

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley**  
**Congregational Meeting**

May 21, 2023  
(In-person and by Zoom video conference)  
MINUTES – Approved

**Call to Order and Determination of the Presence of a Quorum**

Co-President Helen Tinsley-Jones called the meeting to order at 12:58 PM. Helen reviewed the procedures for voting using voting cards. A presence of quorum was established (14 people on Zoom and 60 people in the sanctuary). Stephanie Ann Blythe did the chalice lighting and Rev. Michelle did the chalice reading, followed by the covenant read by the family of Vakhid Shimanski and Hailey Hibler, and the land acknowledgment read by the Rosales family.

**Action Items:**

Consent Agenda/Action Items:

- a. Adoption of the Agenda
- b. Approval of the Congregational Meeting Minutes of February 12, March 26, and May 7, 2023 Congregational Meeting Minutes

Patrick Cullinane requested that the minutes from the 3/26 congregational meeting be removed from the consent agenda.

*A motion to adopt the consent agenda without the 3/26/23 Congregational Meeting Minutes (M Jean Gleason / S Larry Nagel) carried with 90 (affirmative votes).*

Patrick requested that the comments he made at that meeting and subsequently submitted in writing that were submitted regarding the motion to delay the vote be included in the meeting minutes.

*The motion to add Patrick Cullinane's remarks to the 3/26/23 meeting minutes (M Patrick Cullinane/ S Larry Nagel) passed with 62 affirmative votes.*

**Presentation of Schweitzer Medals for Extraordinary Service:**

The following two individuals were awarded Schweitzer Medals for their service:

Lisa Maynard (presented by Lenore Ralston) and

Jim Gasperini (presented by Karen Elliot and Lonnie Moseley)

Affirmation and Installation of the Nominating Committee. Co-President Pier Sun-Ho thanked the outgoing members of the Nominating Committee (Victoria Bowen, Dayana Claghorn, Robin Cooper, Selene Fabiano, Max Jenny) for their service. Pier then asked the congregation to affirm the following members for the 2023-24 Nominating Committee: Lynne Cahoon, Michael DeWitt, Don Klose, Anita Mermel, Sandy Portillo-Robins, Ariel Smith-Iyer, Terry Stokes, Andrew Swan, and Marta Tobey.

***The motion to affirm the Nominating Committee Members named above (M Jean Gleason/ S Jane Lundin) carried.*** Rev. Michelle installed the members and engaged the congregation in an installation commitment reading.

**State of the Congregation Report.** Co-presidents Pier Sun Ho and Helen Tinsley-Jones declared the state of the congregation is excellent. Some of the highlights they shared included:

1. Pastoral Care, Rev. Michelle, our Worship Associates, and Family Ministry nurtured us through COVID.
2. UUCB's virtual footprint has expanded as has technical skills of our staff and members.
3. New visitors are coming to UUCB. Year-to-date for 2023 we have had 126 visitors.
4. Our commitment to Social Justice remains strong (e.g. we continue paying a shuumi land tax and dedicated our new BLM sign).
5. We have a balanced budget and are paying our fair share to UUA. Thanks to Jane Lundin's amazing generosity, UUCB now has a beautiful parsonage.
6. The congregation came together in March 2023 and passed a resolution to move forward with Freestone.
7. We voted unanimously to call Rev. Marcus Liefert to be our next settled minister.

Helen and Pier presented the Board-approved goals for FY23-24. They also named the following as tasks for the board this year: support Family Ministry, make needed changes to Governance Manual and Bylaws, and move forward with Freestone. They ended their report by thanking the Ministerial Search Committee and the Opening Task Force for their hard work on behalf of the congregation.

#### **State of the Interim Report - Presented by Rev. Michelle**

Rev. Michelle thanked the members of her Transition Team (Alice Lemieux, Melissa Rosales, Ariel Iyer-Smith, Randall Hudson, Pier Sun-Ho, and Barry Zuckerman).

She named the following 5 focus points of her interim ministry at UUCB.

1. Heritage – we explored our traditions during the pandemic; completed an anti-racism assessment; facilitated a survey on past and present trust at UUCB; and engaged the congregation in reviewing the history of the Freestone property
2. Leadership & Membership needs of the church. She saw many people step into leadership roles and highlighted the Executive Advisory team, Program council, Board of Trustees, and the March 2023 Opportunities Fair. She noted that UUCB had converted to a new membership management system (Breeze) and that the church is thinking about membership in a holistic way.
3. Mission – This involves defining and redefining our sense of direction, reviewing strategic plans and financial health of the congregation. A financial audit was completed and we had a successful Great stewardship campaign. She identified the areas of mission and identity as growth areas for UUCB.
4. Connections. UUCB is home to Tongan church and a ham radio club. We are doing some direct work with UU (e.g. UUCB's Social Justice Council presented a workshop at the 2021 GA).
5. Future. Proactive decision-making (respect shown during the Freestone decision-making process and at the 3/26/23 congregational meeting). The work of the Ministerial Search Committee resulted in a unanimous call to Rev. Marcus Liefert. Rev. Michelle sees UUCB as a healthy congregation, noting that we have come back strong post-pandemic

Per Rev. Michelle UUCB's current challenges center around mission and identity, as well as nurturing and growing trust and respect. She will talk more about these challenges on 6/18.

Rev. Michelle will preach her last sermon at UUCB on June 18<sup>th</sup> and will be present on at the 6/25 Sunday service where the GA service will be live-streamed. In August, she will become the interim minister for a church in Virginia.

**Opening Task Force Final Report** – presented by Patrick Cullinane.

Patrick thanked the congregation for our resilience, care for others, hope, belief in science, and our support of the work of the OTF to keep us all safe. He highlighted how we lifted one another up throughout a challenging time. Patrick noted that COVID and other safety challenges remain and expressed much gratitude for the sustaining commitment of the OTF members.

**Endowment Committee Report** – presented by Lenore Ralston.

The value of UUCB's endowment fund dropped by 13% from January 2022 through Feb 2023 (Overall US stock market dropped 18% during this time period). Traditionally UUCB uses interest from the endowment fund to supplement the budget. This year UUCB will take out \$45,000, all of which will be used for the Ladd Griffith Building Fund. The Endowment Committee's goal is to build a pipeline for new gifts and eventually reach an unrestricted endowment of \$3 million. Two gifts of \$20,000 each were given to the building fund this year. In addition UUCB received a \$150,000 gift from the estate of Marsha Saxton.

Gifts of endowment are often the last and biggest gifts people make to organizations that are important to them. Jason Russell will be hosting seminars to provide information regarding establishing estate plans and making bequests.

**Treasurer's Report** presented by Jason Russell.

Largest source of revenue is from congregant pledges. He encouraged everyone to fulfill their pledge. Our largest expense is staff salary & benefits.

**Presentation and Vote the Board of Trustees recommended Budget for 2023-24 Fiscal Year.**

Presented by Tess O'Riva.

Tess reported that we have a projected surplus of \$5000 in our budget the coming year. This will be the first time there has been a budget surplus since Tess has been at UUCB. Tess highlighted the following items from the budget:

- Lexington Lodge/parsonage – 100% of the rental will be used to repay the COPE (ministerial housing) Fund and subsidize Marcus' housing. Once the ministerial housing fund is repaid, revenue from the Lexington Lodge will go toward the general fund.
- The proposed budget include a COLA raise for all staff.
- Utility costs have gone up significantly.
- In 2018, 4 congregants loaned \$20K each. This year these loans are now due; however, three of the 4 loans were generously converted into pledges or rolled into another fund.
- When you donate money to UUCB through PayPal using the “friends and family” function, there is no fee.

Discussion re the Proposed Budget

Q. What would you have liked to include in the budget if there were more funds available?

A: Battery wall; new folding chairs; deep tune-up of the organ;

Q: What are the plans for the fire station in the parking lot and how does it fit with our budget?

A: The fire station will be in the parking lot until the end of 2024. The income from the Kensington Fire Department for use of the parking lot is included under the “Community Rental” income line in the budget.

Q: How do I print the budget?

A: Tess can send a PDF copy.

Q: Where do unpledged gifts go?

A: Gifts under \$10K are put into the general fund; Gifts between \$10K-25K –the board decides which fund the gift will be allocated to; Gifts over \$25K automatically go into the endowment fund.

**Motion to approve the Budget for 2023-24 Fiscal Year (M Jason Russell /S Jean Gleason) passed unanimously (with 57 votes).**

**Social Justice Committee Projects** – presented by Sheldon Jones

Sheldon explained that the SJC organizes its work through sponsored projects and explained the process for these sponsoring a project. The SJC will be focused on one new and two returning sponsored projects in the coming year:

1. Blessing Bags (a new project). The project involves assembling and distributing bags with personal care items for unhoused persons. Beth Jerde is the project director. Everyone can participate by collecting small toiletries and/or assembling and delivering the bags.

2. Climate Justice (returning project). This year’s project is to obtain green sanctuary status for our congregation.

3. Confronting Racism and Oppression (returning project). This project includes 4 areas: The LFDMC; Working to Oppose White Supremacy (WOWS); Honoring Indigenous People (HIP); and the People of Color Caucus.

**Widening the Circle of Concern Committee Report**– Presented by the WTCC members.

What is Widening the Circle of Concern? It’s asking “Who’s not in the room” and reaching out to include those perspectives,

Why do we widen the circle? To dismantle forms of oppression and to foster belonging and create a sense of safety at UUCB.

How do we widen the circle? Taking action so we move forward as an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, equitable and inclusive congregation, and by sustaining our actions over time.

Who is WTC? All of us (staff, youth, Board of Trustees, congregation). A few specific examples include: Worship Associate Team which collaborates to use images and media that reflect the diversity of our world. The Ministerial Search Committee which identified a commitment to anti-oppression and anti-racism work as an important skill set in our next minister. The music team which broadens our experience by including music by women composers and composers of color. The LFDMC which under the leadership of Camille Parker for 8 years provides an inspirational and healing space to grapple with issues of race, privilege, and oppression. Climate Justice has expanded our congregational commitment to separate green waste from trash to include our tenants and renters. Youth group created the BLM signs. Staff is now using a process to look for local, green, minority-

owned vendors. This year's RE classes took a deeper dive into different faith experiences. The Doctors of Durability service which fights against ageism included both younger children and seniors. Widening the circle is spiritual work, the work of all of us.

The co-presidents thanked everyone who made this meeting work especially the tech staff, Tess, the kitchen crew who provided lunch, Rev. Michelle, and parliamentarian Stephanie Ann Blythe

### **Benediction, and Adjournment**

Benediction by Rev. Michelle

Pier adjourned the meeting at 2:48PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary