

UUCOD Board Meeting Minutes, February 17, 2026

Attending:

Board Members Present (via Zoom): Rod Belshee, President, Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1st Vice President, Julia Bell, Treasurer, Claudia Simmons, Secretary, Walter Gendell, Director at Large, John Ressler, Director at Large, Rev. Ian Riddell, Minister

Others Present (via Zoom): Jerry L’Hommedieu, Sheryl Eaton, Steve Thornton, Bill Petrarca

Opening and Check-In

- **Chalice Lighting:** Meeting opened with a reading reflecting on hope and community resilience during uncertain times.
- **Personal Check-ins:** Members shared personal updates, ranging from family milestones (e.g., anniversaries, health updates), recent activities (e.g., dinner parties, retreats, snowshoeing), and emotional states. A new guest, Bill Petrarca, introduced himself.
- **Process Moderation:** Julia Bell volunteered to be the process moderator.

Agenda Items and Discussions

1. Approval of January 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

- Rod Belshee asked if there were any questions or corrections to the minutes from the January 2026 meeting. Hearing none, Walter Gendell moved to approve the minutes, and Julia Alberg-Burbank seconded the motion. The motion passed by acclamation.

2. Voices of the Congregation

Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast — Request from Randy Steele

- Randy Steele shared information about the upcoming Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast on Thursday, May 14, 2026, at the Palm Springs Convention Center, which typically draws about 1,200 attendees, including many local students from Gay-Straight Alliance groups.

- In past years, UUCOD has hosted one table. Randy offered to coordinate participation this year and would personally commit to six seats.
 - Tables seat 8 people and cost \$750; individual tickets are about \$95. Randy recommended reserving at least two tables (16 seats), with the option to add a third if interest is high.
 - Information will be shared via the newsletter and a March congregational announcement to gauge participation.
 - Regarding funding, the Board would commit funds up front to reserve tables (approximately \$1,500 for two), with attendees reimbursing the church for their seats.
 - Discussion included a suggestion that the church might consider sponsoring a table in the future for those unable to afford tickets. No action was taken at this time. The Board will make a final decision at the March meeting.

3. Attitude of Gratitude

- It was requested that Walter Gendell send thank-you notes to:
 - Wendy and Steve Thornton for volunteering as Connection and Engagement Facilitators for the next year.
 - Patrick Tidmore for contributions to the men's social group.

4. Meet the Moment Initiative

- Rod Belshee reported on recent activities to learn and prepare to respond to federal government actions affecting neighbors, with a focus on immigrant justice and community support.
- **Activities:**
 - Of the 18 organizations we researched, we selected a few to build trust and long-term relationships.
 - Spanish immersion, silent protests, rallies, Know Your Rights cards, and legal observer training.
 - Legal Observers: 36 trained members; emphasis on safety, documentation, and non-intervention during ICE events.
 - Protocols: Best practices include working in pairs, check-in/check-out procedures, and ongoing training.

- Partnership: Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice was chosen as the primary partner.
- Outcomes: Most ICE event responses involve post-event documentation and family support.
- Appreciation was expressed for the focus on safety and practical engagement opportunities.

5. Strategic Goals Review

- **Long-Term and Short-Term Goals:** Five goals reviewed, including completed items and ongoing priorities.
- **Micro-Volunteerism:** Notable progress, with Steven and Wendy Thornton leading efforts to facilitate engagement and streamline volunteer matching.
- **Lifespan** and social change initiatives progressing; surveys and classes planned.
- **Meet the Moment:** Broad participation; next meeting scheduled for February 24.
- **Safety:** No significant updates this month.

6. Pledge Drive Update

- **Progress:** 75 pledges received, including five new pledges; \$167,000 raised toward a \$240,000 goal (~70%).
- **Testimonials:** Praised as heartfelt and meaningful; new and long-standing members are actively involved.

7. Strategic Planning for Fiscal Years 2026–2029

- **Process Overview:** Steps include revisiting the mission/vision/values, conducting a SWOT analysis, brainstorming, filtering/focusing, and setting actionable goals.
- **Timeline:** Planning to culminate before the fall Church Council.
- **Documentation:** Rev. Ian said that the visioning session summaries were uploaded to the shared drive for use in preparation of strategic planning; suggested making this a three-year plan covering FY 2026–2029.
- **Congregational Input:** To be scheduled before finalizing goals.

8. Board Retreat Preparation

- **Focus:** Strategic goals will dominate the agenda; spiritual growth and calendar review included.
- **Format:** Hybrid (in-person and Zoom); starts at 8:30 AM to accommodate schedules.

9. Sabbatical Planning

- **Update:** Rev. Ian shared the draft job description for the sabbatical minister; housing options have been identified.
- **Selection:** Process streamlined based on previous experience; aiming for diversity representation in the pulpit this summer.
- **Feedback:** Board supports the approach.

Committee and Liaison Reports

Financial Update

- **Pledges:** 77% received; follow-up emails increased payment rate.
- **Expenses:** Slightly above revenue for the month; within annual budget.
- **Investments:** CD maturing in June to be moved to the UUA Common Fund for better returns.
- **Accounts:** Charles Schwab account to be closed for efficiency.

Facilities

- **Maintenance:** Addressed exterior lighting issues and potential A/C unit repairs.
- **Irrigation:** A new system was installed to prevent excessive water bills.

Membership and Stewardship

- **Membership:** 147 members, ~90 friends; strong participation in new member classes and stewardship events.
- **Stewardship:** Successful pledge luncheon and new member engagement.

Social Justice

- **Protests:** Silent protests scheduled; coordination with local partners ongoing.

- **Singing Events:** “Singing the Songs of Resistance,” a growing nationwide movement fostering solidarity, hope, and dissent in the face of rising authoritarianism, is being planned to be introduced here at UUCOD.

Technology & Engagement

- **Breeze App:** Improvements to the login process; ongoing campaign to collect member photos.
- **Breeze Champions:** Recruitment and training to support member engagement with technology. Proposal for “Breeze Help” badges to increase peer-to-peer tech assistance.
- **Connection & Engagement Facilitators:** Steve and Wendy Thornton are developing systems to match volunteers with needs, collaborating with membership and stewardship to streamline processes.

Reflections on the book *Serving With Grace*

- The chapter on “Mindful Meetings” was reviewed; members reflected on preparation, process monitoring, and post-meeting debriefing; there was an emphasis on spiritual and collegial aspects of meetings, preparation, and reflections.

(Executive Session) Board Appointments

- **New Board Members:** New Board Candidates were discussed.

Board Approval

- After reconvening from the Executive Session, the Board unanimously approved the slate of candidates put forth for the upcoming Board election at the Annual Congregational Business Meeting.
- Jane Hillegas-Strommel was appointed to fill the current 2nd Vice President vacancy and will be present at the March Board meeting.

Closing

- **Gratitude:** Expressions of appreciation for leadership, engagement, and community spirit.

- **Adjournment:** Meeting concluded ahead of schedule; next gathering will be the Board Retreat.
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Next Steps:

- Finalize table reservations and funding for Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast and add this topic to the March Board Meeting Agenda to discuss and confirm UUCOD's commitment. Report results back to Randy Steele.
 - Ask Pam Bibo to put information about the Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast tables into the newsletter.
 - Make a congregational announcement about the Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast on the first Sunday in March
 - Continue strategic planning with congregational input.
 - Implement volunteer engagement systems.
 - Monitor progress on pledge drive and committee goals.
 - Prepare for board retreat and sabbatical planning.
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Action Items

- Send a survey to the congregation in the next couple of weeks
- Read the chapter titled 'Mission and Community' in *Serving With Grace* for the March meeting
- Check with Pam Bibo to ensure church keys function properly with the new door locking mechanism
- Close the Charles Schwab account and transfer matured CD funds to the UUA Common Fund Investment at the end of June
- Facilities to replace exterior lighting, possibly with LEDs; also, investigate and address possible bearing problem in A.C. unit on the roof
- Participate in protests on February 21 or March 21 (contact Celia Gorman if interested)
- Lifespan folks to send out a survey and plan chalice circles for the fall

- Wendy Thornton to participate in the next Membership Committee meeting to discuss the Connection and Engagement Facilitator role
- Membership to discuss Breeze usage with new members in orientation

?

Respectfully Submitted,

Date Approved: March 17, 2026



Claudia L. Simmons, Secretary

Attachments

Monthly Reports

Report to the Board
February 17, 2026
President Rod Belshee

This has been an incredibly busy month – way too busy in fact. Most of it was additional to the President role (driving Meet the Moment, Breeze, connecting volunteers, Auction Wildflower tours, etc.). This level is not sustainable but I'm engaging others to drive most of these activities over the next month.

Facebook

The **Community Facebook** moderators met with Rev Ian and me to review current policy and practices.

- The group will be open only to Members and Friends.
- The ability for people to invite others will be turned off (people with no association to the church were getting invited) and the challenge questions will be removed.
- Rev Ian will clarify the definition of Friend with Membership, and also discuss the means to let people know about the Community Facebook page. That might be Membership putting the information in the New Member packet, or Membership periodically giving names of new Friends to the moderators to invite, or having Breeze automatically send an invite when a person is added as a Friend or Member.

The group also agreed on a need to discuss the Policies for the **public Facebook** page and the website, in particular communicating all of the great things we do to the outside community. I've queried to schedule that first meeting. It will first include what we want, and then try to figure out what we support.

Church Calendar

I got a decent draft of the 2026-27 Calendar started, ready to edit at the Board Retreat and then for the Church Council to complete. See draft in the [google drive for the February Board meeting](#).

2025-28 Strategic Goals

I have outlined a process to develop the 2025-28 Strategic Goals, working with Rev Ian and Julia A-B. We will discuss and modify this at the Board meeting, and spend most of the Board Retreat beginning the process. See the plan in the [google drive for the February Board meeting](#).

Board Retreat

The Board Retreat on Feb 21 will be in the morning, since Rev Ian will only be able to join until 11am (by Zoom). I worked up an agenda with Rev Ian and Julia A-B. We will discuss and modify this at the Board meeting. See the Retreat agenda in the [google drive for the February Board meeting](#).

Worship Service Overflow

We have a phased plan for handling overflow on Sunday Worship, including contributions from Hospitality, Facilities, Ushers, Membership, Worship, A/V and others. The **Overflow Plan is complete**.

It describes what do and who does it. It is phased – for example initially we will just ask old-timers to move to overflow but ultimately if overflow becomes regular we could add an additional Chalice and Tibetan Bowl and improve the A/V. The plan is uploaded to the [google drive for the February Board meeting](#).

Rev Ian and Sue report that the maximum seating capacity in the sanctuary is 137 (plus worship leader and associate, pianist and A/V so total 143). At the recommended 80% maximum, that gives 110 before people start feeling it is too full. There is an **Overflow Volunteer list** of 14 people who are willing to be shuttled to the overflow area to make room for newer people and visitors.

An adequate A/V solution has been tested for overflow in the community room, and it requires no equipment purchases at this time. We may want equipment purchases if overflow becomes common, to eliminate the need for a laptop and simplify setup. **A/V has been setting up the Overflow** in the Community room for several weeks now, since January and February are historically the highest months. But to date, we have not needed to shuttle people to overflow.

February 15 was the first day that the **Phase 1 Overflow plan was required**. We had 139 people, so six were in the overflow area. We also had 23 online!

Meet the Moment

We have been very busy planning actions to protect our immigrant neighbors. The Meet the Moment team has spun off several actions and the Social Justice team has several others. In the past month these are starting to become visible to the congregation, with opportunities for people to get involved at different levels. There are very detailed notes from the Feb 6 meeting that describe everything we are doing in the [google drive for the February Board meeting](#). We will discuss this at the Board Meeting, in particular issue of safety.

The Meet the Moment team coordinates closely with the Social Justice team. Denise prefers that the two do not merge (which would add load to the overburdened Social Justice team).

There are several **levels of engagement**

- Building Relationships
- Spanish Immersion
- Silent Protests, including the *Signs of Facism* events where participants simply hold a sign
- Rallies and Protests, joining other groups such as the *No Kings* protest.
- Know Your Right cards, available to give to friends.
- Active Outreach, including distributing business signs that feature a Hotline number.
- Trained Legal Observers, which respond to alerts and document ICE actions.

We are **building relationships** with other faith leaders that over the longer term can improve our ability to help the immigrant and LGBTQ communities. Rev Ian is connecting with several Faith leaders in the west valley and has joined the nascent Inland Congregations United for Change in the east valley. Social Justice has been building a relationship with Galilee Center for years, and the Meet the Moment team is building a relationship with the Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice. All of these strengthen our ability to respond and coordinate actions in the long run.

Harvard is driving the **Spanish Immersion** sessions. He had 25 people come to the organizational meeting and enthusiasm is high! They plan to break into subgroups based on current skill level and experiment with different learning approaches.

There are two **Silent Protests** planned at this point. Joni has arranged to borrow the “*This is what fascism looks like*” signs from the Democrats of the Desert. These silent protests are simply 20 UUCOD people holding these 20 signs along local roadways, spaced out like the old Burma Shave posters. Celia is leading one on Feb 21 and Joni on Mar 21.

Denise J-E watches for **Rallies and Protests** such as the *No Kings* protest on March 28 and puts notices in the newsletter. She has asked for help to watch for notices of local events and then let her know, but has no takers yet.

Carol L is leading the effort to supply and distribute **Know Your Rights cards**. They list the constitutional rights in English and Spanish and include a Hotline phone number. Many congregants have asked for the cards to give to friends, housekeepers and gardeners. The cards are now available in the foyer.

We are also able to distribute **ICE posters for merchant windows**. Denise J-E will provide the training and scripts from the Indivisible toolkit, which has been very successful across the country. We do not yet have a coordinator to lead events, and may just partner when IC4IJ is doing a campaign (they have done one in Indio so far).

The highest level of commitment is **Legal Observers**. We currently have 36 people trained through the **Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice (IC4IJ)**, a subset of who will go on serve as Legal Observers. Beyond the training, we have met as a group on February 6 to get fully prepared, including additional training and organization. Very detailed notes from that organizational meeting are available (see a copy in the [google drive for the February Board meeting](#)) as people join. The next meeting is February 24.

The **role of Legal Observer is to document law enforcement actions, NOT protest**, and involves no direct engagement with law enforcement. The safety of our members is of utmost importance so we are creating safety procedures and protocols, such as having a designated person (Sarita) that anyone responding to an alert notifies before they go out and then again when they return.

We have chosen to partner with IC4IJ. While there are other groups including TODEC and Alianza, when we did our original Meet the Moment research with 18 organizations many suggested that we contact IC4IJ. We are agnostic and want to join whoever has the largest presence so that efforts coalesce around one hotline number. IC4IJ is the dominant force in the Inland Empire and is hiring a full time coordinator for the Coachella Valley so at this point seems best positioned in the valley. If that changes we can adjust.

We explicitly **do NOT plan to protest or intervene at active ICE events**. The safety of our congregants is paramount.

Breeze Adoption

Do Members use Breeze?

- 36% are actively using Breeze

- 27% have no user account or never logged in
- 37% last logged in over 90 days ago

Does the online directory include complete info on Members?

- 100% have email addresses (though 9 members marked it private)
- 89% have photos (16 members do not, 2 of who opted out of listing in the directory)
- 35% have My Story (mostly the stories from new members captured by Membership)
- 12% have Find Your People, Find Your Purpose (131 members have nothing)

Friends – *participation in Breeze by Friends has not been a focus*

- 90% have at least a phone or email contact, and 27% have photos
- Only 6% are actively using Breeze, while 82% either have no account, or never logged in

New Membership

- Approximately 12 Friends will go through the New Member classes in February and be on-boarded March 1 and March 8. (Of those, 10 already have photos and 5 have opted into the directory.)

Breeze Tech

We are **simplifying the Breeze subdomain**. People first getting set up the Breeze app must type the ridiculously long *unitarianuniversalistchurchofthedesert*, which is error prone and immediately creates the impression that this is complicated. We will shorten it to *UUCOD*. This will make it easier for all future users, though there is a one-time disruption for the 78 users (53 members) who actively use Breeze now – they will need to log off and then log on and type in UUCOD. The transition will occur February 20 at 2pm. All active users have received an email, and will get another a day or two before the switch, along with an offer of personal help as needed. New members will be on-boarded after the change. For users on laptops with browsers, the change is from the url <https://unitarianuniversalistchurchofthedesert.breezechms.com> to <https://uucod.breeze.com>, also a great improvement, though existing users will need to update their bookmark/favorites with the new url.

Breeze email going to **junk/spam folders** is an issue that limits its robustness for event organizers. Steve Thornton is working with Breeze to find workarounds, but so far the only solution is for every user to flag the Breeze email as safe in their spam filters. This only needs to be done once, and we are adding it to the on-boarding process when we set up a login.

Breeze Champions

I emailed the Breeze Champion crew to see about having another round of the **Breeze help desk** during coffee hour. I'm too swamped during coffee hour to help much, and several of the other Champions also have other roles on Sundays so we are currently unable to organize regular help desks. I have recruited one new Breeze Champion.

We will have Breeze help to support the domain name change, and new members on March 1 and March 8.

Regardless, I got many additional photos taken this month and uploaded into the directory.

Find Your People, Find Your Purpose, Breeze (was Skills and Interests)

To help people deepen their connection to the church we created this section in Breeze, but it has little success to date. At the Church Council and Board Meetings, there was a desire to promote the use of this section of Breeze (as well as Giving and My Story), but no volunteers to help drive it.

I promoted it in four Newsletters but the number of people filling in this section only increased from 13 to 19 Members plus 2 Friends. It takes more effort than just newsletter articles. I have also encouraged a few Event Coordinators to fill this in for their volunteers, but none have done so.

But there is hope: see the next heading!

Connections and Engagement Facilitators

Wendy and Steve Thornton have agreed to co-lead a one-year effort to make it easy for connect people to activities and events, and make it easy for event coordinators to find volunteers. Wendy will lead the people-facing portion of that effort and Steve will take on the behind-the-scenes technology portion, using Breeze. They are quite enthusiastic about this opportunity.

Importantly, there focus is not to be the Volunteer Coordinator but instead to create the systems, process and procedures, and culture that makes it easy for people to connect to the activities of the church. They will serve for one year as Connection and Engagement Facilitators and then we will re-assess.

They will be coordinating with Membership (Tracy), Stewardship (Jane), and the Board (Rod). Their preliminary report (and formative questions) is uploaded to the [google drive for the February Board meeting](#).

Volunteers

I searched all of the Breeze MyStories and Find My People, Find My Purpose to find candidates to fill a couple of critical holes. I've added one person to the Breeze Champions, given two names to Rev Ian as potentials for Chalice Circle leaders, and sent the name of an IT Network Engineer to the A/V team. Even with the limited data in Breeze so far, it helps!

DIB Ministry

DIBM continues discussing focus and reviewed the rubric completed a few years ago. Stephen T distilled that lengthy report down and a proposed grouping of items into high (7), medium (2) and low priority (5). For each of the high priority items he proposed 1-4 questions to help us assess where we are at. We worked through the first several items and will continue in the next meeting.

Leadership Development Committee

- The Leadership Development Committee is Jim Swanson, Bob Rancourt and Sheryl Eaton.
- They have secured candidates for the three Board positions: Secretary, 2nd VP/Director-at-Large 3, and Director-at-Large 1

- I'm not sure if there is a candidate for the Nominating Committee yet.

A/V

- The speaker in the kitchen is now working.
- The community room TV now successfully streams the service for overflow. We are sorting out minor issues (e.g. couldn't hear congregation during hymns)
- We continue to experience operations errors in streaming from the website, and continue to work on training. Many people have discovered that viewing on YouTube is reliable if the website is not.

Auction tours

The Hiking Wildflower tour was on Feb 6, with a second tour scheduled for people who could not attend then. It was great success as I had a couple of Naturalist experts join us and we hiked in Box Canyon and saw many different species.

The Anza Borrego driving wildflower tour was Feb 14. Dave and I rented two minivans and participants heard about geology and natural history as well as seeing the desert wildflowers. Two people were unable to make that date so I did a special tour of Anza Borrego on Feb 7 for them, as well as another on January 31. One person was ill and I have offered them a make-up trip.

My two auction items became five wildflower trips!

Other Activities

I attended numerous other events and meetings, including Social Justice, New Member training, UUA Presidents' meeting, Soup potluck, donating to the yard sale, helping people with Breeze, Lobby Monitor, etc..

Incident Report

A member experienced a fall so I completed an Incident Report and sent it to Rev. Ian. I have also checked on the member a couple of times. She was refinishing her dining set and is now unable to complete it, so I've found a congregant who will finish it for her.

Whew!

It has been a busy month!

1st VP Report

2.17.26

Submitted by: Julia Alberg-Burbank

I attended a Legal Observer training.

I attended the final class for Transforming Worship

I am in the process of planning Church Council for 3/7/26

UUA Update:

UUA GA Ware Lecturer will be [Mariann Budde](#)

Social Justice Liaison:

Highlights from the monthly meeting:

January 11, 2026: Special Shoes & Socks & on the Second - Denise Stevens & Denise JE

- Over 500 pairs of shoes were donated & many pairs of socks
- a U-Haul truck was rented to carry all of them
- They did not fit in Street Medicine Nurses Storage Unit, so Rob DuWors rented another one for 3 months
- Denise S. began handing them out on 1/27
- We need to go through a cycle to determine when we should next ask people to donate
- An article, which is a reprint from CVUSD, about it was put in the newsletter.

5. Galilee Center Updates

A [Food on the First Collection](#) - Carol McDaniel & Sue Caspari

- 1/4/26: 81 food items
- 2/1/26: 1 med/large bag clothes, 1 medium bag clothes, dish towels, 4 bars soap, 3 toys, & 112 food items:
 - 10 large jars peanut butter
 - 17 cans tuna or chicken
 - 19 single packets dried raisins or cranberries
 - 25 misc. canned food items
 - 7 additional misc. packaged food

B. [Formula on the Fourth Collection](#) - Carol

- 1/25/26: 0 cans

C. Would someone be responsible for opening the appropriate brown bin the week prior to the event so donators can put items directly into it rather than around it, which takes up a lot of space & causes a tripping hazard?

6. Share the Plate - Denise

[25-26 STP Calendar](#) [Total STP Giving to Recipients:](#)

- December 24, 2025: Minister's Discretionary Fund - \$863.
 - Liaison: Rev. Ian Riddell
- January 18, 2026: The Gloria Kapp Scholarship on behalf of Safe Schools Desert Cities - **\$943.41**

See actual to budget report.

On the Revenue side

4001 77% of pledge amounts have been received.

4113 DOS rent was paid in February I am told.

4400 Transfer of funds was for an amplifier and 2 microphones to improve worship audio.

Total Revenue for the month was \$27,670. FYD Revenue is almost the exact amount as last year \$268,731.

On the Expense side

5060 Fixing the front door lock mechanism, rekeying and new keys was approximate \$1200.

5082 We had an extraordinary water bill due to a leak in irrigation system with water bill of \$1200.

New irrigation system w shut off valves and flow metering that has been installed should not allow this in the future.

5145 is the new amp and microphones to improve worship service sound costing almost \$3000.

5500 UUA dues are paid quarterly.

Total Expenditures this month were \$33,282. And FYD expenditures was \$200,36 and within our budget forecast.

Monthly expenditures were higher than income by \$5612.

Financial Position

Checking and Savings accounts are at \$67,280.

1200 and 1201 Our investments with UUA Common Endowment Fund grew 6.33% in last six months, totaling \$182,135 for the MacLean account and \$281,464 for our general investment account.

1202 The local CD is at \$55,779 and will mature 6/30/26 at 3.75% APY.

2700 The solar loan is starting it's 6th year of 30. We owe \$45,442 and pay \$233 monthly.

Total Net Revenue for the FY is \$68,366.

See enclosed statement of financial position for further details.

Thank you,

Julia Bell, Treasurer

FINANCE COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 2026

2 recommendations were passed.

1. Charles Schwab account should be closed.

Not being used and a hassle for officer changes.

2. \$50,000 CD at Columbia Bank funds should be transferred to our UUA common fund investment upon maturity 6/30/26.

Return rate is higher and combining funds makes sense.

The CD is currently a personal CD, as business CDs were not available at the time it was started.

Submitted by Julia Bell

Board Member at Large Report February 2026

Hospitality

- All is going well with our Hospitality team.

Attitude of Gratitude

- I sent thank you notes to Rob DuWors, Carol LaVoie and Joni Paddock for the work they did for Terry LeMaster's Celebration of Life.

Worship Associate

- I was the Worship Associate on February 15th.

UUCOD Men's Social

- There were 15 people at the February Men's Social.

Submitted by:

Walter Gendell

Board Member at Large

February 16, 2026

Liaison with Facilities and Furnishings Committee:

The Facilities Committee held its monthly Zoom meeting on February 6th, at 4:30 pm. Meeting adjourned at 5:04 pm.

At the end of January Committee member Steve Kerr attempted to replace bulbs in the 3 “Pagoda Lights” adjacent to the sidewalk between the trash enclosure and the main steps to the piazza. The sockets were too badly corroded to consider that. He thus removed the fixtures entirely and is currently researching the advisability of replacing them with new LED fixtures. There are problems with LEDs however. Situation not yet resolved.

It has been reported that two of the tall parking lot lights are burned out. We are taking steps to replace the bulbs, or possibly the fixtures, as needed.

Joint Liaison and Membership on the Facilities and Sacred Grounds Committees:

UUCOD’s contract gardening crew, Universal Green, did a “Schismus sweep” of the grounds on Saturday, February 14th. Between their efforts and 4 weed-pulls by congregants the last week in January and first week in February, we have probably removed about 70% of this troublesome non-native grass.

There have been ongoing efforts to remove other invasives from the grounds as well.

When they installed the new control system on the irrigation water, we discovered that the system-wide shut-off also turned off water from our four garden hose faucets as well. They are running a new line that will serve those four separately, with no timed shut-off.

We are planning a major dead-wood removal project from our Palo Verde trees to improve their overall health.

Liaison with Sacred Grounds Steering Committee:

There were no formal meetings of the Committee during this reporting period. Informal meetings occur regularly, as needed.

Most of the native vegetation on the grounds is thriving. Members of the Board and the Congregation are encouraged to visit the various gardens regularly this time of year when most things are in bloom.

Respectfully submitted: Monday, February 16, 2026, by John Ressler, Director-at-Large.

- Liaison: Jack Fitzsimmons
- This is the first year since 2022 that our Congregation has given less than \$1000
- Denise has reached out to Eric Ornelas to determine whether this will affect the scholarship
- February 15, 2026: Transgender Health & Wellness Center
 - Liaison: Rev. Ian Riddell

New Business:

7. Meeting the Moment - Rod Belshee & Denise JE

- Legal Observers Training with Inland Coalition For Immigrant Justice <https://ic4ij.org/>
 - Rod Belshee - temporary coordinator
 - At least 36 UUCOD people have been trained
 - We need more training
- Signs of Fascism Brigade
 - Joni Paddock - coordinator
 - First Event: Saturday, March 21, location TBD
- Protests & Rallies
 - Denise Janssen Eager - temporary coordinator
 - 3rd No Kings Protest is March 28th
 - Two events are already scheduled in the Palm Springs & Cathedral City
- No ICE/CBP Sign Distributors
 - Denise Janssen Eager - temporary coordinator
 - [Signs to Distribute](#)
 - [Signs of Solidarity Canvassing Toolkit](#)

Minister's Report to the UUCOD Board

February 17, 2026

The Rev. Ian W. Riddell

Hello, friends,

I am so immensely grateful for the outpouring of love and support and condolences that I have received from congregants after the death of my mother. Knowing that my family and I are held in your love is a great solace in a difficult time.

I am aware that my Board report may be less thorough than usual this month. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

In love and gratitude
Ian

Board Strategic Goals Update

3) **LifeSpan**. Re-establish our Lifespan Spiritual Growth program to provide opportunity to learn and grow in individual and community spiritual depth and understanding, with at least two offerings. Consider promoting the offerings outside of the church.

Ongoing: I met with a small initial group and we set some overall definitions of what LSG is and are preparing a survey for the congregation to explore what people want and need and who is willing and interested in providing learning and development opportunities. SURVEY STILL IN PLANNING STAGES

4) **Social Change Now**. Conduct a Lifespan series using the workbook Social Change Now (the UUA common read).

Following the completion of three offerings I will arrange for further gatherings to ponder next steps together. I am in the beginning stages of planning this next step.

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.

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. I am especially grateful for how you cared for each other during my sabbatical.

Administration, Governance, and Staff

- I continue my regular meetings with our staff: Pam Bibo (Office Administrator) and Jim Tong (Choir Director).
- I provided Jim Tong with his annual review covering his work from Nov 6 2024 to Nov 5 2025. This review was delayed by my illness in the late fall. It was an excellent review. Jim is doing a fantastic job and is much loved and appreciated by our choir members and other congregants. The choir's contribution to worship has been much appreciated by the congregation and by the worship team.
- I met with the moderators of our UUCOD Community and public Facebook pages to assess how we provided access to those spaces and to reaffirm that the purpose of the Community page was for members and ongoing friends to have a place to converse and check in with each other. We are planning to assess how we use our public FB page for outreach and information.
- I have begun to work on plans for this coming summer's two months of sabbatical. I have been in conversation with one possible sabbatical minister and have a conversation with another planned for this week. I am also working on securing accommodation for the sabbatical minister as well as work with the worship team to discern what preparation they would like before my sabbatical begins.

Membership and Committees

- I have begun meeting one-on-one with our newest members so we can get to know each other better and I can get a sense of how they want to live into their membership in our congregation.
- I continue to meet regularly with several committees. I participate monthly with Worship, DIBM, Stewardship, CoM, the Board, and Chalice Circles (when they are meeting). I participate in alternate months with Membership and Social Justice.
- I have attended the monthly crafting gathering this month.
- I have been regularly attending the monthly Men's breakfasts and enjoying the opportunity for connection.
- The DIBM Team continues to explore together what our work for the coming year is and how we might refocus. We are using a rubric designed by UU leaders for congregations to assess DIB needs and will be exploring new possibilities for our work in the coming months.
- I attended the Soup Potluck for the kick off of the annual Pledge Drive.
- I attended the "New Member Lunch and Conversation" sponsored by the Stewardship committee and answered questions about our denomination and congregation and about ministry.

- LIAISON: The Membership Committee and the Stewardship Committee met jointly this month
 - Stewardship reported on the induction celebration lunch in November, the development of activity bags of materials for families to use during services, and reported on the success of their “Summer Staying Connected Zooms.” They are focusing on upcoming events including the New Member luncheon this Sunday and a Soup Potluck for the kickoff of the pledge drive on Feb 1.
 - Membership did an audit of our membership numbers and reported that we have 147 members & 90 friends as of December 15. Our average attendance (in person + screens): Sept: 77 + 26; Oct: 82 in person no screen count; Nov: 105 + 11; Dec: 108 +16
 - Membership has been working to substantially revise our “New Member Classes” which have remained static for well over a decade. We offered the first session of these new classes this past Sunday and the participants enjoyed and appreciated our approach.

Lifespan Faith Development

- See Board Strategic Goals Update above.
- One of my new-member meetings this month was with one of the the new families who have joined us and they reported great appreciation for the way their family has been welcomed into the community and especially the ways that leaders have gone out of their way to include the children in the life of the congregation (volunteering at the auction, art projects, etc.)

Worship

- We have service leaders planned through May 3.
- The choir is scheduled through the rest of the calendar year and Jim and I are making plans for the winter and the spring, including our annual Choir Sunday, on March 1, 2026.
- I led or participated in worship four times since our last meeting.
 - January 25 — “The Work of Handmind” with Julia Alberg-Burbank
 - February 1 — “Stronger Together” with Steven Toporoff and the Choir [Pledge Drive Kick-Off]
 - February 8 — “Embodied: Movement as Spiritual Practice” with Mel Wilkinson.
 - February 15 — “Only All of Us: Queer Lives and Survival” with Walter Gendell and the Choir

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.

Prophetic Outreach, Interfaith Activities, and Local Collaboration

- I am meeting with some Palm Springs clergy at their regular lunch on Tuesday and having coffee with other local colleagues regularly.

Personal and Professional Growth

- I attended (virtually) the UU Ministers Association Institute for Excellence in Ministry conference. I participated in full-conference activities and worship as well as focusing on a course in somatic (body) work in ministry and expanding accessibility in our congregations.
- 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 grateful for the extra sick days I was able to take in January to solidify my recovery from my fall illnesses.

My weekly schedule is as follows:

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

Upcoming Travel Schedule:

- I am currently away for a week of study leave in late February which will include attending a clergy retreat in Phoenix.
- I will be taking a week of vacation April 6 through 12.

in peace and deep love

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dee".

February 7, 2026

Dear UUCOD Board:

Rod Belshee approached me with the opportunity to take on the job of Volunteer Coordinator. We had a meeting where I began to understand the complexities of the position and the opportunities it could bring to all of us: opportunities for more support and opportunities to know our members better and to help them to connect in new ways.

I was sharing with my husband about our conversation. We brainstormed how Breeze could be used in more expansive ways. How could we go about using it as a tool for committees and individual members?

We saw that we both have skills that could help to make this endeavor successful. Steve is very adept at technology. I have human service skills. We love to work with each other on projects. So, we approached Rod about becoming co-chairs. The attached document is a rough draft of how we would approach this project.

We would like to take on this project for one year and have a review of its successes and growth points around March 1, 2027. This will allow us to see how successful Breeze has been to meet our needs, and how have leaders and congregants engaged with the processes outlined in this draft.

Thank you for your time, and we are happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

In Community,

Wendy and Steve Thornton

Organizing Volunteer Coordination

- I. Existing Congregant Interest Data
 - A. Questions for Membership Committee (Barbara Storms, Tracy Flynn, Randy Steele, and LaGrand Velez)
 1. How are they acquiring and storing interest data?
 2. How can we help ensure all existing interest data is in Breeze?
 3. How can we identify congregants to interview about their interests?
 4. What additional support can we provide for the onboarding process, if any?
 5. Where can we get existing My Story info?
 - B. Interview identified congregants
 1. New
 - a) Build interview step into new member/friend on-boarding.
Membership to email with contact info to volunteer@uucod.org
 2. Existing with no interests listed in Breeze who are Members/Friends and are showing as viewable in the Breeze directory
 - a) Contact them to interview regarding interests and also update Breeze People info (see below)
- II. Updating Breeze People Info
 - A. Contact people who are not in the Breeze directory
 1. Can we add them to the directory?
 2. Can we interview them for interests?
 3. Can we help them add details to their profile?
 - a) Contact Info
 - b) Picture
 - c) My Story
 - d) Family
 4. Can we help them using Breeze?
- III. Train Church Leaders to Access Congregant Interest Data
 - A. So that they can find congregants to participate in one-off volunteering tasks and so they can update interest data if desired.
- IV. Ongoing Updating Congregant Interest Data
 - A. As church leaders determine changed additional interests they update Breeze or email volunteer@uucod.org with contact and better details if change needed

Organizing Volunteer Coordination

V. Receive and Distribute Task Requests

- A. As church leaders determine one off needs, those that are capable can consult Breeze directly or contact volunteer@uucod.org with a request for helpers.

VI. Improve Breeze

A. Email Deliverability

1. Develop and execute a process to update “Unsubscribed” members.
2. Develop and execute a process to remove Breeze emails from member spam folders.

B. Long subdomain

1. Need to change subdomain from “unitarianuniversalistchurchofthedesert” to “uucod”. This will require all existing app users to re-login using the new subdomain name for the church app instance. Web users on computers will have to update the URL they use to access the system.

C. Continue to monitor user deliverability data and adjust, as needed