

**First Unitarian Church of Oakland
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**

September 22, 2020, 6:45-9:15 pm, Zoom

Our Mission

We, the members of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, unite to build a beloved community within and beyond our walls. Guided by individual conscience and wisdom from many sources, we gather in worship and service to nourish the spirit, work for justice, and celebrate the divine in all.
– Adopted by the congregation on March 18, 2019

Present: Rinda Bartley, Hester Green, Alanna Kelly, Meri Lane, Rev. Theresa Soto, Steve Thomasberger, Dan Wright, Kathy Radez, Debby Kaplan, Emily Stoper, Rev. Theresa Soto, Debby Kaplan

Absent:

Guests: Bev Smrha, Noemi de Guzman, Linda Propert Sanford, Dennis Rowcliffe, Alex Haider-Winnett

Timekeeper: Kathy

Process Monitor: Alex Haider-Winnett

Readings: Meri

Communication Facilitator: Steve

Time	Duration	Item	Name
6:45	15 min	Open Comment Period All members and friends welcome. 3 minutes per speaker.	<i>Steve and Kathy</i>
Minutes: Bev expressed appreciation for the Annual Meeting documentation available beforehand. She felt it allowed her time to be used productively because it allowed her to be well prepared. She appreciated the level of organization at the meeting. Noemi adds their thanks to the Board for the quality of the Annual Meeting. Congratulations for a successful first online Zoom annual meeting! The meeting gavel hit the desk at 7 pm.			
7:00	5 min	Chalice Lighting and Opening Reading	<i>Meri</i>

Reading: An Invitation to Brave Space, by Micky ScottBey Jones			
7:05		Welcome to new members	
<p>Rinda: We have 9 members for the next two hours. Welcome to Debby Kaplan and Emily Stoper! Rinda also posed a question for the new members: What are a couple of things you hope to bring to the board?</p> <p>Alanna: I'm offering a formal resignation from the Board of Trustees effective at the close of tonight's meeting, because the family is relocating to Wisconsin. I hope to join a local Congregation there in Appleton. I think it best for this Congregation if I resign. I became involved in service here, and moving further away, to Mountainview, I became more, not less, committed. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. These lessons will help with anything I take up in general. I hope to stay in touch as I move on. And thank you for the way we structured our leadership goals.</p> <p>Pastor Soto: Thank you, Alanna. [Rev. Soto offered a reading: Long Haul People by Rudy Nemser]</p> <p>Emily: Which ends learning team do I want to be on?! All seem really important! I look forward to that work. I also have already agreed to make a bunch of phone calls to try to get Stewards and Board members.</p> <p>Debby: I'm a big picture thinker, and out-of-the-box idea person. I like sending them out even though they don't always land right. Fosterer of collaboration, good at getting people to listen to each other; have a keen interest in governance; how people make things happen together. What works well for different kinds of groups? I'm Interested in learning more about how to make things work in a unique organization like this one.</p> <p>Rinda: Normally we would have a substantial orientation process but we are learning as we go.</p>			
<p><i>Note: Board's six Priorities: Items should be put on the board agenda and time allotted only if they need Board attention this month, as determined by the "Champion". If not, time will be ceded to other priorities, and information can be shared with the Board via a report to the Consent Agenda. Champions should request agenda time by the third Friday of the month by informing the Steering Team of the topic/s to be discussed or decisions to be made. Order of items will be rotated periodically.</i></p>			
<p>2019-20 goals/priorities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - #1 Financial Clarity and Health - #2 Ministerial Transition - #3 JTW Assessment - #4 Stewardship - #5 Policy Governance Transition - #6 Strategic Planning 		<p>2020-21 goals/priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial clarity and health - Hester - Rev. Soto installation - Debby - Stewardship - Rinda for now - Annual Meeting - Dan (completed) - COSM reconstitution - ? - Learning goals (within, among, beyond) - Meri - Policy review and revision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and revise existing policy on the management of endowments - Hester - (Remainder waiting in the wings) 	

7:05	5 min	Board duties this month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chalice Chatter Board News & Notes Article <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - September: Dan - October: Hester - October assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chalice Chatter article: Hester - Communications Facilitator: Dan - Timekeeper: Emily - Opening and closing readings: Debby 	Rinda
Dan hasn't written September article, still to come. Rinda has taken the liberty of inserting Emily and Debby into the schedule of October assignments.			
7:10	10 min	Consent agenda (action) and reporting actions taken since previous meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approved August 2020 minutes - Motions approved online (wording : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve virtual meeting - Motion to appoint Debby Kaplan - Received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board RACI chart August 2020 (Responsible, Accountable, Communicate, Inform) - Financial Clarity and Health Narrative - JTW Liaison Report - Beyond Our Walls Sept 15 Discussion Document - Draft Annual meeting notes from Kris Wedding-Crowell - Transformation Within September update report - Sept 2020 Operations Team Report - Annual Meeting Feedback - Summary of Annual Meeting Feedback - Program Council July 2020 Notes <p>Board member: <i>Motion to approve the consent agenda and receive August reports</i></p>	ALL

Two online motions were passed by an online voting process since the August Board Meeting:

Motion: Pursuant to Sec. 9411 of the California Nonprofit Corporation Law, Part 4 (Nonprofit Religious Corporations), I move that, due to continuing health concerns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board of Trustees authorize that members of First Unitarian Church of Oakland not physically present in person may be deemed present and may vote by means of electronic transmission including electronic video screen communication at the congregational meeting noticed and called for September 20, 2020. Moved by Meri Lane. Seconded by Dan Wright. Approved unanimously.

Motion: Pursuant to Article VI, Sec. 1(d) of Bylaws and Restated Constitution of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, I move that the board of trustees appoint Deborah Kaplan as a trustee of the board, such appointment to continue until a vote by the membership at the next congregational meeting. Moved by Meri Lane. Seconded by Dan Wright. Approved unanimously.

Motion: Meri moves to approve the consent agenda and receive the reports. Alanna seconds. Unanimously approved.

7:20	15 min.	Minister's Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (5 minutes) Report from Interim DRE Alex Haider-Winnett (10 minutes) Practices for covenant 	Rev. Soto
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Interim DRE Report: Alex Haider-Winnett

Alex: I started in early August. It's a pleasure to be with you. I've been a member for a decade now. I'm following in the footsteps of Rev. Sheri, and aware that FUCO is well known for its RE program. The way most UU Congregations have been doing it hasn't changed much in the last 100 years. This is an opportunity for congregations to assess what we're doing with religious education. Doing what was being done before ... fuco was already moving away from the traditional model and we are engaging more intentionally with considering what we will be doing. If we were going to clear the slate, what would we want to retain? What is worth saving? We are trying new things and figuring out what does and does not work. As I was putting my child to bed, he started screaming about a monster. That monster is fear. We can fight those monsters by having confidence and care. Loving kindness is so necessary.

Deborah: The impact that Covid has had on families with kids with disabilities is that life is incredibly difficult because all of the support from the schools is gone and online learning isn't working. I don't know whether we have the capacity to help those families out with what we offer, but this is something to be aware of. Kids like to be together rather than listening to adults expound. [Alex agreed that this is something to bear in mind]

Emily asks, 'what about adult education?' We would like to meet with you to talk about it. I will convene a meeting. [Alex welcomes a meeting]

Hester: Have you explored options to meet in person? Alex: this year paramount is safety; physical safety as well as emotional safety. Planning how to gather without putting vulnerable folx at risk. If we gather in person, a message that is sent to vulnerable people is that we would rather meet without you. We must pay attention to risk.

Steve: Given we've been doing this online for 5 months, have children expressed a wish to interact in other ways? Alex: I've been working on "Monday through Sunday School" to enable families to have everyday conversations about spiritual formation, spiritual practices in everyday life. How to build resilience in our families. A newsletter of resources allowing families and extended communities to have conversations together without adding more to their plate. In conversation with younger members, there is real fatigue over online meetings, but they'd rather meet than

not. The youth group meets every week because they want to check in, take care of each other. The Livermore youth group has a weekly game group over Discord. They meet Sunday afternoon. Nicole has an idea to encourage elders to write postcards to younger families. We are going to try out this idea.

Minister's Report: Pastor Soto

Rev. Soto: Let's visit closely what it means to practice covenant, a set of promises we keep with each other; a mutual set of promises; of our behavior and our commitment.

What does that look like? How are you being successful? [Rev. Soto asked Board folx each to say in a word how they feel, and waited until everyone responded] Why do I ask how you feel? Because our work is close to our heart. It's easy to get busy and not speak from our hearts. Someone was anxious; someone confused; someone grumpy; someone glad; et cetera. Sometimes we do have to talk about it.

Why do these practices matter? We want what we are and what we do to land in the awesome box, so we have to be aware of how we feel. We embody ourselves in our work. How is equity created? Naming the things. The way our work flows should represent what we say about our governances. Consistent with the practice is ethical behavior.

[Rev. Soto introduces here a slide deck. The first slide has a stoplight.] The stoplight can be used when something disturbing is said, when microaggressions happen, when we are out of covenant.

What does red mean? Stop. Red is an exciting color. Red may represent trouble to you, but it stops us to take care of ourselves; so think of red as taking care rather than as trouble.

The yellow light means slow down. Why would we slow down? - Confusion about what's going on; making sure everyone is getting heard; making sure no one is left behind. Pausing to look for the value. White supremacy emphasizes efficiency as a value. That white supremacist practice cancels out the opportunity to slow down.

Green means go! [is that good?] Green can be complacency; it can be just not knowing, and moving forward in ignorance of what's going on with others. Asking is ok behavior. [A comment was made to the effect of, 'I sometimes hold my reservations so I won't get in the way'] Reservations save our bacon! They help us avoid making mistakes and having to take things back.

A word on pauses: two people speaking that have a different sense of how long a pause is normal, the one expecting the longer pause will get interrupted. We have a challenge being deliberate taking turns, and it really matters that we do not interrupt. Interrupting empowers certain people over others. Last Rev. Soto sent Board members by email. If you get interrupted, start over. Or at least at the start of the idea. Lastly, Governance landmarks. Think about what are the highlights of governance in history.

Questions: Meri: are these general rules? When do we use these? Answer: these are practices especially to support the Board in being successful in our efforts.

7:50	10 min	Annual meeting Review	<i>Dan/Rinda</i>
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Rinda: thank you Dan for your part in pulling off this meeting. Alex: Observing as a staff member was new for me. Debby: I was impressed at the number of people there. I loved the voting. Clearly that had been worked out in advance. Everyone was patient and enjoyed watching it happen. Alanna: I was flabbergasted by how well it went. My favorite thing was the anticipation of what would happen when two people on the same

device would need to vote. Kathy: I had fun hanging out in the chat room. Impressed with the flow of everything. Meri: [it was like] watching a high-wire act. And it all went off without falling off the wire. Hester: Also impressed with how smoothly things went, the polling. Rehearsal was important. Steve: I knew it would go well but was prepared for some things not working. And I didn't see many of those things. Church operations manager, new to things...[when looking at the way an organization does things] does one see it as amateur or professional? The meeting reflected professionalism. Emily: I was impressed with the meeting and practice of Board members making comments in a public way. A dilemma around these meetings: I read in feedback recommendations that meeting hosts control the mute button and how much discussion is allowed. People become frustrated. Rev. Soto: let's unpack this for a minute. Feedback from what we know is ok, and speaking for ourselves; [We should discourage] the 'people are saying' part. Rev. Soto: I loved how it was set up and the level of participation and speaking. I'm proud of what happened. Looking forward to a time when even if there are MORE comments; we can take them and use them. Making space for even more folks. Hester: we could use the chat feature more for collecting comments. Rinda: The minutes from Kris Wedding-Crowell need some missing information filled in before we accept the minutes. Kathy offered to use records from the meeting to fill in the gaps sometime within the next month.

	0 min	Goal #1 Financial Clarity and Health	<i>Hester</i>
8:13	20 min	Churchwide Learning Goal selection for church year 2020-21: Transformation Within, Among and Beyond Champion: Meri Teams: Within - Dan, Meri Among - Rinda, Kathy Beyond - Steve, Hester	<i>Meri</i>
<p>Meri: learning goals proposal was sent to new members. Each team currently has two members. Very excited about joining beloved conversations which are about transformation within, among and beyond. What synergies can exist between the teams? Considering what we have to do, how long should we do this in order to have something of the kind of richness we want? February realistically would be when we'd need to get a report in for the Board to approve and present at a March meeting. Recruiting for Stewardship and Board are just two things that we need to focus on over the next months. Engaging the Congregation, inviting people to participate; how do we avoid all teams inviting the same people?</p> <p>Emily: did not realize March was target date. Can't see how this can be accomplished without a good deal of conversation with Congregation members, groups, and clergy. Steve: I think we owe it to the Congregation to do some deep thinking and tell the Congregation what we've</p>			

thought about in March. Hester: share the extent to which we've gone with the Congregation in March and invite dialogue at that point. The process is seen as dynamic and evolving. Deborah: my first reaction to this is, 'why are we doing this?' it's not entirely clear to me what the purpose is. Is this the beginning of a process of change, or learning what they mean to do our work better, or do we think they need to change? I'm not convinced that this is a good time to be doing this. I think the focus needs to be on responding rather than thinking about. The epidemic, when it's over, will change how we live our lives, so it's premature to be thinking along these lines. The world will be different. Rinda: I think this is the right time to do it. The questions are: are we fulfilling our mission? That is an important question. Do we bring about positive transformation? Do we use the values we hold among? Beyond? Let's stop talking about whether to start doing it and start doing it. Alanna: it took us 6 months to get to now. Part of the point of this paradigm was to give us permission to dig deeper and use these as permission to own our discomfort about this. We are in a discussion-based space and we want to be in an action-based space. Kathy: Thank you, Deborah, for the question. Emily: We call ourselves a transformational church. For us to define better what our aspirations are and assess that is important. What can we bring with us to the October 10 retreat? Rev. Soto would like to interview with each group for 30-45 minutes before October 10.

8:08	5 min	Break	
8:35	15 min	Stewardship - Year-round stewardship Progress Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment - Next Steps 	<i>Rinda</i>
<p>One very obvious next step: Recruitment. Meri has reached out to people, and is hearing the comment that given the state of the tools we use, people are hesitant to volunteer. Comments are that the tools aren't well designed and the information is inconsistent (multiple tools and each tool has different information). This is a hang-up in recruitment. Rev. Soto invited Meri to talk to the Operations Team about that. Board members were asked to bring a recruit to this meeting. Only Rinda and Meri had put their names into the list [list of members being used to track our recruitment work]. Why are people not entering their names? Dan: I have done no recruiting.</p> <p>Rinda: We need people with a variety of skills and ideas. Steve: I emailed everyone in the Program Council inviting them to join the stewardship team. I need to follow up since no one has responded. Rinda: We will not yet talk about what we do if we cannot recruit a stewardship team. People are dealing with a lot. People are putting all of their energy into the election; their lives; so much. Hester: Would it be easier if we were to define the different roles and commitment? Dan: we'd like to recruit someone that has the time to break it down like that so we don't have to.</p>			
8:45	25 min	For the Good of the Order (questions, brief planning, items outside of the 6 Goals, spontaneous items, items pulled from consent) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assigning "Champions" to all board goals and initiatives - Points of contact within the Board to Church groups (liaisons)? 	<i>ALL</i>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assigning a liaison for the COSM - Assigning Board tasks - What response, if any, is required from people who've stepped back, with regard to voting, especially online unanimous voting? <p>Definition of "champion": A member who reports on projects at board meetings and tracks, reminds and communicates with team members regarding the project between meetings. The champion requests time on a board meeting agenda if needed, submits a written report, or both. A facilitator, in other words, or project manager.</p>	
<p>A champion is someone that makes sure we keep working on stuff, not the person who does all the work. Hester is the champion for financial clarity and health. Rinda is the champion for stewardship. Dan is done championing the annual meeting. COSM reconstitution is not yet ready for a champion. The task is creating a charter. One of the next steps will be drafting and submitting to the Board for comment. Meri is champion for learning goals. Policy review and update needs a champion. Rev. Soto's installation: Deborah Kaplan? Happy to do it. We have a plan for it. There's a dinner church called Nourish. For Covid they've made a more abstract Nourish. We're working on possibly early December. Emily offered to be part of the COSM reconstitution. Rev. Soto suggests that Emily can look at the rough draft of a new charter (which does not yet exist). Meri: in the bike rack is reviewing and revising existing policy on the management of endowments. Meri and Hester are actually working on that now. Hester: I've been working on some of the other policy changes. We also need a policy regarding emergency situations. Hester and Meri are named as co-champions for finance-related policy changes.</p>			
8:58	10 min	<p>Housekeeping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - * RACI (indicates who is Responsible, Accountable, to be Consulted, to be Informed) - Steve - Next meeting agenda items (Rinda) - Calendar review - duties/events for Board participation in the coming month (all) - Board Fall Retreat Oct. 10, proposed timing 9:30-12:00, lunch break, 12:30- 2:00 - Review BoT meeting Calendar updated through May 2021 	ALL

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Kathy: RACI review.

Emily has volunteered to be on the Within team; Deborah to be on Among team.

Rinda: let's be aware that there's a lot to do. Be aware of your own capacities.

Board Fall retreat planning: how is the time? Kathy has a conflict. Rinda will work on the date / time soon. Rinda asks Rev. Soto to be involved.

Rev. Soto would like to leave this with us: With each opportunity, to be become fluent in the story of the person next to us to absorb their full humanity each time you get a chance.

Rinda calls attention to a draft calendar. Pay attention to the dates through May of 2021. It will be submitted as a report next time.

9:00	5 min.	Process monitoring	
Alex: thank you for the opportunity to share in tonight's work. This is a relatively diverse UU church board comparatively. Two POC and the rest white. Mostly older folks. (gave proportions of gender self-identification) Zoom added complications not being able to read the room. Sound and visual shortcomings. Rinda allowed for a balance of collegiality, familiarity with deep communication. Sharing was on topic. Lack of clear stack did not seem to get in the way but later when it became deeper, a stack was used. Business conducted without bogging down in admin tasks. Conversations included ____ a willingness to engage in questions and conflict. No one was expected to be an expert. An expectation to be specific and clear. There were celebrations of one another. Assignments were clear and specific. Power wielded with sharing in mind. Everyone spoke. Conversation didn't end until everyone had an opportunity to talk. White supremacy culture : working in dualities and either / or; progress is better, bigger, more. Moments of defensiveness, and a right to comfort was defended. Overall, staying in community and working on collective liberation.			
9:05	5 min.	Closing Reading and Adjourn	<i>Meri</i>

Next Meeting Tuesday October 27, 2020 6:45 p.m.

* Indicates an item for which additional documents are to be filed on Team Drives / Board of Trustees / Meeting Materials/...

Bike Rack Items

- ☐ Church name change proposal
- ☐ Professional/Office duties vs. Volunteer duties (Operations)
- ☐ Use of Zoom as a tool to increase access and promote equity

Policies to revise or create in the new year:

- **Update** existing policy on sharing of collection plate.
- **Board policy or advisory** to support training locally when possible
- **Policy on** church sponsorship of ministerial candidates and what that entails. Rev. Soto/Dan Wright/CoSM

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- **Policy** prohibiting hire of church members, except under certain circumstances
- **Policy around** financial support for community organizations, e.g., Boost

These are pending items for board action, to be considered when setting goals for 20-21:

- COSM reconstitution
- Policy writing and revision

Ground rules:

- Phones on vibrate,
- One person speaks at a time (stack process to be used),
- No side conversations,
- Start on time and if a need develops to go beyond 9:00, check with the group.
- Stick to the agenda: items that run long will either be tabled for the next meeting or, if agreed to by the group, to stay late or table other agenda items.