

ANNUAL REPORT

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley

2024-2025



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MINISTER'S REPORT

By Rev. Marcus Liefert



This church year was marked by many changes, big and small, full of both excitement and loss. A year ago, we updated our national UUA covenant, replacing the seven Principles last articulated in the 1980's with a new set of Values that hold Love at the center. The November 2024 election gave a renewed urgency to the need to make these values real in our world. In the wake of the departure of our Executive Director Tess O'Riva in December, we brought on Sharon Dolan as an interim Executive Director to lead us in a process of reorganizing our staff team and help us clarify roles and procedures for the operations of our finances, facilities and HR. We designed and introduced a new visual identity including a logo and website. Throughout the year we experimented with Church du Soleil, evening worship services weaving together eclectic music, simple ritual and stories and taking the in the sunset from our beautiful terrace. In May we gathered for a first church-wide leadership retreat, with about 70 leaders from all areas of church life at UUCB showing up to participate throughout the weekend. Over the summer our Aesthetics committee began a process of revitalizing the atrium by removing posters and asking the congregation for input about how to best reflect our values through the visual cues we send.

This is the story of a community engaged in institutional renewal. We know that across our society we are in a moment of tremendous upheaval and rapid transformation. We know that the church of the 80's or 90's, even the church of the early 21st century, is not the church that will serve the needs of our community in the decades ahead. As we reconnect with the core fire of our sense of mission and clarify our vision for our priorities on the path ahead, we know that we will have to say no to many possibilities in order to say yes to our deepest calling. Institutional renewal is challenging work, asking us to reexamine assumptions about the way things must be, and grieve the losses that change necessitates.

The spiritual discipline asked of us in this moment is discernment. We will need to discern collectively our vision, and individually the roles each of us are called to play in pursuing that vision. Discernment is a spiritual discipline because it asks to attend to the interior experience alignment with the spirit of life or god's call while staying present to the external realities of our larger ecosystem, resources, and communal capacity. So many of the group norms we are accustomed to pull us away from this practice. It's difficult to truly discern in a framework that sets us up to clarify our priorities by majority rules votes through the adversarial process laid out in Robert's Rules of Order, for example. Our ability to faithfully discern together, and then to act with the renewed energy that arises from a shared sense of calling, may be the greatest factor in determining whether our congregation will continue to be of vital service for generations yet to come.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW



By Janae Heard, Operations Director

The last year has been one of major transitions and changes. After many staff members departed, the staff structure changed, and the remaining staff was tasked with taking on and learning new roles. There have been changes and updates to how things work, and many adjustments along the way. But at the end of the year, there was a sense that we were headed down the path that will lead us to success.

Attendance has been steadily increasing on Sundays. On average, Sundays saw 21% more attendance than last year. The attendance of our livestreamed services also showed a small increase.

Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, we added 28 new members to our community, and we are so happy to welcome them to UUCB!

During the transition that has happened with staff this year, a new department was formed that incorporates Family Ministry and Programs. This new department was named Congregational Life and will allow staff to better support growth in the areas of programs, membership and engagement, and volunteering.

PERSONNEL

This year held a lot of change for our community and our staff.

We said goodbye to our facilities assistant James Jackson, who was part of our UUCB family for 2 years. He moved on planning to work with other formerly incarcerated people who are re-entering society.

Steve Boss filled in as facilities assistant to get us through the holidays and was a helpful presence on Sundays. He supported our congregation and facilities team through the months of transition before resigning in June.

In November, our Executive Director, Tess Snook O'Riva, announced her resignation, and we celebrated her 5 years of dedicated service in December. Her time with us is marked and remembered for providing leadership through the pandemic and difficult ministerial transitions.

Sharon Dolan was hired as our interim ED, and she designed a solid structure for the staff in collaboration with the Staffing Taskforce and Rev. Marcus. She also drafted many policies and clarified and streamlined procedures that will support the success of the UUCB community for many years. She retired in June and left us with strong groundwork to move forward.

In this changing staff structure, many of our staff transitioned to new roles within UUCB. After ordaining Rev. Dr. Kathryn Jay in February, she took over the new Congregational Life department and the title of Minister for Congregational Life. Charis Domador was given a new role and responsibilities as well, with the new title Membership and Engagement Manager. And in April, I moved from the Office Administrator role to Operations Director.

FINANCES

Thanks to the generosity of our members, last year's pledges were up almost 20% from the 2023-24 year!

We did end the year over budget, but it was anticipated, and the overspent amount is in line with expectations.

After much discussion about the timing and the pros and cons, the finance team made the decision to switch our accounting software from FundEZ to QuickBooks. This new system is much more user friendly and will let our team work more efficiently, in collaboration, and allow for greater consistency and transparency in our financial reporting. This was a major change and required many hours of labor from our Finance team, particularly our outside accountant Kevin Brower, and our finance administrator, Diana Steinbach.

I am so grateful to our Treasurer, Lisa Maynard, and the many people involved in UUCB's financial processes. Many of you have been so helpful in onboarding me and getting me up to speed on our financial systems. There has been so much teamwork, collaboration, and patience, and I am incredibly thankful to be surrounded by so many people who are willing to share their time and knowledge.

FACILITIES

As you see in the Buildings & Grounds Report, even with the turbulence of staffing changes and restructuring, the Facilities team made progress on the planned projects list, as well as managing the ever-shifting priorities and daily repairs and projects that continually come up.

There has been behind the scenes work this year, discussions on our short- and long-term needs, as well as getting consultants and contractors to look at upcoming projects and what our buildings need for longevity. This information has been very useful in compiling a list of the needs and priorities that will drive our capital campaign.

We are grateful to all the volunteers who come up for monthly Work Parties, and to those who do continuous work on the Landscaping and Buildings & Grounds committee. Our expansive grounds and aged buildings require a lot of upkeep, and with our current level of facilities staff, it wouldn't be possible without assistance from this community.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the coming year, with a solid foundation under us, we are now looking ahead to the opportunities that await. There are plans to start a capital campaign in the coming year, which will give us the opportunity to make major updates and improvements to our campus. We hope to expand our outreach efforts and grow our programs with the goal to create a space where members and staff can continue to grow together, to support and learn from each other. I look forward to the coming year, and the chance to live our values and to work in partnership and covenant together for the mission of UUCB.

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



By Kay Fairwell, President

As I stated at our May Congregational Meeting, I have been overwhelmed with the vibrancy and extent of activities and dedication of this congregation. So I've tried here to cover specific Board actions and some general actions and accomplishments of this past year.

FEBRUARY 2025: Adopted this statement in support of our LGBTQIA+ community: *The current administration campaigned on a platform of homophobic and transphobic hate and now is implementing policies that are damaging to LGBTQIA+ people, especially transgender folx. We at UUCB stand with our LGBTQIA+ and gender diverse siblings. We welcome the important diversity that transgender folx bring and we will not stand silent in the face of attacks on their well-being. We celebrate our transgender members, guests, and their families.*

MINISTER FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

In June of 2024, longtime member Kathryn Jay was appointed as our Director of Family Ministry. Subsequently UUCB was honored to ordain Kathryn as a UU minister. And just recently, as part of our staff restructuring, Kathryn is now our Minister for Congregational Life.

NEW SANCTUARY STATEMENT

At our May 2025 Congregational Meeting, we voted to update and expand our Sanctuary Statement in which we pledged to resist deportation and discrimination through sanctuary and action. We reaffirmed our commitment to defend and preserve the fundamental civil rights and liberties due to everyone in this country. We are answering the call to advocate for immigration justice, accompany immigrant families, participate in networks of protection and rapid response, and work with other organizations resisting detention and deportation.

BYLAWS REVISION

Our Bylaws make up our foundational governing document. It is also first and foremost a legal document. Every three years the Board forms a Bylaws task force to review the Bylaws and recommend amendments, like those we voted on at the May 2025 Congregational Meeting. These revisions included updating language to reflect our current mission statement, including our shared UU values, minor adjustments to membership requirements, and revising voting procedures and our annual meeting schedule, among other revisions.

GOVERNANCE MANUAL

Section 6.1 of the Bylaws states that the Board of Trustees shall establish and maintain a Governance Manual. Its purpose is to affirm essential values of the church; establish consistent policies and procedures of church governance; provide guidance to all constituencies of the Church about its governance; and educate and inform new participants in Church Governance processes. A task force is currently working on the review and revision of our Governance Manual.

INCREASED WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

Our worship service attendance numbers this past year are outpacing prior years. I think the general state of the world is encouraging people to find places of sanctuary. As of January, the average attendance was 175, up from 150 last year and 100 in previous years.

LUNCH HOSPITALITY

One cannot say enough about the importance of our after-worship lunches. These lunches allow us the time to spend time with old friends, get to know new ones, and have the time to slow down and appreciate our community. And certainly, enough cannot be said about the generous spirits who prepare, serve, and clean up. We are definitely blessed.

FREESTONE

In 2023, the UUCB community engaged in information gathering, sharing, and exploration to develop a proposal for our Freestone retreat property. This deliberative process sought to bring a variety of perspectives together to find an acceptable congregational answer to the question: ***What next for Freestone?***

The outcome of the process was a resolution that laid out a path towards safe, healthy, and financially sustainable use of Freestone, while also recognizing the challenges in getting there. Milestones were set along this path which, if not met, meant the property would be listed for sale. In March the Freestone Committee submitted a petition to call a congregational meeting to extend the milestones. This meeting was held on April 27.

By a vote of 77 to 74, the congregation voted to extend the milestones in the 3-26-23 Resolution for ten months. The Freestone Committee stated its intention to continue efforts to find water on Freestone lots 1 and 2, raise the \$250,000 by September 30, 2025, as required for the first milestone, and fulfill the other milestones.

In the event that the Board of Trustees determines that any of the extended milestones are not met, the Board is authorized and directed to initiate the sale of the entire Freestone property. This has been a lengthy as well as a tender and challenging process. And yet the congregation handled the situation with care and cordiality.

STAFF RESTRUCTURING

This last year, with the help of our Interim Executive Director Sharon Dolan and our Staffing Task Force, much work was done on restructuring our staff. The process involved reorganizing finance staff structure, clarifying roles among staff and between staff and the Finance Committee, completing the 2025-26 budget, and refining the budget development process for subsequent years.

LEADERSHIP RETREAT

In May 2025, UUCB held its first Leadership Retreat in many years. Seventy people registered, and 50-60 people were present at any given time. At the retreat we asked each other questions such as: What is spiritual leadership? How do we empower each other to share our gifts? How is each of us called to serve in this critical time? We hope to make this kind of retreat a regular event in our community.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

In June, the Board and Reverend Marcus began discussions on initiating a Capital Campaign. We received a Capital Campaign Consultation Proposal from consultant Kay Crider, a consultant with Stewardship for Us. The Board approved taking on Phase 1 of the proposal with a consultation including church leaders the first weekend in September. More information will follow as the process continues.

In these times of much concern and uncertainty, may UUCB be a place of sanctuary and regeneration as we face the future.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS



By Victoria Bowen

Membership welcomes Newcomers, assists the Minister in information meetings and ceremonies, and supports individuals discerning their path to membership. Co- Chairs: Victoria Bowen and Lonnie Moseley.

The **Welcome Team** greets all congregants with special attention to Newcomers to whom we offer brief orientations, name tag labels and gather contact information. Our Team this year: Lonnie Moseley, for on line, and in person Dave Belden, Susan Blair, Victoria Bowen, Debi Clifford, Christina Creveling, Selene Fabiano, Michelle Fahlsing, Kristen Jensen, Paul Hudson and Jennifer McDougall. New UUCB member Lindsay Leopold joined the Team in May. We staff the Table after the service as well. We invite all to stay for coffee and lunch, a practice that has proven highly valuable. We thank the Hospitality Team!

Our administration liaison, Charis Domador, refreshed the Badge Board for Members only and made file boxes for Active Attendees, thus making badge retrieval easy for all. On December 14, 2024, Lonnie and Victoria hosted a third “Thank You Gathering” at Victoria’s home. We enjoyed brunch and reviewed the work to date, sharing our experiences. A major change this year: Rev. Marcus took leadership of the formerly lay led Informational Meetings held three times per church year and created a two-part class. The “Pathways to Connection” Series took place in September 2024, and February and April 2025. Topics included UU history and theology and UUCB history, governance and our covenant, and a campus tour. We appreciate Reverend Jay Atkinson’s continued contributions, especially on UU history.

This coming year, the Series will cover the topics in three shorter classes, rotating monthly starting August, 2025 through May, 2026. Charis hosted a second year of **Q and A meetings**, offering Newcomers informal opportunities to connect—an initiative that will continue in the coming church year with lay support. We held monthly **Book Signings**. We held **“Welcome New Members on the Chancel” rituals** on November 3, 2024, March 16 and June 1, 2025. This ceremony formally welcomes new members into the whole congregation during Sunday Services. Feedback from new and longstanding members indicates this continues to be a meaningful tradition.

The 28 New Members we welcomed are: Peter Boland, Tricia Boyle, Jan Collins, Donna Goethe, Oak Hallet, Edith Heins, Dennis Kettler, Irene Kiebert, Lindsay Leopold, Michael Hanley (deceased), Brigitte Marshall, Tina Marzell, Barb Minton, Sima Misra, Tad Nicol, Virginia Northrop, Laura Palin, Joseph Plummer, Jane Robbins- Laurent, Nadine Robbins-Laurent,

Maggie Robinson, Cia Robles, Samira Sheahan, Mary (June) Sheffield, Stephanie Studenski, Tina Tworek, Asha Weber, Dañ Weber.

We work closely Charis Domador, newly promoted from Connections Coordinator to Manager of Membership and Engagement. We are deeply grateful for her warmth and skill in connecting Newcomers to UUCB. Starting July 1, 2025, Rev. Kathryn Jay will be Minister of Congregational Life with Membership in her Portfolio. We look forward to another vibrant year under the leadership of Reverends Katherine and Marcus.

PASTORAL CARE



By Barbara Cullinane, Chair

Pastoral Associates and other pastoral care volunteers provide support, comfort, healing and activities that embody our Mission of “Creating Loving Community.”

As lay members, Pastoral Associates supplement and complement the professional pastoral care of our ordained minister Rev. Marcus Leifert, who meets with us monthly for support and training.

UUCB publications invite “referrals” through personal contact, the pastoralcare@uucb.org email, and Sunday Memory Book postings of those who are celebrating or “sick, hospitalized, recovering, grieving or otherwise in need of attention and support.”

With our supportive conversations, calls, notes and visits, we help congregants and their loved ones celebrate, cope and mourn. We often work confidentially to protect privacy.

Since August 2024, we have:

- Provided pastoral attention to 119+ congregants
- Supported 42 individuals with ongoing or acute concerns
- Supported those 80 and better with “check in” calls
- Written countless notes of condolence, encouragement, and appreciation
- Helped spread the word of joys, injury, illness, transition and/or bereavement through Super Cards, Discuss List and publication notices, with permission of those
- involved.
- Sponsored 135 brightly signed butcher paper Super Cards, with loving messages of support, condolence, congratulations, and welcome
- Co-sponsored with Family Ministry holiday remembrance cards to 107 households and 55 holiday bags for staff, our 90- year-olds, and those under 90 we’re aware have had a rough year. Our RE children provided drawings for the cards and bags, which also contained chocolates, greetings, and their homemade cookies.
- Co-sponsored with Rev. Marcus the annual celebration of those 80 and better, especially those 25 Doctors of Durability with 2025 milestone birthdays.



- May 4th highlights included homilies by 3 honorees, the presentation of certificates, greetings and flowers from our children, and a special served luncheon.
- Recognized and appreciated 54 volunteers in our Holiday Remembrance and Doctors of Durability activities
- Represented Pastoral Care through a Stewardship homily on Words of Affirmation as a love language
- Shared resource information with church members and their loved ones
- Helped support bereaved non-church family and friends with calls and notes and by making them aware of church protocols for sharing information of a loved one's passing and celebrations of life

Pastoral Associates are Lynne Cahoon, Debi Clifford, Mary Gardner, Dorothy Herzberg, Judy Sam, Kathleen Slobin, Marta Tobey, Anne Wardell and Barbara Cullinane, Chair.

CHALICE CIRCLES



Because of the amazing facilitators who volunteered their time and talents this past year, UUCB Chalice Circles were able to provide essential and meaningful connections within our community during a time of great need. Our 12 different Chalice Circles, run by 14 facilitators, fostered significant connections between around 120 participants. We found that, as ever, both newcomers and long-time UUCB members long for that sense of connection that is nurtured in a small group.

Our facilitators met with participants both in person and on line. The in person Circles depended on what facilitators felt able to offer, and depended on room and accessibility issues. While Chalice Circles were once only offered for 16 weeks in duration, facilitators have added flexibility to the schedule, and we now have a Fall season (from September to February) and a Spring season (February to June) with Circles meeting either 8 weeks, 6 weeks or 4 weeks during a session. There was a mix of afternoon and evening circles offered.

The 2024-25 Chalice Circle topics were varied. They included: Aspects of Love, Reflections on the Marvelous, and Finding boundaries and priorities. And a group for educators. We had 7 Circles that focused on standard topics. Our Grief Group continued on after having been running for many years now.

Current team members: Lenore Ralston (retiring for the 25-26 season) Lisa Maynard, Natalie Campbell, Cynthia Asprodites, Laura Palin.

Contact: chalicecircles@uucb.org

SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

The SJC met monthly this past year (except July), hosting three in-person potlucks and conducting the rest of our meetings via Zoom. We sponsored eight major projects, launched 12 Good Neighbor initiatives, and participated in key events such as the MLK Jr. Day Parade in El Cerrito, the Right of Return Vigil, and the No Kings rally in Oakland, where we hosted an info table and shared UUCB materials.

We supported GRIP and the annual food drive, helped build the Tiny House Village in Richmond, and collaborated with the RE program on family-centered justice projects, including nature walks and planting the Three Sisters Garden.

In response to the political climate, we created an opt-in Civic Action and Engagement listserv to help congregants stay informed and active. Across all our efforts, we emphasized community partnership, intergenerational involvement, and putting our faith into action. What follows are highlights from each project.

BLESSINGS BAGS

This year we held three Blessings Bags assemblies. The first, in October 2024, supported unhoused students in the Berkeley Unified School District. The second, in March 2025, provided bags for UUCB members to distribute to unhoused individuals. The third, in June 2025, featured Amanda Jenkins, founder of Operation Ground Zero, who spoke about her own experience of homelessness and her work in Richmond.

Youth were central to this effort. One of our teens, Gemma, hosted a Blessings Bag potluck at home with classmates, while another congregation reached out to replicate our project.

Thanks to generous toiletry donations from UUCBers and our \$500 budget (of which \$435.61 was spent), we distributed dozens of bags filled with socks, snacks, water, and hygiene items. This project reflects our congregation's compassion, creativity, and commitment to tangible help for those in need.

CLIMATE JUSTICE COMMITTEE (CJC)

We launched the year with a powerful Climate Justice Revival using UUA Green Sanctuary materials. About 40 UUCB members attended, sharing visions for a just, sustainable East Bay. Our feedback helped revise Green Sanctuary guidelines nationwide. We were paid \$2,000 for this collaboration, which we hope to invest in a local tree-planting or community greening project.

In April, for Earth Month, we offered weekly events: native plant and bird walks, a Gill Tract Farm tour, a talk on ice preservation, a concert with multiple choirs, and a carbon capture presentation. We also hosted a March event with Climate Reality leader Wei-Tai Kwok.

With Buildings & Grounds, we helped UUCB reduce emissions by replacing the failing gas water heater with a heat-pump model, partially funded by a CJC couple.

Finally, we submitted our Green Sanctuary application to the UUA and received promising feedback. As part of that process, we've committed to five-year goals, including ongoing community engagement, education, and climate action partnerships.

CONFRONTING RACISM AND OPPRESSION

This work included two vital groups: Honoring Indigenous Peoples (HIP) and the People of Color Caucus (POCC).

HIP, founded in 2020, meets monthly and leads UUCB's commitment to reparative action. Highlights included planting and celebrating the Three Sisters Garden, co-leading services with Native leaders, and presenting the artist book *Entanglement*. HIP also shared our annual Thanksgiving Letter, offering reflection and resources that honor Indigenous truth and tradition.

In the coming year, HIP will host a fall garden event and a book discussion series on *The Beadworkers* by Beth Piatote.

The **LFMDC** welcomes proposals for discussions suggested by anyone who is interested in the portrayal of the struggle for social justice in any of the arts. We need some planning time ahead so we can read the book or see the play/film, etc.; we will hope for you to moderate the discussion or support someone else doing it.

This spring we had a lively discussion of the film "American Fiction", presented by Cordell Sloan. The Oscar-winning screenplay was adapted from the novel "Erasure" by Percival Everett.

And in November we had a quietly spectacular event brought to us by the Honoring Indigenous Peoples group (HIP). Artist Camden Richards and local activist Laura Callen (Good Guest Kensington) collaborated with the Lisjan Nation to produce a sculptural book entitled "Entanglement". The "Entanglement" book is a bentwood sculpture with seven chapter booklets inside, in the Chochenyo language and in English. We thank the presenters and the attendees for a rich session on beauty and hope. Christina Creveling, Convener

POCC, meeting monthly on Zoom, supported BIPOC members through community-building and leadership. POCC produced a moving Black History Month worship service featuring Haitian and Native voices, music, and multigenerational contributions. We also co-led the Juneteenth celebration, partnering with LGBTQIA+ members and the music team.

Chaired by Helen Tinsley-Jones and Lonnie Moseley, POCC is now working with Worship and Music teams to plan upcoming Heritage Month acknowledgments.

WOWS strives to be a welcoming space where we value respectful and thoughtful conversations. We discussed a variety of topics in 2024-25. We share personal situations related to oppression. This year, Cordell Sloan led a discussion of *The Stolen Wealth of Slavery: A Case for Reparations* by David Montero. After the election, we also focused on how to be the resistance and shared ways to get through difficult times and feel creative. Mary Gardner presented on antiracism work and Julie Winkelstein on homelessness.

WOWS will sponsor a Human Library on Sunday, October 26, 2025, in which the "Books" are people that "Readers" can check out, inviting participants to question their biases through

conversations with people they might misrepresent. Julie Winkelstein and Julia Rogers co-facilitate WOWs.

SUPPORTING EQUITY IN BERKELEY SCHOOLS (SEBS)

This initiative, led by Helen Toy, Lonnie Moseley, and Cordell Sloan, began with two compelling Personal Theology talks by leaders from the Berkeley Public Schools Fund and the district's Office of Family Engagement and Equity. They spoke about the urgent academic and financial needs of BUSD students.

Although outreach via email, tabling, and announcements generated limited classroom volunteer response, several members supported one-time events, including school pantries, supply giveaways, and a December holiday drive.

In April, SJC donated \$1,000 to the Berkeley Public Schools Fund, a timely contribution given deep funding cuts expected in 2025–26.

Looking ahead, we'll focus on supporting short-term school activities rather than recruiting year-long volunteers. This approach offers greater flexibility and proved more effective. No SJC funding is requested for the coming year.

IMMIGRANT SOLIDARITY PROJECT

In response to growing threats against immigrants, this project deepened UUCB's commitment to sanctuary and community support. We began by sharing "Know Your Rights" information, distributing Red Cards, and helping Kensington adopt a sanctuary statement. This year, we led UUCB to adopt a renewed Sanctuary Pledge.

Led by Francey Liefert and Jennifer McDougall, we partnered with IM4HI and Tsuru for Solidarity, participating in vigils and mobilizations. Our congregation sponsored events like "ICE Out of Dublin," provided logistics support, and raised awareness through Sunday services.

Members received accompaniment training, helping an immigrant family develop a preparedness plan. Several participate in the local Rapid Response network, and we are exploring temporary guest housing at UUCB.

In July, Jen spoke at a summer service on sanctuary, and we hosted a May visit from Rev. Deb Lee of IM4HI, one of our 2025 Good Neighbors. We continue monthly planning meetings and maintain a shared calendar of action opportunities.

Our work has expanded UUCB's connections with interfaith and immigrant-led groups across the Bay Area, strengthening solidarity and readiness.

PRIDE PROJECT

Amid ongoing political threats to LGBTQIA+ rights, the Pride Project fosters a safe, joyful, and inclusive space at UUCB. We focus on community-building, advocacy, and visibility.

Monthly meetings guide our programming. We conducted a needs assessment survey at our first all-ages potluck and used the feedback to shape activities. Events included additional potlucks, a “Queer Movie Night” attended by over 22 people (including youth), and a powerful “Coming Out Stories” gathering with 10 participants.

We also offered consultation to a Palo Alto UU congregation looking to replicate our model and shared LGBTQ+ events from Berkeley and Oakland on our listservs.

We represented UUCB at SF, Oakland, and Richmond Pride, and took part in protests, legislative outreach, and social media advocacy. We also pushed for more visible Pride signage on campus and the website.

As we continue this work, we are committed to amplifying queer voices, celebrating diversity, and ensuring that UUCB remains a truly welcoming spiritual home.

VOTING JUSTICE PROJECT

From March to November 2024, UUCB’s Voting Justice Project mobilized for the national election through postcard-writing and nonpartisan engagement. We partnered with UU the Vote, Reclaim Our Vote, and the Environmental Voter Project to reach historically disenfranchised voters — particularly young people and voters of color.

Led by Cyndy Greenleaf, Norie Clarke, and Karen Elliott, with support from many congregants, we set up weekly Sunday tables and distributed thousands of postcards. Around 50 volunteers helped write an estimated 6,000 postcards and letters.

We hosted intergenerational postcard-writing parties and created a Voting Photo Booth, where members posed with signs stating their personal reasons for voting.

This joyful, action-based project helped UUCB members live our values of democracy and inclusion — and provided a vibrant spiritual outlet for hope, resistance, and connection.

WOWS

Working to Overcome White Supremacy, known as WOWS, discussed a variety of topics in 2024-25. Throughout the year, we've shared MAUBs (Moments of Awareness of Unconscious Bias) and MOIs (Moments of Illumination) and personal situations related to oppression. A discussion about reparations led to a book study of *The Stolen Wealth of Slavery: A Case for Reparations*, by David Montero, discussion led by Cordell Sloan. We also focused on the election and how to be the resistance, as well as things that help us get through difficult times and that make us feel creative. Mary Gardner presented on the antiracism work she did in Massachusetts. Julie Winkelstein presented on homelessness. And we discussed the upcoming Human Library, which WOWS will sponsor on Sunday, October 26, 2025. A Human Library, in which the “Books” are people that “Readers” can check out, allows participants to question their biases through conversations with people they might have biases about. WOWS strives to be a welcoming space where we value respectful and thoughtful conversations. Julie Winkelstein and Julia Rogers co-facilitate WOWs.

ADULT EDUCATION & EXPLORATION

PERSONAL THEOLOGY

The UUCB Personal Theology successfully completed its 45th year of providing various topics regarding personal spiritual journeys. Speakers included Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt, James Baraz, Rev. Alvin C. Bernstine, and Rebecca Black and others. Topics ranged from 'A Course in Miracles', poetry by UU poets, personal stories of what inspired you, health equity and the 6th extinction.

The hybrid format was used throughout the year. Two programs a month were presented from 9/24-6/25. Attendance ranged from 25-70. The program was again able to come in under budget.

After serving 10 years on the Personal Theology Committee, Anne Wardell is stepping down as chairperson. It is anticipated that the program will continue with a committee of volunteers that have expressed interest in seeing that Personal Theology, a legacy program of UUCB, will continue.

HUMANIST CONNECTIONS DISCUSSION GROUP

Humanist Connections is the second oldest discussion group at UUCB - Personal Theology is the oldest. The group was started by Helene Knox who named the group "the Devout Atheists." Following Helene, Lee Lawrence/Perry took over as chair and renamed the group "the Humanist Connections." Following Lee, Marcia Bates took over as chair, followed by Ray Westergard.

Each Sunday we meet on Zoom, except for the third Sunday of the month when we gather together in the church Safir room without Zoom. On the first Sunday of the month, we select the speakers and topics for the following month and also have short discussions. From the second Sunday on, a lead presenter will discuss a topic, usually for about 10 minutes, followed by a group discussion. All meetings start at 1 pm and may last until 2:30, though we often end earlier.

HC discussions cover a wide range of topics, as indicated by the following listing of several of our recent topics: Is there free will?, the battle between Harris and Trump, can A.I. reason?, the epidemic of loneliness, dimming the sun using solar geoengineering, why are traditional religions losing their members?, longevity, Trump's mental health, elder abuse, our future with A.I., and what is wrong with health care in the U.S.?

In June of 2025, Ray announced that he's leaving his HC leadership role as of the end of July, and he asked Harold Ogren to take over. Harold and his wife Denise are moving from Bloomington to Berkeley. Harold was stepping down as the leader of the UU Bloomington Humanist group but was convinced by Ray to accept the leadership of our group.

LAWRENCE LECTURE SERIES

The lecture this year was the keynote speech for the April 19th conference hosted at UUCB : "Emergence: The Futures We Can't Yet Imagine." Reverend Marcus Liefert and the organizers invited Dr. Ruha Benjamin, Professor of Sociology and African American Studies at Princeton and MacArthur Fellow (2024). Our committee wanted to support the choice of speaker and to experiment with the Laurence Lecture being part of a larger event. Committee Members: Katie Lipka (Treasurer), David Rosales, Jim Acock, Christina Creveling

APPLIED UU BUDDHIST SANGHA

This past year we met every Tuesday for two hours on Zoom. We meditated for fifteen minutes, shared about the relevance to our lives of Buddhist readings and ended with Metta affirmations. We currently have eight members who have benefited from these experiences which affirm the values of Beloved Community. Co-Leaders Lynnette Delgado and Karen Voorhees.

TEXTILES AND ART GROUP

Textiles And Art Group was formed at the end of the church year 2023 with much support from UUCB congregants who enjoy creative endeavors, engaging in designing and making textiles and art. We presently meet twice a month, pursuing individual and group projects with encouragement, laughter and sharing of ideas. Some who attend T&A are knitting hats for a local non-profit organization. Leader Karen Tripp.

WEDNESDAY WALK AND TALK

The Wednesday Walk and Talk group, open to all, has been walking on Wednesday mornings for more than fifteen years. The goal is to build loving community while supporting our physical and mental well-being. Attendance ranges from two to six or more people. During 2024–25 average attendance dwindled, in part because of a schedule overlap with the Aging with Grace group. Leaders Ann Harlow and Lisa Maynard.

WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP

We have come to know each other deeply through our discussion of books and the relationships between the world, history, and our own lives. The love and trust we have developed over time allow us to explore difficult topics such as social issues, human-caused destruction, and our mortality. We draw comfort and hope from addressing these topics together. Four recent books are: James by Percival Everett, The Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams, West with Giraffes by Lynda Rutledge, and North Woods by Daniel Mason. Leaders Lisa Maynard and Karen Tripp.

WOMEN'S INSIGHT MEDITATION

Women's Insight Meditation continued to meet weekly and offered both in-person and virtual environments to practice "insight" and "loving kindness meditations. Leader Evelie Delfino Sâles Posch.

WRITE FOR YOUR LIFE

Write For Your Life, a creation of Beth Glick-Rieman and continued by Kit Hewitt, continues to Zoom every Monday to write meditatively on life, the universe and anything else that is on our minds. Leader Kit Hewitt- kihkew@gmail.com.

COMMUNICATIONS

This year saw the gradual rollout of a new church logo and visual style. After ten years using a logo commissioned by the UUA, we hired designers to create one specific to UUCB. A survey of members asked how we felt about the church, what visual elements around our campus most spoke to us, and how we want visitors to feel as they get to know us. The designers drew on survey results to fashion the logo. It centers on a stylized chalice incorporating plant life, inspired by the rubber trees in the Atrium. Its flame suggests the sun setting over the Bay as viewed from the Terrace. The designers aimed for a “fresh, contemporary, cool, different, alive, and welcoming” visual identity. They made three versions: standard, monochrome, and rainbow.

The logo and associated color scheme first appeared in this year’s Stewardship campaign. They now display on new name badges, in printed materials, and on slides projected during services. The Worship Team redesigned the slides to feature light text against a black background, chose a new typeface, and had the logo designers create a version with higher contrast to look better when projected.

In July our newly named Manager of Membership and Engagement (Charis) oversaw the rollout of a redesigned UUCB.org. It features a restructured layout based on the Enfold WordPress theme (we no longer use the UUA theme, which after ten years was showing its age). Its navigational structure focuses on making it easy for newcomers to learn about UUCB. The needs of members were not forgotten, however. All the important information members need is still there, much of it collected under a new Members tab. The site will continue to be a work in progress, as our needs change and we see what works and what doesn't.

Work also remains to be done in enhancing the church’s social media presence. Members of the Program Council are looking for someone within each program area to take responsibility for regularly posting to Facebook and other media. As a start, a series of Instagram posts will explain the history of interesting works of art and other items around the campus. An effort has begun to revive the UUCB podcast, enabling listening to sermons and Personal Theology lectures in a convenient format. Charis continues to improve the technical presentation, ease of use, and rich content of our weekly and monthly newsletters.

ENDOWMENT

The Endowment Project Oversight Committee was established in January 2018 as required by the congregational vote authorizing the withdrawal of up to \$758,000 from the Board-Designated Endowment Fund for capital needs. The role of the EPOC is to oversee the use of these endowment funds and to report to the board and congregation periodically.

Current members of the EPOC include Larry Nagel, Beth Pollard, Lenore Ralston, Kay Fairwell and Tom Tripp. The committee meets intermittently, as needed.

UUCB has used the money from the endowment fund, plus some targeted member contributions for the following projects:

1. Reconstruction of the Safir Room and adjacent skylights
2. Replace Sanctuary furnace and renovate Cottage for rental.
3. Repair rotted rafter (Purlin) tail
4. Ventilation upgrades for Sanctuary, Social Hall and Fireside room, and refresh Atrium bathrooms.
5. Building Management Computer controls for Heating and Ventilation.
6. Cost of engineering studies for HVAC & Electrical design for all-electric campus.
7. Private Sewer Lateral Construction (required by EBMUD)
8. Atrium door repairs and upgrades (still underway)
9. Further Engineering Studies for all-electric campus (currently underway), and schools.

\$725,000 has been withdrawn from the Board-Designated Endowment Fund and the balance of \$33,000 has now been withdrawn, bringing the total withdrawal from the Endowment fund to \$758,000 as authorized by the congregation.

With these funds and about \$180,000 of targeted contributions from church members, we have completed the above projects with a total cost of about \$881,000 using \$700,000 of endowment project funds.

An additional \$22,000 has been committed for completion of the door project and ongoing design studies for all electric campus, leaving about \$35,000 uncommitted and available for future projects authorized by the Board of Trustees

More detailed reports are available upon request.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

The Buildings and Grounds committee meets monthly and is responsible for supporting staff and the Board of Trustees in prioritizing, analyzing and implementing projects for the buildings and the grounds on the main campus and other sites to support the mission of the church in providing safe, welcoming, functional and aesthetically pleasing spaces. We are starting to prepare for a Capital Campaign.

Our buildings are in excellent condition, but 65 years old. They need ongoing building preservation efforts, such as painting and sealing as well as significant upgrades to Mechanical and Electrical systems, doors and other building components with moving parts.

Major efforts accomplished by staff, committee and contractors during the 24 - 25 fiscal year:

- Continue to maintain and update the long-range facilities plan, which documents facility needs totaling over \$2,000,000.
- Numerous volunteer work parties, which accomplished landscape upgrades and miscellaneous beatification tasks, both inside and out.
- Continue to work with design consultants to study and refine plans for HVAC and Electrical upgrades, to update our building systems, improve and update the school buildings.
- Hired a structural engineer to study and analyze a crack discovered in a sanctuary truss. They studied all the trusses and recommended a reinforcement project for the one crack, which is completed.
- Re-keyed the entire main building, inside and outside, creating a new master key system and added key-pad locks to key exterior doors.
- After a detailed study of potential uses and costs to keep Kensington Fire Department temporary buildings on site, B & G recommended allowing the removal of the buildings and restoration of the parking lots. All work is completed.
- The staff held a “clean up” day and filled dumpsters with saved but un-needed hardware, furniture, etc. Storage needs are still under discussion.
- B & G studied the planned Sanctuary sound system upgrades with the engineering consultant and decided not to change speakers at this time.
- Replaced and upgraded all hardware on the sanctuary center doors, bringing them into compliance as emergency exit doors.
- Contractor started work on atrium and fireside room doors. Upgraded hardware, hinges, pivots, etc. on the “6 panel trifold” doors from atrium to sanctuary and social hall to fireside room to correct excessive sagging and poor operation. The doors from atrium to social hall remain to be completed, are scheduled to be upgraded in the coming year.
- Contractor added 4 new lighted exit signs, to correct exit code violations. One at the front of the sanctuary (concealed by the projection screen), two at the back of the sanctuary (at center door that now complies with exit code) and one in the fireside room at the south door to the outside.
- Enforced some warranty correction work on the sidewalks for the private sewer lateral contractor and simultaneously repaired some sidewalk near the school parking lot.
- Trimmed the trees in the atrium

- Worked on Social Hall lighting, adding some spot task lighting, which only made the general lighting levels seem worse. With the activity tables expanding into the social hall and the Sunday lunch tradition, we need to upgrade the overall light levels, then perhaps add some spot or flood lights.
- Removed the tall, unstable folding bookcase used for Sunday book sales, and replaced them with a lower, safer bookcase.
- Initiated the replacement of the last remaining gas water heater on campus, to be replaced in the next fiscal year by heat pump water heater, all at no cost to UUCB, thanks to extensive effort by member Lucinda Young (not with the B & G committee).
- Ongoing study of a condensation issue at the chancel.
- Continue ongoing repairs and maintenance to kitchen appliances.
- Continue ongoing repairs and maintenance in the classrooms.
- Contracted to have the fireside room chimney inspected and cleaned.

Some projects under discussion for the upcoming years:

- Improve general lighting and task lighting in the social hall.
- Replace doors from social hall to breezeway. Doors are old, sagging and have numerous patches. They do not comply with ADA code (even though these doors provide the only 0 access to the ADA restrooms).
- Playfield restoration (gophers, general disrepair and outdated play equipment)
- Design studies in anticipation of a Capital Campaign.
- Remove, repair or replace mushroom lights in the front parking lot.
- Storm drainage on west side. Eliminate black flexible pipes.
- Repair or replace stage curtain.
- Caulk and Seal wood windows (sanctuary, fireside room and misc.)
- Longer Range (larger) Projects under consideration:
- Upgrade all Heating Systems, to modernize and potentially convert to all electric.
- Replace all power panels. All are more than 65 years old and have never been replaced.
- Replace main electrical switchgear. Past its normal design life.
- Reconstruct the Atrium toilet room area.
- Paint and seal all buildings, to preserve for future generations.
- Add Solar panels and batteries for load management and for power outages.
- Add EV Chargers

The committee continues to work to maintain our buildings and grounds, and welcomes any member interested in joining the committee.

ALL ELECTRIC TASK FORCE

The board endorsed the vision to create an “All Electric” campus, in support of our mission to support climate justice and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

The All-Electric Task Force was established to further this vision and locate sources of government, utility company and other funding, and support the Building and Grounds committee in the overall effort. Current members of the task force include Abbot Foote, Paul Hudson, Larry Nagel, Sheila Tarbet, Tom Tripp and Lucinda Young. The committee has met intermittently, as needed.

All HVAC and kitchen equipment is past its normal design life and needs replacement and upgrade, including the 20 gas fired furnaces and kitchen equipment. We also hope to include EV chargers, additional photovoltaic solar panels and batteries for load management and backup.

The task force has met several times and researched the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), attended UUA seminars and a UUA Peer Learning Circle about the IRA. We have attended US Green Building Council (USGBC) seminars and researched government funding. Much of the federal funding has been phased out so this vision will likely need to be funded locally, with a capital campaign and/or private donations.

One bright spot is the replacement of the last remaining gas fired domestic water heater with an electric heat pump water heater. Lucinda Young located a combination of government grant funding and a local contribution for this upgrade, at no cost to the congregation. By September, all eight water heaters on the campus will be electric.

The committee recommends continuing with design contracts for HVAC, electrical and energy design consultants to plan the best long-range approach to this vision while we continue to research funding.

FREESTONE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC) was established when the congregation adopted the [March 2023 resolution](#) outlining the process, conditions and milestones for making UUCB's Freestone retreat property safe and financially sustainable. FOC's purpose is to oversee and report to the Board and congregation about the progress of the Freestone Committee in accomplishing the fundraising and renovation work needed to retain Freestone as provided in the resolution.

The FOC was also tasked with administering a \$12,500 Contingency Loan Fund for initial work - including successfully securing a Vacation Rental Permit and a Transient Occupancy Tax License, as well as obtaining engineering advice, mapping/surveying, and groundwater testing.

The Board-appointed six FOC members are: Susan Lankford, Larry Nagel, Beth Pollard, Tom Tripp, and Freestone Committee representatives David Wemmer and Bob Moore.

Since July 2024, the primary focus of the Freestone Committee's efforts to fulfill the congregational resolution has been to survey and drill for sufficient water on Lots 1 & 2 to sell them for development - thereby raising at least the \$250,000 needed for the first congregational milestone.

In August 2024, the first well on Lot 1 was drilled to 200 feet but came up dry. A new geological survey identified a more promising site, but it required grading before drilling. With all the work funded by an "angel" donor, this second well was delayed repeatedly due to wet weather and access issues.

The first milestone in the Congregational Resolution is to raise \$250,000 by December 1, 2024. In late November, because a second drilling to seek sufficient water to sell the lots and meet the milestone appeared imminent, the FOC recommended to the Board of Trustees, and the Board approved, a conditional postponement of this milestone to April 1, 2025. If the drilling came up dry before April 1, the Board would proceed with listing the entire property for sale.

In March 2025, with drilling still pending, the Freestone Committee sought an extension beyond April 1. The FOC recommended keeping deadlines unless extended by a congregational vote. The Freestone Committee petitioned for such a vote, proposing an extension of all milestones by 10 months - with September 30, 2025 as the first milestone to raise \$250,000.

At the April 27, 2025 special congregational meeting, the motion to extend all milestone dates by ten months passed by a vote of 77 in favor and 74 against. The Board retained authority to sell the entire property if milestones were unmet.

The second well was drilled May 27, 2025, to 280 feet—but also came up dry. This outcome jeopardized plans to sell Lots 1 and 2 to meet the funding milestone.

The Committee began to reassess other options, including possibly drilling a third well. On August 6, 2025, a consortium of donors submitted a conditional proposal to buy Lots 1& 2, but for less than the \$250,000 threshold, and proposing conditions that would relax, modify, or remove requirements in the congregational resolution. Congregational approval is required if such a proposal is pursued.

