

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**United Church of Christ Board**  
**January 12, 2026**  
**Via Zoom**

**Board Members Present:**

Jean Avison, Joyce Bathke, Bret Bicoy, Judith Booker, Deborah Dee Brayton, Elizabeth Brunton, Indigo Brown Bryant, Charles Buck, Cynthia Butts, Susan Cartmell, Lorraine Cenicerros, Tyler Connoley, Tom Croner, Equilla Curry, Lillian Daniel, Courtney Dobbins, Jamar Doyle, Mark Dutell, Jimmy Gibbs, Sheila Harvey, Cean James, Ali Lopez-Valcarcel, Marcia Keesee, Marisa Laviola, Andy Mangum, Roy Mosley, Janese Murray, A.T. Ortiz, Jasmine Coleman Quinerly, Sara Rabe, Michael Readinger, Lawrence Richardson, Gregory Sato, Jennifer Smith, Karen Georgia Thompson, ivy tillman, Elizabeth Walker, Careina Williams, Kate West, Kim Wood

**Board Members Not Present:**

Carrie Call, Sana Delcorazon, Daniel Doty, Josann Jenks, Tracy Keene, David Klassen, Shari Prestemon, Andrew Ponder Williams, William Young

**Staff Present:**

Joshua Baird, Patrick Duggan, Heather Kimmel, Shameerah Lemon, Olivia Risko, Brian Tracy

**Guests Present:**

Jennifer Sowell

**Roll Call was taken and a Quorum was declared.**

**Opening Prayer**

**Welcome by Chair & Vice Chair**

Jasmine C. Quinerly & Cean James wish the Board a Happy New Year and express gratitude and excitement for the year to come.

**Voice without vote was granted to staff.**

**Welcome by GMP/CEO**

Karen Georgia Thompson wishes the Board a Happy New Year and welcomes Brian Tracy as the new Chief Financial officer.

**Approval of Agenda**

Roy Mosley moves to approve the Agenda, Deborah Dee Brayton seconds.

**Discussion:** None.

**It was VOTED:**  
**UCCB-26-01-01** To approve the Agenda.

**Motion:** Roy Mosley  
**Second:** Deborah Dee Brayton

**Vote:** Passes.  
*Supporting document:* UCCB-26-01-01 Agenda

**Approval of October 24-26, 2025 UCCB Meeting Minutes**

Roy Mosley moves to approve the October 24-26, 2025 UCCB Meeting Minutes, Janese Murray seconds.

**Discussion:** None.

**It was VOTED:**  
**UCCB-26-01-02** To approve the October 24-26, 2025 UCCB Meeting Minutes.

**Motion:** Roy Mosley  
**Second:** Janese Murray

**Vote:** Passes.  
*Supporting Document:* UCCB-25-10\_10.2025\_Minutes

**Executive Committee Report**

At the December 9, 2025 Executive Committee meeting, the Executive Committee acted as the United Church of Christ Board for several election matters for other organizations that needed to be attended to prior to the UCCB's March meeting. The actions are on the Executive Committee's written report in BoardEffect.

The Executive Committee moves to receive the December 9, 2025 Executive Committee Report.

**Discussion:**

A Board member asked why there were so many unexpired terms for CB&LF and why the decisions were made by the Executive Committee and not the UCCB as whole. Karen Georgia Thompson answered in stating that the CB&LF Board had been restructured, and that their Board needs elected by the UCCB. Due to the vacancies (members rolling off & retiring) the Executive Committee took the vote to allow the CB&LF Board to work to reorient their Board without too much of a time constraint. Heather Kimmel, General Counsel, added that we should not see this process again, as CB&LF is now restructured and on the new schedule.

A Board member asks the same about the Pension Board and states that because someone is approved as eligible, it does not mean they are necessarily going onto the Board. Karen Georgia Thompson responds and states that the Pension Boards needs the UCCB to approve their slate of eligible candidates to be on the Board and from that point, they select their Board from approved individuals. PB is also in a period of transition, with a new CEO & President.

Karen Georgia goes on to state that the CGMB was similar, in that they were also restructuring their terms.

**It was VOTED:**  
**UCCB-26-01-03**

To receive the December 9, 2025 Executive Committee Report.

**Motion:** Executive Committee

**Electronic Vote:** Passes.

*Supporting Document:* UCCB-26-01-02\_ExComm\_Report

### **AGM Search Committee Report**

The following process was reviewed: The AGM Search Committee will present its report, followed by an opportunity for board conversation. After the conversation, the candidate will be invited into the meeting to speak to the board, followed by brief Q&A with the board. The candidate will be excused. The business item will be moved, and the chair will call for discussion and the vote. Following the vote, the candidate will be invited back into the meeting to hear the outcome. The candidate will then be excused and the board may continue its business.

**At this time, there is no vote on the floor, and the Board discusses the candidate as follows.**

Cean James starts by thanking the first AGM Search Committee. He states that there were more applications and they were more robust this time around. The Committee obtained resumes, writing samples, and cover letters from the applicants and four were interviewed via Zoom. Of those four, three were selected for in-person interviews which took place in December. During those interviews, presentation, vision of GMP, and how they see their first 90 days were a few of the large points being focused on. The position was ultimately offered to and accepted by Jennifer Sowell. She is a local church pastor and has ecumenical experience.

A Board member asks if anything was done different this time that produced a more robust response. Cean answered that the amount of time and awareness that someone was not chosen were factors that contributed to this. Karen Georgia stated that General Synod was also a place where people heard we were looking for someone.

A Board member asks for more context as to Rev. Sowell and her experience within the wider church. Cean states that that is a balance as far as this candidate is concerned and she does not have a large amount of experience when it comes to the wider church. Cean states that she will be met with help.

A Board member asks what other intangible things Rev. Sowell can offer. Cean answers by stating the candidate has demonstrated innovation and church growth. Rev. Sowell, during interviews, told the Search Committee that her work will be designed with the mission and purpose. Karen Georgia states that as a Search Committee, when hope for this position was talked about, it was really around someone who could come in and focus on the local church and that there is no cookie cutter model. The must haves are there, and there is a huge learning curve.

Board members discussed the candidate's geographic experience, familiarity with ministry at the National Ministries, and devotional excellence. The Search Committee noted its decision was unanimous.

Board members asked questions about the process and the materials they received.

The candidate, Jennifer Sowell, was invited to join the meeting.

**Jennifer Sowell joins the meeting virtually.**

Jasmine welcomes Rev. Sowell and asks her to introduce herself.

Rev. Jennifer Sowell starts by stating that she has been ordained for twenty years and has two sons. She goes on to state that she lives in the Midwest and grew up on east coast. Her skills as a visionary allow her to serve and be part of the team of larger congregations. She is the senior pastor of a church of 500 members. She states that when she noticed the posting for the AGM for Love of Church, she often wondered how she would fit in and has always wanted to work at the National Setting. She states that by and large, she is a person who loves and believes in the local church and helping churches be vital and grow and she has tried to do that at every church she has served. She believes that a healthy local church is the best way to resist the injustices in our church. She has served churches from 100 to 500 members.

Conversation is invited and the following points are discussed:

- Current struggles for local churches
- The candidate's experience with racial and ethnic groups
- The candidate's vision of the church
- Communication between church settings

**Jennifer Sowell is moved to the waiting room.**

The AGM Search Committee moves to nominate and recommend to the General Synod the election of Jennifer Sowell to an unexpired term as Associate General Minister of the United Church of Christ.

**Discussion:** None.

**It was VOTED:**

**UCCB-26-01-04**

To nominate and recommend to the General Synod the election of Jennifer Sowell to an unexpired term as Associate General Minister of the United Church of Christ.

**Motion:** AGM Search Committee

**Electronic Vote:** Passes.

*Supporting Documents:*

*UCCB-26-01-03\_AGM\_Report*

*UCCB-26-01-05\_JenniferSowellBio***Call of Special Meeting of Thirty-Fifth General Synod**

Beth Walker moves to call a Special Meeting of the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, to be held remotely on May 9, 2026, with the business agenda limited to the election of an Associate General Minister, Kim Wood seconds.

**Discussion:** None.

**It was VOTED:**  
**UCCB-26-01-05**

To call a Special Meeting of the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, to be held remotely on May 9, 2026, with the business agenda limited to the election of an Associate General Minister.

**Motion:** Beth Walker  
**Second:** Kim Wood

**Electronic Vote:** Passes.

*Supporting document: UCCB-26-01-04\_GS\_Special\_Meeting\_FAQ*

**Jennifer Sowell is invited back in and informed that the vote has passed.**

Karen Georgia Thompson closes the meeting with a prayer.

The meeting is adjourned.