

First Unitarian Church of Oakland BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES February 25, 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. <i>Adopted by the congregation on March 18, 2019</i>
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Board of Trustees: Nicole Fitzhugh, <i>President</i> Debby Kaplan, <i>Treasurer</i> Marilyn McMahon, <i>Secretary</i> Evalyn Seidman, <i>Vice President</i> Dennis Rowcliffe Janet McFarland (timekeeper & comms. facilitator) Judith Hunt Patsy Wood	Guests: Jorim Rhee, <i>Congregational Administrator</i> Jef Melcher, <i>DRE</i> Kate Lenhardt Bill Blakely Laurel Egenberger
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Open comment period 6:30 pm (15 min) Laurel Egenberger, who will be Moderator of the annual meeting 3/16, reminded the Board to hold the votes to change the bylaws <i>before</i> holding the election of Trustees. Bill is helping Jorim compile the voting-members list. The bylaws say that the criteria for voting are to have signed the membership book and pledged in the current year. Both 2024 and 2025 pledges will be counted as current.	<i>Congregation</i>
“Deep chair” discussion 6:45 pm (15 min) Expressed views on Rebecca Parker’s chapter “Not Somewhere else but Here.”	<i>Dennis</i>
Business meeting 7:00 pm	
Chalice lighting and opening reading	<i>Dennis, Janet</i>

<p>Welcome and preview of meeting</p> <p>Consent agenda</p> <p>A. Updates on Board activity and reporting actions taken since previous meeting. B. Quick action items</p> <p>MOTION to ask Building and Grounds (BAG) team to create a Safety subcommittee (Janet, 2nd Patsy) – PASSED</p> <p>After submitting her request for Board approval of a donation of \$500 for the year to DRUUMM for their worship services, Janet decided that the request was not appropriately specified, and withdrew it.</p>	<p><i>Nicole</i></p> <p><i>Nicole</i></p>
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<p>MOTION to authorize Clark and/or the tech team to resume doing any work on the website that they deem necessary, until the Board has developed a church communications strategy (Marilyn, 2nd Janet) – PASSED</p> <p>MOTION to approve the minutes of the January 2025 Board meeting (Marilyn, 2nd Evalyn) – PASSED</p>	
<p>Minister's report</p> <p>In Rev. Laurel's absence (vacation), Nicole reviewed highlights of her written report. During the last month, Rev. Laurel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● helped the Justice Team (steering committee) to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ prepare its inspiring service and ○ launch UU Oakland's partnership with Genesis, including the current Listening Campaign to foster deeper connections among our congregation ● led a memorial service for Cathy Cade, attended by hundreds of people ● led a "generations" service that featured members of the congregation ranging from 10 to 82 ● taught her monthly sermon-writing seminar ● directed two Worship Associates meetings ● participated in the Reaffirming Sanctuary procession and vigil in San Francisco ● attended the monthly gathering of Bay Area UU clergy, who agreed to urge their congregations to join and support interfaith justice work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● welcomed the hundreds of Vedanta Society followers who celebrated in our church the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's talk here in 1900 	<p><i>Nicole</i></p>

<p>Administrator's report and Operations Team report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed the annual UUA certification • Changing our insurance company for property coverage because current company will raise rates by at least 30%. (We will keep our liability coverage with them, though.) Our insurance agent is shopping for a new carrier, and Jorim advises Board officers, Operations Team, and BAG (Building and Grounds) chair to attend his upcoming (April) presentation, which will contain much important information. Particularly, the application and quote process gives valuable insight into what executive policies and building repairs should be prioritized. • Communicated to the Ops Team our need for a staffing map and an overall review of all staff's responsibilities and roles, to close a consistent gap in all staff's understanding of who does what. • After a review of hourly wage employees (by Jorim, Operations Team, and Personnel Committee), proposes to the Board: Amend the 2025 budget to accommodate an increase for hourly wage employees to move towards a "livable wage standard". Using MIT-developed standards for Alameda County, we would need an additional \$2000 for wages. The Ops Team has consulted with the Finance Team and this is financially viable. 	<p><i>Jorim</i></p>
<p>Religious Education report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads up on an upcoming need for new teen youth group hire for next program year. Nicole asked Jef to email the Board with specifics so we can put it on agenda for an executive session. 	<p><i>Jef</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Religious Education Committee have divided up their work. Team is working well. • Does the Board need specific attendance numbers of all Children & Family groups? Nicole: Quarterly averages should suffice, noting any trends. 	
<p>Treasurer's report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put on the Board google drive an Excel spreadsheet with January budget vs. actuals. We compare monthly actuals to benchmark of 1/12 (or 8.33%) of annual budget and watch for significant variances from that. Looks good so far. • The Finance Team hopes that BAG will develop a plan of when large facilities expenditures will be made. 	<p><i>Debby</i></p>
<p>Human Library event</p> <p>Leslie Schipa proposed that we host a Human Library event here, providing the space, chairs, snacks, etc. and a \$400 - \$1500 donation, while she would organize it, providing the personnel and publicity. HL events foster learning about others' diverse lived experience, so are strongly in line with our values and ends. Board members also like that such an event could draw in the local community.</p> <p>Decided that Patsy would ask Leslie for a more specific requested donation and Board will consider it at next montly meeting. Then we'll need to set a date – maybe in the summer?</p>	<p><i>Nicole, Leslie</i></p>

<p>Formation of Communications Strategy team</p> <p>Discussion of the difficulties of getting enough volunteers to do the work to substantially communicate within and beyond our congregation via the website, let alone any additional media. Nicole wonders whether it is possible and worthwhile to assemble a team to create a communications strategy/vision. There are also other viable approaches to enticing new people into the church.</p> <p>Jorim emphasized the need for congregants to accept our current size and capacity. We need to accept what we can do right now as good enough, knowing that as we grow, we'll do more. Debby added that prospective volunteers need not to feel daunted by the task and need to know that others will accept what's realistic. Nicole will meet to hear Jorim's vision for communications strategy, and Nicole will convey it to the whole Board.</p>	<p><i>Nicole, Jorim</i></p>
<p>BREAK 8:06 pm (5 min)</p>	
<p>Rev. Kevin Mann's proposal expenses</p> <p>Nicole summarized the history of our affiliation agreement with Rev. Kevin. The Board negotiated an agreement with him and COSM (Committee on Shared Ministry) which would include reimbursing up to \$500 for the year for his expenses in developing a proposal for antiracism work connecting UU Oakland to larger efforts. This did not get incorporated into the agreement, leading to confusion. Nicole has instructed Jorim to process reimbursement requests from Rev. Kevin, and will talk with COSM and Rev. Kevin to work toward a specific understanding going forward.</p>	<p><i>Nicole</i></p>

<p>Antiracism work: Next steps on antiracism plan task force; Justice Endowment funds process</p> <p>To elicit volunteers for an antiracism plan task force, Nicole will give a pitch at the annual meeting and will post a signup sheet.</p> <p>What is the language from the Justice endowment for use of the money? Janet: The only direction is that it is for "justice" work; it's up to us to interpret. Years ago, we developed some guidelines. Janet will try to find those. The Board will revisit this topic next month.</p> <p>Who should determine Justice grant awards? The Justice Team Steering Committee declined to take that on. Suggestions: Use Justice grants to match the split-plate donations to organizations; have the Program Council award the grants.</p>	<p><i>Nicole</i></p>
<p>Informational meetings/Board updates after worship</p> <p>Dates for series of "Board Updates" have been set: 1st Sundays of March, April, and May, from 11:35 - 12:15.</p> <p>In the first session, this Sunday, Janet plans to talk about our long-term ministry hopes and what's needed from the congregation. Specifically, a plan is in the works where Rev. Laurel would stay at least the next two years as we prepare for our next minister. It is contingent on an increase in Laurel's pay to 75% time, so we need the congregation to increase pledges to cover the additional 25%. The informational meeting offers an opportunity to build support for the plan and get feedback about it.</p>	<p><i>Janet</i></p>

Proposed by-law changes Discussed the draft of text regarding bylaws changes to be voted on by congregation on March 16. Some edits proposed, but in the end the Board decided to approve the draft without changes.	<i>Marilyn</i>
“For the good of the order” (Questions, brief planning, spontaneous items, or pulled from consent agenda) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed task commitments made by Board members tonight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicole will email COSM and Rev. Kevin for clarification about reimbursement agreement Nicole will meet with Jorim to discuss next steps for a Communication Plan Janet will look at past Justice funds and contact Rev. Laurel about having Program Council decide grants Patsy will contact Leslie Schipa about preparing a specific proposal for the Human Library event. Marilyn will ask Finance Team rep to be at next Board meeting Board thank-you’s – By email, Board members will sign up to write particular thank-you’s 	<i>Nicole, Evalyn</i>
END OF PUBLIC MEETING EXECUTIVE SESSION BEGINS 9:00 pm	
Personnel matters	

Extinguish chalice & closing reading	<i>Dennis, Patsy</i>
END OF MEETING 9:20 pm	

BIKE RACK (Topics saved for future meeting)

- Human Library event
- Criteria and process for Justice grants
- DRE job description
- COSM progress report on “shared ministry” definition
- Timeline for preparing to hire next minister
- Leadership Development Committee (Rev. Laurel recommends)
- Stewardship for Us (Rev. Laurel recommends)