

**First Unitarian Church of Oakland**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**MEETING AGENDA**  
**January 28, 2025 6:30 p.m.**

**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* (chalice and readings)

Nicole Fitzhugh  
Patsy Wood

**Guests:**

Rev. Laurel Liefert, *Contract Minister*

Jorim Rhee, *Congregational Administrator*

Jef Melcher, *DRE*

Amy Carlson, *for COSM*  
Claire Eustace, *Community Minister*

Kate Lenhardt

Clark Sanford

<p><b>Open comment period (15 min)</b>  (Members and friends to speak; 3 minutes each. Secretary reads aloud comments sent by email.)  Kate: The short informational meetings (that she suggested last month and the Board will discuss tonight) functioned to draw people more into the church. Board president and treasurer, plus minister, usually spoke. A half hour was a good length, not longer. As to extending length of time Board members can serve, Kate believes there should be a limit of only one additional year.</p> <p>Clark: We used to have such after worship where one of the church groups would talk about what they're doing, or Stefan would explain how to reserve a room. We could have any group or staff person share information. For example, Clark could give a talk about using our online tools like Google drives.</p> <p>Jef liked the idea of informational meetings as a way for the Board to communicate more with congregation and staff.</p> <p>Debby liked that these meetings would allow more people to know what's going on without having to take on responsibilities or sit through long meetings.</p>	<i>Congregation</i>
<b>"Deep chair" discussion</b> (on a reading by Rebecca Parker's <i>Blessing the World</i> )	<i>Rev. Laurel</i>
<b>Business meeting begins</b>	
<b>Chalice lighting and opening reading (3 min)</b>	<i>Marilyn</i>
<b>Welcome and preview of meeting (2 min)</b>	<i>Dave</i>

<p><b>Consent agenda (5 min)</b></p> <p>A. Updates on Board activity and reporting actions taken since previous meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicated the new deadlines for written reports to Board (4 days before meeting), with objective that Board members will read reports in advance and reports time at the meeting will be used for Q&amp;A.</li> </ul> <p>Rev. Laurel, Jef, and Jorim agree with this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correction to December minutes about the approval of October minutes. The November minutes were correct after all. The October minutes had been approved unanimously by email.</li> </ul> <p>B. Quick action items  (An item may be moved to "For the Good of the Order" if more discussion is needed.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>MOTION to approve the December minutes (Marilyn, 2nd Dennis)</b>  <b>– PASSED</b></p>	<i>Dave</i>
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<p><b>Minister's report (8 min)</b></p> <p>Has been working much more than 20 hours a week. Exceeds 20 hours each week just preparing worship. That's not good for congregation or future minister. So next program year, would like to be paid for 3/4 time.</p> <p>Very committed to UUOakland, and to seeing the growth of seeds she sowed. Wants to be able to continue work she's begun and have us be an active, healthy church when we search for a new minister.</p> <p>Would like to change the Embracing Meditation part of the service. In current form, where we ask people to speak out loud their concerns/joys/sorrows, it's not working. Would like to change to a book where people write them down, which this could also inform the pastoral associates of new needs of congregation members.</p> <p>The last couple of services have been exciting. Attendance at recent meetings was great (Program Council: 35 people, Justice Team:30, Listening Campaign: 35).</p> <p>The Listening Campaign is not just for the Justice Team, but for the church as a whole. It's more about building relationships with each other than getting information.</p> <p>She has been watching a Stewardship training webinar, and recommends that Board members watch it too.</p> <p>Nicole: An idea for reducing Rev. Laurel's worship workload and accommodating needed work of the various church teams would be to replace worship on one Sunday a month with time for all groups to have their meetings or work sessions.</p> <p>Marilyn: Found out that the Starr King church, though with about half the membership of ours, is getting a full-time minister. Wants to learn about other</p>	<p><i>Rev. Laurel</i></p>
<p>congregations' budgets. Wondering whether we're managing our resources as well as we can, or if there could be a way for us to afford a full-time minister.</p>	

<p><b>Administrator's report (6 min)</b>  Noted that our congregation and staff both include people who belong to one or more of the groups the new US administration is targeting. It's important for us to keep that in mind.</p> <p>Staff members are now receiving their 3% increase (COLA) approved by the Board in December.</p> <p>The website was purposefully stripped down and simplified a year ago by our previous administrator (Daisy) because we did not have the staff or volunteer resources to maintain it in its old form. Jorim does not have capacity to add more website duties to her responsibilities.</p> <p>Asks the Board for clarification of who Zach's supervisor is. This is becoming more important because we are having more church events and he is having more responsibilities.</p>	<p><i>Jorim</i></p>
<p><b>Religious Education report (6 min)</b>  The children's programs are growing. The 5-11 -year-olds now need a separate room from the 0-4 group in the Kinder Room.</p> <p>Four teens from UUOakland, and ten from other UU congregations, participated in an all-day retreat one Saturday with Faithful Fools.</p> <p>RE is understaffed still. He's interviewing a teen for the teen position but also needs to hire another adult. There was a critical shortage of staff and volunteers to manage the children's rooms during the 1/26 Sunday service. Dave suggested that, if there are not enough staff and volunteers to cover each room, Jef ask the congregation for volunteers before the "singing out of the children" portion of the worship service.</p>	<p><i>Jef</i></p>
<p><b>Pastoral Care (15 min)</b>  Claire has worked at times without being paid. She did pastoral care for us last summer but did not get a monthly on-call fee. She worked without a Memo of Understanding. Nicole apologized for this on behalf of the Board. The Board erred in not making sure there was an MOU in place for the summer.</p> <p>Claire has now been paid for all the work she invoiced this year. (She does not bill for small tasks like answering emails or phone calls).</p> <p>Claire and Rev. Laurel discussed coverage of pastoral care visits during the program year. Laurel suggests that she be the main "on call" minister for pastoral care calls during the church year. Claire will handle the summer.</p> <p>It's important that both Rev. Laurel and Claire document their pastoral care time so we can budget accurately.</p>	<p><i>Rev. Laurel, Claire</i></p>

<p><b>Defining “shared ministry” – Committee on Shared Ministry (COSM) (5 min)</b> (Background: COSM submitted a definition to the Board. Laila had drafted it by consulting online information from other congregations, the Shared Ministry handbook by Barbara Childs, and a UU World article. The other COSM members then reviewed it. The Board, however, had expected the definition to be the result of polling of the congregation. )</p> <p>It was suggested that COSM consider creating a forum for interested congregants to voice their ideas of shared ministry. There are strong and differing views of shared ministry among the congregation.</p> <p>The Board does not expect any further deliverable from COSM by March 16 (the annual meeting). COSM’s work on defining shared ministry and their work as the conflict-resolution task force should be done by our second annual meeting in June.</p> <p>Discussion shifted to the current survey put out by COSM. It was decided that COSM could present the results at the June annual meeting.</p>	<p><i>Amy (COSM)</i></p>
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**Status of two priority task forces (10 min)**

*Dave,  
Amy (COSM)*

- **Antiracism**
- **Conflict resolution**

Amy reported that COSM had been doing some UUA online trainings about Right Relations work (conflict resolution). The trainers recommend against giving responsibility for COSM work and Right Relations work to the same committee. Amy suggested that COSM could do trainings and have a handout about how to handle conflicts through direct conversation.

Also, Amy noted that the Disruptive Persons policy gives a role to COSM. The policy title is too harsh. Rev. Laurel suggested it might be renamed Right Relations. Clarifying the difference between the Disruptive Persons and Safety policies, Nicole explained that the DPP was instituted when there were protesters harassing congregants over political issues, and the SP addresses threats like an active shooter.

Given that the antiracism and conflict-resolution task forces were never formed and that the Board didn't follow through with directing their operation, Nicole suggested rescinding the Board motion that called for them. Marilyn objected, saying that an antiracism task force was necessary. Either the Board or a task force needs to convene conversations/meetings about what kind of antiracism work the congregation wants to do.

Janet and Marilyn expressed hope that the the deep-listening approach of the Listening Campaign could be extended into antiracism training/ education as well as conflict resolution.

Debby cautioned against the Board or the congregation taking on too much at once. Tonight, various needs and shortages have been expressed that are signs that we are growing—a good thing. But we are stretched as to volunteer time and energy, so must limit what we take on.

**BREAK (5 min)**

<p><b>Formation of communications strategy team (10 min)</b>  Dave changed the allotted time to five minutes. He offered comments about the congregation's needs in the area of communications.</p> <p>Nicole asked whether it might help to outsource our website work. Clark said No. He explained that what we lack is not technical work but rather a strategy and people providing information for the website. Before developing the technical aspects of communication, the church must develop a strategy: What do we want to accomplish with, for example, the website? Who is our audience? What is the message? Who will provide the content? What technical resources are available, and who will manage it all?</p> <p>Nicole said that the Board will decide what kind of team will work on communications strategy and will form the team at next month's meeting. Will also communicate to Clark what work is authorized.</p>	<p><i>Dave</i></p>
<p><b>Goals and dates of annual meetings (March and May/June) (15 min)</b> The standard annual meeting has already been set for March 16th. We are changing our budget year to match the program year (July 1 - June 30) rather than the calendar year. So we need a second annual meeting in May or June, before the new budget year begins.</p> <p><b>MOTION to schedule the second annual meeting for June 1, 2025 (Patsy, 2nd Judith) – PASSED.</b></p> <p>After discussion of the goals of each meeting, the Board plans the following:</p> <p>At the March 16 meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elect new Board members (and a nominating committee if the bylaws require this to be done at the March meeting)</li> <li>• Submit two amendments of the bylaws for a vote</li> <li>• Announce the June 1st meeting.</li> </ul> <p>At the June 1 meeting, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give a preview of plans for next program year</li> <li>• Present the updated budget (but not submit it to congregational vote) • Suggest that members increase their pledges so we can pay Rev. Laurel for 3/4 time</li> <li>• Call for congregants to form the antiracism and conflict resolution task forces • Elect more Board members, if needed. A full board is 12 members. • Elect the nominating committee (if not done in March)</li> </ul> <p>We need to hire Vincent to manage the zoom polls (votes).</p>	<p><i>Dave</i></p>
<p><b>Informational meetings after worship (10 min)</b>  Discussion concluded with Janet volunteering to work with Rev. Laurel to organize one such meeting.</p>	<p><i>Dave</i></p>

<p><b>Special announcement by the president:</b> Due to ongoing and recently diagnosed medical conditions that require him to reduce stress, Dave resigns from the Board, effective at the end of tonight's meeting.</p>	
<p><b>Proposed by-law changes</b> (10 min)  Marilyn will draft bylaw amendment proposals with Ingrid Mittermaier, Meri Lane, and Reilly Hirst, to move the annual meeting date from March to June, and to allow Board members to serve consecutive terms. She asked Board members for their thoughts about term limits.</p> <p>Most thought that allowing a second 3-year term made sense. Suggestions: Allow person to run for 1, 2, or 3 years as their second term; require 2/3 majority vote for a second term; require person to explain why they want another term (for example, specific work they're involved in that is ongoing).</p>	<p><i>Marilyn</i></p>
<p><b>“For the good of the order”</b> (5 min)  (Questions, brief planning, spontaneous items, or pulled from consent agenda)</p> <p><b>MOTION to elect Nicole as interim president until March (Marilyn, 2nd Patsy) – PASSED</b></p> <p>Big Board thank you to Dave for his magnificent leadership and dedication to our Board this past year.</p> <p>Thank you to Nicole for her willingness to step up as interim president.</p> <p>Nicole will write a thank-you to Jef for his leadership of the teen retreat in SF.</p>	<p><i>Dave, Evalyn</i></p>
<p><b>Extinguish chalice &amp; closing reading</b> (3 min)</p>	<p><i>Marilyn</i></p>
<p><b>END OF MEETING</b></p>	

**BIKE RACK** (Topics saved for future meeting)

- Safety committee
- Form communications strategy team
- Process for hiring minister for 2026-27