

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, November 1, 2023**

Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Minutes – Approved

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Michael Armstrong, Bill Brown, Kay Fairwell, Pier Ho, Randall Hudson, Beth Pollard, David Rosales, Cordell Sloan, Helen Tinsley-Jones

Absent: None

Ex officio members: Rev. Marcus Liefert, Tess O’Riva (Executive Director), Selene Fabiano (Secretary), Carolyn James (Treasurer)

Visitors: Michael DeWitt, Karen Elliot, Jean Gleason, Anne Greenwood, Lynn Hammond, Albert Kueffner, Jane Lundin, Larry Nagel

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Helen Tinsley-Jones, co-president, at 7: 20__p.m. Rev. Marcus did the chalice lighting and reading, Beth read the Board covenant, Helen read the land acknowledgement, and Cordell read the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion for the following (M _Michael _/S_Helen_) passed unanimously:

- Approve agenda
- Approve October 2023 Board Meeting minutes
- Accept monthly Executive Director report
- Accept monthly Treasurer’s report
- Accept monthly Freestone Oversight Committee report

MINISTER’S REPORT

Rev. Marcus reported that there will be a new member in-gathering this Sunday. He expressed appreciation for the people who brought Kevin Fisher Paulson as a recent Personal Theology speaker, and to Heaven Walker and the Family Ministry Committee for a wonderful Halloween and Fall Festival. The Ground and Horizon discussions have begun. Twenty of these

discussions are scheduled through the year. People have been responsive to host and attend these events. Rev. Marcus' hope is to engage at least 150 members this year.

Rev. Marcus reported that in December, the UUA will announce that Minister Steven Furrer, who served as an Assistant Minister at UUCB from 1981-1982, has been removed from Fellowship for misconduct. Rev. Marcus wanted UUCB members to know. Because UUCB has already engaged in a lot of conversation previously about misconduct during that era, there are no plans for broad discussions of this issue. However, Rev. Marcus is available to talk with anyone should this news stir up any issues for any of our congregants.

Executive Director Report

Tess expects to hear about her sabbatical application this month. She reported that 33 families signed in for the Halloween festival. Charis and our Family Ministry Director will follow up with these families. She also reported that over 100 people attended Personal Theology when Kevin Paulson Fisher spoke. Part of the success is likely due to the fact that he promoted the talk within his own network. UUCB will encourage future speakers to do that.

Tess asked the Board to approve an update to signatory permissions for the UUCB Mechanic's Bank account. The request: 1) remove former interim Minister Michelle Collins and former Treasurer Lenore Ralston; 2) add Rev. Marcus Liefert; and 3) retain Anne Greenwood, Tess O'Riva, and Beth Pollard. The goal is to have a more stable list of signers so the permissions do not have to be changed every year.

Motion (Pier- M/ Kay- S). To add Rev. Marcus Liefert, remove Rev. Michelle Collins, and retain Anne Greenwood, Tess O'Riva, Beth Pollard as signers for the Mechanic's Bank account as written on the letter that Tess shared during the board meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

Board or Staff Announcements:

Report from Board listening presence:

Many congregants felt that Social Justice Sunday was very successful.

UUCB is doing a good job with social media and hybrid events but there are a lot of challenges with getting all events recorded and uploaded. There was interest in having UUCB create a more modern social media presence (e.g. divide the Sunday service recording into smaller bits and target certain audiences.) There was also a wish/request that the UUA would help provide tools to help with social media promotion, since this is a common need among most UU churches.

Related to this was to make the screen prior to the beginning of the remote Sunday service more dynamic rather than a static screen, as the first 45 seconds are very important on social media.

Tess's response: The UUCB YouTube page has a "Live" tab which now includes snippets from services. She will be recruiting an "Event Host" to help provide more content for UUCB's social media sites.

After recent rain, there was standing water in the corner of the parking lot under the oak tree. Randall suggested that UUCB create a drain by cutting into the curb. Tess's response: She is aware of this. Once the fire department leaves, UUCB will resurface the parking lot which will remove the low spots.

There was a suggestion to post the 7 principles in the Fireside Room so people attending Zoom meetings could see them.

Many thanks to the Board for their work.

Congregants who wish to speak to the Board:

Jane Lundin expressed her concern about UUCB's recent decision to pay for brush removal at Freestone. She believes that the spirit of the Freestone resolution was that the church's maintenance funds would not be used to maintain and improve Freestone. She is concerned that to address safety issues, UUCB may repeatedly be called on to pay Freestone expenses.

Tess responded: For issues related to fire safety, the church needs to act immediately. However, she is keeping track of expenditures for Freestone and there could be a discussion about having the Freestone Committee repay UUCB for this expense.

Michael Dewitt spoke about the importance of leveraging social media for marketing UUCB. He wondered if the UUA could provide some training on this topic.

Jean Gleason spoke about the Awards Committee, noting that it was time for the past presidents to meet to convene the Awards Committee and begin their work.

Response: Board member Michael Armstrong stated that he will be convening the committee soon.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

a. Endowment Committee Recommendation Re: Ann Lane Bequest (Anita Mermel)

Anita Mermel, Chair of the Endowment Committee, provided a brief summary of the written report she had sent to the board. UUCB received the \$250,000 Ann Lane bequest three years ago. A separate fund was created so the fund could grow for three years before UUCB began to use proceeds from the fund. The fund has now grown to about \$275,000. The Endowment Committee is making the following recommendation for the Ann Lane bequest: That the initial gift corpus and all growth be transferred into UUCB's donor-designated permanent endowment fund, known formally as UU Church of Berkeley fund

Motion (Beth – M; Helen- S) to move the Ann Lane gift into UUCB’s permanent endowment fund, per the recommendation of the Endowment Committee. **This passed unanimously.**

The Endowment Committee made the following second broader recommendation: Board appoint a Recognition Task Force, to run for no more than a year, to think through, recommend, and implement how UUCB publicly acknowledges gifts of treasure (financial) and of time/creativity to UUCB and to the wider mission of our Congregation. Anita indicated that the Endowment Committee doesn’t want to take on this task by itself.

Discussion:

- This Task Force should be separate from the Awards Committee in order to have broader representation.
- Consultation with the Awards Committee was suggested so there wouldn’t be overlap with the Flaming Chalice and Schweitzer awards which also recognize gifts of time and creativity.
- Tess has been involved in discussions on creating some permanent visual recognition, and is happy to share her thoughts.

Motion (Michael- M; Randall- S). Motion to create a Recognition Force using the recommendation and language from the Endowment Committee. This motion passed unanimously.

b. Transylvanian Church Collaboration

Anne Greenwood asked if some members of UUCB board would be willing to meet with members of the council of our partner Transylvanian Church, as a way to strengthen the relationship between the two churches. She suggested the meeting be scheduled at 10AM on Saturday morning in order to accommodate the agrarian lifestyle of the partner church members and manage the 10 hour time difference. Several members of their council speak some English and understand more. Their minister also speaks English. Anne noted that UUCB Church member Ekaterina speaks Hungarian and has indicated she would be willing to help with interpretation.

Pier asked interested board members to let her know. Helen, Tess, and Pier expressed interest. Rev. Marcus also stated he would be happy to join in. Thus subgroup will find a date between now and January that will work for them and then Anne will see if that date will work for the Transylvanian church

c. Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza and Israel

A board member shared that a few of the BLM chapters came out in support of Hamas after the 10/7 attack. Due to this, they wondered whether UUCB’s BLM sign might now be interpreted as anti-Semitic. Another board member noted that these BLM chapters have walked back their initial statement of support for Hamas.

Discussion

This is a very complicated issue.

Commitment to black lives and wondering if our social media campaign is effective.

Violence is not a solution. UUCB must stand for peace.

Important to speak out against violence.

Many Jewish members of our congregation are having a hard time now.

There was a question as to whether UUCB should put out a statement about the war in the Middle East.

Rev. Marcus expressed his belief that it's important to separate the BLM organization from the Black Lives Matter slogan and sentiment. He also stated that requests for a statement about a current event often signifies there is a pastoral need and that worship is a place to address those needs. He wondered what the process is for UUCB regarding making statements and encourage thoughtfulness rather than reactivity.

UUCB has made statements in the past, sometimes from prompting from the Widening the Circle Committee. In response to the murders of black people by police, UUCB organized a vigil which was pastoral and healing.

The UUA's 10/17/23 statement (<https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/catastrophe-gaza-and-israel>) would be good to share.

Maybe the Board can send a link to the UUA statement with one or more introductory sentences to provide context.

Motion (Beth-M; Randall- S): Move to ask a Board subcommittee to draft some opening words to go out with a link to the UUA statement. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Cordell and Randall volunteered to work on this

d. Beacon article recommendations

Michael will provide an update on the work of the Nominating Committee for the December Beacon article (due 11/15).

Maybe do an update on the Nominating Committee

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

Nominating Committee. Started meeting in September. They are trying to find candidates for outgoing board members (Bill, Cordell, and Randall).

Widening the Circle (WTC). Met with Rev. Marcus recently and appreciate his being open to their ideas.

Family Ministry. Heaven did a great job with the Fall Festival. Youth group had their meeting. Big thanks to Melissa Rosales for her work in structuring the new RE program.

Social Justice (SJ). SJ Sunday was a huge success. More than 150 people attended church that Sunday (the average # of Sunday attendees is 90). LFDCM is starting up again with a presentation by HIP titled “Sharing Indigenous Stories and Songs.” See The Week Ahead for more information.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Helen thanked congregants who attended the meeting and thanked the board for their work.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:44PM

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Next Board Meeting: 12/6/23