

# Board of Trustees

**MEETING: June 12, 2023, 7:00 pm Eastern Time**

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

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Kathy Burek, Chris Chepel (Co-Financial Advisor), Barbara de Leeuw, Charles Du Mond (Co-Moderator), Suzanne Fast, Susan Frederick-Gray (President), Sherman Logan, John B. Newhall, JeKaren Olaoya, Meg Riley (Co-Moderator), Adam Robersmith, Justine Sullivan, David Stewart (Co-Financial Advisor), Sam Trumbore, Bill Young (Secretary)

**ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS:** Carey McDonald (Recording Secretary & Executive Vice President), Andrew McGeorge (Treasurer), Stephanie Carey Maron, Danielle Di Bona and Chris Buice (chaplains), LaTonya Richardson

**Observers:** 12

## Meeting Minutes

Co-Moderator Charles Du Mond started the meeting at 7:05 pm, and Sherman Logan offered an opening reading. Check-in was postpone for Board members until Executive Session, to prep for GA

### Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was unanimously approved, including minutes from the April and May 2023 Board meetings.

### Fund for UU Identity Based Ministries

President Susan Frederick-Gray presented a proposal to create a Fund for UU Identity Based Ministries. This would be a Board-restricted endowed fund in the UU Common Endowment to provide grants and support to identity-based groups representing UUs with marginalized identities, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+), and disabled UUs. The Fund's usage would be to support current and future commitments and partnerships with these groups. She noted that nominee for UUA President Sofía Betancourt had been consulted about this proposal and is supportive.

The proposal was based on recommendations from the 2020 Widening the Circle of Concern report from the Commission on Institutional Change. In the past few years, the UUA has built up its relationships with identity-based groups, including funding for Transgender UU Religious professionals Together (TRUUsT), memoranda of understanding with Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUJMM), and EqUUal Access. These are in addition to the completed MOU with Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU). Recognizing that the UUA's support of these or other identity-based groups has varied over time, the Fund would backstop the UUA's financial commitments. It would also create enough flexibility



to shift these commitments over time as the landscape of identity-based groups changes.

Under the proposal, \$1 million would be added to the fund, drawn from the surplus sharing dividend received from Beacon Press in 2021. This was in part due to the sales from *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, and President Frederick-Gray noted it was appropriate that these funds be used in ways that are reparative in support of marginalized communities. The endowed Fund's projected return would cover about half the UUA's current commitments to identity-based groups. It would also allow, but not require, more funds to be added to the principal over time.

Barbara de Leeuw moved, Sam Trumbore seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the proposal for the creation of the Fund for UU Identity Based Ministries restricted fund, with \$1 million contributed from the 2021 Beacon surplus sharing.

### **General Assembly 2025**

LaTonya Richardson, Director of General Assembly and Conference Services (GACS), reviewed the proposal to choose Baltimore, MD as the host site for multi-platform General Assembly (GA) 2025, following an all-virtual GA 2024 which the Board had previously approved. She noted the GACS had conducted a national request for proposals, and Baltimore's bid was a clear winner. The detailed proposal included the terms negotiated with the Baltimore Convention Center, as the primary site, as well as the terms and room rates with local hotels. Highlights included:

- The City of Baltimore had been a strong and responsive partner in developing the proposal, and is excited to have the UUA come to the community. The fee for use of half the Baltimore Convention Center (BCC), after rebates, would only be \$17,000, a significant savings from previous years.
- Hotel rates were very competitive, much less than Portland for GA 2022, because the UUA was able to negotiate from a new post-pandemic basis. The contracts also include courtesy blocks from other nearby hotels without UUA liability to avoid undercutting rates. The UUA does anticipate that some dorm housing may also be made available. These housing options should improve the financial accessibility of GA.
- The schedule for the event is a little earlier than usual, starting on June 18, 2025. The GA Advisory Council considered whether it was better to be a little earlier or a little later in June, given where the weeks fall in the month, and recommended this option. It was noted that set-up will not be able to begin until Tuesday, rather than the typical Monday, so this may impact the availability of space in the Main Hall on Wednesday. There are a number of creative options to manage this.
- The primary sticking point in negotiations had been around the accessibility of the BCC elevators. The BCC has committed to capital upgrades for elevator access before 2025, and to allow the UUA's use of freight elevators as part of the agreement. This is a good example of the UUA using its negotiating power to shift norms across the industry and improve accessibility.



Kathy Burek moved, John Newhall seconded, and the Board unanimously approved the location of Baltimore as the host site for multi-platform General Assembly 2025 from June 18-22, 2025, with one abstention.

### **Funding for New Presidential Initiatives**

President Frederick-Gray and Executive Vice President Carey McDonald asked the Board to prepare to consider a request from the next President early on in their term to make a substantial financial investment in their initiatives and priorities, above and beyond the current operating budget. Many decisions are locked in for the first year of a President's term before they begin, and this kind of flexibility, which may be able to increase senior executive capacity, would be essential. Senior staff and UUA volunteers are exhausted after the pandemic years. There is little capacity for urgent conversations such as plans for the 24 Farnsworth headquarters building, climate action in relationship to the UU Common Endowment, and widening the pathway to ministry.

They reported this idea had been discussed in the Values & Resources Group. While there was no specific proposal at this time, they asked the Board to prepare for a future conversation with the next President after the start of their term. The Board informally affirmed the UUA Administration's further exploration of this idea and their willingness to entertain such a proposal in the coming year.

### **General Assembly 2023**

Co-Moderator Du Mond shared that he was drafting the General Session script with the ModSquad, and the Board was currently working on the Board/Co-Moderator report for General Assembly. He noted there would be a live General Session rehearsal with online and onsite ModSquad members in Pittsburgh in the Main Hall on Wednesday, prior to the start of GA.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The meeting moved to Executive Session at 8:15 pm, for the purpose of considering appointments and to allow Board members to share personal reflections.

It was later reported that the following people were appointed to the new Accountability Launch Team for a term of two years:

- Rhonda Brown (chair)
- Julica Hermann de la Fuente
- Elizabeth Foster

The meeting ended at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Carey McDonald

Recording Secretary

