Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, September 2, 2026
Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Approved Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Voting members: Peter Boland, Ryan Devine, Kristen Jensen, Beth Jerde, David Rosales, Helen Toy, and Co-Presidents Selene Fabiano and Pier Sun Ho

Absent: Carla McCasland

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

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING RITUALS:

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Co-President Selene Fabiano at 7:15 p.m.

a. Chalice reading & lighting – Ryan Devine read "i thank You God for this most amazing" by E.E. Cummings (aka e.e. cummings)
b. Board Covenant reading- Helen Toy
c. Land Acknowledgement Statement –Beth Jerde
d. Widening the Circle Statement – Selene Fabiano

CONSENT AGENDA:

a. Approve agenda
b. Approve August 5, 2026 Board meeting minutes
c. Accept Treasurer's report, with action on Wile bequest under Discussion/Action Items
d. Accept Operations Director's report

M/S, Beth J/Ryan, to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

MINISTER'S REPORT:

Rev. Marcus reported:

Facilities: Facilities Manager Peter returned to work Sept. 1, with temporary staff helping to fill in for him remaining until longer-term arrangements are established

Freestone: Conducting an in-church recognition ceremony after the sale was preferred by those involved with Freestone, rather than an on-site gathering before the sale

Adult education: Several offerings this fall, including Wednesday Trusted Sources workshops, Monday Bible class series with John Beuhrens, *Hospicing Modernity* book discussions with Rev. Marcus and Courtney Martin during the Personal Theology timeslot, and more.

Neighborhood connections: Exploration is underway on bolstering connections among congregants with other UUCB members in their neighborhood, which could enhance mutual support for individual needs; a first try is a park gathering for the Ohlone Park neighborhood.

Program fees: In response to Board member questions and concerns about when and how fees are charged, Rev. Marcus explained it was an issue undergoing discernment. Considerations include differentiating between members and non-members, programs with underlying costs, the perception of increased value and likely attendance after registration when a fee is paid, and not wishing to exclude members from participating due to cost, especially costs not directly related to the expenses of the event - with perceptive differences in how that is phrased.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/INFORMATION ITEMS/LISTENING

a. Board or staff announcements
   - The Social Justice Council will discuss on September 20 what's next for its structure
   - Treasurer Lisa Maynard disclosed a conflict of interest that her son may be helping out, with pay, in the Sunday childcare program

b. Freestone: The property has been listed for sale

c. Sunday lunch survey results from the Committee on Shared Ministry (COSM)

   COSM Chair Ladie Malek presented the survey results and the resulting plans for lunches.

   The survey inquired about members' interest in lunch, its purpose, menu and importance, and volunteer willingness to help. 158 members responded. General takeaways included:
   - The community building during lunch is more important than the food itself
   - Volunteering, especially for clean-up, was soft and hesitant; common reasons included other church commitments and time/physical constraints

   Accordingly, the plan now is to simplify the menu and clean-up work, look to have paid staff for coffee set-up and clean-up help, and have fuller menus on special occasions and when groups offer to handle the lunch. There is sufficient funding through December to implement these changes, which are being overseen by a "Kitchen Cabinet" of leaders.

d. Board Listening Presence (Helen Toy) – Comments included kudos for the Board and a question she directed to Charis

e. Congregants who wish to speak to the Board: Francie Nurkse said she was glad to be able to attend the meeting; Anne Greenwood thanked Don Klose with his help in scheduling a November 1 presentation on Polish Brethren, based on a trip by a UUCB group to explore Unitarian history.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

a. Distinguishing between Board committees and program/operational committees: Review Governance Manual Section 3.9 - Board Committees, discuss what differentiates Board committees as governance-oriented from other committees, consider organizational alignment/reporting structures, and develop next steps

   Pier introduced the item with an overview, noting it is part of the Board's work to shift focus to its policy and visioning functions rather than operations. Issues/questions include Board definition on what is a committee of the Board, and why, and what direction is needed around its current Board committees. As much as Board members are interested in and want to be informed about operations, directing operations is not the Board's function.

Board Member comments included:

- Even though it delegates executive responsibilities to the minister, the Board holds all the executive power of the church and therefore executive and operational issues are within the Board's purview. There may be special circumstances where the Board may want to hold the executive power for some reasons.
- It is relevant for the Board to understand the state of operations to help guide policy decision-making and stay informed.
- In all three of committees under discussion – Buildings & Grounds, Endowment, and Widening the Circle – there are both policy and operational functions. The Board needs to figure out how those two function areas do not get conflated in committees.
- Can the Board ask the groups themselves to advise on separating the functions
- There is the perception among committee members being designated a Board committee carries greater importance
- It is the Board's job to decide where it wants policy advice and how it receives that advice
- The Board forming a committee indicates the need for a tight relationship with the Board, that it needs help with forming polices in mission-driven areas
- Maybe there are committees that do not need to be Board committees but would benefit from having a Board liaison

The Board will continue discussion on the topic of committees at the September 19 Board retreat.

b. Creation of a task force to plan UUCB participation in the June 2027 UUA General Assembly in San Jose

Melissa Rosales presented the proposal for the task force, in follow up to Board direction at the August meeting. She has served on a GA committee in another church and is willing to be part of the task force, serve as chair or co-chair, and recruit members. The goal is at least three, or up to five, task force members. She is aware of some interest, would like to put out a call to the congregation, and has been in conversation with Rev. Kathryn about encouraging youth to attend.

M/S, Kristen/Selene, to establish this one-year task force. Ayes: All, except David who abstained due to conflict of interest (in being married to Melissa.)

c. Adoption of Five-Year Capital Projects Budget

Operations Director Janae Heard explained there were a few changes since last month. Topics raised during discussion included:

Sanctuary and Music Room electric heat pump project to replace gas furnaces: A congregational vote is needed to authorize use of Board-designated endowment funds. Timing is under review because there will be no heat in the Sanctuary while work is underway. Outcomes of the project includes lower utility costs and eliminating condensation problems.

Installing Sanctuary ceiling fans: Their purpose is to push down heat that otherwise rises into the high ceilings of the Sanctuary - thereby wasted. David asked that aesthetics/shadows and acoustics be considered in the project.

Playground equipment: Kristen inquired about installing playground equipment becoming a higher priority, serving the needs and interests of families. This issue speaks to strengthening Board direction on church priorities to help drive capital budget priorities.

Fireside Room A/V: Beth J. expressed appreciation for those improvements being added to future projects.

M/S, Selene/Beth J, to approve the 5-year capital projects budget. Motion passed unanimously.

d. Designation of Joanne Wile bequest:

Last month the Board took action to accept the bequest. Treasurer Lisa Maynard relayed the recommendation from the Finance Committee that the bequest be transferred in three years to the donor restricted pooled endowment - where only the earnings are spent. The recommendation was based on Joanne's intentions conveyed in Maybeck Society form that she completed in 2016. Lisa noted that the Endowment Committee, after it re-forms, will be making an effort to contact members, including those who previously completed forms, about designation options and their wishes for their bequests.

MS, Selene/Kristen, to place the Joanne Wile bequest into the donor-restricted pooled endowment, also called the permanent endowment. Motion passed unanimously.

e. Board September retreat planning presentation and discussion

Kristen and David summarized ideas from their visioning break-out group, which also included Carla.

Ideas included:

- The inter-relationship between values, mission, vision, covenant, goals, and objectives.
- Proposed focus areas: *Cultivating Community*; *Deepening Connections*; and *Linking Arms with Others."* It is more important that the Board establish unified themes than adopt those particular three. Next step: Board consideration of proposed focus areas, setting its focus/unified concepts, and then what the Board can do to set policy and priorities for these areas.
- To support the Board visioning process, set standard procedures and timelines for how the Board reviews and re-sets its vision-related direction; this may include congregational surveying and other review processes in the areas of focus and other vision direction
- Include into the procedures and timelines Board input into the budget, and other guidance on focus and priorities to staff and committees.
- Form a task force to define and execute a strategic plan process, such as on the question: What is a future we are excited to work together to build?

The Board will discuss the group's ideas at its September 19th retreat.

f. Ideas for the October Beacon Blog – Helen Toy. Ryan suggested Helen write about her experience as the Board's Listening Presence.

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

Governance Manual Task Force: David reported that it has selected three sections to bring the Board.

Safety Task Force: Helen reported that it is nearly finished with emergency section, for presentation in October.

Nominating Committee: Kristen reported that the committee may want to discuss with the Board ideas about how to identify potential Board members.

CLOSING COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Pollard, Secretary