member abstentions (including Wendy). Two members who attempted to join but were disconnected expressed support for the Legacy Process. Members voted to suspend the bylaw requiring in-person attendance, allowing their votes to be counted.

Final Tally

- **14 members:** Pursue the Legacy Process.
- **8 members:** Continue the ministry.
- **2 abstentions.**
- **3 non-members** offered support for continuing ministry but not eligible to vote.

Outcome: Sanctuary UCC will begin the Legacy & Closure Process.

Katie reiterated that this begins a spiritual and legal process—not an immediate closure. Ministry continues until a Legacy budget and full plan return to the congregation for a later vote.

Overall Themes

- Grief and gratitude were palpable throughout the gathering.
- Sanctuary’s identity in arts, food justice, spirituality, and radical welcome remains deeply cherished.
- Mixed emotions about merger attempts and long-term sustainability.
- Strong trust in Wendy’s leadership, paired with realism about volunteer capacity.

Executive Summary

The congregation gathered to consider the future of Sanctuary. After prayer, framing, and member sharing, the congregation voted to begin the Legacy & Closure Process. The Ministry continues during this process until further votes establish a timeline. The decision reflects a desire to steward Sanctuary’s history, mission, and values faithfully into the next chapter.