

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, May 7, 2025
Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Minutes – Approved

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Michael DeWitt, Kay Fairwell, Kristen Jensen, Carla McCasland, David Rosales, Pier Sun Ho, Helen Toy

Absent: Beth Jerde, Helen Tinsley-Jones

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

Visitors: Michael Armstrong, Cyndy Greenleaf, Lynn Hammond, Jenn McDougall, Anita Mermel, Larry Nagel

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Kay Fairwell, president, at 7: 20p.m. David Rosales did the chalice lighting and reading, Kristen Jensen read the Board covenant, Carla McCasland read the land acknowledgement, and Helen Toy read the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion for the following (M __Pier_/S__Helen Toy) passed unanimously:

- Approve agenda
- Approve April 2025 Board Meeting minutes
- Accept Interim Executive Director report
- Accept monthly Treasurer's report
- Accept monthly Freestone Oversight Committee

MINISTER'S REPORT

Rev. Marcus reported on two recent events: 1. In April the Lawrence Lecture was presented as part of a conference. Forty-five people attended in-person and 30 people attended on-line. We received some positive feedback. Gratitude to the Lawrence Lecture Committee, Starr King, and staff from the Pacific Western Region. 2. Leadership Retreat was held this past weekend. There was huge turn-out: 70 people registered, and there were 50-60 people present at any given time. There were lots of interesting conversations and Rev. Marcus hopes to continue this in

some way as an annual event. A big thank you to the organizers, especially Ladie Malek and Suzette Anderson-Duggan.

Looking ahead to next year. There is a plan to create opportunities for multi-generational outdoor art activities organized around our JETPIG values. Rev. Marcus is preparing for parental leave this fall. Rev. Amy Zucker Morganstern will be retiring as parish minister of UU Palo Alto in June and offered to preach for a significant part of my leave.

Rev. Marcus shared his reflection on the process around Freestone. His question is how we as a congregation can build a culture of faithful discernment rather than jockeying for decision-making? How can we listen and consider how we are being called to something greater than ourselves and move into deeper alignment with our values? He suggested Susan Beaumont's book "How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going" as a valuable resource.

The staff is settling into the new staffing structure. They are in the process of hiring for half-time people to support the administrative and facilities work.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

Board or Staff Announcements:

- a. Budget Informational Meetings - Two meetings: 5/11 at 12:30 in Fireside Room; 5/13 at 7PM on Zoom. Will be announced in The Week Ahead, and will be posted on the discussion list.

Report from Board listening presence: Some concern about the cost of the Lawrence lecture.

Congregants who wish to speak to the Board: None at this time.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

- a. Agenda for May 18th Congregational Meeting – Announcing the GA delegates needs to be added to the agenda for the 5/18/25 meeting. Pier moved to approve the May 18 congregational agenda with the addition of announcing the GA delegates. Michael DeWitt seconded and the motion passed unanimously. We will do this once we receive the list of delegates.
- b. Nominating Committee New Members. There is currently have 9 members including the Board VP, Pier, who have agreed to serve on the 2025-26 Nominating Committee, the Committee is trying to find one more member. The following Nominating Committee members will be affirmed and installed at the 5/18/25 congregational meeting: Michael Armstrong (continuing), Suzette Anderson-Duggan (continuing), Paul Hudson (new), Anita Mermel (continuing), Sima Misra (new), Carrisa Orwig (continuing), Lorraine Schnurr (continuing), Pier Sun Ho (new), and Andrew Swan (continuing).
- c. Signing up for Sharing the Responsibility/Introducing the Offering- Reminder for board members to sign up.
- d. FY25-26 Budget for Board approval to bring to May 18th Congregational Meeting - Lisa Maynard gave a brief summary. Some changes to the notes she provided – Janae's title

should be Operations Manager. The focus of the budget planning process was restructuring the staff, making sure their work is accurately classified, and making staff salaries fair. The Finance Committee believes these goals have been met by this budget. One change is that the operational budget includes some rental income from the Lexington Lodge. In September 2024 we voted to replenish the minister's housing fund using all the Lexington lodge rental income. The Finance Committee is now suggesting that we put some of the Lexington lodge rental income into the operating budget and set up a maintenance fund for all the rental properties.

Questions/Discussion

Q: Will we need an increase in the "Guest Speaker" budget given that Rev Marcus is going on parental leave?

A (Rev Marcus): We could use some of the minister's professional expense fund. We also hope to have some lay leaders preach.

Q: How long will the repayment of minister's housing fund take if we're taking some of the revenue for the operating budget?

A: If we repay it at \$15k/year, it will take 13 years. The original plan was to pay it back in about 8 years.

Q/Comment: Helen Toy asked about the kitchen budget, noting that the kitchen team received less funding than they had requested. She and other board members noted how important the Sunday lunches are for building community.

A(Lisa and Rev. Marcus): The hospitality budget was greatly increased for FY24-25, in part because people really enjoy the lunches. We're on track to stay within budget this year. The initial kitchen budget request for \$20k was related to their request for paid staff in the kitchen. Hiring kitchen staff has a number of implications that aren't practical for us. There have been many conversations regarding the kitchen. Rev. Marcus has discussed it with the Committee on Ministry. He thinks the most important issue is sustainability and that increasing the budget won't address that.

Helen Toy made a **motion to increase the hospitality budget from what is currently listed in the 2025-26 budget (\$10,000) to the 2024-25 budget (\$11,750) and account for the difference by reducing the Building and Grounds maintenance budget by \$1750.**

Michael DeWitt seconded. **The motion did not pass** (Yes: 2; No: 4)

Pier made a **motion to approve the FY2025-26 budget as proposed to submit to the congregation.** Michael DeWitt seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

- e. Sanctuary Statement – Jenn McDougall and Cyndy Greenleaf shared a proposed Sanctuary Statement from the Social Justice Council's Immigration Support Team. The Immigration Support Team looked at UUA guidance, sanctuary statements from other UU churches, and at what UUCB is already doing. The goal of the proposed statement is to clarify what it means to be a sanctuary church. The request was for the Board to support the proposed statement and bring it to the 5/18/25 Congregational Meeting.

Discussion

There was a suggestion to add the following phrase to the last line of item 3: “and US constitutional rights of individuals and immigrants.” Cyndy and Jenn liked this suggestion and agreed to add it into the proposed statement.

A Motion to approve this Sanctuary Statement as revised (M- Pier; S- Kristen) passed unanimously.

- f. Draft Policy on Care of Material resources (including question of spending authority)
Per Rev. Marcus, this draft policy is a result of the work with Sharon Dolan as they adapt to the new staff structure and is based on ideas from Dan Hotchkiss’ book on church governance. There was a lack of clarity re spending authority in our governance manual as there is in the template from Dan Hotchkiss’ book. The goal is to make explicit what has been implicit practice based on the in the global delegation clause of the governance manual. There is some new specificity (e.g. naming that cash operating reserves can’t fall below 3 months of operating expenses). Some of the other changes include: 1. Drafting a 2-year operating budget during the budgeting process to help us look ahead; 2. Develop a capital budget that shows all the projects that we need to fund, outside of the operating budget, over a 5-year period. 3. Trying to clarify the temporarily restricted accounts. Some lack of clarity re who decides what fits each fund. This designates the staff’s authority to make those decisions and that would usually be in consultation with a team, (e.g. B&G regarding the Ladd Griffith fund). The hope is that the Board will review this and bring it back to the next board meeting, as this is a policy decision that falls under the board’s authority.

Discussion/Questions

Q: Is this suggesting that staff only have the authority to do these things? Or just showing us what staff have the authority to do?

Q: The latter. Most of what we do is in partnership between staff and the congregation. This is not getting in the way of partnership. Hotchkiss’ model is that the board sets policy and delegates authority to the staff for operational matters.

Q: Accepting donations – a lot of that is done by volunteers rather than staff. Should the policy include something about volunteers?

A: The board isn’t giving authority to volunteers to accept donations. The volunteers would be doing that in partnership with the staff.

Q: Who can decide what an appropriate gift is? Lisa suggested that we ask Anita Mermel, Endowment Committee Chair, about this given her knowledge regarding accepting gifts.

A (Anita Mermel): We already have policies for gifts of \$10,000 and above. The language in this policy should state gifts “below \$10,000 (or “up to, but not including \$10,000”).

Q: Will staff have an understanding of which staff will make a decision at any given time, depending on the type of gift?

A: The staff who will make decisions are core staff. Most of this will be Janae but she might delegate some decisions to Peter.

Rev. Marcus also noted that some language needs to be updated in the Governance Manual such as removing explicit references to delegation of tasks to the Executive Director and changing it to say the Senior Minister can delegate to staff. He is also recommending adding a Human Resources (HR) Advisory Committee that would review compensation and be a resource when HR issues arise. UUCB already has Facilities and Finance teams for issues that arise, but not one for HR issues.

- g. Follow-up to Freestone Vote Petition – The result of the vote was 77 (yes) to 74 (no), approving the extension of the milestones. The FOC isn't planning to make a report unless there is some news. Larry Nagel shared that the driller is having trouble getting equipment in because the ground is so soft. As a result, they will probably need to put in some gravel. Drill date is probably one or two weeks away from today, but there could be more rain.
- h. Beacon Article Ideas - June Beacon article (Kristen Jensen) – will write about the Leadership Retreat

There was some discussion about the Beacon- accessibility issues, how many people read it. Rev. Marcus shared that the staff realize we need to make a change in terms of how The Beacon is done. If you have ideas, please reach out to Charis.

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

Social Justice Council. They are doing a lot. There is a Civic Action table which provides ideas about what congregants can do. The Climate Justice Committee offered lots of events during April for Earth Month. Pride group is happy that at the number of people who joined the Coming Out stories. Immigration group has been focusing on the Sanctuary Statement. Norie and Helen went to a workshop showing how we can help immigrants with young children. Helen Toy will work with the accompaniment team that helps a family to talk about what will happen with his children should he or his wife be deported.

Bylaws Task Force has completed its work for making updates. The task force did a lot of research and some of the proposed changes synch up our bylaws with what the UUA does. There is a paper ballot and a link to an electronic ballot. The task force just realized that there is a typo in one of proposed changes which needs to be corrected. The vote opened on 5/4 in line with the bylaws but there haven't been any votes yet. We will send out another message with an explanation and correction of the typo.

Family Ministry. Carla met with Kathryn Jay and wrote up a report which she will share with the Board. The OWL classes have finished. RE classes need more volunteers. There are plans for another OWL class and a Coming of Age program.

Appreciations Committee. Helen Toy and Carla met. In future board meetings, board members can let Carla know names of people who we think should be appreciated.

CLOSING COMMENTS

We had a full agenda tonight and handled it efficiently. Thank you everyone. Much appreciation for Lisa's work on the budget and for the Appreciation Committee's thank you notes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:16PM

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary