

University Mennonite Church Congregational Meeting

November 23, 2025

Notetaker: Marvin Hall

More detailed reports and information for this meeting can be found at:

[Congregation Meeting 2025-11-23 - University Mennonite Church](#)

Present in Sanctuary (36):

Joel Weidner (co-chair and zoom operator), Jim Rosenberger (treasurer), Ruth Kitchin Tillman (asst chair), Doug McPherson, Hope Brubaker, Doug Miller (elder), Sue Miller, Nel Kopp, Heidi Martin, Joyce Hall, Marvin Hall, Doug Yoder, Dave Beppler, Ken Litwiller (elder), Laura Litwiller, Becky Kephart, Kathleen Stehouwer, Rick Stehouwer (co-chair), Dale Kephart, Leah Witzig (elder), Cathy Bresee, Jim Rosenberger (treasurer), Gloria Horst Rosenberger (elder), Evelyn Bartch, Karl Bartsch, Jess McCormick, Bethany Spicher Schoenberg, Tim Groff, Carolyn Brubaker, Sally Minnich, Mark Mininch, Meredith Wideman, Rodney Brubaker, Ben Wideman, Micah Schoenberg, Mary Derstein.

Present on Zoom (5):

Jim Pierce, Evelyn Stauffer, Karen Brandes, Lesle Webb, Gben vakor Harrison Mawulawee.

Opening - Rick Stehouwer

Humans are part of the natural order and have a responsibility to care for it.

Minutes from September 7, 2025 Meeting - Rick Stehouwer

Minutes were approved with minor changes

Congregation Co-Chair Report - Rick Stehouwer

The survey results found that congregational meetings immediately after the worship service are preferred.

Park Forest Pre-school: Rick informed the congregation that the leadership team decided to increase the value of the gift cards that our church gives during the Holidays to \$75. This will result in \$2475 needed in monetary donation to achieve that goal. This change received unanimous support.

Pastoral Search Committee Report – Gloria Rosenberger

Gloria reported that the search committee is hard at work and can't say more because it is imperative that we maintain confidentiality of applicants.

Worship Committee Report – Kathleen Stehouwer

Worship Committee continues to meet monthly to plan worship themes, brainstorm ideas for speakers and worship content, fill out the worship grid, and discuss feedback.

Many of you have asked about filling speaker slots since Kate left. We're thankful that so far this is going very well. The combination of Ben preaching 2 times/month, a wealth of members who have agreed to speak, and other local resources has made our job easy to this point. We currently have speakers scheduled through January 2026. Please continue to consider if you would have a message you would like to share with the congregation.

Fall/Winter Themes:

- The theme for November is "Creation and Thanksgiving"
- The theme for Advent is "What do you fear? Insisting on Hope." We are using resource materials from Sanctified Art.

Christmas Eve Service:

We will have a service of Lessons and Carols, beginning at 5:00PM

Communion Observance:

Prompted by thoughtful questions from a UMC member, the committee re-visited our communion practices of open table and monthly observance. As a committee, we reaffirmed both of these practices and also decided on the following:

- We will begin to offer grapes again for children whose parents may want them to have an alternative to bread and juice.
- We'll have some flexibility around monthly observance if we need to accommodate special services, guest speakers, or other service elements that might arise.

The Worship Committee welcomes input from the congregation on all matters related to worship. However, we do not feel that it is a good time to make major changes or take surveys during this period when we are searching for a new pastor. If you have feedback, ideas, or questions, please reach out to: Kathleen Stehouwer (chair), Ruth Kichin Tillman, Ross Harrison, Bethany Spicher Schonberg, or Ben Wideman.

Treasurer's Report - Jim Rosenberger

- Audit of the 2024-25 financial records was completed by Cathy Bresee and all financial records and transactions were found to be in order. Cathy's written report can be found on the UMC web site at
- Balance Sheet, Income and Expense vs Budget and Income and Expense by Class Reports for the current fiscal year beginning Sept. 1 (2.5 months or 21% of the 2026 FY) can be found on the UMC web site.
- Current assets for church now include value of improvements (solar panels, heat pumps and renovated bathrooms) to our building.
- Following up on questions from the previous meeting, Jim reported that the Memorial Garden fund will be used up in this fiscal year.

Proposal for above budget donation to State College Food Bank – Rick

In response to increased food needs due to grocery inflation and the recent lapse in SNAP benefits, the leadership team made a motion that we make a one-time, above budget donation to the Centre County Food Bank of \$1,000.

Background and Rationale:

1. This motion comes in response to a suggestion from one of our members that UMC should use funds we are not paying for pastor's salary to help those around us who are in need.
2. The UMC budget already takes into account salary savings in that the salary and benefits portion of our budget is reduced by 25% compared to last year. The income side of our budget is also substantially reduced compared to last year due mostly to decreased pledges and decreased interest rates. Our current budget shows only a \$3,210 surplus.
3. The suggestion to give additional donations to help those in need came when SNAP benefits stopped due to the government shutdown. Now that benefits have resumed the need is somewhat less pressing.
4. We may realize greater salary savings than are projected in our current budget. If this occurs, we can consider making additional donations later in the fiscal year. We normally do this at the end of our fiscal year if carryover funds exceed 20% of our budget.

Motion seconded and passed.

Radical Hospitality Committee Report – Bethany

In 2022, University Mennonite Church was gifted funds through Allegheny Mennonite Conference from the sale of the International Guest House in DC. Our task as a congregation was to use these funds for "Radical Hospitality." UMC affirmed volunteers to form a committee to evaluate how we might best use these funds in our context. Our committee has been longing for a singular "big idea" to crystallize. After three years of listening to the congregation, completing a congregational survey, and evaluating our ongoing community needs, we continue to see a vital need in refugee advocacy.

Of the \$30,000 Radical Hospitality Fund, the Committee proposes and makes the following motion:

\$5000 be gifted immediately to Mennonite Central Committee to continue to work at international refugee work, an additional amount beyond our annual budget commitment to this organization in a pressing international moment of need.

\$10,000 to be gifted to Church World Service - Harrisburg (the primary refugee resettlement agency connected to our community) as they continue work with refugee resettlement in Pennsylvania, amid drastic federal funding cuts threatening their future viability.

\$15,000 to be earmarked for ongoing local refugee work, to be provided as needs arise from Centre County Rapid Response/Moshannon Detention Center response work, and the ongoing work of our collaborative State College Interfaith Group. These funds will be gifted with the ongoing oversight of our Radical Hospitality Committee working with our University Mennonite Church Finance Committee.

Motion seconded and passed.

Children's Sunday School Report – Bethany

Members of the Children and Youth Program Committee have been teaching children's Sunday school on second and fourth Sundays. Meredith Wideman and Laura Litwiller are teaching the younger elementary class (Andy, Timothy, Will, Ellie, Everett, Vivian, Jonas) and Doug Miller, with assistance from Jasiel Lira, is teaching the older elementary/middle school group (Alethia, Mira, Lena, Ben, Daniel, Amy). Bethany Spicher Schonberg is working with Carmen Groff and Meredith on a third-Sunday intergenerational Christmas celebration on December 21 for all the children, and will be sharing Advent resources for families by email.

Other Reports

Meeting House committee reported that the bathroom project is finally complete. The next project in the pipeline is the outdoor sign.

Old Business:

New Business:

Allegheny Conference is seeking additional funds and has asked our congregation to contribute. A video prepared by Allegheny Conference explaining why funds are needed will be sent via email and included in the midweek update.

Closing - Rick