

First Unitarian Church of Oakland BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES July 25, 2023 6:45 - 9:00 pm	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. <i>Adopted by the congregation on March 18, 2019</i>
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Present: Nicole Fitzhugh, President Evalyn Seidman, Vice Pres. Dennis Rowcliffe, Treasurer Marilyn McMahon, Secretary	Judith Hunt Bev Smrha	Guests: Rev. Laurel Liefert (contract minister) Bill Blakely (vol. administrator) Sharon Dolan Debby Kaplan Dick Bailey Claire Eustace Jodie Mathies
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Open comment period (15 min.) (Members and friends may speak up to 3 minutes each. Secretary reads aloud comments sent by email.)	<i>Congregation</i>
Chalice lighting and opening reading (3 min.) The Paradox of Organized Religion, by Dan Hotchkiss [Sent to the Board by Rev. Laurel] “Religion at its best is no friend of the status quo. Religion transforms people; no one touches holy ground and stays the same. Religious leaders stir the pot by pointing to the contrast between life as it is and life as it should be, and urging us to close the gap. Religious insights provide the handhold that people need to criticize injustice, rise above self-interest, and take risks to provide healing to a wounded world. Organization, on the other hand, conserves. Institutions capture, schematize, and codify persistent patterns of activity. People sometimes say, “Institutions are conservative,” and smile as if they had said something clever. But conservation is what institutions do. A well-ordered congregation lays down schedules, puts policies on paper, places people in positions, and generally brings order out of chaos. Organizations can be flexible, creative, and iconoclastic, but only by resisting some of their most basic instincts. No wonder “organized religion” is so difficult! Congregations create sanctuaries where people can nurture and inspire each other – with results no one can predict. The stability of a religious institution is necessary for the instability that religious transformation brings. The need to balance both sides of this paradox – the transforming power of religion and the stabilizing power of organization – makes leading congregations a unique challenge.”	<i>Dennis</i>
Welcome and preview of meeting (2 min.)	<i>Nicole</i>

<p>New contract minister's greeting (10 min.)</p> <p>Rev. Laurel shared some thoughts, and her excitement, about her ministry at FUCO. Her primary goal here is to rebuild trust. She promises to be trustworthy, and to trust everyone until/unless they prove undeserving of that trust. Our UU faith calls for comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable; she plans to do more of the former here, at least initially. But she won't let us be complacent; she's a minister who likes to "stir the pot." She quoted Rachel Naomi Remen on helping (which sees life as weak), fixing (which sees life as broken), and serving (which sees life as a whole, and is the work of the soul). Rev. Laurel is here to serve, and this work is what (echoing Howard Thurman) makes her "come alive."</p>	<p><i>Rev. Laurel</i></p>
<p>Hiring plan (40 min.)</p> <p>Sharon presented the hiring plan developed with the Finance Team to recommend to the Board. Prioritizing the stable operation of the church and coordination of the parts, with an eye to growing our congregation and income, she recommended hiring a full-time administrator and a half-time sexton (who would provide custodial and event-setup services and some maintenance work, working with and supervising Frank). She listed major areas of responsibility for the administrator. Her spreadsheet showed the costs of the recommended plan and three alternatives, as well as budget projections and actuals as of June. The recommended plan would require about \$60,000 in increased income, so a strong Stewardship campaign this fall is crucial.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <p>Bill has been working most days of the week and is doing only office management, not actual administration. Noemi worked $\frac{3}{4}$ time officially but really worked extra hours from home. Also, the plan is to add to the administrator's responsibilities rather than hiring a new facilities manager. So already there is plenty of work to fill 40 hrs/wk, and we want to grow. As Sharon said, "we can't cut our way out of a crisis."</p> <p>We need to be bold (not too conservative), to believe in our congregation, and to commit to rebuilding our volunteer engagement, membership, and activity. Several Board members expressed confidence that revitalized worship services would bring more people and increased income eventually, optimism about the future of the congregation, and desire to provide what is needed for growth and flourishing. Also, several expressed concern that we might overspend before we can build back up. Sharon and Jodie declared their belief that increasing our income to cover the recommended hiring was very doable. People who have drifted away from the church may become re-engaged as worship improves and a new administrator restores stable church functioning.</p> <p>MOTION to authorize the hiring of a full-time administrator and a half-time co-sexton at the salary levels in the recommended plan (Judith, Bev 2nd). PASSED</p>	<p><i>Sharon Dolan</i></p>
<p>BREAK (5 min.)</p>	

<p>Consent agenda (10 min.) Briefing, including actions taken since previous meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board approved June meeting minutes. • Board will meet with Rev. Laurel and our affiliated ministers to discuss Pastoral care for next year. • Board received reports on UUA 2023 GA from our delegates. Will publish them in next week's Chalice Chatter. <p>MOTION to approve Suzanne van Houten as an additional member of COWSM (Judith, Bev 2nd). PASSED</p> <p>MOTION TO approve revised version of Personnel Handbook [subject to updating the health benefit section according to Board action later in this meeting] (Marilyn, Bev 2nd). PASSED</p> <p>MOTION to approve contract to rent space on the third floor to Cal. Interfaith Power & Light at \$1600/month (Dennis, Bev 2nd). PASSED</p>	<p><i>Nicole</i></p>
<p>Operations Team report (10 min.) Our new tenant CIPL plans to move in this weekend. Dave Ruede and Carol Layne have put down a first coat of paint on their space. Bank paperwork is done to get a church credit card for Bill to pay bills with. The bell tower roof needs some repair, but damage is not structural so repair can wait. The Earth Justice plan that Tom Smith is working on includes sealing the stained glass windows in Hamilton Hall with double pane windows on the outside. We should consider whether to repair them first. The last estimate for repair (10 years ago) was \$100,00 (not a typo!).</p>	<p><i>Bill Blakely</i></p>
<p>Finance/Treasurer's report (5 min.) We are operating close to what we budgeted (including deficit).</p>	<p><i>Dennis</i></p>
<p>Religious Education report (5 min.) Jef is taking time off through early August. He has asked his volunteer team to handle the REnUUz newsletter and to organize another picnic.</p>	<p><i>Nicole</i></p>
<p>Employee health benefit policy (10 min) Our advisers recommended that we offer a Non-Accountable Reimbursement Plan to our employees instead of the UUA health insurance. A nonaccountable reimbursement plan is taxable income to the employee, to be used for expenses such as healthcare or rent. Such a plan has no administrative burden for us once it is set up (no need to verify receipts, for example). The employee can opt out of the plan if they don't want the income.</p>	<p><i>Nicole</i></p>

<p>Nicole asks the Board to approve such a plan in principle, and to authorize a committee to write the plan in detail. The committee will probably be Nicole and the finance team, with the advice of a lawyer if needed.</p> <p>MOTION to authorize a committee to write a detailed Non-Accountable Reimbursement Plan for our employees (Dennis, Bev 2nd). PASSED</p>	
<p>Schedule a breakfast meeting with staff (5 min)</p> <p>The Board needs to be supervisor to the church staff now, so let's plan a meet-and-greet with them. Board AGREED to plan a breakfast meeting for staff on Aug. 20 before worship. We'll make pancakes for the staff. We'll check into how to include Judith by Zoom. [8/16/2023 Note: The 8/20 event had to be cancelled. The Board will schedule a meeting with staff soon.]</p>	Nicole
<p>Special collection Aug. 6th (Tet Gallardo) (5 min)</p> <p>MOTION to authorize a special collection on Sunday, Aug.6 for the Filipino LGBTIQAP ministry of guest minister Tet Gallardo (Bev, Dennis 2nd). PASSED</p>	Nicole
<p>“For the good of the order” (5 min.)</p> <p>(Questions, brief planning, spontaneous items, or pulled from consent agenda)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board thank-you's – The Board will send thank-you's to Dave Ruede and Carol Layne for painting the office space to be rented (Nicole) and to the Women's Retreat organizers, Emily Stoper, Hester Green, Karen Axelsson, and Sondra Schwartz (Marilyn). Review tasks chart – Evalyn will do Sunday Board welcome on Aug. 6. Marilyn will do opening and closing readings for the Aug. Board meeting. 	Nicole
END OF PUBLIC MEETING	

	Executive session: Personnel matters	Nicole
	Extinguish chalice & closing reading	Dennis

“BIKE RACK”

- Employee review form, etc.