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# Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert

## Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

July 15, 2025

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### Attending:

A meeting of the UUCOD Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, July 15, 2025.

**Board Members attending in person:** Rod Belshee, President, Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Julia Bell, Treasurer, Claudia Simmons, Secretary, John Ressler, Director at Large.

**Board Member Attending by Zoom:** Frank Riela, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

**Board Members Not Present:** Walter Gendell, Director at Large, Rev. Ian Riddell, Minister (on sabbatical)

**Others Present:** Fran Hoag

**Others Present by Zoom:** 0

### Welcome and Call to Order

Rod Belshee called the regular Board Meeting to order at 5:00 PDT.

### Chalice Lighting.

Julia Alberg-Burbank offered inspirational sentiments and lit the chalice.

### Check-In

Rod Belshee welcomed everyone, and he 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 June 17, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes.
  - No edits or corrections were noted.
  - Julia Alberg-Burbank moved to approve the minutes; John Ressler seconded it.
  - With no objections, the minutes were approved by acclamation.

### Old Business:

- Designation of Attitude of Gratitude Note Recipients.
  - John Ressler will send out notes this month in Walter Gendell's absence.

- Note to be sent to Walter Gendell and Jack Fitzsimmons for hosting the end-of-year Board Potluck Dinner.

## Unfinished Business

- Consideration, Discussion, and Approval of the DIBM’s Newly Proposed Accessibility Policy.
  - The newly revised document was presented for the Board’s final approval.
  - Julia Bell made a motion to approve the Accessibility Policy. Julia Alberg-Burbank seconded the motion. Hearing no objections, the motion was approved.
  - Secretary, Claudia Simmons will forward to the new Accessibility Policy to Administrator Pam Bibo for uploading to the website.

## New Business

- Update Command One Response List in the event of an emergency.
  - Mel Wilkinson, Facilities
  - Julia Bell, Treasurer
  - Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President
  - Jerry L’Hommedieu, Finance Chairman
  - John Ressler, Director-at-Large
  - The Board authorizes Administrator, Pam Bibo, to issue keys and the code to the above-referenced individuals.
  
- California Native Plant Society Garden Day Nov. 22: brief review and determine rental fee.
  - The Board reviewed a request from the California Native Plant Society to host their annual Garden Day event at UUCOD. This well-attended community event, formerly held at UCR, typically draws between 300–500 people. Plans for the day include:
    - Full use of the UUCOD campus, including the labyrinth for a plant sale featuring vendors such as The Living Desert and others.
    - Use of the front patio and parking lot for approximately 20 vendor booths.
    - Speakers and presentations held in the Sanctuary.
    - Event flyers to be displayed on campus, and Board suggested UUCOD’s name to be listed as a sponsor on all promotional materials.
    - Dave Emmerson, representing Sacred Grounds, will serve as UUCOD’s liaison for this event.
  - The Board expressed general support for hosting the event and discussed an appropriate rental fee. Julia Bell proposed a flat rate of \$840, based on an hourly rate of \$140/hour during event hours, with discounted rates for setup and takedown. Additional cleaning of the facility would be scheduled post-event.
  - The consensus was favorable to move forward, with rental logistics to be finalized.
  
- Planning for January–March Worship Service Overflow
  - The Board discussed the need to begin planning for expected overflow at Worship Services during the winter season. Rod Belshee recommended forming a task team to explore potential options and develop a plan to accommodate increased attendance.
  - It was agreed that the task team could include congregants beyond the Board and that thoughtful selection of participants would be key. Several names were informally suggested as possible members with relevant experience or insight. The Board expressed support for Rod’s proposal and will follow up to formally establish the group.

- How Do We Meet This Moment – Discernment with UURISE and UUCOD
  - This was an initial, informal discussion introduced by Rod Belshee. No decisions were made, but the Board was updated on early efforts underway to explore how UUCOD might respond to the increasingly hostile political climate, particularly toward vulnerable communities.
  - Rod shared that Rev. Ian and several congregants have expressed concern about recent ICE activity in Indio and Desert Hot Springs. The trans community, in particular, has voiced fear. There is a growing sense that “things are going to hell” and the church is being looked to for a compassionate, values-driven response.
  - The framing question is: *What does our faith call us to do in this moment?*
  - Rod and Fran Hoag attended a session at GA led by UURISE and others, outlining a discernment process for congregations. This process involves:
    - Defining the current moment and the specific problems faced by our communities.
    - Identifying existing relationships and organizations already doing this work (to avoid a savior mentality).
    - Assessing the congregation’s actual capacity and resources (e.g., Spanish speakers, volunteers, financial contributions).
    - Matching community needs with the skills and commitments within UUCOD.
  - Rev. Ian has been in conversation with Kasia Hanson, who worked with him previously in San Diego. She may be a resource as this discernment process develops.
  - Two complementary resources were highlighted:
    - The upcoming UUA Common Read (title not specified in the conversation), which Rev. Ian plans to use in monthly gatherings throughout the next year.
    - The book *Social Change Now: A Guide for Reflection and Connection* by Deepa Iyer, which offers a reflective workbook to help individuals understand their roles in movements for justice and how their values align with broader community ecosystems.
  - Fran Hoag emphasized resisting authoritarianism with faith and values, countering the growing identification of religion with Christian nationalism. She recommended reviewing the UUA’s Article of Immediate Witness (AIW) on Resisting Authoritarianism and possibly creating a UUCOD-specific resolution.
  - Rod noted that this work must go beyond short-term service projects. It will require deep personal reflection, trust-building, and long-term commitment. While leadership is important, the effort should be open and inclusive, involving the whole congregation through something like a Lifespan Faith Development class.
  - Recognizing that there are *many roles* in this work, the group stressed the importance of supporting those who are more vulnerable, including members who may become deeply affected by what they encounter. Rod referenced a guiding quote: *“Start with a broken heart, and see where it leads.”*
  - Rod reported that Rev. Ian has recorded a short video message of support for this effort, encouraging the group not to wait for his return from sabbatical. He expressed full endorsement, whether the group works with Kasia or takes another route.
  - The group plans to reconvene with Kasia Hanson (date TBD), and all Board members will be invited to attend and participate if they wish.
  - In closing, Rod acknowledged that the outcome of this discernment is unknown — it may lead to direct action, support of outside organizations, or another form of meaningful response. The important thing is to start asking the questions together, and to discern what role UUCOD is called to play.
  
- Board Retreat September 6 Preview: Strategic Goals, Board Roles and Liaison Assignments, Volunteerism.

- Rod Belshee asked the Board for input as to the topics to be discussed at the Board Retreat:
  - Strategic Goals
  - Roles and Liaisons
  - Volunteerism and how to get more people involved. Micro-volunteerism so that when we come to the Church Council in the Fall.
  - Review Calendar.
  - UURISE and meeting the moment? Board learning can be a part of the retreat.
- Review and Discussion of Monthly Reports:
  - Reference the attached Monthly Reports for complete details.
  - Treasurer’s report. Julia Bell wanted to update her report to clarify UUCOD’s CD position: “The UUCOD CD is a business CD, in the name of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert and reflects the church’s address and business entity type. As Treasurer, when the CD was established, Jerry L’Hommedieu was the sole signatory on behalf of UUCOD and was authorized by the Board at that time to do so.”
  - The Treasurer is changing the signatories on the Charles Schwab Account, and paperwork is in process.
  - Rod Belshee gave a Breeze update. The important needs of getting the new system up and operating have been met. At this time, there is no Breeze Leader to add and implement additional features. The feeling is that as time goes by and as people are interested, a leader will present him/herself to lead the project at that time.
  - The membership roster is accurate and current.
  - Skills and interests will have a light roll-out for people to check off if interested.

## Process Moderation

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

## Chalice Extinguishment

- Julia Alberg-Burbank extinguished the chalice with words of gratitude, acknowledging the responsibility, kindness, and spirit that everyone brings to their work

## Adjournment

- Rod Belshee adjourned the regular Board meeting at 6:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Claudia L. Simmons, Secretary

Date Approved: September 16, 2025.

Attachments  
Monthly Reports

# UUCOD President's Report

## July 2025 Board Meeting

### Staff

- Rev Ian put together a very comprehensive plan for his Sabbatical. So far it's working!
- Pam will be out of the office 7/30, 7/31, 8/1 and 8/4

### Command One alarm list

The Command One alarm list needs updating with one or two more volunteers. Bob asked to be removed from the second slot, and Jerry asked to be retained only if he is the fourth or fifth on the list. Here's the current list. [Can any of you join this list?](#)

- Mel Wilkinson
- Vacant
- Rev. Ian
- Vacant
- Jerry

### Parking Lot resurfacing

- Jerry, Mel and Rod agreed to award the parking lot contract to Asphalt MD. They were also our provider in 2019.
- Their proposal is competitive at \$13,983 (well below the approved budget of \$25,000) and includes two coats of emulsion, strip and paint, and 4 van accessible spaces.
- The work will be performed sometime in the last three weeks of October.
- As before, we need to expect that the cracks will reappear quickly – the emulsion is to protect the surface.

### UUA General Assembly

Fran and I attended the UUA General Assembly in person. There were many powerful sessions, including Meeting the Moment by Preventing Catastrophic Loss (due to ICE), Increasing Membership, and the Ware Lecture. Small group sessions were also useful, such as ones for Board Members to share experiences.

### CNPS Garden Day

- The Sacred Grounds Initiative has forged deep connections with many local environmental organizations.
- In particular we have worked closely with the California Native Plant Society and the Desert Horticultural Society for several years, building relationships and assisting in their events.

- Those two organizations hold a massive Garden Day event every year, that draws 300-500 people. They have asked to hold this year's CNPS Garden Day at UUCOD on November 22!
- The event will include a full speaker program, workshops, non-profit booths, native plant sales and other activities. The speakers will be in the sanctuary, the plant sale on the labyrinth, and the booths on the patio.
- The rental fee schedule for the full facilities all day comes to about \$1,000. Do we want to offer a reduced rate, as co-sponsors of the Garden Day?

### **Living Our Values in These Current Times**

We are facing perhaps the strongest challenge to our values in our lifetimes. Our communities are under siege by our own government.

Unitarian Universalists have a deep tradition of resisting oppression and working for justice and safety for all. This congregation has been training to support oppressed communities since 2017, with many graduates of the Waking Up White and Beloved Conversations programs, and our Social Justice team has built relationships with the Galilee Center and Migrant Education. We have been preparing for this moment.

Rev Ian and Rod are engaging Katia Hansen of UURISE to help lead the congregation to discern how we will live our values and resist oppression and cruelty. Our first formative meeting was June 26 with a small group (Rev Ian, Rod, Linda, Sandy, Margaret, Chris, Denise, Bob, and Julia Bell). Minutes:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VmABDQUFpgdWaxAubMo9VV6PP7tXIAqH/view>

Rev Ian has created a video encouraging us to explore how we should respond to this moment, and get started even during his sabbatical. [Rev Ians Message.MOV - Google Drive](#)

The initial step is a Discernment of what UUCOD might be able to do. Katia will lead the first discernment meeting July 19 (TBD) at 5pm. Additional leaders will be invited, including all Board Members.

### **Breeze Update** <see additional report>

- Database
  - Following the import of meminfo data, Membership did an extensive scrub of the database
  - The database is now complete and very accurate, with continuous timely updates
  - There are 142 Active Members, 83 Active Friends, 67 Visitors and 41 others, a total of 341 people, plus another 310 Archived people.
- Giving
  - Roll-out is completed
  - All Contributions since January 1, 2025 are included, plus 2025-2026 Pledges
- People Profile
  - We added "My Story" and look forward to people adding their free-form stories (only three so far)
- Directory
  - 128 opted in to the directory, Including 71% of all Active Members

- 115 people include photos!
- Breeze Champions continue support on Sundays and at breeze-help@uucod.org
- Only 25 people responded to the newsletter survey but overwhelmingly they were up and running

### **Breeze Skills & Interests**

- Skills & Interests Goal
  - 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.
- Skills & Interest Roll-out Plan
  - See attached plan, including Policies, Roll-out Plan and Concerns
- Skills & Interest Overall Timetable
  - May through June – Design
  - July – Policy decisions, finalize Roll-out Plan
  - July through September – Start roll-out to congregants
  - October – Train Committee Chairs and Event Organizers
  - November onward – Integrate into our standard practices

### **Breeze un-staffed opportunities**

- Skills & Interests
  - There are no leaders for the Skills & Interests roll-out, training and support
- Volunteer Scheduling beta testing
  - Tracy Flynn is testing centralized scheduling (ushers, readers, etc.),
  - The Breeze Champions are testing a self-sign-up model (users volunteer for open slots).
  - There are no leaders to help others adopt Volunteer Scheduling
- Events
  - The Dining Divas tested the Event organization feature, but since they rotate leaders every month it was not a good beta test
  - There are no leaders to help Event Organizers adopt this feature

To: UUCOD Board

From: Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1st VP

July 15, 2025

- Supported the development of the agenda for this meeting
- July is my vacation time, so I am taking all of July away from church work.

**Denominational Affairs:**

**Social Justice:**

- Backpack drive is currently in progress

We lost a little over \$15,000 in June (\$27,500 minus \$12,025) with about half the revenue of past few months coming in and expenses holding steady. Not unexpected with slower summer months.

We collected more Pledges this year than budgeted by \$24,000. \$213,767 total collected for FY. Almost \$54,000 of next year's pledges has also been collected. Approximately one fourth of the \$220,000 total pledged.

June's share the plate was Planned Parenthood and we collected and paid them \$726.

There were planned increases in Staff Costs—a 3% increase in salary for one person and one-time bonuses for all. It was deemed important to share our good fortune with our employees. Our 24-25 FY profits were \$86,600. Reasons for the profits were outlined last month. We sent \$75,000 to our UUA investment account now totaling close to \$253,000. The MacLean Endowment remains at approximately \$160,700. UUA is changing their platform so the most recent numbers were not available.

The local CD was automatically rolled over for another year at 3.75% APY (down from 4.83%) maturing 6/30/26. It's value is approximately \$54,100. \$50,000 was invested 7/31/2023 or approx 8% growth in 2 years. This CD is unusual in that it was opened as a personal CD. No business CDs were available by our bank then. So this CD remains in our past treasurer's name. If any changes at all are made, the CD would only pay 0.5% as a new business CD. Pacific Premier Bank is merging with Colombia Bank and changing it's name to Colombia Bank later this year. More to be revealed.

Breeze software allows everyone to see their various contributions to the church under the giving tab. Hopefully, that is an incentive for continued enrollment in Breeze. Year-end statements for taxes will easily be available through Breeze.

Reverend Ian has started his two month sabbatical and Reverend Howe is the interim minister. The Sabbatical Reserve Fund of \$10,000 is for both this and next year's sabbatical.

Other contingency reserves for the building and grounds (almost \$150,000) put us in good shape for the future.

This was an extraordinarily profitable year. I, as the new treasurer, have inherited a financially healthy church fund and organized budget for the next fiscal year. I thank Jerry whole-heartedly for his patience, guidance and thoughtfulness in preparing me for this role. We are most fortunate to have him as a diligent and honorable member of our congregation.

Julia Bell 7/2/25

## **Board Member at Large Report July 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:
  - Chris Eager
  - LeGrand Valez
  - Julias Bell
  - Ros Hoover
  - Lina Savard
  - Barb Storms
  - Rob DuWors

### **Worship Associate**

- I will be the worship associate on July 20<sup>th</sup>.

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

Monthly Report – July 15, 2025  
UUCOD Secretary Claudia Simmons

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1. I was present and took the minutes of the June 17, 2025, Board Meeting. The draft has been prepared, reviewed by Board members, and is awaiting approval at the July 15, 2025, Board Meeting.

## Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert Accessibility Policy

### Definitions

In thinking about how we define “disability” in this policy, we draw on the perspective of EqUUal Access, a UU group focused on accessibility and congregational life. Their understanding is that “variations in how our minds and our bodies work are part of the vast range of human diversity, and contribute to individual uniqueness. Society determines which of these variations are considered ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ and defines the rest as ‘disabilities.’ These definitions are fluid over time and across cultures.”

Grounded in this understanding, we define “disability” as any condition of the body or mind that interacts with physical, social, or institutional barriers to limit full access and participation in major life activities and in our community. We aim to emphasize that the “problem to be solved” lies not in the individual condition but in the ways the broader world and our organizations do or do not center accessibility for all.

### Purpose

An estimated one in five North Americans has a disability, demonstrating that disabilities are a natural part of life and can be acquired at any time. Many disabilities are obvious, many are invisible, and people may also have barriers that don’t amount to a medically designated disability that impair meaningful access or participation. Whether physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory, many of the worst barriers faced by people with different abilities result from attitudes and environments that we create and could change, rather than the functional limitation itself. Such attitudes and environments exclude people from the beloved community.

In 2022, UUCOD adopted the Eighth Principle, which invites our journey toward spiritual wholeness to include working to build a diverse, multicultural Beloved Community by actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions. In 2023, the Board of Directors formulated the long-range strategic goal to assess our physical facility (including decorations, art, signage, access, gender neutrality, etc.) and make changes as possible to be more welcoming and accessible to diverse groups. Part of our commitment is to ensure that everyone has access to our building, grounds, programming, literature, and other areas, and that everyone find such access equitably and easily.

**In this congregation**, we know that the demographics of our community bring with them some specific challenges brought on by age and health issues. **This congregation believes** that everyone should have the opportunity to participate, contribute, and belong to our beloved community. We also believe that people of all abilities positively affect and enhance human diversity and community life. Therefore, in keeping with our shared values and commitments **the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert adopts this policy.**

**Policy**

1. In this congregation, we value people of all abilities consistent with our shared values.
2. We consider all people—with disabilities and without—to have gifts, and we encourage everyone to enrich congregational life by practicing their faith and using their gifts in our beloved community and the world.
3. We will endeavor to welcome people of all abilities into all activities of the church. This includes physical access to the building, auditory access at all times, sensitivity to sensory experiences, digital access, and access to worship, education, small group, and outreach activities.
4. We will seek to name, understand, and attend to the special spiritual, physical, and psychological needs of those of us affected by disabilities, including caregivers, and will offer training to respond appropriately to disability issues and to raise awareness in our congregation. In our learning we will always strive to center the voices and experience of those directly impacted and invite them into developing and implementing solutions.
5. We will endeavor to modify any policy, practice, procedure, or architecture that excludes those of us with disabilities from any aspect of congregational life, and we will accomplish this through ample discussion with all parties involved.
6. We will designate an Accessibility and Inclusion Coordinator with a designated, confidential e-mail account (presently [accessibility@uucod.org](mailto:accessibility@uucod.org)) to receive requests for accommodation under this policy and work with the requesting party to try to honor the request. Nonelectronic requests may be made through the church office and will be confidentially transmitted to the Accessibility and Inclusion Coordinator. We will listen to suggestions and provide feedback from the appropriate congregational staff or committee. We will make this policy available on our website along with a statement of our accessibility commitments and a link to the confidential e-mail account of the Accessibility and Inclusion Coordinator.

*Signed copy on file at the church*



\_\_\_\_\_  
Rod Belshee, Board President

\_\_\_\_\_  
??/??/2025  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Claudia Simmons, Board Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
??/??/2025  
Date



(760) 863-4500  
41700 N Jackson Street, Indio, CA 92203  
State License No. 626842  
gary@asphaltmds.com  
asphaltmds.com

TO:  
**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**  
**72425 VIA VAIL**  
**RANCHO MIRAGE, CA 92270**  
**JERRY L'HOMMEDIEU (562) 761-7889**

JOB NAME/LOCATION:  
**"Sealcoat Application & Striping"**  
**Parking Lot and Drive Lanes**  
**treasurer@uucod.org**

WE HEREBY SUBMIT SPECIFICATIONS AND ESTIMATES FOR:

**CLEANING:** Power clean the entire surface to be sealed free from all dust, dirt and debris.

**SEALCOAT APPLICATION:** Apply a two (2) coat application of "ACE-HD" Heavy Duty asphalt emulsion sealer on the entire asphalt surface area of complex using three percent (3%) acrylic latex additive in each application. (Approximately 27,546 sq. ft.)

**STRIPING:** Re-paint all parking stalls, directional arrows and signs. (Approximately 43 single white stripes, 4 handicap stalls with 3 blue hashed access aisles; paint 6 parking spaces with blue bumpers, blue lines and "reserved parking" stencils.)

**CURB PAINTING:** Scrape and remove loose, flaking paint and repaint approximately 333 ln. ft. of red curbing including "No Parking Fire Lane" stencils.

**HANDICAP STALL SIGNS & POSTS:** Remove existing handicap stall signs and posts and replace with 4 new van accessible ADA signs and posts.

**LUMP SUM PROJECT TOTAL: \$13,983.**

*This proposal is confidential and proprietary. It is intended solely for the recipient and may not be shared, distributed, or used in any form without the express written consent of Asphalt MD's.*

**\*PRICE INCREASE:** Due to volatility of today's oil and asphalt prices, we cannot guarantee our price on any work to be scheduled beyond 30 days from this proposal.

**NOTE:**

- CRACKS WILL IMMEDIATELY REAPPEAR.
- THERE IS ONE GUARANTEE AVAILABLE WITH CRACKS – IT IS GUARANTEED THEY WILL GROW IN SIZE AND IN NUMBER EVERY YEAR.
- THE SURFACE WILL SCUFF AND TEAR IN HOT WEATHER WITH TIGHT TURNS.
- THE SURFACE WILL STAIN WITH WATER.

**PAYMENT TO BE MADE AS FOLLOWS:**  
**LUMP SUM DUE IN FULL UPON COMPLETION OF WORK.**

All material is guaranteed to be as specified. All work to be completed in a professional manner according to standard practices. Any alteration or deviation from above specifications involving extra costs will be executed only upon written orders, and will become an extra charge over and above the estimate. All agreements contingent upon strikes, accidents or delays beyond our control. Owner to carry fire, tornado and other necessary insurance. Our workers are fully covered by Worker's Compensation Insurance.

*Gary D. Butler*

GARY D. BUTLER

NOTE: Proposal may be withdrawn by us if not accepted with \_\_\_\_ days.

**ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSAL:** The above prices, specifications and conditions are satisfactory and are hereby accepted. You are authorized to do the work as specified (Please Indicated Option Number, If Applicable: \_\_\_\_\_). Payment will be made as outlined above.

DATE OF ACCEPTANCE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_