

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday June 5, 2024**

Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Minutes – Approved

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Michael Armstrong, Michael DeWitt, Kay Fairwell, Beth Jerde, Beth Pollard, David Rosales, Pier Sun Ho, Helen Tinsley-Jones, Helen Toy,

Absent: None

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

Visitors: Anne Greenwood, Paul Hudson, Sheldon Jones, Albert Kueffner, Larry Nagel, Melissa Rosales

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Helen Tinsley-Jones, co-president, at 7:17 p.m. Selene did the chalice lighting and reading, David Rosales read the Board covenant, Kay read the land acknowledgement, and Beth Pollard read the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

Motion (M-Pier; S-Michael A): Pier moved that the agenda for today’s meeting be adjusted with the following changes; 1.Move the DFM update to the Discussion section of the agenda; and 2. Add an item titled “Ministerial Housing Fund Replenishment” to the Discussion/Action section of the agenda. The motion passed unanimously

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion for the following (M Pier _/S_ Beth J) passed unanimously:

- Approve agenda
- Approve May 2024 Board Meeting minutes
- Recommend May 2024 Congregational Meeting minutes for approval
- Accept monthly Treasurer’s report
- Accept Freestone Oversight Committee report

MINISTER’S REPORT

There will be a Worship Retreat on June 7th. Sheila Tarbet is working to get UUCB ready for the UU Climate Justice Revival Weekend in September. This revival will take an intersectional approach of looking at how we do justice in UU. Charlie Classen began her internship, focusing on how justice work is sustained over time, looking specifically at how UU and UUCB approach DEI issues. Rev. Marcus will be out of the pulpit from 6/23 – 8/11 for vacation and study leave. He will join the UUCB staff for their “unplugged work week” the 2nd week of July and attend the July Board meeting. He will be at Chalice Camp in Tilden the 1st week of August. He can be contacted for pastoral care and other church emergencies even when he is off.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

Board or Staff Announcements:

- Update on the Bylaws Task Force - Two more congregation members are needed to join this task force which currently consist of Cynthia Asprodites and Board Members David Rosales and Michael DeWitt. Please contact Selene if you are interested.

- Update on Right Relations

Helen Tinsley Jones read the following statement. *“At UUCB’s April and May Board meetings, the Board informed the congregation that the Board was engaged in a process of Right Relations with a former employee, who requested repair around harm they had experienced several years ago. In a series of discussions which involved the former employee, Board members and Rev. Marcus, the Board had to face difficult historical issues and sought to provide healing for the former employee. A structural change in the form of revisions to the grievance process in the Governance Manual was put in place. While the Board’s reading of a statement at a Board meeting was under consideration, the former employee ultimately requested that we not do so. We appreciate that the former employee brought this difficult situation to our attention. In our Beloved Community, guided by love and compassion, we are committed to caring for one another.”*

Marcus noted that Unitarian Universalists, including UUCB, don’t yet have a process for repairing harm that occurs within the church community. He believes the Board is probably not the best group for addressing these kinds of harms. His intention is put together a team that can explore this issue and create processes that will support the congregation when these issues arise.

Executive Director’s Report

Tess reported that the staff is working hard on streamlining processes and has introduced a new calendaring system that will help with streamlining. If you need access to this calendar, please contact Janae. The congregation is expected to adhere to the calendar and include set-up/clean-up time when scheduling events, as it is problematic when events run late. The annual calendaring summit is scheduled for this Sunday (June 9th) after the Sunday service. Recurring meetings need to be added each new fiscal year.

Congregants who wish to speak to the Board:

Paul Hudson shared his thoughts and feelings about the statement on right relations that was read tonight. He stated he was initially disheartened by the statement but was more heartened when Rev. Marcus spoke about the need to develop processes for repair when harm is experienced within the church. Paul shared his belief that the personnel issue that led to this recent statement was a violation of covenant and hurt the entire congregation, not just the person directly involved, noting that some of the harm may not be apparent because some of the harmed people have left UUCB. He expressed a wish for greater transparency and shared his expectation that the church have a process for healing so that he can feel safe at UUCB.

Helen Tinsley-Jones responded by thanking Paul for his heartfelt statement. She noted that her statement is not intended as an ending to the issue of harm and repair within UUCB, and shared that the Board has committed to additional discussion about how we care for individual and the congregation when harm has been done. She noted that our church doesn't currently have a template for how to do this and further exploration is needed to determine what entities in the church can help with this and how much responsibility the Board holds.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

- a. Director of Family Ministry. This item was moved from an update to an action item for today's meeting. Pier reported that the DFM search committee has finished its discernment. They received 7 applications, interviewed 5 applicants by Zoom, and then met in person with their top 3 candidates in person and watched them work with children. At the end of this process there was a unanimous decision to recommend Kathryn Jay for UUCB's next DFM. Kathryn has a MA of divinity from Starr King, served at Unity in Minnesota, and comes to the position with a lot of excitement and enthusiasm.

Motion for Rev Marcus to extend an offer of employment for the Director of Family Ministry position to Kathryn Jay (M- Michael D; S – Helen TJ) passed unanimously.

Rev Marcus will make the offer tomorrow. Kathryn will be ready to start 7/1.

- b. Vote regarding Ministerial Housing Allowance for IRS: Pier reviewed this item which was explained in the Board packet for this meeting. The Board votes every year on the amount of the minister's salary that is allocated as the ministerial housing allowance. It is common practice that the Board's allocation be fairly liberal in this allocation so that the amount proposed by UUCB is not the limiting factor in the final determination. This year, Rev. Marcus has informed the Board of his intention to purchase a new home closer to the church. Since the entire down payment of a home purchase can be included as a housing expense, Rev. Marcus's CPA has recommended that he ask the Board to designate the 100% of his salary as housing allowance. The finance committee has recommended that the board allocate 100% of Reverend Marcus' salary as housing allowance. In order to get on track with the IRS' preference for the housing allowance period to follow the calendar year, the Finance Committee is also recommending that approval up for a vote go through 12/31/25 and then make a new motion in December for the period of the 2026 calendar year.

Motion (M-Michael Armstrong; S- Beth Pollard): After considering the provisions of Internal Revenue Code §107 that provides for a minister's housing expenses to be free from Federal income tax with his intention to purchase a new home in the near future, the UUCB Board of Trustees designates 100% of Rev. Marcus Liefert's cash salary as housing allowance for the period of 6/5/2024 - 12/31/2025. This motion passed unanimously.

c. Ministerial Housing Fund Replenishment. Pier provided the following background information to provide context for this discussion item: The Cope Fund is used to assist UUCB ministers with their housing costs. However, in order to pay for renovations to the Lexington Lodge, the Board voted to borrow money from the Cope fund to do those renovations. As a result the Cope Fund is currently underfunded by \$205,000. Since Reverend Marcus is wanting to purchase a home closer to UUCB and would like to use the Cope fund towards his down payment, the Board needs to find a way to replenish the Cope fund. The Finance Committee thinks the best approach is for the Cope Fund to borrow money from the Quasi Endowment Fund, and repay the loan over time through the revenue from the rental of the Lexington Lodge. A 2/3 vote from the congregation approving this proposal is needed to move forward with this plan, and an additional congregational meeting would need to be scheduled. Pier invited the board to consider the best time for such a congregational meeting, noting the desire to move quickly to make the funds available to Reverend Marcus with the need for some time for the Negotiation Team to provide education about this proposed plan.

Comments/Discussion

How long the repayment period will be? It is expected that it would take 6 years to repay if no interest were paid. However, there is a feeling by the Negotiation Team that borrowing from the corpus of the Cope Fund should be repaid with interest.

d. Financial Roles and Responsibilities work

Pier shared that there have been discussions among those involved with UUCB's finances that there is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities. The Finance Committee and Treasurer are starting work on getting a clearer picture of all of UUCB's finance-related tasks and responsibilities and how they interact so that all tasks are assigned to a role, not an individual. Treasurer Lisa Maynard noted that that some past treasurers have ended up with lingering responsibilities and it is hard to know how much volunteer time is going into taking care of church finances.

Comments/ Discussions

- Due to its fiduciary responsibilities, the Board should be included as one of the parties responsible for UUCB's finances.
- It is sometimes hard to know who reports to whom. The actual job of the Finance Committee isn't always clear.
- Reverend Marcus is glad the Finance Committee is looking into this. He shared his view that there is a logic to UUCB's governance structure (which based on Dan Hotchkiss' model) and this structure should be considered during these discussions.

e. Board meeting scheduling changes for the summer. There will be no board meeting in August. Prior to the pandemic, UUCB's board did not meet in August. The Board's July meeting will be changed to the 2nd Wednesday (July 10th), since the 1st Wednesday falls close to the July 4th holiday. The Board is planning a retreat in September to engage in visioning and community building. The Board will return to its regular meeting schedule in September.

f. Beacon Article focus for July - It was suggested that there should be two parts to the July Beacon Article: 1) Pier will write about the proposed plan for replenishing the Ministerial Housing Fund; and 2. Helen Toy will focus on the new Director of Family Ministry and mention the schedule changes for the board meeting in July and August.

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

Music Committee – They have tentative dates for four concerts. There is a request for more volunteers to help with staffing at the entry desk for music events/concerts.

Social Justice Council –Voting Justice is very happy with the number of people writing postcards. In their last meeting, the SJC supported 4 sponsored project, including a new project to support the Berkeley public schools. The Blessing Bags project has been very successful and will be continued again this year; UUCB's youth have become engaged in the Blessing Bag project. At the next SJC meeting, Sheldon Jones will talk about the Civil Rights monuments he and Helen saw on their trip to the South. Some excellent speakers are scheduled for the Summer Forum.

Widening the Circle of Concern – There is a request for the congregation to continue to notice, nudge, and acknowledge ways in which UUCB has widened the circle and ways in which more opening is needed. Congregants are encouraged to speak up if they see a situation that isn't good for someone physically or psychologically.

Board Listening Presence - Michael Armstrong provided an expanded view of how the Board can have a "listening presence" by staying connected to online comments and electronic communications. He commended Melissa Rosales for her religious exploration work with the youth and her inspiring summaries of this work. Helen Tinsley-Jones noted the cross-fertilization that happens at UUCB, pointing out that HIP used information from one of Melissa's summaries to learn more about indigenous people. Michael also praised Camille Parker's posting on the UU Discussion list about the history of the Statue of Liberty.

Program Council. Updates being made to the website to help with volunteering. UUCB is transitioning from Breeze to a new church management system.

Family Ministry - The RE teacher committee will reconvene in July with the new DFM. There is a push to connect youth with different areas of the church. Ideas of how to work with youth on different church programs are welcome.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:33PM

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary

UPCOMING EVENTS AND BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Next Board Meeting: July 10th