

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, February 4, 2026
Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference**

Minutes

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Michael DeWitt, Kay Fairwell, Kristen Jensen, Beth Jerde, Carla McCasland, David Rosales, Pier Sun Ho, Helen Tinsley-Jones, Helen Toy

Absent: None

Ex officio members: Rev. Marcus Liefert, Selene Fabiano (Secretary), Lisa Maynard (Treasurer), Janae Heard (Operations Director), Liesl Dees (Intern Minister)

Visitors: Ryan Devine, Lynn Hammond, Anita Mermel Marta Tobey

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

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion for the following (M Helen Tinsley Jones __/S_ Kristen Jenson_) passed unanimously:

- Approve agenda
- Approve January 2026 Board Meeting minutes
- Accept monthly Operations Director report
- Accept monthly Treasurer's report

MINISTER'S REPORT

There has been excellent attendance at our Sunday services. Thanks to everyone who has made our Sundays the way they are. Gratitude to the People of Color Caucus for last Sunday's service. The Pacific Western Region will be holding a Rising Resilient assembly in Sacramento the second weekend in April. Rev. Marcus is encouraging our leadership to attend and consider it as a leadership retreat. More information can be found here: <https://www.uua.org/pacific-western/calendar/pwr-uua/rising-resilient>

Rev. Marcus acknowledged the request for facilities staff presence on Sunday morning. He and the staff are trying to balance the need for a sexton-type figure on Sunday morning with the need for facilities staff to take care of projects that have been delayed due to limited staff time. The current approach is for the teen childcare staff to take on some additional tasks on Sunday mornings. He recognizes that this isn't the same as having an adult staff present. Appreciation for Janae's work on the lease with the Good Earth School. The current five-year lease will be ending and the hope is to have a new lease in place by the end of March. Contractors will be starting work on the playfield!

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

Board or Staff Announcements: None

Report from Board listening presence:

One person expressed wish that we could sell the Freestone property soon.

Congregants who wish to speak to the Board: None

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

a. February Congregational Meeting Agenda, Tasks, and Roles

Quorum counters: Helen T-J, Carla

Reading land acknowledgement – Michael

Chalice lighter – Helen Toy

Slide creator – Pier

Request for changes to the February Agenda changes: use the new logo, add reports for the “Discernment Task Force , and the “Social Justice Council”

Motion to approve the amended agenda f (M - Michael – M; S- Helen TJ) passed unanimously

Assigned roles for the meeting

Quorum counters: Helen T-J, Carla

Reading land acknowledgement – Michael

Chalice lighter – Helen Toy

Slide creator – Pier Staff Recognition and appreciation – Helen TJ will buy roses; Carla will hand them out

Call for GA delegates – we need to have someone who will accept the names of people who want to be a delegate.

b. Budget Process Update (Janae or Lisa)

Will bring a preliminary budget to the Finance Committee meeting next week. It's helpful to begin this process early so there is time to make changes and updates before the next board

meeting. As is typical at this stage in the process, basic expenses seem to exceed the revenues. It's challenging to meet our stated goal of giving staff UUA-recommended compensation levels and cost of living increases when revenue doesn't always rise the same way.

c. Authority for Janae to Pay Freestone Expenses (Lisa)

We realized that even though Janae would be the point person for things at Freestone that need to happen now (e.g. contact with contractors and neighbors), she also needs spending authority so she doesn't have to come to the board to handle every expense. Lisa suggested that we authorize Janae to spend up to \$12,000 between January-June 2026. She hopes we won't need to spend all of it but there are numerous expenses that we want Janae to be able to address. Recent expenses include removing a tree that fell, repairing the fence where the tree fell, and repairing water diverters across the road that were damaged by the tree removers. We will also need to pay for brush control. Freestone expenses will be tracked and included in the conversation when the congregation is ready to decide what will happen with the property.

Motion (M- Pier /S- Kristen) authorize Janae to spend up to \$12,000 to support the maintenance of the Freestone property effective January – June 2026. Passed unanimously.

Michael Dewitt offered to provide a FAQ re information for getting on and off the property

d. Funds for GRIP Donation – Request for approval to use some of money from the Board Discretionary Fund (Lisa)

As Lisa Maynard outlined in a previous board meeting, GRIP was inadvertently not included in the 2025-26 budget due to a transition in UUCB leadership and lapse in communication following the change from having GRIP as the October Good Neighbor organization. GRIP was expecting a \$2000 donation. To fill the gap for this year, the Social Justice Council agreed to pay \$500 towards that amount. Lisa asked the board if they would want to contribute \$500-\$1000 from the as-yet-unspent \$2000 Board Discretionary Fund. She thought that she could find the remainder of the money to bring the GRIP donation to \$2000 without additional board approval.

Lisa and Janae hope to do budget information sessions in April during one of the Personal Theology times on a Sunday when another speaker is not scheduled.

Questions

Q: How much of the Board's Discretionary Fund was spent last year?

A(Lisa): It wasn't spent on board-related needs; however, some of the funds were used for the leadership retreat and for Rev. Kathryn's ordination.

Q: Is there a certain time by which GRIP is expecting the 2025-26 donation ?

A (Lisa): There's no specific time commitment but I'm sure they'd like it sooner rather than later.

Q: Is there a plan so this doesn't happen again in future years?

A (Lisa): Yes. The GRIP donation will be a line item on the FY26-27 budget. UUCB does already spend \$3000 to buy lunches for GRIP. The budget review committee does look at every line item so I'm not worried that this item will get left off.

Q: Will the donations to GRIP and to our partner church, and the Shuumi land tax be in the FY26 -27 budget?

A (Lisa): We're putting them in the draft budget. I would like to have a section of the budget for items that are owned by the congregation rather than by a particular group (e.g. the Shuumi tax, GRIP contribution plus the money for GRIP lunches, Transylvanian partner church)

Discussion

If you're new to the church, you wouldn't know the history of certain donations. It would be good to explain those line items for people who are interested when the budget is explained. Maybe the board could be the stewards for those line items to protect them and make sure they continue to be funded. Maybe we could label these donations "historical congregational support."

The board discretionary fund is for unexpected expenses so maybe we should keep some money in the fund for now. Maybe the board could give GRIP \$1000 now from the Board Discretionary fund. We could revisit this later in the year and if the board still has money in its board discretionary fund, we could contribute more to meet UUCB's promised \$2000 donation to GRIP.

Motion (M-Pier; S- Helen Tinsley-Jones) to authorize spending of \$1000 from the board discretionary fund for the GRIP donation. **Passed unanimously**

e. Nonviolent Communication - Beth Jerde

At the January WOWs meeting Julia Rogers provided a training session on Nonviolent Communication that was very effective. This might be a good training for all of UUCB as we can all use training on how to interact with other people

Discussion

There was discussion about how this might be done. Could it offered through Personal Theology? How could we reach a wider audience? This might be part of adult education and fall under Rev. Kathryn Jay's purview.

Rev. Marcus shared his perspective that this is a programmatic conversation and that the board's role is to look at objectives and communicate those clearly. The question for the board is do we have the structure in place to facilitate the kind of spiritual development that we need? Have we resourced the organization to allow that to happen? Rev. Marcus noted that UUCB does have adult spiritual development programs which could be developed; however, it is not the board's job to develop that program.

He also reminded board members that in addition to their role as board members, they are members of the congregation. If someone is passionate about something, they can take it on as a church member; they don't need to bring it to board for the board to take on.

f. Certify Membership

Certification with the UUA is done every year. Janae recently reported to the UUA that we have 311 members.

Rev Marcus clarified that certification with the UUA is separate from UUCB's annual review of our membership rolls. The latter is a responsive review after our stewardship campaign to see who has not made a pledge. We contact those people to see if they need a waiver. If we don't hear back from them, they are removed from the rolls.

The board asked Janae to find out from UUA what our allotted number of delegates to GA is this year. She will get that number from UUA and the UUA will provide the link to sign up delegates.

g. Beacon Article Ideas - March Beacon article – Helen Toy

Describe line items that we are going to be donating to every year.

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

Stewardship – Board members are encouraged to pledge before the February 22nd congregational meeting so their pledges can be included in the early pledge amount reported by the Stewardship Committee at that meeting.

Discernment Task Force - They have met twice. They facilitated the board's circle and are thinking about how to move forward with circles for the rest of the congregation; The next circle will be for the Freestone Committee (FC) which has identified the members they want to attend. The FC has requested that a member of the board who voted to sell Freestone come to their discernment circle. That meeting might not happen until March.

The Task Force is currently discerning the best process to move forward. They recognize that the desired outcomes for the different circles are not identical. As a result, different processes might be needed for different groups. The first phase is focused on listening and healing, not seeking solutions.

UUCB members have asked when are the circles going to happen and how long are they going to last. The Discernment Task Force (DTF) is working that out. It is important for the DTF to share what they are doing at the February congregational meeting. The group may need to grow in order to do the work they want to do. If you know people who would be good listeners/ good mediators, let Marcus know.

New members for committees – Kristen asked Victoria for names of people who might be interested in getting more involved in UUCB. She gave the name of someone who would be interested in the Endowment Committee if she could work with Anita; another name for Buildings & Grounds who will speak to Tom Tripp. Also looking for someone for HR

The Social Justice Council full report was in the packet. Very active groups in SJC_ civic action, equity in Berkeley schools, confronting racism, bridging for democracy, blessing bags.

First mtg for bridging for democracy will happen this Sunday.

Endowment Committee. Lisa Maynard reminded the board that Anita Mermel sent a statement to the board regarding her involvement with the Endowment Committee. Although she is termed out, she is willing, if the board approves it, to continue as a caretaker until there is a functioning EC.

Motion (M- Kristen; S- Helen Toy) to approve Anita Mermel to continue on the Endowment Committee as caretaker until there is a functioning Endowment Committee. Passed unanimously

CLOSING COMMENTS

The Board expressed its deep gratitude for the wise counsel and leadership provided by Kay Fairwell and Helen Tinsley-Jones who will be completing their board terms later this month.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary