

**First Unitarian Church of
Oakland BOARD OF
TRUSTEES
MEETING MINUTES
December 19, 2024 6:30 - 8:30 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. *Adopted by the congregation on March 18, 2019*

Board of Trustees:

Dave Ruede, *President*

Debby Kaplan, *Treasurer*
Dennis Rowcliffe

Evalyn Seidman, *Vice President* (task list)

Janet McFarland (timekeeper & comms. facilitator)

Judith Hunt
Marilyn McMahon, *Secretary*

Nicole Fitzhugh
Patsy Wood (chalice and readings)d

Guests:

Rev. Laurel Liefert, *Contract Minister*

Jef Melcher, *Dir. of Religious Education*

Jorim Rhee, *Congregational Administrator*

Leslie Schipa
Emily Stoper

Kate Lenhardt

Bill Blakely

<p>Open comment period (6:30 pm)</p> <p>Emily advocated for rewriting our Vision statement and requested that the Board appoint a committee to get input from the congregation, then draft a new vision, which would then be voted on by the congregation. She argued that the current vision is old and does not represent who we are now. She believes that, though we still strive to build a radically inclusive community, it is no longer our primary goal, and the vision should reflect that. Asked how a vision and a mission are distinguished, she characterized as a vision as short-term, more focused. (For example, our current vision was named “Vision 2012” and was to be realized by that year). Dave suggested she place a notice in the Chalice Chatter calling for interested congregants to volunteer for such a committee.</p> <p>Leslie proposed that UUOakland sponsor a Human Library event. “A Human Library event creates a safe space where people who volunteer to be Open Books engage in 30-minute conversations with Readers who come to learn about the lived experiences of others. The Books have experience of prejudice, discrimination, or marginalization simply because of their diagnosis, disability, beliefs, race, ethnicity, social status, LGBTQIA+ identity, lifestyle, etc.” People find these events very worthwhile. Sponsoring an event would be an opportunity to open our church to the community. It would involve providing the space, paying expenses of the Books and the organization, and giving a donation of \$400-1500. Dave suggested the Justice Team is an appropriate group to consider the proposal, and Marilyn had already forwarded Leslie’s proposal to them.</p> <p>Kate suggested we hold occasional short informational meetings after worship on Sundays, so the congregation can know more about what is going on, including church finances. The Board will put this on the agenda for its January meeting.</p>	<i>Congregation</i>
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<p>Leadership discussion (6:45 pm)</p> <p>The Board, Jef, and Rev. Laurel shared their results from the True Colors personality test, which together show our different personalities and leadership styles.</p>	<i>Rev. Laurel</i>
BUSINESS MEETING BEGINS	
Chalice lighting and opening reading (3 min)	<i>Patsy</i>
Welcome and preview of meeting (2 min)	<i>Dave</i>

<p>Consent agenda (5 min)</p> <p>A. Updates on Board activity and reporting actions taken since previous meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approved minutes of November Board meeting by email ● Correction to Nov. minutes: They erroneously stated that the October minutes had been approved. The Secretary will seek Board approval of them in the coming week. <p>B. Quick action items</p> <p>Dave asked whether the Board wanted to add to the agenda discussions of the need to form a safety committee and/or of issues of communication with the Board, and he recommended saving these for the January meeting, as they would extend tonight's meeting beyond a total of two hours. No Board members spoke in favor of addressing them tonight.</p>	<p><i>Dave</i></p>
<p>Minister's report (10 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wants to add COSM to the rotation for the Sunday worship welcome (currently done just by Board members). The idea is for the congregation to know who the lay leaders are. ● Has met a lot with Steve Thomasberger, who heads the Justice Team steering committee, and with Mary Lee of Genesis, of which our church is now a member. ● The Justice Team is planning a Listening Campaign, where training listeners will meet with 100 congregants over 100 days. The training will be held Sunday, January 26, from 12:15-2:30 pm. ● An open issue is where our anti-racism work should be based – with the Justice Team or another group? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wants to begin having monthly short meetings after the Sunday service to inform the congregation about what's going on and to answer questions, as suggested by Kate Lenhardt, who brought this idea from her experience at the Mt. Diablo church. ● In addition to the December worship services, has been planning memorials in January for Cathy Cade and Bev Smrha. 	<p><i>Rev. Laurel</i></p>
<p>Administrator's report (8 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We paid our 2024 contribution to the UUA (\$9000). ● We have joined Genesis (\$500 membership paid) ● Will spend the rest of 2024 reconciling monthly statements with bookkeeper, completing year close-out for all transactions, and completing many end-/beginning-of-year Human Resources tasks. ● We now have a volunteer, Beth Skinner, helping in the office one day a week. ● Bill Blakely is down to one or two days a week in the office. Jorim emphasizes that <i>we need other people to learn what Bill knows.</i> 	<p><i>Jorim</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We have less tech volunteer time, so there will be additional tech needs in 2025. ● Building a relationship with two new event renters, both justice-oriented organizations. ● The church would benefit from a half-time Facilities Manager. 	

<p>Religious Education report (8 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Spark team has become the “Religious Education Committee.” Jef co-chairs it with Kris Wedding Crowell. • Upcoming infant-and-child CPR workshop to be taught by David Conrod; staff attendance will be paid. • First Sundays are going well. • Staffing of the Kinder room has improved, but the 4-to-7-year-olds are outgrowing it. We need to expand to two rooms, and this will require one more volunteer or staff member. • The Young Adults group to be started by Tyler working with Jef and Heather. They’ll invite the teens to collaborate on a project with them. Coming-of-Age events are coming up – ours in April, and a regional one in January. Jef is connecting and collaborating with the SFUU YA program. • Families who might benefit from pastoral care are not contacting Pastoral Associates. Jef doesn’t know why, though he notes that the PA program is not highly visible. Judith commented that the PA notice in the Chalice Chatter does not indicate the breadth of what they do. Dave suggested that Jef make personal introductions between the families and Pastoral Associates. 	<p><i>Jef</i></p>
<p>BREAK (5 min)</p>	
<p>2025 Budget: Discuss and vote (30 min)</p> <p>At the Board’s budget retreat, we examined a draft budget that met our priorities of giving a COLA increase to staff, supporting RE to the extent that it doesn’t fund itself, continuing the Sunday plate share, and addressing needs for facilities maintenance. The need to discuss our vision of the RE program became apparent, and the draft was revised to reflect that, adding some new RE staffing.</p> <p>Nicole urged the Board to remember that approving a budget does not set things in stone. A budget can be changed down the road if necessary. And since we plan to change the fiscal year, this budget will really only last through June.</p> <p>She shared her screen showing the latest draft of the budget, and reviewed income and spending. The large preponderance of our spending is on staff and facilities. The budget includes \$14K for our UUA contribution next year. If we agree to raise our draw from the Wendte Endowment to 6%, the budget will show a \$9146 deficit for the year.</p> <p>MOTION to direct the Finance Tea to raise the draw from the Wendte Endowment to 6.0% (Janet, 2nd Debby) – PASSED</p>	<p><i>Nicole</i></p>

<p>Nicole emphasized that any positions not funded in this budget are not ruled out: they may still be added in the future. Also, the DRE can reallocate funds not spent on, say, hiring, to other RE areas of need.</p> <p>Marilyn wanted to be sure that the budget allows for technical contract hires for, especially, the website. Nicole assured that the Operations Team or the Board can approve spending for that as needed.</p> <p>The budget includes a general staff COLA increase of 3% and a raise for Jef to \$32/hour.</p> <p>MOTION to increase Jef’s pay to \$32/hour, effective January 1, 2025 (Janet, 2nd Nicole) – PASSED.</p> <p>MOTION to approve the budget presented, but adjusted if necessary to reflect Jef’s raise, to be effective January 1, 2025 (Nicole, 2nd Debby) – PASSED.</p>	
<p>Fiscal/budget year change (to sync with program year) (10 min)</p> <p>We want to change our fiscal year to run from July 1 to June 30. Jodie has suggested changing our <i>budget year</i> without changing our fiscal year with the IRS. This would be much simpler and may save costs.</p> <p>The secretary will invite Jodie to the January meeting so she can walk us through how the church can make this change.</p> <p>At the January meeting, we will also discuss the by-laws changes we want the congregation to approve (one regarding term limits, the other moving the date of the congregational meeting), and will appoint a committee to draft the changes. Till then, we need to recruit people for the committee.</p>	<i>Dave</i>
<p>“For the good of the order” (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board thank-you’s: Corless for crafts fair (Evalyn); Jodie for cookies after the concert; Jane Facente (Patsy), Kate Lenhardt, (Patsy), and Kate Lenhardt and Beth Skinner (Dave) for decorating the church for the holidays; Susan, Renee, and all the musicians for the winter concert. (Marilyn will include this in her piece for next week’s Chalice Chatter.) • Review task commitments made tonight 	<i>Dave, Evalyn</i>
<p>Extinguish chalice & closing reading (4 min)</p>	<i>Patsy</i>
<p>END OF MEETING</p>	

BIKE RACK (Topics saved for future meeting)

- Safety Committee
- Communication from the Board to the congregation and staff
- Changing our fiscal/budget year

- Appoint committee to draft by-laws changes