

Board Statements and Votes regarding the 10/22/25 Board Motion on Freestone

Motion: To not accept the purchase offer for the two Freestone lots because we believe it is in the best interest of the church and the congregation to not pursue the repair and maintenance of Freestone and we recommend the sale of the entire Freestone property. Each Board member subsequently was asked to type up a statement outlining the reasons for their votes on this motion.

There were **4 “No” Votes** and **5 “Yes” votes**. Each member voting “No” chose to write their own individual statement. The members voting “Yes” wrote a combined majority board statement; in addition, four of the “Yes” voters included a short individual statement.

The “NO” Votes (alphabetically by last name)

1. Michael DeWitt

2 Processes Before a Congregational Vote Occurs; Which Process is Best?

Option 1: The process which Already occurred; Calendar Year 2022 – The Rev. Michelle Collins led plan

Rev Michelle's stated goal was to get the Congregation to a decision on Freestone's future without tearing the Congregation apart and to have this divisive issue behind us by the time our new minister began. The Resolution set the path forward for Freestone, and all understood that. It was a wonderful compromise among those both on the pro and con sides of the Freestone Retreat. It prescribed a timeline of milestones which gave the board the authority to sell the entire retreat if any milestone failed. Details of this process – an extensive series of meetings lasting nearly a full year are displayed in Exhibit 1, a one-page exhibit.

Option 2: November 5, 2025 – The Present Board Motion

- The motion before the Board suggests a rather Rushed Rehash on the Future of Freestone whereby the Board Puts its Thumb on the Scale and Recommends a Full Sale of the 50-Year Retreat to the full congregation.
- Rather than a slow deliberative process to consider all voices and sides over the course of a full year, this proposal recommends using the just next 10-day period, extremely short time frame, to review all matters and take it to a congregational vote on November 16th.

My take:

- I prefer the more thorough and longer deliberative process of a year.

My Questions with this Proposal:

- Why now? Why Rehash and Replace the CY2022 process, that Rev. Collins provided, which led us to a resolution concerning the future of Freestone? IDK
- Why is the Board making this recommendation now when the Freestone Committee has found funding to meet the first milestone of the Resolution? IDK
- What change in circumstances does “Letting the Resolution Play Out” seem now an unwise

course to certain members of the Board on the pro side of this motion? IDK

- Is there a mere coincidence of Milestone One being achieved by the Freestone Committee and now a board plan to go back for a congregational vote on Freestone seeking a sale? IDK
- I would have preferred a petition by members to hold a congregational meeting had been done, rather than using the strong voice and influence of a board action here.
- IMO, by a narrow one-vote majority, this Board seeks to upend and undo a long 4-year track record of work that began in Fall 2021.

Respecting the Will of the Congregation

Some on the board have argued we are in a different time now. The will of the congregation spoke and revisited the whole topic quite recently, just 6 months ago. Furthermore, this was nearly 6 months after our new president was elected, and he had served most of his first 100 days in office; 97 days to be precise. So ,what about Nov 2025 is so different than April 2025? “I Don’t Know! (IDK)

After two consecutive congregational votes concerning the same Freestone resolution, both supporting the continuance of Freestone, how can the Board reasonably justify casting the resolution to the curb now and go shopping for a no vote? This is not what I would have expected from UUCB. One individual vote of the Board overturning a vote of the entire Congregation.

Per Rev. Michelle’s leadership and the resulting resolution, I see that this train we now are on left the station 4 years ago. So much work has been done both before the passing of this resolution and in the 2 ½ years since. **I hold that our “compromise” set in this resolution is rather sacrosanct.** It should not be interfered with, especially 4 years down the line. Why alter course now? I hope this board will honor the congregational will expressed in March 2023 and again in this new environment, just 6 months ago and let the train continue. I argue, “LET THE RESOLUTION PLAY OUT”.

Let’s especially not approach this very significant church matter in a rushed narrow 10-day period with a planned Nov. 16th congregational vote. As with any church issue, a serious matter needs serious attention.

Members of this church, have spent hundreds of hours over many years thoughtfully deliberating the pros & cons of the Freestone property. It has been voted on many times before.

With this in mind, I believe the final decision on Freestone should not be rushed through. In the end, this could create misunderstanding and lingering ill will. That is not the end result we want.

Since joining UUCB in 2017, and particularly since becoming one of the two most recently elected Board members, I have been acutely aware of the profound and often heated conflict surrounding the Freestone property. The high tensions created by this long-standing issue were so significant that I seriously considered declining my nomination to the Board; I still carry a sincere fear that the conflict may result in a harmful schism within our congregation.

I have never visited Freestone and hold no personal connection to the property. From a practical, forward-looking standpoint, I struggle with the long-term prudence of retaining land that inherently carries significant costs and risks—including property management, fire danger, land-use restrictions, construction costs, and ongoing maintenance expenses. I can't help but wonder if this land is an asset or if it is ultimately a liability.

While I sincerely respect the deep personal connections and cherished memories many members hold for Freestone, I question if our collective time, talent, and treasure might be better stewarded toward our core community needs and the care of our home at 1 Lawson Drive. We have a capital campaign approaching, and I fear supporters of Freestone will have less to offer to our primary buildings and grounds in Kensington.

That said, I felt compelled to cast a 'No' vote with the minority of Board Members on the recent decision regarding the sale of the adjoining lots to fund the repair and rejuvenation of the Freestone property. My position is that rejecting the Merrills' purchase offer was inconsistent with the process the congregation established, because the offer substantively met the requirements laid out in Resolution 22-1.

I deeply respect and honor the long, careful process that was guided by Reverend Michelle and subsequently approved by the congregation, including the narrow vote last April that extended the deadlines. Although my personal judgment leans toward questioning the property's utility for the congregation's best long-term interest, I feel that my ultimate responsibility as an elected member of the Board is to uphold and defend the expressed will of the congregation—however narrowly that will was determined. My 'No' vote, therefore, reflects this commitment and my pledge to faithfully represent the community that elected me.

2. Kristen Jensen

I voted no because I do not have the long term history with Freestone that other members have. I feel neutral about Freestone because I have neither spent much time at Freestone, nor experienced the financial or administrative burden of supporting it.

In addition, I feel that given the long and arduous road by which the congregation arrived at the resolution, and given the strong feelings associated with Freestone, it would be prudent to allow Phase 1 to proceed. This additional time would show either a growth in congregational support of Freestone or demonstrate that congregational support will not grow and that long term maintenance, and management by the current congregation is not feasible.

The extra time would also give us opportunity to review additional solutions such as a Tenancy in Common by interested members, sale to UUA, sale to an indigenous community, or other options that would, of course. require congregational approval.

3. Carla McCasland

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4. Pier Sun Ho

Resolution 22-1 on the Future of Freestone passed 87 - 78, a margin of 9. I believe that vote represented the desire of the congregation to give the Freestone Committee the chance to revitalize that property. And after speaking directly with more than 9 members who supported the resolution, I also believe the margin of that vote represented the desire for this to be the *final* chance.

But nevertheless, a real opportunity for the committee to restore Freestone for use in ways similar, though not identical, to the past - a place of long and rich history where members have gathered in nature to experience both communal connection and spiritual revitalization.

It was to honor this intent that I voted twice to extend Milestone #1, while there was a credible 3rd party offer to purchase the two lots awaiting the confirmation of water. I believe that the

congregation's even narrower April 2025 vote to extend the milestone also represented the desire to honor the original intent, as opposed to a decisive mandate from the congregation that Freestone should be saved.

When water was not ultimately found, I fully expected Milestone 1 would not be reached and that the consequences outlined in Resolution 22-1 should follow. Instead, a last minute, and now significantly above-market, offer from two long-standing members came forward. This gave me pause.

Had \$250,000 simply appeared in the Freestone account, I believe the Board would have been obligated to recognize the milestone as met. But it did not just appear; it came as a real estate offer. And evaluating such offers in the best interests of the church is both the Board's prerogative and responsibility.

However, the motion ultimately presented in Executive Session included not only the rejection of the offer, but also the determination not to consider future offers, and furthermore to recommend to the Congregation to sell the entirety of the Freestone property via Congregational Vote. I have unresolved concerns about accepting this offer, but I believe considering the offer alone is the Board's responsibility as we are still operating under Resolution 22-1. For this reason, I voted no.

But I will go on record as saying I no longer believe there is a viable path forward for Freestone under the conditions of 22-1, whether milestones are failed now or later. As such, I do not believe it is in the best interests of the church to continue to spend so much of our collective capacity in this struggle.

I love the idea of Freestone. I feel awed that our church had sanctuaries like Inverness and Freestone to offer our members for so many decades. If I could save Freestone with my own resources, I would. But I cannot. And loving something deeply does not always mean we can keep it. Sometimes it means letting it go so we can grow into what comes next.

YES VOTES

BOARD MAJORITY STATEMENT

Kay Fairwell, Beth Jerde, David Rosales, Helen Tinsley-Jones and Helen Toy

At the special executive meeting held on Oct. 22, 2025, a majority of Board members—Kay Fairwell, Beth Jerde, David Rosales, Helen Tinsley-Jones and Helen Toy—voted to approve the motion “to not accept the purchase offer for the two Freestone lots because we believe it is in the best interest of the church and the congregation to not pursue the repair and maintenance of Freestone and we recommend the sale of the entire Freestone property.” (wording of motion)

The members of the Board of Trustees take seriously the duties and responsibilities assigned to us. As referenced in the UUCB Bylaws, Governance Manual and the Board's Aspirational Covenant,

Board members are tasked to look at the bigger picture, to envision, to be responsive and be responsible stewards of the interests of the church and to advise the congregation on matters that we believe raise significant concerns, even if those concerns run counter to prevailing ideas and plans.

Acting in good faith and because we respect and because we have been moved by Freestone's long history and the extraordinary efforts, sweat and dreams, and compelling stories of heartfelt events at the property, the Board has supported the Freestone Committee's multiple requests for modifications of Resolution 22-1. However, it is now over two years since the resolution was approved. And when we took time to look at the bigger picture, the Board majority saw an aggregate of concerns has led us to determine that continuing Freestone is no longer in the best interests of the church.

These concerns of the Board majority include the

a. **increasing level of complexity.** The light switch moment was during the Board's special executive meeting on Oct 22nd, at which time the Board reviewed the feedback we had received from the Board's consultation with a real estate attorney and realized that more legal advice would be needed and additional monies would have to be expended. The Board also realized then that the level of complexity of the project was rising far beyond what was ever anticipated or covered in Resolution 22-1, approved by congregation in March and April, 2023.

b. **rising costs affecting construction and renovations would exceed the 2022 estimate of \$250K.** According to The California Construction Cost Index developed by Real Estate Division of California's Department of General Services,¹ the construction cost index grew 13.4% in 2021, 9.3% in 2022, 9.4% in 2023, and while cost growth leveled off to 2.3% in 2024, so far in 2025, it has risen 5.12% (Jan to Oct 2025). This would strongly suggest that the Freestone Committee's 2022 estimate of \$250K would be inadequate to complete the proposed scope of Phase I.

c. **zoning does not support Freestone's use as a retreat center.** Until very recently, Freestone had been described as a "retreat center." It is actually zoned as a single family dwelling. Its proposed use is to be a vacation rental similar to an airbnb, which could not be rented as such until the completion of Phase 2. The time gap between completion of both renovation phases that would then be quite large, during which time, little to no income would accrue.

We also question whether the running of an airbnb is how we want to engage our resources and time.

d. **disproportionate amount of the Board's time and energy has been and will continue to be expended if Freestone moves forward.** The process of getting to this first milestone has already involved considerable time and focus for the Board of Trustees. Board members are willing to work hard. However, when we spend more time on Freestone than on any other church activity, many Board members find themselves asking, "Is this a top priority for our

¹ <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/RESD/Resources/Page-Content/Real-Estate-Services-Division-Resources-List-Folder/DGS-California-Construction-Cost-Index-CCCI>

congregation right now?” Due to a focus on Freestone over several years, other pressing needs that require Board time and energy have been put on the back burner.

Ultimately, of course, it is the congregation that decides if Freestone does or does not move forward, not the Board. In our role as advisers to the congregation, we believe it is our moral and covenantal imperative to advise you of these concerns. We feel it would be unconscionable on our part not to do so.

In closing, we find ourselves asking if renovating and managing a vacation home is worth the gigantic and growing price in time, energy, and opportunity that we have been paying and will continue to pay for years. The only reasonable and responsible answer is “no.” This is truly heartbreaking to say, but it’s important to face this reality.

In beloved community,
Kay Fairwell, Beth Jerde, David Rosales, Helen Tinsley-Jones and Helen Toy

1. Beth Jerde

We are not working with an updated budget to compute the accurate numbers needed for Freestone. We also do not have an overall long-term plan to work with.

One vote in favor for Freestone equals one volunteer: If you vote in favor for Freestone, that vote equals your commitment as a volunteer for Freestone.

SHOW it, don’t just say it.

2. David Rosales

Resolution 22-1 was a compromise that proposed a measured plan with conditions to check that the endeavor could be properly funded and resourced on a reasonable timeline. The resolution makes it clear that there should be “no-to-very-minimal net cost” to UUCB. Success was never a certainty and the congregation of 2023 that crafted the resolution knew that. The resolution is a litany of thoughts about mitigating risk and avoiding liability.

Even with the collective wisdom of the congregation in this resolution, there are complexities and grey areas that were not anticipated or outlined, but the spirit of the resolution is clear: to be careful and measured; to be time constrained; to mitigate risk; and to not impact the operation of the Church. My affirmative vote for the motion to not accept the offer to purchase the land upholds this standard.

The resolution left no guidance for the potential conflict of interest or ethics issues arising from a church member attempting to purchase church owned land with multiple failed wells for artificially inflated values. Is this a conflict of interest? Is this ethical? Does it create liability? Are we accidentally performing market manipulation for our own gain? After all, it is our own resolution that is driving the offer to be way above the appraisal and the market value.

We do not want to have any appearance of bending ethical guidelines or taking advantage of

grey areas for anyone's gain. That is the standard I think we would all hold ourselves to. I am not comfortable moving forward with this scenario until I can answer all of these questions for the congregation with certainty and ensure we are not opening up UUCB to any legal liabilities.

The resolution also did not anticipate the use of future promises to pay. I do not think that the use of promises to pay or other debt vehicles is consistent with the risk-adverse spirit of the resolution and does not meet the funding criteria.

It is with compassion and conscience that your board is trying to hold, with care, the good intentions of everyone involved and the best interests of the church. That is why we have all voted as we did. We ask you to trust that this was not an easy decision, and we did not take it lightly.

With love for our community,

David Rosales
Member, Board of Trustees

3. Helen Tinsley-Jones

The state of the world calls us to meet the moment

This large expenditure of time and focus has distracted us from visioning. Looking forward beyond where we are now, what we called to do? How can we connect and be a spiritual and moral force in our community? There's a wider world of concerns for UUCB think about.

What actions do we wish to take and how might we collaborate with community groups to take on these actions? This discernment requires deep envisioning, time, space, energy; envisioning sometimes means giving up what served us well in the past, but no longer does so, and I believe continuing Freestone may in fact impede us to fully engage in future-thinking.

What are we being called to do in this moment in time? And, what are we willing to let go of to take on this historical challenge?

4. Helen Toy

We are a generous congregation! Many kind-hearted members of the congregation and the Board itself have listened to the highly emotional, heartfelt and very articulate statements from Freestone Committee members. *We may, however, have placed those individuals' well-being above that of our church itself.* I believe the time has come to vote "Yes" --- and to focus on the well-being right here at UUCB.