

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday May 6, 2026
Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Minutes

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Ryan Devine, Selene Fabiano, Kristen Jensen, Beth Jerde, Carla McCasland, David Rosales, Pier Sun Ho, and Helen Toy

Ex officio members: Rev. Marcus Liefert, Beth Pollard (Secretary), Lisa Maynard (Treasurer), Janae Heard (Operations Director)

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by, Co-President Selene Fabiano, at 7:15p.m. David did the chalice lighting and reading, Kristen read the Board covenant, Carla read the land acknowledgement, and Helen read the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion for the following (M/S, Kristen/Beth J.) passed unanimously:

- a. Approve agenda
- b. Approve April 1, 2026 Board Meeting minutes
- c. Accept monthly Treasurer's report
- d. Authorize deposit of the \$300,000 distribution received in March 2026 from the Lee Lawrence estate to the Board Designated Endowment Fund, with designation for use pending May 17 congregational action.
- e. Accept Operations Director's report

MINISTER'S REPORT

Freestone Discernment: The Task Force has been hard at work with heartfelt care in its leadership. It completed the fishbowl reflection phase and is turning its attention to visioning - on how we are called to move forward with Freestone, by engaging with groups across the congregation and planning for a final written input phase. Feelings about recent Freestone actions remain, but their processing will happen in ways other than being a main focus of the task force.

Beacon Blog: As announced to the congregation, the Beacon is transitioning from a monthly newsletter to a Beacon Blog that can be updated on an ongoing basis with an evolving process of how it will work.

Coming of Age: Nine UUCB youth who completed the program, ending with a retreat at Camp Sibley, will speak at Sunday's service. Rev. Marcus extended gratitude for Rev. Kathryn's leadership and members who made it possible to have a robust Coming of Age group.

Facilities Manager: Peter is out on extended medical leave with an unknown timeline. His absence creates stressors for staff and the congregation in this area of church work that is already hard to keep

up with. Janae is doing everything she can, including picking up project management as well as establishing short term disability insurance coverage.

Intern Minister: Liesl Dees graduates tomorrow from Starr King School for the Ministry. She will continue as Intern Minister until mid-July; we will have opportunities to celebrate her time with us.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

a. Board or Staff Announcements:

- Board resignation: Selene announced that Michael DeWitt had resigned from the Board, and that the Board thanked and appreciate him for all his service to the Board and the church.
- Board appointment: Selene announced that the Board appointed Peter Boland to fill the Trustee vacancy, effective May 18 until the conclusion of the term in February 2027.
- Budget Informational meetings: Sunday May 10, 12:30 pm, Fireside Room, and Tuesday, May 12, 7 pm, Zoom
- Congregational Meeting: Sunday, May 17, after worship service; Trustees were reminded of their roles
- Freestone visioning: The Freestone Discernment Task for will host general congregational Visioning sessions on Sunday, June 7, after worship service in the Fireside Room, and on Tuesday, June 9, 7 pm, via Zoom

b. Report from Board Listening Presence (Helen): The Social Justice Council would like to be involved in visioning work the Board may undertake

c. Congregants who wish to speak to the Board on agenda items or other matters. Michael DeWitt said he appreciated the Board's time and intentions to UUCB, and looked to serve on the Board again in the future.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

a. Approve Draft FY26-27 Budget for May 17 congregational vote:

Treasurer Lisa Maynard explained there were no changes to the April draft budget other than an adjustment to reflect revenue pass-through that did not change the sum of either revenue or expenses.

M/S, Kristen/Beth J to approve the draft budget and bring to a congregational vote on May 17.

Motion passed unanimously.

b. Recruit more delegates to the UUA General Assembly: More delegates are encouraged to add to the 2-3 members interested in UUCB's 7 delegate slots.

c. Authorize funding for Freestone roadway repairs and other essential expenses.

As delineated in the Operations Director Janae Heard's report, there was significant wash-out on the access road shared with an adjacent property; a portion is proposed to be paved while gravel is proposed for the remaining affected area, for a total cost of \$17,500. The other affected property's neighbors proposed a 50/50 cost split (\$8,750 for UUCB) if UUCB's use of Freestone was not expected to increase, and a larger UUCB share to reflect UUCB's ownership of its three lots if use will increase. Furthermore, additional expenses such as for fence repair, weed removal/fire safety are anticipated, and other costs may arise - all of which means that the \$12,000 allocated budget for Freestone costs will be exceeded.

The Board discussed the scope and costs of the work on the roadway and weeds/fire safety, and repayment to the General Fund if the property is sold - without making an assumption or suggestion that it be sold, and a suggestion about using goats for weed removal was offered.

M/S, Kristen/Selene, to authorize the expenditure of up to another \$12,000, bringing the total budget amount to \$24,000, all of which would be repaid to the church in the event Freestone is sold. Motion passed unanimously.

d. Designate the Stewardship Committee as either a Board Committee or as a committee under the purview of the Minister

The Board discussed Chapter 10 of the Dan Hotchkiss book Governance and Ministry, which offered some suggestions about Board vs. Minister areas of responsibility. The Trustees asked questions of Rev. Marcus and one another about how Stewardship functions, what might be different under either approach, and how the question fits into the Board's overall role and responsibilities.

Some Board members identified the Board's role as a visioning body and being responsible for providing a vision that can be used by the Stewardship team in its fundraising - with the committee work being done under the purview of the Minister, rather than the Board being involved at that operational level. Also, that the Minister asking for team chairs/members is a more effective recruitment strategy. Helen expressed that vision drives fundraising, and if the fundraising is based on the Board's vision, then Stewardship seems to fall to the Board.

Rev. Marcus noted that the Stewardship Committee is currently running very well, including its attention to succession planning. The issue around whether the Board or the Minister is responsible for the committee becomes particularly critical if leadership gaps or other issues arise. He expressed agreement with Dan Hotchkiss' perspectives.

M/S, Ryan/Selene, to designate in the Governance Manual that the Stewardship Committee is under the purview of the minister. Ayes: All except Helen, who abstained.

e. Establish policy (i.e. authority & process) for external fundraising requests

The Board reviewed current fundraising policies, which they found incomplete and outdated. Board members discussed models in other organizations where the staff head would make such decisions, that a policy might include approval thresholds, the handling of timing-sensitive requests, requests coming to the Board when clarity on a response is needed, and exploring whether UUA had any guidance.

Selene will work with Lisa, and also David if useful, on drafting a policy for Board consideration in a few months.

f. Develop Communication Goals (Carla & Kristen)

Kristen and Carla met with Membership Engagement Manager Charis Domodor and learned about aspects of communications being considered, underway and in development – including readership data and insights, podcasts and reels, and completion of a Style Guide. As a result, Charis is scheduled to meet with the Board at its June meeting so Trustees can educate themselves before coming up with strategic direction. As part of this focus, Carla & Kristen will develop draft goals, with ideas to date including making sure members get church information in the format that is useful to them; this includes the consideration that formats continually evolve as well as needing multi-generational reach.

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS

Helen reported that the Safety Task Force, which also consists of Helen Tinsley-Jones, Rev. Kathryn, Paul Hudson, Kay Fairwell, and Operations Director Janae Heard, has met 25 times since last

October. This work includes ideas about how to protect Sunday attendees, staff members, and those at church on weeknights against a variety of threats. An October 2026 report to the Board is anticipated. The Board will need to decide how to carry out the recommendations. Helen will send the draft Table of Contents to Board members.

Beth J reported that the Widening the Circle Committee is currently on pause due to other church activities underway.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Reminder about Board retreat on Saturday, May 9.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Pollard, Secretary