

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, December 7, 2022**

Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Minutes – Approved

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Michael Armstrong, Bill Brown, Pier Ho, Randall Hudson, Elaine Miller, Beth Pollard, David Roberts, Cordell Sloan, Helen Tinsley-Jones

Absent: None

Ex officio members: Rev. Michelle Collins, Selene Fabiano (Secretary), Lenore Ralston (Treasurer)

Absent: Tess O’Riva (Executive Director)

Visitors: Barbara & Patrick Cullinane, Karen Elliott, Lynn Hammond, Beth Jerde, Sheldon Jones, Don Klose, Albert Kueffner, David Lingenfelter, Lisa Maynard, Anita Mermel, Denny Parker, Grace Ulp, Anne Wardell, Dave Wemmer, Lucinda Young

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Beth Pollard, president, at 7:04_p.m. Randall did the chalice lighting and reading, Beth read the Board covenant, Bill read the land acknowledgement, and Dave read the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion for the following (M Pier___/S Helen___) passed with one abstention (Randall).

- Approve agenda
- Approve Board Meeting minutes
- Accept monthly Executive Director report
- Accept monthly Treasurer’s report
- Approved Nominating Committee recommendation that to assure staggered terms going forward, approve the following terms for Committee appointment in May 2023: One-year term: 3 new members; Two-year term: 2 continuing members + 1 new member; Three-year term: 3 new members.

INFORMATION ITEM

Minister's Report: Rev. Michelle

1. Update on feedback from the Solano County Planning Department regarding the uses of Freestone. UUCB recently received an email from the Senior Planner saying that they had confirmed our tax status and will be resuming the meetings with Planning and Codes Department. She hopes to hear back from them by early January. Thanks to Dave Wemmer who has stayed in contact with the Senior Planner, in an effort to keep the Freestone matter on their radar.

Randall noted that the Board's motion re postponing the vote on Freestone had stated that the delay would be no longer than 90 days and that we are now at day 60. Beth plans to put this issue on the agenda for the January 4th BOT meeting. She and Rev. Michelle identified the following 2 possible dates for the postponed Congregational Meeting: January 22nd or February 5th. The dates are being held on the congregational calendar.

2. Attendance is increasing at Sunday services. There were 125 people at service this past Sunday. There are new visitors coming every week, and each week there has been someone who is coming back for the first time following the beginning of the pandemic.

LISTENING

Announcements/Board Listening Presence:

Beth announced a Staff Appreciation fundraising drive. We're asking people to donate if they can with cash, check or e-payment so we can give cash gifts to staff. We haven't done this for the last two years, during the pandemic. Thanks to Elaine for being the point person to receive Paypal, Venmo or check contributions. There will also be a jar for cash & check donations at church.

Michael reported on the Youth Committee's activities to support middle school and high school students. There is a holiday part on 12/17. They are also actively supporting the 12/11 Food Drive. Some folks will drive youth to the food pantry so they can see what happens with their donations. They have brainstormed re how to support youth and get them back to church.

Pier reported that this past Sunday was the largest RE class this year (10 children) including some returning students who hadn't been at church since the pandemic.

Congregants who wish to speak to the Board: Debi Clifford, Michael DeWitt, Karen Elliott, Lynn Hammond, David Lingenfelter, Ann Wardell, Beth Jerde, Barbara Cullinane

1. Several members shared concerns about proposed and perceived changes regarding COVID safety protocols. These comments included:

- People are still feeling vulnerable and don't want to loosen any requirements
- Concern re the trifecta of viruses (COVID, Flu, and RSV).
- Concerns that there weren't the usual church safeguards at the UUCB Thanksgiving dinner (e.g. no one was checking vaccination status at the door)
- Was exposed/infected with COVID at the UUCB Thanksgiving dinner
- Was drawn to UUCB because of its safety protocol
- Concern re being at the welcoming table if we were to drop vaccination & masking requirements
- Important to caution congregation not to come to church if they have symptoms.
- Reminder that COVID is spread through the air and that vaccination reduces the chance of hospitalization and/or death from COVID, as well as the chance of getting long COVID

2. Gathering on 12/10 ,1-4PM in social hall to make gingerbread cookies and holiday cards for UUCB elders. Anyone who wants to help is welcome.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

A. Recommendation from the Opening Task Force. Recommendation to discontinue the policy requiring vaccination (or medically based exemption by the minister) to attend in person church activities; and instead perhaps state a recommendation that attendees be vaccinated and boosted, and expect adherence to other safety requirements such as masking and avoiding contact with contagion. Item includes policy topic of non-participation if symptomatic of contagions.

Rev. Michelle suggested that the issues of vaccination and symptomatic presence on church campus be discussed separately.

1. **Symptom policy.** Rev. Michelle reported on an incident at UUCB's Thanksgiving dinner which has made it important to have a clear plan for how members should respond if a person with persistent respiratory symptoms comes onto the church campus and refuses to leave when asked. When this occurred at the Thanksgiving dinner, there were no church staff present to address the situation. Rev. Michelle plans to reiterate the symptom policy, and put up better signage. She also asked for the board's discussion and affirmation around the idea of applying UUCB's "Disruptive Behavior" policy to situations in which a symptomatic individual refuses to leave the church campus when asked. She has informed UUCB staff (excluding child-care staff) that they may be called on to respond to disruptive behavior and she has provided the staff with relevant training. She is also asking for church members, including some church leaders, to

volunteer to be part of a “safe congregation team”, members of which could be called in if someone engaging in disruptive behavior refuses to leave the church campus. If the person still refuses to leave, a call would be made to the non-emergency police line or another outside authority.

Rev. Michelle sent a copy of the “disruptive behavior” policy to board members, highlighted the language in the policy relevant to the symptomatic individual situation, and reviewed the “no-touch” response outlined by the disruptive behavior policy.

Board Discussion:

1. Concerns re liability for church members on the “safe congregation” team, the importance on how those staff and congregants handle the situation, the need to provide them with adequate training, and the importance of calling 911 sooner rather than later – although they first would seek help from the appropriate staff member where possible.
2. Michelle shared that the “good Samaritan” laws would protect the safe congregation team member from liability.

Pier made the following **Motion**: *We the board support the application of the disruptive behavior policy for attendees on campus who refuse our health & safety protocols, contingent upon conflict resolution or de-escalation training for persons who are responding to such situations.*

Helen seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Proposal to discontinue the vaccination attestation policy

Lisa Maynard stated that the OTF believes that COVID vaccinations are important and that the OT is NOT recommending loosening safety precautions related to masking. She also provided the context for the current OTF proposal:

- a. A year ago the BOT established a policy requiring proof of vaccination to come into the church.
- b. Six months ago, the policy was revised to accept verbal attestation of vaccination. There was a plan to revisit this plan but no specific date was set for that.
- c. OTF does not have the capacity to follow up with people regarding their status vis a vis whether they have received COVID boosters. Thus the one-time vaccination attestation may not be very meaningful.
- d. OTF recognizes that vaccines are not the critical element for reducing the spread of COVID. Instead the critical elements are masking, ventilation, social distance, and symptomatic individuals not coming to church.
- e. UUCB can fulfill the attestation policy by having a sign outside that says, “By walking through this door, you are attesting that you have been vaccinated for COVID or have received permission not to be vaccinated due to a medical exemption.”

- f. Thus far, no one has come and asked to enter that are not vaccinated with the exception of some confidential situations with medical exceptions granted by Rev. Michelle.

Board Questions/comments:

1. Concern about the timing of changing the policy given that there has been a recent uptick in COVID cases. It might be better to wait until COVID numbers come down again.
2. Dropping the vaccine attestation policy may have a negative psychological impact. It's important for us to be a community that says we "We care about our community." Changing the policy may send the wrong message.
3. Recognition that the current method of getting the vaccination affirmation is an administrative burden and that it is a struggle to find enough volunteers.
4. Agreement with the OTF's reasoning but recommend not changing the policy now given the concerns voiced by members at tonight's board meeting.
5. Appreciation of the OTF's keeping up with the recommendations from the CDC and the scientific community. Big thanks to the OTF for all their work.
6. We could move to a passive attestation approach to reduce the burden on volunteers.

Beth's summary: There is a strong sense that the Board should not change its vaccination attestation policy at this time, and will revisit this issue in 90 days.

Rev Michelle announced that the OTF will be disbanding, noting they have done a tremendous amount of work in re-opening the church. She will be reconvening the Safety Task Force to address COVID-related issues (among other matters) going forward. The task of vaccination attestations has been handed over to the Welcome & Membership Committee.

Results of Rev. Michelle's congregational trust survey

Rev. Michelle provided a short presentation on trust including definitions of trust and different aspects of trust. Because this is such an important topic, she and Beth have discussed the possibility of a future Board/leadership retreat focusing on trust.

UUCB Congregational Trust Survey

- Survey is based on Grunig & Childers Hon.
- Questions are answered on a scale of 1 to 7.
- Considered to be a valid measure (some questions are reversed scaled)
- Drawbacks: may be confusing which leaders are being referred to.

Results of Survey

- High areas: openness (highest), integrity, benevolence/concern.
- Mid range: Commitment, competence,

- Lowest ranges (relative): Vulnerability (lowest), satisfaction/representation, identification, diversity.
- The less time involved with UUCB, the greater the trust in leadership. (Per Rev. Michelle, this is not a surprisingly result. The longer time with an organization, the more opportunities to be disappointed.)
- 55% of respondents involved with UCCB for more than 15 years

Most frequent topics in narrative responses

- Freestone
- Processing past ministerial misconduct
- Communication
- Financial mismanagement in 2017 (and maybe other times)
- Past ministers (departure, leadership, how treated)
- Policy governance
- Authority & power
- Lack of volunteer appreciation

Board Comments

1. 4 is the mid-point on a 7 point scale. Thus the 5+ scores suggest an overall mildly positive feeling.

2. The results may overestimate the actual level of trust because UU's don't like to say negative things about other people in the church. What's important is that we're moving in an upward direction.

3. Appreciate the effort that went into this survey.

4. There's more work to do and we shouldn't just pat ourselves on the back. On the other hand, there does seem to be a higher degree of trust among members and towards the leadership than in the past. The board and the church community has worked hard to get where we are.

5. This provides a good baseline if we want to repeat the survey in the future.

6. The qualitative statements provide important information regarding what's lacking and what's appreciated.

7. Request to get the median and mode for each of the trust components, since the average (mean) can be skewed by a few very high or low scores. Rev. Michelle will calculate these and send out later.

8. Rev. Michelle shared that based on what she had heard, she has seen the trust at UUCB grow and believes that it's still an issue, with room to grow. The survey is one of 4 strategies that she is suggesting.

9. It would be good to do some work on trust with the larger leadership group at UUCB, not just the BOT.

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

1. Monthly Ministerial Search Committee Report

- Successful Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop (60 people attended) & Personal Theology with Keith Kron
- Successful cottage meetings. Data has been analyzed and compiled into reports. This provides Give us a snapshot of the needs & interests of the congregation which can be shared with candidates.
- The next phase of their work includes a mock interview with Rev. Michelle

B. Widening the Circle of Concern Committee

- Updated language in the WTCOC Board charge & will submit the changes for the January 4th BOT.
- Discussed with the MSC the results of the multiple focus groups
- Established the need for greater communication among church groups/committees regarding how they are widening their circles,
- Met with the Aesthetics committee to discuss refreshing the Atrium to include images that resonate with newcomers of more diverse backgrounds.
- Responded to the Nominating Committee request to review the language of the anti-racism question to be asked at the Candidates' Forum
- Discussed succession plan for new board liaison to the WTCOC.

C. Music Committee.

Messiah Sing-Along is in person and will be live-streamed. Masking, symptom-free, and vaccination requirements will be in place.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary

UPCOMING EVENTS AND BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Listening Presence: December: Dave Roberts; January: Pier Sun Ho

Next Board Meeting: January 4, 2023