

Board of Trustees

MEETING MINUTES: April 11-12, 2025

Pursuant to notice duly given, this meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association was held via Zoom conferencing.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sofia Betancourt (President), Barbara de Leeuw, Charles Du Mond (Co-Moderator), Suzanne Fast, Emily Koriath, Sherman Logan, John B. Newhall, Meg Riley (Co-Moderator), Adam Robersmith, John Simmonds (Secretary), David Stewart (Co-Financial Advisor), Justine Sullivan, Sam Trumbore (Financial Secretary), Amanda Weatherspoon, Bill Young

ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS: Carey McDonald (Recording Secretary & Executive Vice President), Ashley Horan (Vice President of Programs and Ministry), Dave Valentine (Vice President for Finance and Investments), Stephanie Carey Maron (Governance Manager), Betty Clark (Executive Assistant to the Executive Vice President and Vice President of Programs and Ministry), Danielle Di Bona (chaplain); LaTonya Richardson (Director of General Assembly and Conference Services), Shannon Harper (Lifespan Faith Engagement Co-Director), Ember Kelley (Youth & Emerging Adult Ministry Staff), Jennica Davis-Hockett (Youth & Emerging Adult Ministry Staff), Nico Van Ostrand (Youth & Emerging Adult Ministry Staff)

Observers – Natasha Walker (Moderator Candidate), Kimberly Quinn Johnson (Moderator Candidate), Brent Lewis (Executive Assistant to the President), Stephanie Samson, Connie Hester, Meg Richardson, Dick Burkhart, David Jackoway, Elias Ortega, Linda Rand



FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2025

Co-Moderator Charles Du Mond opened the meeting at 11:14 am ET, and Board members took turns reading their covenant aloud.

Consent Agenda

The consent agenda, which included the following document, was unanimously approved:

- March 10, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

Executive Reports

West Georgia Unitarian Universalists' new congregation application was removed from the consent agenda in order to be unanimously and joyfully accepted into the Association.

President's Report

President Betancourt provided updates on several initiatives and reflected on the state of Unitarian Universalism. She shared that, after a very successful Climate Justice Revival, the Climate Justice Working Group, co-led by UUA Climate Justice Strategist Rachel Myslivy, is preparing to report to the General Assembly, with recommendations focused on cultural and finance. She also shared that a gathering is planned to discuss

Widening the Pathway to Credentialed Ministry, aiming to address barriers and improve preparation processes. President Betancourt expressed gratitude for the UUA staff's hard work during a challenging time and shared positive experiences from her recent travels, including the Finding Our Way Home retreat and various community engagements. Despite difficult times, UUs are showing up in inspiring ways, demonstrating communal care and engagement with shared values.

Organizing and Communications Update

Vice President for Programs and Strategy Ashley Horan, provided updates on several UUA initiatives, including the Meet the Moment framework. She mentioned the response team monitoring congregational and political issues, the Pink Havens Coalition supporting Trans people seeking refuge, and the deepening work with Side With Love's Action Center.

Horan also discussed the UUA's engagement with grant consultants to identify grant funding opportunities for programs like Our Whole Lives (OWL) and Side With Love. Additionally, she noted that these consultants are helping UUA congregations access rapid response grants for security and programming needs via the [Community Resilience Hub](#). Beyond the Veatch program or work with smaller private family foundations, the UUA has not sought out major grant funding for well over a decade.

Lawsuit and Safety Update

Executive Vice President Carey McDonald shared information about [the UUA's involvement in an ongoing lawsuit challenging ICE's "sensitive locations policy."](#) which had its first hearing in DC District Court, with an expected ruling on the injunction to come in the following week. The UUA is focusing on reinforcing its status as an established religion with deep roots in the country, which provides additional protections and standing. The UUA is increasing explicit ties to their shared values and religious heritage in public communications.

McDonald also highlighted the importance of risk management, focusing on both state and non-state risks. They mentioned their efforts to support security planning, digital safety, and tracking of incidents. McDonald also mentioned the opposition to ICE raids in churches and the guidance provided to congregations on private space and immigration enforcement laws. They clarified that General Assembly will be a private event, with no public events, and that the Sunday morning service will be live-streamed.

Virtual Hymnal and Cultivators Collaborative

EVP McDonald shared that the UUA is preparing to launch a new virtual hymnal called ["Sing Out Love"](#) at General Assembly 2025, which will be a subscription-based service integrating licensing for streaming, projection, and printing.

McDonald also shared that work with the [UU Cultivators Collaborative](#) is proceeding, and a new round with the next set of cohorts is beginning.

Meet the Moment Update

VPPS Horan [discussed the ongoing piloting of the "Meet the Moment" wave cohorts](#), which are cross-staff teams focusing on various topics. These cohorts are open to participants from across Unitarian Universalism, and their work will be presented at the upcoming General Assembly. The theme of this year's General Assembly is "Meet the Moment," and the wave cohorts will be integrated into the event. The cohorts will have dedicated rooms for in-person and virtual participation, and participants will have the opportunity to engage in the framework and hear report-backs from the cohorts. Horan also mentioned plans for future iterations of the wave cohorts, including expanding to



other constellations of Unitarian Universalists and providing tools for congregations to engage in similar conversations.

FY2026 Budget Discussion and Approval

EVP McDonald explained the UUA's budgeting process and financial strategy. They elaborated on the transition to a multi-year budgeting process, which includes a preliminary trajectory for the next three years. Noting that the UUA has had a structural budget deficit for over a decade, they also discussed the need to reduce expenses to achieve a sustainable budget. They highlighted the need for strategic decisions, particularly in areas where natural transitions are occurring, such as the UU College of Social Justice. The conversation ended with a discussion on the importance of aligning the budget with the overall strategy and the need for ongoing strategy planning.

Vice President for Finance and Investments Dave Valentine, focused on the UUA's budgeting process and the use of adaptive tools. He explained that the operating budget presented was a subset of the overall UUA financial picture, separate from the group insurance component and regional components. He discussed the use of approved management predictive changes that demonstrated expected increases in each type of expense for each coming year. He clarified the different budget views, including the old view, the proposed FY26 budget, and the proposed UUA 3 Yr Sustainability Budget, which includes the General Assembly and Group Insurance Program budgets.



Valentine discussed the budget for FY25, highlighting gaps in the initial budget and the need for adjustments. He mentioned that the group insurance income had been initially underestimated and the adult registration for GA was not included in the old version of the budget presented to the Board. Co-Moderator Du Mond and EVP McDonald provided further details on the budget and its alignment with prior years. Valentine then presented a 5-year financial plan, noting its plan to preserve needed cash balances over the next three fiscal years. He emphasized the importance of strategic planning and flexibility in the budget, using the leasing of additional office space as an example of potential additional income.

The Board discussed the UUA's financial projections and Annual Program Fund (APF) contributions. McDonald explained that APF estimates for FY26 show little increase from the current year due to economic uncertainties. The UUA Administration plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the unified APF formula implemented 5 years ago, as attainment rates have decreased.

The Board discussed the endowment draw policy and budget projections. Valentine explained that the endowment draw is calculated using a 4.5% rate based on a 12-quarter lookback to smooth out market volatility. McDonald noted that the policy weights prior year spending at 70% to buffer against market fluctuations. There was also discussion of the capital budget and potential options for increasing rental income from the UUA headquarters building to improve the financial outlook.

Revision of FY 2026 Board Meeting Dates

Governance Manager Stephanie Carey Maron shared some changes to the board meeting calendar, specifically the August and October 2025 dates. These changes were made at the request of the moderator candidates and Carey Maron to ensure that the new moderator(s) would have sufficient time to figure out how best to use the time

in the longer multi-day meeting, which is now scheduled to take place in October 2025. The Board approved these changes.

General Assembly (GA)

GA 2026

Approval of Dates and Event Structure

EVP McDonald introduced the proposed structure for GA 2026, which includes an all-virtual business meeting and national online programming with options for local gatherings. The proposal separates the business meeting from the national online content in time, with the business meeting taking place over two days and the national online content taking place over a weekend. This structure would also hopefully reduce the operating budget of GA, because it would involve less production costs and more streamlined programming. The Board discussed the potential for local gatherings and the desire to create more flexible options for people who want to participate in person. They also discussed challenges around timing, messaging, and registration logistics. McDonald noted that similar formats have been successful for other UU organizations. Board members expressed excitement about the potential benefits, including reduced exhaustion and increased focus.

Registration and Voting Process

The Board focused on the registration and voting process for GA26. The hybrid model was discussed, which combines delegate and attendee registration into one package. The cost for delegates-only was set at \$100, with financial flexibility available, while attendees would pay \$300 for the combined package. The Board also discussed the voting process, with the possibility of a Friday night vote and successive ballots on Saturday and Sunday. The production of the meeting and potential additional sites for hosting were also discussed. There was some confusion about the registration process, but it was clarified that full registrants would still be able to listen in and learn from the general sessions.

Business Weekend as Leadership Development

The Board discussed the potential of a business-focused weekend for leadership development and continuing education within the UUA. President Betancourt emphasized the opportunity to encourage people to understand the business of the faith more deeply, especially through the lens of the business being conducted rather than just debated in social media. Betancourt also highlighted the potential for this weekend to offer a range of opportunities for leadership development and continuing education. The Board discussed the importance of making the business of the Association accessible and engaging for all members, not just delegates. The proposal for a 2026 business-focused weekend was discussed, with the President Betancourt expressing hope that it would be a powerful opportunity for the UUA.

GA 2025

Meet the Moment

VPPS Horan spoke on the "meet the moment" blocks for the 2025 program, which will allow participants to engage in discussions and discernment about their specific topics. The aim is to provide a framework for people to understand the moment they are in as Unitarian Universalists, identify the most urgent and important needs and opportunities, and determine what they are called to do rooted in their values.

Draft Business Resolution



Co-Moderator Du Mond presented a draft business resolution to continue suspending the GA Planning Committee for another 3 years. The Board discussed how to structure the resolution, with suggestions to keep the actual voting element concise while providing context in the rationale.

Draft Consent Agenda Item

The Board reviewed a bylaws cleanup document prepared by Carey Maron, which removed outdated language about districts and made minor edits. This cleanup will be presented as a consent agenda item at GA.

Webinar and Mini-Assembly Dates

Carey Maron briefly shared the schedule for the pre-GA webinars and mini assemblies related to these business items.

Approval of Bylaws Renewal Team's Draft Framework Schedule

Trustee and Convener of the Bylaws Renewal Team, Barbara de Leeuw, introduced a framework for implementing bylaw changes over several years, organized into "waves." The Team is seeking approval for the first two waves, which include:

Wave 1

- Article IV – General Assembly - Sections 4.12, 4.13, 4.14 e & f, and 4.16 b (CSW Process)
- Article V – Committees of the Association

Wave 2

- Article VI – Board of Trustees
- Article VII – Committees of the Board of Trustees - Sections 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, 7.11, 7.12, and 7.14
- Article VIII – Officers of the Association
- Article IX – Nominations and Elections

The framework also includes a new "pre-wave" note for the Article II work already in progress and the bylaws cleanup which will be in the 2025 consent agenda. The Team clarified that some changes may require a second vote in a subsequent year, particularly for G Bylaws. They also discussed how potential changes to officer roles, including the Financial Advisor position, fit into this framework.

Updated Draft of Religious Education Credentialing Committee (RECC) Rules

RECC Chair, Emily Gage, and Professional Development Programs Manager and Staff Liaison to the RECC, Sarah Gettie McNeil, presented a new complaint procedure for the Religious Education Credentialing Committee. The procedure, which had been vetted by legal counsel, was rewritten from scratch to better align with current practices and the specific needs of religious educators. It aims to protect the integrity of the credential while acknowledging the care the RECC has for candidates and religious educators.

Youth Leadership Update

The Board and presenters had a lengthy and rich conversation about what lies ahead in the area of youth leadership. Lifespan Faith Engagement (LFE) Co-Director, Shannon Harper, Youth and Emerging Adult Ministry Staff, Jennica Davis-Hockett, Youth and Emerging Adult Ministry Staff, Ember Kelley, and Youth and Emerging Adult Ministry Staff, Nico Van Ostrand introduced themselves and their roles in this ministry. They expressed their appreciation for the invitation to share their work and emphasized the



importance of nurturing youth leadership and faith development. They also acknowledged past challenges and expressed a desire for a fresh start. They discussed their various projects, including the "Deeper Joy" initiative, the "Thrive" program, and the "YEA" safety and inclusion umbrella.

Harper discussed the decline in youth involvement in UU programs, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted existing youth leadership structures. The UUA has shifted focus from direct ministry with well-connected youth to supporting religious educators and congregations in better serving all youth. Kelly and Davis-Hockett then lead a discussion on the meaning of youth ministry, emphasizing the importance of creating spaces where youth feel truly welcome, valued, and able to explore their identities. They highlighted a shift towards collaborative, communal leadership models and introduce the "stream" concept as an alternative to the traditional youth leadership pipeline, aiming to provide more flexible and inclusive opportunities for youth engagement and leadership development.

The Deeper Joy Project, led by Davis-Hockett, aims to create a community building map for youth. Van Ostrand is working on the Thrive Connections program, which focuses on providing meaningful relationships between young BIPOC individuals and adult BIPOC UUs. Harper highlighted other youth programs, emphasizing the importance of belonging and community. The National Emerging Adult Task Force was also mentioned, which is a group of emerging adults working on leadership development. The team also discussed the hiring of youth guides for the upcoming GA event.

The LFE staff discussed youth engagement in congregations, noting a wide range of experiences post-pandemic. Some congregations maintained virtual youth groups and successfully transitioned back to in-person meetings, while others saw significant drops in attendance. They also discussed the challenges of implementing new youth ministry models in congregations. They acknowledged the ongoing struggle of religious educators in convincing congregational leaders to adopt new programs. The team is also exploring creating youth communities in new formats besides traditional youth groups. They are working on making programs more inclusive and accessible for neurodivergent youth and young adults, incorporating these considerations into all their events and activities. At GA, they plan to introduce pop-up events to encourage intergenerational engagement.

The LFE staff also discussed the challenges of implementing new youth ministry models in congregations. They acknowledged the ongoing struggle of religious educators in convincing congregational leaders to adopt new programs.

The conversation also touched on GA 2026, which will be online, and the potential for youth to play a more active role in the event. The team expressed interest in exploring new models for GA 2026, such as hosting a couple-day retreat for youth groups. They also discussed the possibility of seeding potential leadership for future events.

The Co-Moderators and the EVP praised the youth and emerging adult ministries team for their progress and impact. The team discussed the potential for youth leadership on the board arising from new programs and initiatives.

The meeting ended for the day at 5:02 pm ET.



SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS: Carey McDonald (Recording Secretary & Executive Vice President), Stephanie Carey Maron (Governance Manager), Betty Clark (Executive Assistant to the Executive Vice President and Vice President of Programs and Ministry), Danielle Di Bona (chaplain)

Observers – Natasha Walker (Moderator Candidate), Kimberly Quinn Johnson (Moderator Candidate), David Jackoway, Meg Richardson, Lynn Richards, Dick Burkhart

The meeting opened at 11:05 am ET, and Chaplain Danielle Di Bona shared opening words.

Strategy Planning Process Development

EVP McDonald shared a series of slides which focused on defining strategy and its role in the UUA's planning processes. The participants discussed various interpretations of strategy, including a plan for success, a course of action to achieve a goal, and a corrective to reactivity. They also explored how strategy fits into the UUA's context, considering factors like resources, capabilities, and trade-offs. The discussion also touched on the UUA's current processes, such as "Meet the Moment" and multi-year budgeting, and how strategy-planning can bridge these two processes.

McDonald discussed the need for a new approach to strategy planning, moving away from inflexible traditional models that often focus on long-term plans. They emphasized the importance of aligning internal capacity planning with external needs and the need for regular structures and tools to support strategy work across different teams. The Board discussed the challenges of strategic planning in a rapidly changing world, asking questions about the feasibility of long-term planning. McDonald highlighted the need for a balance between short-term and long-term planning.

The Board discussed the need for a dynamic and flexible strategy that can adapt to changing circumstances. They emphasized the importance of involving all members of the organization in the planning process and ensuring that everyone understands their role in achieving the strategic goals. The Board also highlighted the need for ongoing analysis and experimentation to ensure the strategy remains relevant and effective. McDonald highlighted the need for clear articulation of the core strategy across the organization.

McDonald presented questions about the Board's role in setting strategy and participating in planning processes. Moderator candidate Natasha Walker suggested the Board should focus on prioritization and of commitments and tradeoffs. Moderator candidate and current trustee Bill Young emphasized the Board's role in vision and mission work, as well as being thought partners on strategic issues. President Betancourt focused on the importance of centralizing prioritization work and integrating staff perspectives. The conversation touched on the need for clear decision-making processes, fundraising initiatives, and ensuring the faith's aspirations are held by the system rather than individuals. Co-Moderator Riley concluded by emphasizing the importance of building trust through initiatives like bylaw revisions and Meet the Moment. The conversation ended with a model for thinking about strategy in the UUA's context, emphasizing the importance of clear goals, resources, and intended outcomes.

Continuation of Earlier Discussions



GA 2026

The Board continued its discussion on the location, dates, and engagement of non-delegates at GA 2026. The Board was prepared to vote on the location and dates, while other aspects were not part of the voting process. There were questions about the commitment to engaging non-delegates and the potential for a hybrid model combining online and in-person events. EVP McDonald emphasized the need to agree on the direction first, before engaging in detailed discussions. The discussion also touched on the registration process and the potential for future discussions on these topics.

Voting on Items Discussed Earlier

The Board voted on the following items which were discussed the day before:

Suzanne Fast moved, Barbara de Leeuw seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the following motion:

The UUA Board of Trustees approves the two-part structure of General Assembly 2026 with a virtual business meeting over one weekend, and a national online program conference with opportunities for local gatherings over the second weekend, in June 2026.

David Stewart moved, Sherman Logan seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the following motion:

The UUA Board of Trustees moves to approve the FY26 operating budget with consolidations and the FY26 capital budget, with exemption to the policy requirement for the Administration to submit a balanced budget, in order to proceed with the proposal to achieve operating sustainability by FY29.

Barbara de Leeuw moved, John Simmonds seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the following motion:

Under the approved framework for the multi-year bylaw renewal process, The UUA Board of Trustees approves the first wave of bylaw renewal to begin in FY26 to include Article IV - General Assembly - Sections 4.12, 4.13, 4.14 e & f, and 4.16 b (CSW Process) and Article V - Committees of the Association; and to give preliminary approval to the second wave to begin in FY27 to include Article VIII - Officers of the Association, Article IX - Nominations & Elections, Article VI - Board of Trustees Article VII - Committees of the Board of Trustees - Sections 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, 7.11, 7.12, 7.14, and any needed conforming changes related to these sections.

Suzanne Fast moved, John Newhall seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the following motion:

The UUA Board of Trustees approves the proposed changes to RECC rules regarding the complaint procedure.

Board went into executive session at 12:20 pm ET.



Executive Session

The Board met in Executive Session for the purposes of approving appointments and other sensitive business.

The following appointment was later reported:

- Appointments Committee
 - Rev. Alyssa Lee

The following motions were approved:

The UUA Board of Trustees affirms the current version of the Accountability Team charter and commits to remain in relationship with the Accountability Team as this charter continues to evolve.

The UUA Board of Trustees authorizes the Executive Vice President to complete negotiations and to execute the purchase agreement for 1110 Resaca Place under the terms outlined in this memo or substantially similar ones, and for the UUA to make the agreed upon distributions to the Allegheny UU Church based on the net proceeds.

Co-Moderator Riley closed the meeting at 1:46 pm ET.



Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Carey McDonald
Recording Secretary