

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting  
Wednesday, February 5, 2025**

**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,

Ex officio members: Rev. Marcus Liefert, Selene Fabiano (Secretary), Lisa Maynard (Treasurer)

Visitors: Claire Baker, Anne Greenwood, Lynn Hammond, Kristen Jensen, Sheldon Jones, Marsha Lanier, Ladie Malek, Carla McCasland, Bob Moore, Lonnie Moseley, Larry Nagel, Jane Ramsey, Tom Tripp, Dave Wemmer

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

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**A motion for the following (M -Helen Tinsley-Jones/S-Michael DeWitt\_) passed unanimously:**

- Approve agenda
- Approve January 2025 Board Meeting minutes
- Accept monthly Treasurer's report
- Accept monthly Freestone Oversight Committee report

**MINISTER'S REPORT**

Interim ED, Sharon Dolan, will start on 2/10 and will meet the whole congregation on 2/23. Lots of growth at UUCB. Over 20 people attended the Pathways to Connection class. Attendance in RE has increased and we are at capacity regarding RE volunteers. Kathryn Jay is thinking about how to involve more volunteers and possibly staff the RE with some of the new high school childcare workers. The goal is to eventually have some paid positions as anchor teachers for the RE classes. Event Host CJ Miles is taking on some of the rental communications; Janae will

handle the rental contracts. Peter is supervising the event host. KFPD expects to be out by the end of February. A group of younger new folks who have connected through WhatsApp are starting to organize around resistance to fascism.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING**

### **Board or Staff Announcements:**

- Kathryn Jay Ordination on Feb 16, 2025 during service
- February Congregational Meeting on February 23, 2025
- Stewardship – Board members are asked to pledge early, preferably by February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Selene will email the Board when the UUCB website is updated for 2025-26 pledges.
- This Sunday is the Black History month service

**Report from Board listening presence:** Great feedback from candidates' forum. Many people are enjoying the lunch after Sunday service and there is some concern about the sustainability, given the limited number of volunteers.

### **Congregants who wish to speak to the Board:**

Anne Greenwood shared that this Sunday's lunch is provided by Freestone and the POCC.

## **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

### **a. Freestone Update (Beth Pollard)**

The Freestone Oversight Committee reminded the board that in December there was a robust discussion regarding the 12/1/2024 milestone of raising \$250k. The Board took the action of deciding to list the entire Freestone properties if the one well is unsuccessful or on April 1, 2025, whatever comes first. If water is found, lots 1 and 2 are sold and \$250,000 is raised by April 1, then listing of the entire Freestone properties would not proceed on April 1. It was expected that the well-drilling would happen in January 2025 since that was a dry month but the driller wasn't available. Drilling is scheduled for 2/10/25, but the ground must be dry enough; the driller needs about 7-10 days of dry weather for their equipment to access the well site.

There are some additional costs for the well-drilling at Freestone (e.g. grading for access, additional layer of gravel due to the wet weather, and a culvert pipe at the existing drainage swale). The estimated cost to drill has grown to \$43,500 which is being paid for by an angel donor. The Freestone Committee has informally talked about reimbursing the angel donor if the well is unsuccessful but that has not been sanctioned by FOC.

The 6/1/25 milestone for obtaining building permits is also approaching. Dave Wemmer has prepared a schedule which was reviewed by the FOC to tee up the building permits to be available if water is found. The parallel track has a lot of unknowns regarding whether the lots are sold and the money is raised by 4/1/2025. FOC will make a verbal report to the congregation at the 2/23 congregational meeting. This item will be an action item for the Board, at the latest, by the April board meeting.

Questions/Discussion

Q: What are the expenses associated with the permitting process?

A: (Dave Wemmer): We need some drawings and structural engineering work for the permits. Although we have some drawings, the FC wants to look at a different approach to the structural retrofit to the dome. The estimate is about \$15,000 for the structural and architectural work.

Q: What's the timeline for the permit process?

A (Dave Wemmer): Preliminary work needed for the permits would take about 3 weeks. Both the structural engineer and architect say they can begin work as soon as needed. Dave has emailed Sonoma County to get an estimate of how long the permit review process takes and is waiting to hear back.

Q: What are the funding sources to pay for the work needed for the permits?

A (Dave Wemmer): We have \$13K in the fund from angel donors.

Q: Are there any policies for accepting donor-restricted gifts of a certain size?

A: The Freestone Oversight Committee set a policy for Freestone fundraising that would override any other policies.

Q: Is the donation being run through the church. Is the angel donor going to pay directly for the drilling?

A: (Lisa Maynard): Previous FC angel donations have been made through the church account.

b. Board Tasks for Congregational Meeting (Helen Tinsley-Jones)

Board members volunteered for tasks for the 2/23 Congregational meeting.

c. Update re the Budgeting process (added to the agenda by Lisa Maynard)

Lisa reminded the board that the 24-25 budget has a \$1000 "Board Contingency") line item and asked the board to let her know if they want that to be included in the 25-26 budget. She has also asked at the Program Council for each group to request funds they want for next year, rather than assuming the same amount from the current year will carry over. The Finance Committee will review a preliminary budget this month.

d. Public Representation of the Congregation on Issues (Helen Tinsley-Jones)

The Board learned that the Climate Justice Committee wanted to sign a petition related to emissions reduction. This raised the question of whether a church group/committee can sign statements or petitions on their own or if they need board approval. In the coming year there will likely be a lot of social issues on which church groups may want to take a public stance. Sections 11.4 and 12 of the Governance Manual address this issue. Section 11.4 states: *Individuals, Committees, Teams, and Task Forces may speak for themselves, but only for themselves, and not for the congregation as a whole. Representation on behalf of the congregation may be approved by a vote of the Board of Trustees or by a vote of the congregation at a Congregational Meeting.*

Helen Tinsley-Jones recommended that when the new board members join in March, the newly-constituted board consider whether there should be some revision of the Governance Manual regarding this policy.

## Discussion

It's helpful for the board to adopt general policies and vision statements that form an umbrella, under which church groups can take actions. The Board President can review letters /statements to see if they are in line with the board's policies/vision. If they are in line, the group could sign their own letter.

Although it's not practical to do for all issues, it can be very powerful when there is congregational support for a statement. For example, it was very meaningful when the congregation voted to put up the "Black Lives Matter."

Having the Board and a number of church subgroups sign a letter can give it more weight.

### e. Request for Board's Approval of Statement for LGBTQI+ Support

Lonnie Moseley introduced this request, on behalf of the Widening the Circle of Concern. The WTC typically stays behind the scenes, encouraging programs as they take on new projects. However, in light of actions by the new administration, the WTC felt it was important to partner with UUCB's Pride Project to create a statement in support of LGBTQI+. Lonnie and Marsha Lanier, Chair of the UUCB's Pride Project, created the statement at the end of these minutes and are asking the board to sign it. Marsha noted that congregants are eager for action items to reduce feelings of powerlessness.

## Question/Discussion

Q: The Board doesn't put out press releases. How would this be disseminated?

A: Some ideas include putting copies of the statement on the SJC and other places at church, posting the statement on UUCB's Facebook page, adding it as an opening slide for the Sunday service, send as an email to the congregation.

Q: Would the board's name go on it? Would other groups co-sign?

A: The request is for the board's name to go on the statement

**Motion** (M-Pier; S – Beth Pollard) to approve the statement in support of transgender folk as crafted by Lonnie Moseley and Marsha Lanier passed unanimously. (See statement at end of these minutes)

### f. Protecting Immigrants

Helen Tinsley-Jones asked to add this item from the Social Justice Council. Per the National Immigration Law Center, current law states that ICE cannot enter "private spaces" without a warrant. The SJC is looking into our posting signage for certain areas in the church we consider private. Rev. Marcus has been in touch with Rev. Deborah Lee at the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity and is hoping to add UUCB to their list of sanctuary churches.

## Discussion

Q: What does sanctuary mean?

A: We want to protect people from being investigated by ICE, keep them safe and live their lives in this country where they live.

SJC would like the board come up with a policy and update our sanctuary agreement, as our

current agreement is not robust as that of other UU churches. The Board suggested that SJC and/or Immigration 2025 revise the statement and share it with the board.

Q: Does placing a sign that says “private” – does that require a vote by the board? Or is that something that Rev. Marcus can ask the facilities people to do that? Could we use a moveable sign?

A: Marcus will talk with his staff. They will start with marking the offices and the meditation room as private. He will consult with other Bay Area ministers and ask what they are doing regarding signage; he has heard that some are using “Law enforcement is not welcome on our premises without have prior authorization.”)

We don’t want to send the message that all law enforcement is not welcome at UUCB. We have an agreement with the Kensington Police Department allowing them to use our bathrooms and we also want to be able to contact law enforcement in the event of an emergency. In addition, many Bay Area police departments have indicated that they will not be cooperating with ICE. Our issue is more with wanting to prevent ICE from entering without authorization.

There were questions about where to get “Know Your Rights” training and what our protocol would be if there were an intrusion by ICE.

It would be good if the SJC could be a clearing house to decide what information needs to be shared so we don’t get overwhelmed and bombarded.

g. Bylaws Committee Update (Michael Armstrong)

The Bylaws Committee is meeting weekly. Each committee member has taken on one of the 4 sections we want to update. We are required to hold 2 info meetings which will be held on Sunday 4/6 after the service and on Monday 3/24 (virtual) in the evening.

h. General Assembly Issues (Helen Tinsley-Jones)

David Rosales shared a PowerPoint presentation about GA. There is a cost for registration but scholarships are available for UUCB and financial support from UUA. Big items on the agenda this year: election for new moderator(s) and some bylaw amendments

UUCB can have 6 delegates this year. Delegates represent their congregation. They need to be informed about the business items and vote on business items. There is also an expectation that delegates bring back to the congregation some of what they learned at GA. The Board of Trustees needs to vote to approve delegates in April or May. The Board will need to determine a process to choose delegates more folks want to be UUCB delegates than there are slots.

Rev. Jane Ramsey has agreed to take on the role of helping to assemble delegates and answering questions regarding GA. Big thanks to Jane. Rev. Ramsey shared that she attend her first GA 20 years ago and loved the experience of being among so many other UU’s. There are several thousand dollars in the UUCB GA scholarship fund. If you have

questions about being a delegate, contact Rev. Jane Ramsey. Rev. Jane will post on the discussion list.

Ladie Malek noted that GA is happening around Juneteenth in Baltimore, which is not too far from Washington DC. She is hoping that some UU's from GA could go to Washington DC to march for democracy and equality.

- i. Beacon Article Recommendation. Michael A volunteered to write the February Beacon article.

### **BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS**

Family Ministry – More families are coming; there is a large cohort of kids who attend regularly.

Appreciations Committee. Holding monthly sessions to write notes of appreciation to volunteers. Last week 6 people wrote letters of appreciation to 28 volunteers.

Social Justice Committee. The Tiny House Village in Richmond is looking for volunteers. Great turnout for the LGBTQIA+ movie event (“Nimona”). Salsa party on 2/21/25 is open to everyone and will be a fundraiser for Gaza.

### **CLOSING COMMENTS**

Many appreciations to our co-presidents and to Michael Armstrong and Beth Pollard who are going off the board.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:38PM

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary

Statement in support of our LGBTQIA+ community:

The current administration campaigned on a platform of homophobic and transphobic hate and now is implementing policies that are damaging to LGBTQIA+ people, especially transgender folx. We at UUCB stand with our LGBTQIA+ and gender diverse siblings. We welcome the important diversity that transgender folx bring and we will not stand silent in the face of attacks on their wellbeing. We celebrate our transgender members, guests and their families.”