
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

June 17, 2025

Attending:

A meeting of the UUCOD Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, June 17, 2025.

Board Members attending in person: Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1st Vice President, Jerry L’Hommedieu, Treasurer, Claudia Simmons, Secretary, Walter Gendell, Director at Large, John Ressler, Director at Large, Rev. Ian Riddell, Minister

Board Member Attending by Zoom: Bob Rancourt, President, Frank Riela, 2nd Vice President

Board Members Not Present:

Others Present:

Others Present by Zoom: Linda Savard; Rod Belshee; Fan Hoag, David Emmerson, Sheryl Eaton

Welcome and Call to Order

Julia Alberg-Burbank called the regular Board Meeting to order at 5:00 PDT.

Chalice Lighting.

Rev. Riddell offered inspirational sentiments and lit the chalice.

Check-In

Julia Alberg-Burbank welcomed everyone, and she asked the Board, attendees, and online friends to check in.

Process Moderation

Process monitor was assigned to Frank Riela.

Consent Agenda

- The Board reviewed the May 20, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes.
 - No edits or corrections were noted.
 - Jerry L’Hommedieu moved to approve the minutes; Walter Gendell seconded it.
 - With no objections, the minutes were approved by acclamation.

Voices of the Congregation

- Directory Progress:

- Rod Belshee reported that 101 of 144 active Church members have opted into the Breeze directory, many with photos. 70% of members now appear in the directory
- The total user members with “friends” included in the directory is 127.
- User Feedback & Help Desk:
 - Rod Belshee said it is unclear how many actively use the app—the system doesn't track that.
 - He also reported that Breeze training videos are in the works.
- Notable Issue:
 - Rod reported that there is one serious bug issue where Breeze falsely reports emails as sent. Rod escalated the issue, and it is now tagged as top priority by the Breeze team.
- Phase One Recap:
 - The goal was to get people enrolled and comfortable using the directory. The team is still offering online access vs. a printed version. Photos make the online version more useful.
- Rod Belshee shared a Breeze Phase Two Preview:
 - 2A – Skills & Interests Rollout (summer):
 - The goal is to create a database of interests to match with future volunteer needs. In the fall, the interest data will be shared with committee chairs to connect members to opportunities.
 - 2B – Volunteer Scheduling (currently beta testing):
 - Tracy Flynn is testing centralized scheduling (ushers, readers, etc.), and the Breeze Champions are testing a self-sign-up model (users volunteer for open slots). Both test approaches are going well.
 - The long-term vision is that Breeze could become a powerful support tool for micro-volunteering (small, one-time asks). This system may help address the recurring need for more volunteers, especially as committees shift away from long-term roles.
 - Bob Rancourt told Rod Belshee how terrific the whole committee is doing on the Breeze project.
 - Walter Gendell asked about the possibility of capturing the hours that volunteers work.
 - Julia Bell asked about their ‘giving’ information. Rod stated that it is available now and includes the current fiscal year since January 1.
 - Sheryl Eaton shared her experience of using Breeze to help a friend find another friend.

Old Business:

- Nomination and Designation of Attitude of Gratitude Note Recipients.
 - Walter Gendell and Jack Fitzsimmons for hosting Sunday’s Board Potluck.
 - Rob DuWors for his vegan and gluten-free cookies and snacks that he provides.
 - A couple of committee chairs are leaving and should be sent a thank you note: Ros Hoover for her service on the Care Team, Chris Eager, as Chair of the Finance Committee, and LaGrand Velez as Membership Chair.
 - Walter is finishing his term on the Committee on Ministry.
 - Linda Savard and Barb Storms are leaving the Leadership Development Committee.
 - Sheryl Eaton and Bob Rancourt will be joining the Leadership Development Committee.

Unfinished Business

- Consideration, Discussion, and Approval of the DIBM’s Newly Proposed Accessibility Policy.
 - Rev. Riddell recapped that he had previously presented the DIBM’s Proposed Accessibility Policy. At that time, the Board asked for a little tweaking to the Policy. These changes were made, and Rev. Riddell reviewed and discussed each of the proposed corrections.

- Rev. Riddell will take this policy and massage it and have it ready to present back to the Board for final approval at one of the next summer meetings.

New Business

- Consideration and Reflections on the Annual Transition of the Board of Directors.
 - Rev. Riddell asked the Board to think back on this past year and reflect on one or two highlights about working on the Board this year. Conversation ensued, hearing from each person present.
- Incoming Board President Remarks – Rod Belshee
 - Rod flagged two major issues he hopes the Board will begin thinking about early:
 - Changing volunteerism patterns – revisit this topic at the upcoming Church Council on October 18.
 - Sunday service overflow – attendance has increased, and we need to consider how we'll accommodate everyone during the busy winter season (seating, participation, etc.).
 - Rod asked whether to keep an August Board meeting, given that these topics are time sensitive.
 - Bob noted there's no formal decision yet on skipping July or August meetings.
 - It was acknowledged that 3–4 Board members won't be available in August.
 - Walter Gendell suggested using the July meeting as a strategic session instead of a regular agenda, giving space to dive into the larger issues Rod raised.
- Review and Discussion of Monthly Reports:
 - Julia Alberg-Burbank presented the Board members' reports. (See attached reports for full details.) Noteworthy to mention:
 - Rev. Riddell reviewed all the measures he has taken to leave the church in capable hands during his sabbatical.
 - Treasurer Jerry L'Hommedieu gave the Board an update:
 - Cash Position & Investments:
 - UUCOD currently has \$116,000 in savings, earning only 0.1% interest.
 - Proposal to transfer \$75,000 to the UUA investment fund, which is currently earning about 6.25%. This would help funds grow more effectively, despite a minor added risk.
 - CD Maturity:
 - A \$54,000 CD is maturing at the end of the month (current rate: 4.93%).
 - Jerry and Julia Bell recommend rolling it over, depending on the new rate (to be revealed on the 30th).
 - Parking Lot Bids:
 - Four vendors reviewed the project, and three submitted bids.
 - One bid was discarded—it didn't align with the RFP and came in at \$96,000.
 - The two remaining bids are in budget range with slightly different approaches.
 - Jerry is doing due diligence (checking licensing, state status, etc.). One vendor raised red flags.
 - Decision likely to fall under Mel Wilkinson's Facilities lead, as approved in the budget.
 - The tentative target date for the work is October.

Process Moderation

- Frank Riela reported that the Board Meeting finished a bit ahead of schedule, and everyone had been heard.

Chalice Extinguishment

- Rev. Riddell extinguished the chalice with words of gratitude, acknowledging the responsibility, kindness, and spirit that everyone brings to their work.

Adjournment

- Julia Alberg-Burbank adjourned the regular Board meeting at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Claudia L. Simmons, Secretary

Date Approved: July 15, 2025.

Attachments

Monthly Reports

To: UUCOD Board

From: Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1st VP

June 17, 2025

- I attended the Worship Associate's meeting on 5/27
- I was worship associate for the 6/1/25 service
- I met with Rev. Ian and Bob on 6/9, to help formulate the agenda for this meeting.
- I attended my first Committee on Ministry meeting on June 12th
- I made it home from work on time to take in most of the "Cahuilla 101" presentation.
- Thank you to Jack and Walter for opening their home this past Sunday for our Board potluck. It was lovely.

Denominational Affairs:

So as Liaison for UUA/GA, I can report that UUCOD has 5 people attending the GA. Bob Rancourt, Rod Belshee and Fran Hoag are in person in Baltimore. Linda Savard and I are virtual. Bob, Linda and I are voting delegates.

GA information is coming out regularly. We will all be busy and engaged with the business part plus many additional offerings.

Social Justice:

- Recruiting volunteers specifically for November's Pride Event: Denise Janssen Eager, Denise Stevens and Rueben Gallardo are committed and are reaching out to the community.

UUCOD Treasurer's Report May 2025

As is normally the case, pledge payments, plate collections, and contributions of record decreased significantly in May due to a drop in attendance as snowbirds departed from the desert. A bequest of \$15,000, with \$5,000 going towards Sacred Grounds, helped raise our monthly revenue to a more normal level.

UUCOD also paid year-end and unanticipated expenses during the month. We paid annual expenses for our website applications and Zoom accounts, repair of our front doors, year-end payments for our solar loan, and we purchased additional trees for our Sacred Grounds. In aggregate, these expenses were well within our annual budget. As of May 31, year-to-date expenses were \$45,734 under the annual expense budget of \$310,720.

At May's month end, financial statements reflected \$102,086 in excess revenue for the year although this will decrease slightly by the end of the fiscal year in June.

At its May meeting, the Board approved recommendations from the Finance Committee to transfer \$67,500 in excess revenues for the year into various reserve funds. Sixty thousand dollars was directed to the Building Maintenance Fund and \$5,000 was directed to the Office Equipment reserve fund. The Board approved allocations for the Sabbatical reserve fund and the Minister's Discretionary Fund. The Board also approved the Treasurer allocating any remaining excess revenue to the Building Maintenance Fund prior to the end of the fiscal year. Given UUCOD's financial position this fiscal year, the Board voted to give our three staff members bonuses for the year.

I continue to work with Julia Bell regarding her transition to Treasurer. We have worked with our bank to provide all required documentation for signatories on our bank accounts to transfer as of July 1. This includes an updated Statement of Information filed with the CA Secretary of State which our Secretary, Claudia Simmons, completed earlier in the month.

We have received four proposals for resurfacing our parking lot and Mel Wilkinson and I are currently reviewing them to determine which vendor will be awarded the work.

The Finance Committee and I have reviewed UUCOD's current cash positions and are proposing two actions as part of our year-end analysis. See the chart below for details.

First, we propose transferring \$75,000 of the total \$116,736 in our savings account to our UUCOD Investment Fund with UUA. We currently receive only 0.01% interest on our savings account balance while the value of our UUCOD Investment Fund account has increased by 6.25% in the past year. While the UUCOD Investment Fund does have some risk of a decrease in fund value, our experience over the past seven years has been positive. UUCOD will continue to have \$41,736 in its savings account which will provide immediate funds for emergencies. Funds can be withdrawn from the UUCOD Investment Fund as any time.

Secondly, we recommend allowing our Certificate of Deposit (CD) with our bank in the amount of \$54,098 to roll over for an additional 12-month term. The CD provides a 4.93% annual interest rate of return with no risk.

Finally, I am pleased to report that UUCOD's MacLean Endowment Circle fund with UUA increased by \$9,512 in fund value over the past year; a 6.25% increase. The current fund value is \$161,767. In total, UUCOD currently holds cash reserves in the amount of \$548,961 although \$446,289 of those funds are held as restricted/designated funds.

Jerry L'Hommedieu

June 14, 2025

Cash Reserves			Y-o-Y Change	% Chg.
Pacific Premier Bank				
Checking	\$35,044		\$25,276	
Savings	\$116,736		\$26,709	
Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$4,391		\$3,500	
12 month Certificate of Deposit	\$54,098		\$50,389	4.93%
	\$210,269	\$210,269		
UUA Investment Accounts				
MacLean Endowment Circle	\$161,767		\$152,255	6.25%
UUCOD Investment Fund	\$179,161		\$168,627	6.25%
	\$340,928	\$338,692		
Total Cash Reserves		\$548,961	\$426,756	
Total Restricted/Designated Funds				
Current Restricted/Designated Funds	\$336,468		\$260,246	
2210 FY 25-26 Pledges Payments	-\$50,885		-\$36,116	
MacLean Endowment Fund	\$160,706		\$152,255	
Net Restricted/Designated Funds	\$446,289	-\$446,289	\$376,385	
Unrestricted Available Cash Reserves		\$102,672	\$50,371	

Board Member at Large Report June 2025

Hospitality

- All is going well with our Hospitality team and nothing of significance to report to the Board.

Attitude of Gratitude

- Attitude of Gratitude thank you cards were sent to the following people:
 - Trish Ewoldsen
 - Fran Hoag and Rod Belshee
 - Barb Storms
 - Rob DuWors

Committee on Ministry - Minister Evaluation

- The Committee on Ministry met on May 15th and continued to discuss and make sure everything was in place while Rev. Ian is on sabbatical.
- There were no issues or concerns and everything is being covered, including bringing on Rev. Everett Howe to preach four sermons during July and August and be available for any pastoral care.

Worship Associate

- I was worship associate on June 8th.

**Submitted by:
Walter Gendell
Board Member at Large
June 10, 2025**

Monthly Report – June 17, 2025
UUCOD Secretary Claudia Simmons

1. I was present and took the minutes of the May 20, 2025, Board Meeting. The draft has been prepared, reviewed by Board members, and is awaiting approval at the June 17, 2025, Board Meeting.
2. Cahuilla 101 Presentation: Attended the informative *Cahuilla 101* presentation held in the Sanctuary on Tuesday, June 10th.
3. Statement of Information Update: An updated Statement of Information was prepared and filed with the Secretary of State to reflect the names of the new President and Treasurer.

Minister's Report to the UUCOD Board

June 17, 2025

The Rev. Ian W. Riddell

As we come to the end of another church year and the end of the terms of some of our Board members I am full of gratitude for the time, service, love, and care that you have all brought to the leadership of our congregation this year. Thank you for all you bring and do for our community and the ways you engage in shared ministry.

And my sabbatical begins in less than two weeks. We have, collectively, spent the last months in preparation for this: training and collaborating with worship and AV volunteers, consulting with staff and the Board and the Committee on Ministry and the Care Team, finding and hiring our Sabbatical Minister. Thank you for the ways you've leaned in to getting our community ready for my time away.

I look forward to returning in September and beginning our next year of shared ministry together.

The following information will be going out by e-mail to everyone next week and will be in my out-of-office reply for my e-mail:

I will be away on sabbatical leave from Tuesday, July 1, through Monday, September 1. I will not be checking this e-mail or my office phone messages again until September 2.

Sabbatical is a time for my professional and personal rest and renewal, and part of that means being completely away from my work. I appreciate you helping me maintain healthy boundaries during this sabbatical leave.

If you need some pastoral support needs, please reach out to our Care Team or Rev. Everett Howe, our Sabbatical Minister

- Julia Bell (July) - jabell@montana.com
- Joni Paddock (August) - joni@palmcitybooks.com
- Rev. Everett Howe - rev.everett.howe@gmail.com | 619-648-9287

If you have concerns or questions about worship, please reach out to the chair of our Worship Team, Bryna Blum at bb@brynab.me

For all other issues, please reach out to Pam in the office (admin@uucod.org) and she'll guide you to someone who can help.

If this is an emergency and you really need to contact me, Rev. Everett or Pam will know how to get in touch with me.

I look forward to being back in touch in September. I hope you have a wonderful day and a great summer. Stay safe and don't forget to care for your neighbor and resist hate every chance you get.

Summary Outline of the work I've been involved with for the past month. This is not an exhaustive list, but is meant to give you a general idea of what I've been up to as your minister.

A. Counseling and Pastoral Care

- I continue to meet with congregants in need of connection and conversation by phone and Zoom and in person.
- I am heartened, as always, by the ways I see you all take care of each other when people are in need.
- Julia Bell is finishing her term as chair of the Care Team. I have so much gratitude for Julia and her caring organization and leadership. Joni Paddock has agreed to take on the leadership of the Care Team. Thank you, Joni!
- Julia and Joni will share being the point person for Care Team needs over the summer. Julia will remain the contact from July and Joni will assume that role in August.

B. Administration, Governance, and Staff

- I meet weekly with Pam Bibb (except when one of us is on vacation or study leave) to check in on work expectations and how things are going.
- I continue to work with our Breeze team to facilitate adoption and integration of the program into our congregational life and practices.
- I participated in the end-of-year Board potluck at Walter and Jack's home on Sunday, June 15.

C. Membership and Committees

- I meet regularly with several committees. I participate monthly with Worship, DIBM, Stewardship, CoM, the Board, and Chalice Circles. I participate in alternate months with Membership and Social Justice.
- When I can, I attend our monthly Men's Breakfast.

D. Lifespan Faith-Development

- We hosted representatives of the Agua Caliente Band of the Cahuilla people on Tuesday, June 10, at 4pm. They presented "Agua Caliente 101." We had 41 people in attendance in person in the Sanctuary and 26 screens (several of which had 2 or more viewers) watching online.

E. Worship

- I met with a local couple to begin planning their October wedding which will take place at a restaurant in Palm Springs and another couple whose wedding I will be performing in Las Vegas in February of 2026.
- Except for one Sunday, we have service leaders planned through November 2.
- We have worship associates and piano players planned through September (through my sabbatical)
- I continue to lead the weekly Production meetings, though the AV team has been taking a larger role as we get ready for sabbatical. In our production meetings, we continue the practice of reflecting on the service the day before and noting any issues we need to address.
- I led or participated in worship three times over this past month.
 - May 25 — “How Civilizations Heal: The Role of the Artist in the Face of the World” with Steven Toporoff. This was the second of my auction sermons.
 - June 1 — “Ask Your Minister Anything: A Question Box Service” Julia Alberg-Burbank.
 - June 15 — “Making Meaning out of Chaos” Steven Toporoff.
- We were blessed with a service led by our very own Jack Fitzsimmons on “The Little Engines That Move the World.”

F. Denominational Activities

- I regularly consult with local and regional colleagues on issues affecting our congregations.
- I have been meeting monthly as a mentor to a new minister as he works through his Preliminary Fellowship.
- I worked with a team of colleagues to create a workshop that will offered to people participating in GA about our CSAI: Fat Justice.
- I am attending the UU Ministers Association Ministry Days and the UUA General Assembly this week. Our CSAI will be presented by a colleague at the Thursday general session and voted on that evening.

G. Prophetic Outreach, Interfaith Activities, and Local Collaboration

- On June 10 I attended a seminar on finding meaning in struggle offered by the chaplaincy department at Eisenhower Health followed by a clergy and volunteer luncheon where I was able to do some networking with local colleagues.
- I continue to reach out to local leaders to find ways our congregation can get more involved in the justice work in our area.
- I participated in the “No Kings” rally/protest in Cathedral City on June 15.
- I reached out to colleagues in the LA area to see what support and help we could offer during the recent ICE raids and protests.

H. Personal and Professional Growth

- I am grateful for a week of vacation in Mammoth Lakes June 2-8.
- I continue meeting monthly with a coach for ongoing support, learning, and accountability as I minister to the congregation in our diversity transition work. My coach is Rev. Julica Hermann de la Fuente
- I meet monthly with a small group of colleagues in our region in reflection, sharing, and collegial support and learning.
- I am be attending the UUMA Ministry Days and UUA General Assembly online at home from June 16-22.

My weekly schedule is as follows:

My day off is Friday. My writing/reading day, which I try to keep free of meetings, will be Mondays and I will work in the office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

When I return from sabbatical, I will shift my day off to Mondays with Friday being my work from home writing day.

Upcoming Travel Schedule:

- I will be away on sabbatical leave from Tuesday, July 1, through Monday, September 1. I will not be checking this e-mail or my office phone messages again until September 2.

in peace and deep love

