

First Unitarian Church of Oakland

Annual Meeting March 19, 2023



Our Covenant

We, the people of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, covenant to build a religious community sustained by relationships of understanding, mutual trust and respect.

Guided by our mission and collective inspiration, we will encourage all our members to participate fully in congregational life and to grow and learn together in faith and love.

Knowing that what one of us does affects the community, we covenant to act with loving kindness in all our endeavors by speaking directly and positively with one another.

We recognize that this calls for honesty in communications, valuing of diversity and inclusive process. We covenant to engage in ethical communications, to take our concerns to those responsible and to refrain from gossip.

Recognizing that conflicts have the power to strengthen or diminish our relationships, when they arise we will handle our disagreements with courtesy, fairness and forgiveness.

We promise to listen to one another, assume good intentions and identify common goals. In support of our shared ministry, we covenant to honor our commitments, keep our decision making processes transparent and give generously of our spiritual goals and material resources. This we covenant together.



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.



Our Ends

The First Unitarian Church of Oakland embodies beloved community as an intentionally multigenerational, multiracial, multicultural, anti-oppressive Unitarian Universalist religious community. We work for spiritual and social transformation within, among and beyond ourselves in support of our vision, mission and ends.

TRANSFORMATION WITHIN

Church members and friends discover and articulate personal spiritual growth. We lead lives of integrity and meaning that reflect our spiritual identity and values.

TRANSFORMATION AMONG

People of all ages who are part of our church community experience caring relationships which connect us to an ever wider circle of life. We use our collective gifts and learning to nurture and expand beloved community. We overcome barriers that divide the human family.

TRANSFORMATION BEYOND

Our neighborhood, the city of Oakland and the world community are more just and compassionate because of our prophetic role and ministries. We generously share our human and financial resources beyond the walls of our church.



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the land and the Peoples who belong to this Land, the Muwekma Ohlone Peoples.

Our church, institutions, and homes are occupying their lands, ancestral and current.

We acknowledge that the lands were stolen from the Ohlone Peoples, who have an ancestral relationship with this land, the plants, the animals, and the water—for millennia, continuous to the present day.

Ohlone People are still here. We also recognize that the Ohlone ancestors, in spirit and of the Land, are present.

In solidarity with all Indigenous People and their right to self-determination and justice, we commit to working toward accountability of the theft, dispossession, and resulting trauma Native Peoples continue to face.

We commit to being active partners toward the healing of the intergenerational trauma which persists to this day.

Amen. So may we live.



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Annual Meeting Agenda

10:30 am	Devotion - Rev. Jef Melcher & Worship Associates
10:50	<p>Welcome and Call to Order - Barbara North, President of the Board of Trustees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of Meeting Secretary (Dave Ruede) and Parliamentarian (Dan Goss) – Barbara North • Reading of Congregational Covenant - Members of Journey Toward Wholeness • Explanation of Ballot and Voting - The Nominating Committee: Kris Wedding Crowell, Laurel Egenberger, Corless Smith • Announcement of Quorum Count - Dave Ruede • Motion to elect Zia Swim as Moderator - Dave Ruede • Review Agenda and Rules of Order - Zia Swim
11:10	<p>Congregational Business - Moderator Zia Swim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election of Trustees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Presentation of candidates from the Nominating Committee ◦ Opportunity for nominations from the floor • Election of Nominating Committee Members (2023-2024) • Motion of Consent to Ordinations for Kevin Mann & Claire Eustace - COWSM: Sarah Letson, Laila Ibrahim
11:30	State of The Church - Barbara North
11:45	Financial Report - Debby Kaplan
12:05	Recognition of Outgoing Trustees- Daisy Quan, Kathy Radez, Zia Swim, Claudine Tong, & Debby Kaplan
12:15	Invitation to Church Service - Rinda Bartley
12:20	Benediction and Closing Words - Rev. Jef Melcher
12:25	Adjourn Annual Meeting and Invitation to Social Time - Zia Swim
12:25 - 1:00	Zoom link will remain live for social time



The Need Is Great, The Time Is Now

Help us sustain the life of the church in this transitional moment.

Governance Needs:

Board of Trustees

- We need 5 more trustees to serve 3 year terms to align with our current bylaws

Nominating Committee

- We need 3 new members to serve two year terms

CoWSM (Committee on Wellbeing of Shared Ministries)

- We need 2 more members to serve at least 2 years; developing and implementing the “full body scan” and evaluation of the congregation’s wellbeing as chartered

Short Term Congregational Function Needs:

Hiring Committee

- We need 4 - 6 people to run the hiring process for the Administrator & Facilities Manager positions, terms to last until the positions are filled

Personnel Committee

- Update Personnel Handbook to reflect best practices and policies; project should take no more than 2 months

Facilities and Grounds Committee

- Work with Frank Tabor, our sexton, to maintain the building and with other volunteers on upkeep of the grounds; beginning after Stefan’s retirement and continuing on a regular basis until a new facilities manager is hired; after that as needed

Office Tasks

- Assist Bill Blakely as needed on short term projects until Administrator is hired
- Website content in collaboration with church programs– as needed or monthly

Worship Service Tech Team

- Work with paid techs to run the Zoom stream and the sound board for Sunday Worship



Program Needs for Long-Term Congregational Success:

Pastoral Associates

- 4 new members to join this community of care; 15 - 20 **Lend-A-Handers** who operate as needed to do specific tasks to care for fellow congregants.

Community Connections Team

- Welcome newcomers, help them get acquainted with our church, build connections among existing congregants, and engage people in our programs and ministries through Sunday Greeting and Ushering & through Zoom Coffee Hour Welcome Hosting

Endowment Committee

- 1 - 2 people to assist in managing endowments and educating the congregation about them, and growing the justice endowment

Religious Education

- Volunteers to work with our 3 youth groups (ages 5 - 12, 12 - 16, 16 +) on rotating basis to assist DRE and other hired staff
- Project or Event based volunteers

Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Team

- Assist the congregation in anti-racism work and personal growth
- Support First Sundays for Anti-Racism discussion group(s)

The Life of the Church

Programs that carry out our vision, ends, and means who are always looking for new members– contact programcouncil@uuoakland.org for information

- Crescendo Choir & Joyful Noise Band
- Boost! West Oakland
- Earth Justice Advocates
- Adult Spiritual Development
- Accompaniment Team
- Covenant Groups
- Women's Group Retreat
- Book Club
- Poetry Circle



Board of Trustees Report

Submitted by Barbara North, current President of the Board of Trustees

It has been another year of transitions for the Board and the Church. At present, your Board of Trustees is comprised of the following:

<i>Trustee</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Role</i>
Barbara North**	2022 - 2025	President
– vacant –	2022 - 2023	Vice President
Marilyn McMahon	2022 - 2024	Secretary
Debby Kaplan*	2020 - 2023	Treasurer
Nicole Fitzhugh	2022 - 2025	
– vacant –	2023 - ??	
– vacant –	2023 - ??	
– vacant –	2023 - ??	
– vacant –	2023 - ??	
– vacant –	2023 - ??	Youth Member

* term ends **March 2023**

** will vacate term at **end of 2023 program year**

We thank Debby Kaplan whose board term comes to a close this month. And we also thank Zia Swim, Claudine Tong, Kathy Radez, and Daisy Quan who served on the Board and ended their terms of service before this annual meeting.

We currently seek to fill 5+ open terms on the Board Of Trustees. Our current bylaws mandate at least 9 members.

We ask all members who have expressed optimism for the future of our community to consider serving a term on the board at this time.



Over the past year we've prioritized the following efforts:

Setting the stage for stewardship

At the behest of the Stewardship Team, the board of trustees engaged in several outreach programs including some congregational calls, outreach during stewardship, and notices in Chalice Chatter & services.

Basic operations

Due to low community staffing on teams such as COWSM, Personnel Committee, etc. the Board of Trustees has stepped up to provide additional functionality in these areas. Due to churn and limited documentation there were continuity gaps for the current trustees to bridge in being able to move forward.

Congregational conflict

The congregation has had a number of points of conflict this year - the board addressed several of these in support of COWSM and worked to address specific issues that were surfaced to the board directly - including those that led to impacts to membership and stewardship goals.

Your call is important to us. At this time of high volume, please expect delays.

At this time, like many areas of the church, the Board is feeling the pinch of low volunteer engagement. This is particularly difficult when that impacts other areas of the church, and we are operating with limited paid staff. With the departure of both Pastor Ninán and Noemi de Guzman, changes to our paid worship support staff, and the pending retirement of Stefan Schneider, the primary focus of the board at this time is the continuation of basic operations, followed by hiring. We are also working to engage additional support, including the UUA "Hope For Us" program to help resolve conflicts within the congregation and establish next steps for engaging with a minister for short or medium term care of the congregation.



Operations Team Report

Submitted by Noemi de Guzman, on behalf of the operations team:

Stefan Schneider, facilities manager and choir co-director

Noemi de Guzman, congregational administrator

Nicole Fitzhugh, trustee

The operations team is accountable for the operational organization of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, its achievements and conduct, and for operating to support the ends of the church as approved by the board of trustees.

People and personnel

First and foremost, we thank the staff whose labor served the needs of church leaders, congregants, and the community:

Dorothy Paul, nursery worker

Evan Fitzhugh, Spirit Games leader

Frank Tobor, sexton

Jef Melcher, director of religious education

Judy Schonebaum, Club UU leader

Kade Goldsmith, Spirit Games leader

Lane Nihei, worship a/v tech

London Reid, nursery worker

Orhan Hosten-Mittermaier, Spirit Games leader

Renée Witon, accompanist and choir co-director

Stefan Schneider, facilities manager/rentals coordinator, choir co-director,
and Joyful Noise Band leader

Susan Keiter, musician and Pop-Up choir director

Vincent Raines, livestream director

Zachary Gamble, audio tech

With the recent departure of lead minister Rev. Theresa Ninán Soto, forthcoming departure of congregational administrator Noemi de Guzman and livestream director Vincent Raines, and planned retirement of facilities manager/rentals coordinator and band leader/choir co-director Stefan Schneider, we are especially grateful for the flexibility of remaining staff and volunteers who are taking on additional responsibilities, notably Director Of Religious Education Jef Melcher, whose portfolio now includes worship coordination in the interim.



The church continues to strive to be a good employer, to assure policies and practices are compliant with labor laws and contracts and consistent with Unitarian Universalist values. Last year, we made up more than \$15.5K of unpaid pension contributions and lost earnings from 2020 and 2021, and for the first time, employees were duly informed they could make their own retirement plan contributions, whether eligible for employer contributions or not. The board approved the addition of Juneteenth to the list of paid holidays. Inconsistencies in the vacation accrual policy from UUA best practice have also been identified, and policy revision is pending. The personnel committee has not had members since 2019, and competing demands have prevented a more dedicated and methodical approach to addressing personnel issues.

Please contact operationsteam@uuoakland.org if you have any question or interest in joining this critical team.

Programs and shared ministry

We have gratitude also for the countless volunteers whose dedicated service supported First Unitarian and enriched church life in the remarkable past year, especially the stalwarts of the pastoral care, worship, Community Connections, finance, tech, and stewardship teams and also the ad hoc religious education hiring team and music visioning team. Many of these volunteers serve on multiple teams.

The program council offers a venue every month where volunteer leaders develop their skills and knowledge of the church organization, collaborate, make collective decisions and plans, and receive inspiration, support, and resources. In the past year, participants of the program council and collaborators nurtured relationships with community partners such as Genesis and the African American Museum and Library of Oakland, acted on opportunities such as the IRA Grant that would benefit the planet as well as the church budget bottom line, and brought ideas to life such as a sock drive and book sale. These efforts and other programs such as the holiday concert are made possible with the advice and assistance of religious education, facilities, music, and administrative staff.

Administration and finance

Early last year, the operations team approved the software transition team's recommendations for an oversight/advisory team to administer Breeze, the new church management system, as well as a technology team to manage, oversee, and coordinate all information technology resources. The Breeze oversight/advisory team (BOAT) launched in March, and the technology team was chartered in August. As we continue to depend more and more on data, technology,



and online services, these teams will promote data quality and security and not only efficiency but also continuity of operations.

Breeze implementation, stabilized financial processes, and improved relationship with our contractors have resulted in more efficient utilization of our accounting and bookkeeping service and significant cost savings. Continuing clarification of roles and responsibilities and the relationship between the finance team, operations team, treasurer, and board of trustees will strengthen financial operations further, particularly budgeting and reporting, as well as implementation of a streamlined chart of accounts.

Additional detail may be found in the tech team, BOAT, and finance team reports.

Facilities and asset management

With the oversight of the reopening team, implementation of COVID safety protocols kept the First Unitarian community healthy during and as we emerged from the pandemic. Building occupancy is increasing beyond staff, volunteers, and congregants on Sunday mornings and throughout the week as previous and new day/evening-use renters return. The dramatically different rentals market has significantly reduced rentals income, yet the church is faithful to serving the nonprofit community, as it was recently when it offered a warm comfortable space for a vigil of remembrance on the anniversary of Executive Order 9066.

Our historic building is well maintained and its structure and building systems provide a safe place for the congregation and community. In the past year it has passed fire inspections that led to replacement of sprinkler heads and emergency exit lighting. The elevator undergoes regular preventive maintenance, and necessary repairs are promptly made. This winter's storms have revealed again the need to flood-proof the basement, and estimates are being solicited so that the work can be appropriately prioritized. It is hoped that the church will be a federal grant recipient so that improvements in building insulation, energy usage, and emissions can be funded through a partnership with other local churches and nonprofits.



Finance Team Report

Submitted by Hester Green (on behalf of the Finance Team) & Debby Kaplan, Treasurer

Your 2022 dedicated Finance Team has been Bill Blakely, Hester Green, Laila Ibrahim (Endowment Committee), Leslie Brandt, and much support and hard work from our Congregational Administrator, Noemi de Guzman.

The Finance Team's mission is to help the Board Treasurer provide accurate financial information to the Board and the congregation, assist the Stewardship and Membership (CCT) teams, prepare the annual Budget with the Operations Team, and watch for anything that can impact our church's financial situation.

Bookkeeping Triumphs, and Hopes –

- a. **Accounting costs** were significantly lower this past year due to last year's bookkeeping and recordkeeping streamlining efforts. Also thanks to Breeze much of the labor needed to coordinate pledge payments etc was eliminated. Furthermore, our processes have been better documented to help keep up the efficiency rhythm in handling the ongoing details in face of personnel and other changes. True to our predictions in last year's report, Breeze has been easy to use in transferring contribution funds to the bank account and generating the annual 2022 Tax Notices.

FUCO's Endowment Funds –

- b. **Wendte Building and Memorial Operations Fund** – We are grateful for the \$1,000 donation (\$500 to each of the above funds) made by a generous congregant. Any endowment fund donations will remain in that account indefinitely and will perpetually benefit our congregation from the investment earnings they generate over time.
- c. **Overall 2022 UU Common Endowment Fund Portfolio Performance** – As 2022 was an extremely financially fraught year, our portfolio experienced an approximately 16% loss during this past year.

2022 Financial results and Initial 2023 Budget

- d. **2022 Operations Deficit** - annual operating expenses exceeded annual income by \$27.2k due to the lingering pandemic effects causing reduced pledging and rental revenue. As the year progressed, however, expense reductions, a higher than



anticipated Clarabelle Hamilton Fund distribution and additional donations reduced that gap. The actual deficit amounted to just over 1/2 of the deficit anticipated in our initial 2022 budget (\$50.9k).

- e. **2023 Budget** – We continue to anticipate some savings in our bookkeeping costs and reduced/deferred contribution to UUA. Our initial 2023 budget numbers are deliberately conservative to avoid unpleasant surprises but we also hope to fine-tune the budget based on careful monitoring expenses and exploring revenue opportunities as year 2023 unfolds.
- f. **Employee benefits and compensation** - we put out a special effort to encourage our salaried employees to take advantage of our retirement plan's salary deferral program. In addition we improved our accounting of accrued vacation.
- g. **Hosted August Financial Information Session** to keep congregants informed and receive valuable feedback

Moving forward into 2023 – additional planned Finance Team activities

- h. **Additional Administration Foreseen** – Due to recent, sudden personnel changes the Finance Team volunteers may, again, need to take on extra tasks, at least temporarily, such as bill payment and donation processing and investment when the staff positions covering those functions are unfilled.
- i. **Continuous improvement** of processes and procedures, including use of Breeze software, improve bookkeeping processes, and streamline financially-related administrative processes.
- j. **Host Financial Information Sessions** for congregation -
- k. **Enhance our financial presentations** - In response to feedback from last August's Financial Information Session we plan to include further information such as financial comparisons to earlier years, etc.

Finance Team regular monthly meetings are on the second Saturday morning from 9:15 to about 11:15 AM and as needed. Respectfully submitted and open to comments, questions, and suggestions at treasurer@uuoakland.org, financeteam@uuoakland.org or at this meeting in person or via Chat.

Finance Team Informational Charts continued on next page



2022 UU Oakland's UU Common Endowment Fund Portfolio Activity (UU CEF)

Endowment Fund	1/1/2022 Mkt Value	Distributions from the Funds to Operations as of 12/31/2022	Additional Contributions Invested	Investment gain/loss, earnings, less fees	12/31/22 Value per UU CEF Statements	Jan. - Dec. 2022 Donations pending Investment in Endowment Funds as of 12/31/2022*	December 31 2022 Mkt Value of UU CEF Reserve
George E Grant*	\$20,016.13	(813.82)	-	\$ (3,282.12)	\$15,920.19		\$15,920.19
George E Grant Memorial*	\$39,841.58	(1,604.06)	-	\$ (6,435.77)	\$31,801.75		\$31,801.75
Memorial Operations Endowment	\$229,974.32	(9,026.45)	-	\$ (37,176.85)	\$183,771.02	\$500.00	\$184,271.02
Wendte Building Endowment	\$1,839,768.14	(96,545.25)	\$79,180.52	\$ (309,237.41)	1,513,166.00	\$500.00	\$1,513,666.00
Aurelia Reinhardt Justice Endowment	\$229,082.68	-	\$5,600.00	\$ (38,367.91)	\$196,314.77	\$0.00	\$196,314.77
Total Value:	\$2,358,682.85	(\$107,989.58)	\$84,780.52	(\$394,500.06)	\$1,940,973.73	\$1,000.00	\$1,941,973.73

January - December 2022 Approximate Investment Return on our overall portfolio: -16%

*For these funds we are recipients of periodic distributions but have no ownership or management control.

*Please note that UU CEF cannot receive additional deposits of less than \$1,000.00 to any one fund.



			2022 Budget	2022 Actuals	
Revenue					
	Contributions				
		Stewardship	\$ 341,709	\$ 348,000	98.19%
		Collection plate and one-time gifts	14,184	19,000	74.65%
	Trust and endowment distributions*		155,367	148,222	104.82%
	Rentals		1,940	25,000	7.76%
	Programs		3,193	6,845	46.65%
	Other		2,515	6,730	37.37%
		Total revenue	\$ 518,908	\$ 553,797	93.70%
Expenses					
	Personnel				
		Wages	\$ 307,683	\$ 314,690	97.77%
		Benefits and payroll costs	71,484	83,584	85.52%
	Professional services		22,251	34,462	64.57%
	Programs		6,711	20,500	32.74%
	Denominational support		14,000	14,000	100.00%
	Facilities		72,716	92,256	78.82%
	Administrative		41,802	31,734	131.73%
	Other		9,423	13,500	69.80%
		Total expenses	\$ 546,070	\$ 604,726	90.30%
Net Surplus (Deficit)			\$ (27,162)	\$ (50,929)	



ASSETS AND LIABILITIES STATEMENT	
AS OF 12/31/2022	
Assets:	2022
Total Bank Accounts	\$388,284.14
Total Fixed Assets	2,768,787.37
UUCEF Memorial Operations Endowment*	183,771.02
UUCEF Wendte Building Endowment*	1,513,166.00
UUCEF Aurelia Reinhardt Justice Endowment*	196,314.78
Other UUCEF Endowment Funds not controlled by FUCO*	47,721.94
Manse Fund loan to Rev. Soto	8,757.74
Prepaid Insurance and Bookstore Inventory	<u>7,644.58</u>
Total Assets:	\$ 5,114,448
Short-term liabilities:	<u>\$ -</u>
2000 Accounts Payable	7,301.38
2135 Accrued Vacation	29,316.40
2130 Accrued Payroll	6,075.54
Long-term liabilities:	0
Total Liabilities:	\$ 42,693.32
Funds for Special Programs:	
Musicopia	\$ 7,616
Manse Fund	37,558
Fund for Social Justice	18,279
Intern Fund	20,646
Green Sanctuary Fund	2,202
Total Funds for Special Programs:	\$ 86,301



Children & Family Ministries

Children and Family Ministries Annual Report - March 2023

Submitted by Jeffrey Melcher, Director of Religious Education

We started this program year in August of 2022 to coincide more closely with families returning to their children's school year start. About half of our families did not return post-pandemic for various reasons. We have about 16 families involved in our program. A little over half of these are "regular" attenders. Much effort has gone into rebuilding the capacity of the program while also providing a quality relational experience for families and children who are involved. Our volunteer pool has grown and we have started providing snacks for all ages thanks to volunteers and parents. In addition to the Sunday morning programming we have had excellent results in establishing a much needed multigenerational, interactive community atmosphere with two Game Days and which now is expanding to CFM participation in collaborative efforts for a Beatles Sing-a-Long (March), a JTW workshop that will be more youth friendly (April), monthly 4th Sunday potluck and Game Days, and several more activities supported by the RE Spark Team.

RE Spark Team: Ingrid Mittermaier, Kris Wedding Crowell, Matt Goldsmith, Katrinca Ford, and our newest member, Alexis Wielunski.

Nursery/Pre-K

We hired London Ried as a second childcare employee to cover when Dorothy Paul is not available. (1st Sundays, Christmas & Easter services and others as needed.) London has her own childcare business and brings another loving heart to the care of our littlest people.

Both Dorothy and London are available to provide childcare after service for meetings, special events, JTW workshops, and Listening Circles. Ask the DRE for more information.

A significant clean-out of the room by Katrinca Ford and Josh Rose liberated the space from too many toys. With a new coat of paint brightening the room we are preparing for a "Grand Opening and Tea" and a more vibrant program for this age range.

Spirit Room

Our previous Club UU staff person resigned last Spring and we have not hired into that position yet. Jeffrey and various volunteers have been bringing activities, music, heartfelt conversations, gratitude circles, and free-play to encourage growth of individual character and community building for children, youth and families. Stefan has been providing drum sessions on 4th Sundays. Volunteers and parents have started providing snacks.



Game Days - Several successful game days in the Fall brought people together. The Dungeons and Dragons Saturday event brought in over 20 participants from six Bay Area UU congregations. This effort has grown to build a more collaborative relationship between the RE programs for youth in our extended area and is supported by UUA Pacific Western Region staff and the Pacific Central District Liberal Religious Educators Association. Religious educators have the intent to share resources to better serve youth and families in programming that includes OWL, Coming of Age, middle school and high school youth. Sadly, the popular district middle-school program known as MUUGs did not survive the pandemic.

Our second Game Day sponsored by RE was a multi-generational success with over 30 children, youth, and adults - mostly from UU Oakland and a handful of visitors as well. With advice from a games expert consultant, Xavier Elias, we are moving Games Day to coincide with 4th Sunday potlucks after service, noon to 2 pm. We expect this to be a good draw with options for board games, Dungeons and Dragons, food, and fellowship for all ages.

Our Whole Lives (OWL)

OWL is a program this congregation takes very seriously. Fallow during the pandemic, and resuscitated this year, we have an OWL Program Team (OPT) to oversee the broader aspect of the OWL classes for all age ranges. We pulled together a teaching team for a grade 4-6 cohort, but we did not get a critical mass of students to run the class this spring. We have a head start on a teaching team and registered families to hold a 4-6 OWL class in the Fall.

A clear priority is the building of a teaching team for a 7-9 OWL cohort that needs to begin early Fall '23. We have enough teens from our own congregation and there are several families from UUCB who want to join as well. A person does not need to be a trained OWL teacher in order to be on the OPT, just have an interest in helping organize OWL classes.

OWL Program Team: Dan Goss, Nicole Fitzhugh, Jef Melcher, Janet McFarland, LauraJean Torgerson
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Youth and Adult Committee (YAC)

This budding group has the intention to be made up of youth and adults to design programming for youth ages 11-16. It is looking at the local UU Oakland program as well as opportunities in the greater Bay Area. We have adults and seek a few youth to attend monthly area programs and create an annual event to which we invite other congregations. (ie DnD 101 Game Day).

YAC: Nicole Fitzhugh, Charles Keatts, Ines Alejandra, Lucia Savage, Laura Christian



Program Reports

Community Connections Team - March 2023 Annual Report

Submitted by Maria Bielass, Clark Sanford, & Michael Fitzhugh

Over the last year, as more people have started to attend in-person, we have been connecting with people both virtually and in-person, starting up our Exploring Membership events, and welcoming new members. We have also been learning a lot about our new database Breeze and improving the quality of our data and processes in both Breeze and our other databases.

Newcomer Welcome

- Since the last Annual Meeting, we received about 75 online or paper Guest Connection Cards. In response, we sign them up for Chalice Chatter, connect them with church programs & groups, answer their questions and provide information about our church.
- In Fall 2022, we began doing in-person Newcomer Welcomes after Sunday services in addition to connecting with people on Zoom.
- In May 2022, we helped conduct an Ingathering service to formally welcome our new members from the past year.
- In Jan 2023 we started in-person Exploring Membership sessions. We plan to do these on a regular basis, perhaps monthly.
- 5 people have become members since the last Annual Meeting.
- We have explored different methods for having people sign up to be greeters and ushers (and VAX checkers in the past) with mixed results. Thank you to everyone who has helped welcome people on Sundays!

Connecting Congregants

- We did not have a Connections Fair this past year. We are exploring having the next one either during this church year or the next.
- We continue to work with church staff and the Breeze Team to update & maintain our people records in our various church systems. Thank you to Noemi de Guzman for spearheading the recent effort to get an accurate eligible voter list for the annual meeting!
- We have been using Breeze for bulk email outreach to newcomers, and are starting to use it for other communications as well.



- We maintain member records in the UUA mailing list for the UU World magazine. We are reconciling that UUA list with our Breeze records.
- We also maintain the church mailing list for Chalice Chatter, which is in MailChimp. We have made some progress in cleaning up this list over the last several months.
- We are continuing to use the infochange@uuoakland.org email as a way for people to let us know about changes to their contact information or other life changes.

Affiliated Community Minister

Submitted by The Reverend Mary Foran

As Affiliated Community Minister, I am not part of the church's professional ministerial staff. My ministry in the community is Spiritual Direction. I guide and companion people who want to strengthen their grounding for participating fully in the delights, sorrows, mysteries, and toils of human life. One of the greatest gifts of our time on this earth is cultivating the spiritual resources that help us to bring more kindness, compassion, resilience, strength, and joy to all the ways we are in the world. As a Spiritual Director, I help people find their wisdom by listening, asking questions, inviting silence, sharing laughter and tears, and bringing my full compassionate attention to them.

In keeping with the covenant I had with Pastor Ninán this year, at their request I visited members in need by phone and in person and offered memorial circles for Rob Eller-Isaacs and Gerald Hill. In cooperation with the congregational minister, I am available for Memorials and Weddings. For church members the church compensates me. In the summer I was able to do a wedding at short notice for the family of a past church member. One never knows when someone will ask for a UU minister to be available! This summer and fall I was privileged to lead two Memorials for church members. For the past several years I have been the paid Summer Pastoral Care minister, available to support the Pastoral Associates and to attend to significant life events in the congregation.

During this time of transition, I am available for individual confidential pastoral care conversations and support for listening circles and other meetings to find our ways to the future. In addition, the minister members and those in process of becoming UU ministers are meeting to coordinate our support of ministerial functions. We are Kevin Mann, Claire Eustace, Jeffrey Melcher and me. Look for more information in the Chalice Chatter.

I am grateful to be in community with you and to be of service as your Affiliated Community Minister.



Endowment Team

Submitted by Tom Haw and Laila Ibrahim

Our three congregational endowments will ensure and strengthen the vision, mission and presence of First Unitarian Church of Oakland for the future. In addition to our congregational accounts the UUA holds two trust accounts for us that we have no oversight or control over.

Because of the general decline in the stock market our endowments decreased this year. As of December 31, 2022:

The Wendte Endowment for Building Maintenance and Improvement

Went from \$1,918,950 to **\$1,513,166**

The congregation took a distribution of \$96,543 for general building maintenance and repairs thereby fulfilling the requirements of the endowment.

The Aurelia Henry Reinhardt Endowment for Justice

Went from \$234,682 to **\$196,314**

The congregation is not getting distributions until we get this account to \$250,000.

First Unitarian Oakland Memorial Endowment Fund

Went from \$229,974 to **\$183,771**

\$9,025 was distributed to the congregation for general expenses.

After a three year hiatus due to COVID we are committed to begin a campaign to educate the congregation about the endowment to ensure this building will still be a thriving liberal religious congregation 150 years from now! We could use more members on our team. Contact Laila (laila.d.ibrahim@gmail.com) or Tom (tomhaw04@gmail.com) to join us, with questions or to learn how to contribute to our funds now or in your estate planning.

Nominating Committee

Submitted by Laurel Egenberger, Corless Smith, and Kris Wedding Crowell

As per our By-laws the “Nominating Committee shall be elected for the purposes of conducting recruitment for the subsequent year’s candidates for the Board of Trustees”.

In preparation for that task, we took a number of steps that we hope will be useful for future nominating committees.

(continued)



1. Set aside, with Noemi de Guzman's help, dedicated space on the UUOakland google drive for the Nominating Committee. Whoever is in the boardnomination@uuoakland.org group will have access to that drive space.
2. Polled former trustees about their experiences serving on the board and summarized the results in two reports that were distributed to the congregation and the Board.
3. Updated the form used by congregants interested in running for the Board in consultation with JTW and current Board members.
4. Collected suggestions from congregants about who they'd like to see serve on the Board.
5. Reached out to many congregants about serving on the Board.
6. Learned that many ARE willing to serve, and plan to do so - just not right now.
7. Kept notes that will be passed onto the next Nominating Committee.
8. Identified two candidates willing to serve on the Board right now if elected.*
9. Trusted that other candidates will be inspired to nominate themselves at the meeting.
10. Prepared to help introduce a new Nominating Committee to the resources.

(*one candidate withdrew their nomination after this report was submitted– Editor)

Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Team

Submitted by the team: Donna Fujioka, Janet McFarland and Linda Propert Sanford

In 2022, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Team (JTWTT) maintained a steady focus on the work to which it is dedicated: keeping the vision of being an actively anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural congregation front and center in the life of the church. Our work included these activities:

We participated in the Multicultural Advisory Council (MAC) formed by Pastor Soto. Within that structure, we facilitated the first Sunday gatherings in collaboration with the minister, who connected worship and the meeting after worship by means of a common theme.

We joined the minister in creating church services on the first Sunday of every month, effectively serving as worship associates for those Sundays. We continued this service through January and February of 2023.

The composition of the team has been constant throughout 2022. Some of us are tired and need a break, but until there are others to pick up the baton, we keep working.

We encouraged congregants to participate in Jubilee III online, as some of our JTW members did.



We contributed funds to building racial justice beyond the walls of the congregation, including programs such as DRUUMM's public worship and Indigenous Led Unlearning Conversations.

We supported BIPOC individuals who sought to attend antiracism/multicultural-related trainings, offering scholarships as needed.

In March 2023, JTW stepped back from its worship associate role on the first Sunday of every month, in the wake of Pastor Ninán's resignation. We opted to focus our energy instead on the after-church gathering. We are in conversation with the Board of Trustees about how JTW might best serve our congregation at this time, particularly with regard to reviving a strong white allies group.

BOOST! West Oakland

Submitted by Natalie Ingraham

More tutors are needed to support this program. Please [click this link](#) to see what is needed.

Women's Retreat

Submitted by Emily Stoper

In July 2022, the congregation sponsored its first all-weekend women's retreat since 2019, at Redwood Glen Retreat Center. The retreat included fabulous crafts projects, singing and poetry workshops, a qigong session, a Nonviolent Communication workshop, walking a labyrinth and much more. Evaluations were stellar; 100% of attendees said they'd like to return next year. Planning is already underway.

Book Group

Submitted by Emily Stoper

The congregation's book group meets once a month, usually on the 4th Thursday evening, to discuss highly readable nonfiction books, generally under 400 pages. There's a lively core of regular attendees, but drop-ins are always welcome, provided they have read that month's book. Favorite book topics include politics, psychology, history, race relations, ecology and science. If you would like to attend a meeting or to be placed on the group's email list, contact bookgroup@gmail.com.



Covenant and Affinity Groups

Submitted by Emily Stoper

Thirty-four members and friends of our congregation attend one of four covenant groups, where they deepen relationships with each other and discuss the monthly themes as well as other personal, social and spiritual topics. One group meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday mornings of every month. The other groups meet one evening a month: on 3rd Tuesdays, 1st Thursdays, and 3rd Thursdays. All these groups are open to anyone who wishes to join. Members of the covenant groups led a Sunday service in June. A strong but unsuccessful attempt was made to start a fifth group, which is needed because all the groups have many members. For more information about any group, contact covenantgroups@uuoakland.org.

Poetry Circle

Submitted by Ron Weisberg

The Poetry Circle has thrived during the past year. We began meeting in person again, as well as continuing on Zoom. We added two new regulars and maintained our usual attendance of about 10 every month. We also began distributing our shared poems to the list serve; and have received favorable responses from several congregants. Most recently, we are assembling a collection of poetry to offer in worship, when the opportunity arises. We are a merry band, indeed.

The Music Program

Submitted by Renée Witon and Stefan Schneider

Crescendo Choir, Pop-Up Choir and Joyful Noise Band

On March 2, 2022, in-person services and music rehearsals resumed with full energy and enthusiasm among the musicians of the congregation. Live music once again continues to minister and amplify the message and mission of our church.

Choir membership saw a loss of members, due to non-musical reasons such as members leaving the church for various reasons, moving away from the Bay Area, family commitments, etc. The choir continues to have a dedicated core group that sees our choir as a “covenant group” of sorts. New members are beginning to join the choir.



The musicians of Joyful Noise Band continue to inspire and offer their talents as pre-service music. Pop-Up Choir resumed performing in services in January 2023 with great expectation and much participation, and continues to be a popular musical outlet for the church.

The Holiday Concert

Various members and Crescendo Choir also celebrated a successful live and in-person holiday concert last December as a fundraiser for the church. Musicians in the congregation contributed to a joyful and celebratory evening of music that served to unite the congregation during the holiday season. The event was coordinated by the Music Team.

Album Sales

First Unitarian Oakland Chancel Choir's three albums (*Bring Many Names*, *Music in the Air* and *Wake Now My Senses*) continue to be available for streaming on all major platforms (Spotify, iTunes, YouTube, Pandora, etc.). CD versions of these recordings continue to be sold online through the UUA Bookstore and are selling out regularly.

The Music Team looks forward to creating meaningful worship music to minister to the congregation not only during Sunday services, but also in the weekly rehearsals where camaraderie and community are developed and established. We continue to strive to reflect the mission of the church in culturally and stylistically diverse musical offerings.

Stewardship

Submitted by Rinda Bartley, Dan Wright, Jodie Mathies and Dave Ruede

The work began in June of 2022. A decision was made by the Stewardship Team and Board not to continue with the creation of a small circle year-round Stewardship model, as we felt that it was important to act as a whole congregation as we returned from the pandemic shutdown. Future Boards and Stewardship Teams may return to the year-round, small group model if this seems like it would be advantageous. The campaign was kicked off on October 9 with a service and concluded on November 20 with a Celebration Sunday luncheon, the first opportunity our community had to break bread together since the pandemic began. The campaign included small group gatherings at congregant homes and at church after services. The Stewardship Team would like to thank congregants who opened their homes to host gatherings, and those who assisted with follow-up phone calls toward the end of the campaign. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Breeze Team and Noemi de Guzman, who provided invaluable technical, accounting, database and communications assistance for the Stewardship effort, as well as the congregation for their generosity. Heartfelt thanks also goes to Nicole Fitzhugh, the Board Stewardship Liaison.



Results as of the annual meeting: 115 pledges for a total of \$318,301, which is nearly 98% of the “Victory” goal. The need for new Time and Talent pledges is ongoing.

GOALS \$400K Miracle - \$350K Challenge - \$325K Victory			
	2023	2022	2021
# Pledges	115	115	145
# New	15		
# Renewing *	100		
% Renewing	86.96%		
\$ Pledged	\$318,301	\$326,167	\$381,439
% Miracle	79.58%		
% Challenge	90.94%		
% Victory	97.94%		
* Net \$ D	1.67%		
* # Incr / same	56		
% \$ Increase	17.83%		
* # Decreased	44		
% \$ Decrease	-18.88%		
Average	\$2,768	\$2,836	\$2,631
Median	\$1,400	\$1,800	\$1,500
3/10/2023			

Program reports continue on next page



Breeze Oversight & Advisory Team (BOAT)

Submitted by Noemi de Guzman, Bill Blakely, Clark Sanford, and Maria Bielass

The Software Transition Project Team implemented Breeze as our church database in 2021. That project team wrapped up their work in early 2022. Jane Voytek, the project leader, moved away, but Noemi, Bill and Clark regrouped themselves as the BOAT to determine how to support Breeze and expand its use for other church purposes. We soon recruited Maria Bielass to help with this work. For now, our team is doing all the development & implementation, plus the ongoing administration and data entry, to keep this system going. We hope to expand use of the system, first to church staff & leaders, then to a wider audience, as we better understand what Breeze can do for us.

Notable Items since last Annual Meeting:

- The church now maintains our people, pledging and giving records in Breeze. This is the primary reason for implementing Breeze. It replaced several separate systems that were not integrated, with a single one that is. We enter new records, make updates, reconcile discrepancies, and generate reports for church staff & leaders, all from Breeze.
- We helped Stewardship conduct the Fall 2022 pledge campaign: Built a pledge form in Breeze & helped congregants use it. Did bulk mailings from Breeze for the campaign.
- We developed pledge status reports in Breeze, and bulk mailed them to congregants in the fall. We hope to send these reports to congregants quarterly.
- We worked with Finance to generate year end contribution statements, first for 2021, and recently for 2022.
- We used Breeze to develop a Covid proof of vaccination form for people to submit their records, then staff to generate check-in lists for the initial months of re-opening.
- Church staff was recently able to use Breeze records to do a comprehensive member status review, which has not been fully done since well before Covid. This review identifies members who are no longer active, or need financial waivers, and is key in identifying eligible voters for the congregational meetings.
- We worked with the Community Connections Team (CCT) to implement Guest Connection Card followup items in Breeze, and use this to notify group leaders of newcomer's interests in their church programs.
- We expanded Breeze to keep membership notes for CCT to use.
- CCT is now using Breeze to bulk email newcomers about membership events.
- CCT is also using Breeze to manage signups for Sunday Hospitality Greeters & Ushers.
- We have set up basic Breeze access for church staff, church leaders, and recently for Jef's Children & Family Ministry (CFM) Spark Team.



- We are adding RE program records to Breeze to support CFM, and plan to develop a registration form for them.
- We have started testing whether the event calendar capabilities of Breeze could better manage our various church event & rentals calendars.

Technology Team

Submitted by Clark Sanford, Michael Fitzhugh, and Noemi de Guzman

The Software Transition Project Team, which worked to implement the Breeze church database in 2021, recommended in their final report to the Operations Team that a Technology Team be formed to manage church IT systems & resources. In Feb 2022, the Ops Team approved the establishment of that Technology Team. During the summer of 2022, a working team of Noemi de Guzman, Clark Sanford, and Michael Fitzhugh, drafted a charter for this new Tech Team. On Sep 14, 2022, the Ops Team approved their charter, and appointed the working team as the Tech Team's initial members.

Since then, this new Tech Team has been working to identify and learn about church IT assets – our various computer & network equipment, systems & databases, applications and services. Our next step has been to assess how well these assets serve our needs, where improvements are needed, how they are supported, and what training & assistance is needed to use them effectively. This will be an on-going effort, as needs change and technology evolves.

Meanwhile, the Tech Team members continue to administer and support the various IT assets they have been responsible for, such as the church web site and Google suite. We also coordinate with others who already administer other church systems, such as the Breeze Team, Finance, Stewardship, and Connections Teams.

The Technology Team cannot do all this work themselves. Our main focus is to coordinate and manage the work, which is done by both us and other congregants & staff, plus outside support as needed. We welcome help from our congregation to work with us on this, to better meet the needs of our church.



Pastoral Associates

Submitted by Evelyn Sheridan

FUCO has had a committee for the support of the congregants of the church by providing comfort, practical assistance, and a sense of well-being since 1991. Due to the attrition of this group, once shortly after the current chair joined in 2019 and again in this post-isolation era, we are now four regular members who are Judith Hunt, Annette Williams, Claire Eustace (in a ministerial capacity), and Evelyn Sheridan as the chair. The group is at 50-75% capacity.

This past year we have assisted with memorial services, post-surgical support, other hospitalization support, supportive home visits, in-person and telephone conversations, located the helping hands quilt, found rides for people needing transportation assistance, and sent food to new mothers and their families.

Mary Foran and Jeffrey Melcher came forward as ministers to help with ministerial aid when Pastor Ninan was unavailable. Noemi De Guzman gave us administrative support from the office as we needed it.

Our current focus is finding and actively recruiting more members to PA, rebuilding our Lend-a-Hand list, and procuring some training sessions.

I have been in awe this past year as many people stood up and actively took care of others in the congregation, seemingly as a matter of course. That speaks volumes about the care we, as a congregation, maintain for each other and is a wonder to behold.

