

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert  
Board of Directors Regular Meeting, November 16, 2021  
Minutes

**Attending:**

BOD Attending by Zoom Meeting: President Linda Savard, 1st Vice President Hiroshi Yamaguchi, 2nd Vice President Barbara Storms, Treasurer Fred Bloss, Secretary Rod Belshee, Director-at-Large Bob Rancourt, Director-at-Large Rob DuWors, and Minister Reverend Ian Riddell.

BOD Absent: *none*

Congregational Members by Zoom Meeting:

Sheryl Eaton, Mel Wilkinson, Sarita Gonzales, Jane Zaun, Jerry L'Hommedieu, Fran Hoag (briefly)

**Meeting minutes:**

1. Opening and Chalice Lighting: Linda called the regular Board Meeting to order at 5:00 pm PST by Zoom Meeting.

2. Welcome and Check-in: Linda led a check-in of Board Members.

3. Approval of Board Minutes: The Board approved a motion to accept the minutes for the October 19, 2021 regular meeting of the Board.

4. Process Monitor and Timekeeper: Fred Bloss

5. Board Action Between Regular Board Meetings:

The following Board action is incorporated into these minutes:

- a. The Board held a special meeting on November 2, 2021 and approved a motion to remove the restriction of Members and Friends only at the Sunday Worship Service.

6. Voices of the Congregation:

<none>

## 7. Reports:

a. President Linda Savard: Linda submitted a written report. In the meeting she reported progress with two candidates for the Committee on Ministry.

b. 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Hiroshi Yamaguchi: Hiroshi submitted a written report. In the meeting, he added that the new art pieces will be installed in early December.

c. 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Barbara Storms: Barbara submitted a written report. There was no discussion.

d. Treasurer Fred Bloss: Fred submitted a written report regarding our financial position and notable financial events.

e. Director-at-Large Bob Rancourt: Bob submitted a written report. There was no discussion.

f. Director-at-Large Rob DuWors: Rob submitted a written report. There was no discussion.

### g. Minister Reverend Ian Riddell:

Reverend Ian submitted a written report. In the meeting he added that two Choir Directors interviews will occur this Sunday, and that he is discussing outdoor choir activities. He will amend his written report to include his worship activities.

## 8. Old Business:

### a. Attitude of Gratitude, Rob

Cards for Gratitude will be sent from the entire Board:

- Carol Lavoie, Barb Storms, Peter Mathews and Fred Bloss for the auction. Barb will supply a list of additional Auction volunteers.
- Sandy Sladen, Margaret Manson, Peter Matthews and Bryna Blum for Lifespan events.
- Chris Eager, Roger Beaman, Sarita Gonzales and Fred Bloss for the campaign to Pay Off the Mortgage.

### b. Facilities Update, Rod

Rod submitted a written report. In the meeting Hiroshi added that our usual tree trimmer (Leon Landscaping) is not available until next year and Hiroshi is looking for an alternative. Our Palo Verde trees are heavily diseased and need attention. Hiroshi also added that he and Linda have discussed ideas for updating aesthetics of the foyer and hall with an intention of increasing inclusion. Sarita mentioned that she can refer us to local native artists if we wish to commission any

work.

c. Covid Protocols/Sunday Service, Hiroshi and Rod

Nothing to report.

d. Building Usage / AV Equipment Update, Rod

Building Use. Last month, the Board discussed updates required for the Building Use policy to reflect the new AV gear. Rod reported that two people in Facilities have agreed to look into it and propose updates.

AV Equipment. Rod submitted a written report. In the meeting he made one change – the AV Professional scheduled for Thursday canceled. Rod commented that a number of people have now been trained and generally they find the system to be quite easy to operate.

e. Auction Update, Barb

Barb submitted a written report, and Carol Lavoie will submit a report at a later date. In the meeting Barb reviewed the report, including an updated total of \$20,400. She emphasized the community building aspects of the Auction, including the number of items that are social events and the large number of volunteers. Concern for inclusion for people of more modest means was raised, and discussion mentioned that a number of food items and events are offered at low fixed prices and that some private individuals buy more expensive items that they then pass on to others. Further, the Variety Show was created to provide an alternative fun event like the Auction but with no cost to attendees.

A looming issue is the need for new leadership.

9. New Business

a. Special Congregational Meeting – Mortgage Payoff, Sarita/Linda

Sarita reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the campaign. Last month the Board agreed with a Finance Committee recommendation to hold a Congregational Meeting in December for approval to pay off the mortgage. However due to the combination of \$25,000 paid from prior year carry-over, generous contributions of \$85,900, and the benefit of early payments, the remaining balance, deducting budgeted payments and additional contributions due in January, the incremental amount to be paid is well within the approved budget, in particular considering that we have not yet hired an Assistant Minister or Choir Director.

Discussion emphasized that this was a major milestone for the Church.

Instead of a Congregational Meeting for Approval, the Finance Committee now recommends a celebratory event, with the theme “The Little Church that Could”. The Board passed a motion to pay

off the mortgage balance “as soon as practicable” and to hold the celebratory event, probably December 12 after services. Discussion included notifying living donors of the original construction project that the mortgage is now being retired.

#### b. Board Reports, Linda

Each month, the Board Members submit written reports. This fosters efficient communication and greatly reduces the time required in the meeting. The Board discussed this practice and agreed to continue written reports with limited time in the meeting for review. Further, the Board discussed making these all Board Meeting documents (Director reports, agenda item documents, ...) available to Board Members and the congregation on the Friday before the Board Meeting. The content was briefly discussed with no intent to standardize content.

#### c. Communication Policy and Procedures, Barb

Discussion of the Communication Policy and Procedure was deferred from last month. Barb highlighted the two questions raised last month: is the process too onerous, and is the archive policy a separate policy.

Discussion included the staffing needed to implement the policy and procedure, the separation of policy and procedure. Fred and Rod offered to help offline with detailed questions and suggestions

Barb will pull together the ad hoc team and Rod and Fred to separate the Policy from Procedure, resolve detailed issues, and then bring back the Policy for a second reading at the next Board meeting and the Procedures for a first reading. The Board will still need to address how we implement the Procedures, such as staffing a Communications Committee.

#### d. Pledge Drive – Priorities for the coming year, pledge theme, Linda/Jerry

Jerry requested the Board to provide clear input for the pledge drive. He emphasized the value of starting with strategic goals to set a budget then use those to drive pledge drive goals and messages. E.g. the Board might decide to focus on a Youth Program, or Music, or some-such and that would drive the budget and pledge drive.

The Board agreed to meet with members of the Finance Committee before December 12th to provide such clarity. Discussion included using the Pay Off the Mortgage celebration to solicit input from congregants on their priorities. Having costs associated with the ideas would be beneficial throughout the process.

#### e. Board Retreat Debrief / Strategic Goals, Linda

Linda requested that the sub-teams that agreed to refine the Strategic Goals please complete their work before the next Board Meeting. Rod will resend the sub-team assignments.

f. ICD Use of the facility – Fees, Linda

Discussion of the fees for ICD rental of the facilities was moved to the Executive session.

10. Process Monitor Report, Fred

Did we stay on topic? yes

Did we stay on time? Close!

Did everyone get to contribute, were all voices heard?

Did we follow our covenant?

11. Extinguish Chalice and Adjournment of Regular Board Meeting

Reverend Ian offered closing thoughts and extinguished a chalice. Linda adjourned the regular Board meeting at 7:13 pm.

12. Closed Session

The Executive Session ended at 7:48pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Rod Belshee

December 21, 2021

Date Approved

Addendum to Board of Directors Meeting  
Written Reports of Board Members and Committee Chairs

**Attachments**

Written Reports of Board Members and Minister

- A) President Linda Savard's written report
- B) 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Hiroshi Yamaguchi's written report
- C) 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Barbara Storm's written report
- D) Treasurer Fred Bloss's written report
- E) Director at Large Bob Rancourt's written report
- F) Director at Large Rob DuWor's written report
- G) Minister Reverend Ian W. Riddell's written report

## a. President Linda Savard's written report:

### **Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Ministry (DIBM)**

At this month's meeting we continued our discussion on our goals. We will continue to work on refining and prioritizing them. The development of a Cultural Corner at the church was explored again. Hiroshi and I will get others involved to work on that and on the aesthetics of the foyer and community room. We debriefed the church council meeting and moved forward on the adoption of the eighth principle. Leaders who volunteered from the church council meeting were identified to help with this process. Bryna and Joni, from the worship committee, joined us. During this discussion time we covered moving from being "not racist" to anti-racist", we discussed our land acknowledgment and possible changes to it, and possible changes to the Sunday Worship in general.

### **Beloved Conversations**

We had our first meeting with our coach, Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons. We had a period of getting to know each other a little deeper. We began work on writing our covenant. Linda and Sandy will gather additional suggestions for items in the covenant and put together a draft covenant for all members to review and offer changes.

### **Committee on Ministry**

In conversations with a couple of congregants who had suggestions regarding possible members to serve on COM. Rev. Ian and I met and reviewed those names and others. We are in the process of checking to see who would be interested and available to serve on COM.

I also did some reading about the history and current thinking on Committees on Ministry within the UUA. Rev. Ian and I discussed how we would like to see the Committee on Ministry function within UUCOD. We would like the committee to be aware of the "pulse" of the church and to keep Rev. Ian up to date on how things are going. We also want them to implement Right Relations Policy and to be available for mediation between congregants when difficulties arise.

### **Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee is moving forward with gathering information from all committees on the roles and responsibilities of the chairs and co-chairs. This will help in developing what is needed in the area of leadership development.

### **Personnel**

We have received applications for the Choir Director, Rev. Ian has had initial conversations with the applicants and formal interviews will happen in the next couple of weeks.

We have not yet moved forward on looking for and hiring a part time minister. We still need to determine what would be the responsibilities of a 20% minister at this time.

**Additional**

I participated in a film series class facilitated by Sandy Sladen and Margaret Manson offered through Lifespan Spiritual Growth. This was an excellent class with deep discussions that led to new insights and appreciation of the lives of individuals from a variety of cultures and experiences within North America.

b. 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Hiroshi Yamaguchi's written report:

Report is limited to items pertaining to work of the Board or items that the board should be made aware of.

In the process of forming an ad hoc group to prepare a proposal to be approved by the BOD for possible changes to the "Aesthetic Furnishings, Decor and Art inside of our building to include the foyer, hall, community room and possibly the sanctuary. Will carry this process through in Accordance with our Aesthetic Furnishings, Decor and Art Policy and Procedure approved by the BOD 3/17/20.

All funds for the transportation of the 2 sculptures being donated by Gene Kain have been received and the location of the sculptures has been proposed by the group of donors for approval by the Board. Concrete foundations for the sculptures will likely be formed and poured next week in preparation for their arrival sometime early in December. The addendums to the Policy and Procedure (Gift or Loan Agreement & Checklist) have been completed. This transfer of ownership is being made with no restrictions, including but not limited to limitations on display or disposition. All costs of installation are being paid by the artist. This acquisition is possible through the generosity of the artist and the group of donors in this self-funded effort.

Addendum

Our donor group and the artist decided this morning on the locations for the 2 sculptures referenced on my board report. I have included images of the locations on our grounds and of the sculptures. We are proposing that "Sonoranson #1" (the stainless steel sculpture) will be placed in the open area between the labyrinth and the middle parking area and "Sonoran Desert" (the kinetic sculpture with suspended stone) will be located on the unpaved "planter" area across from the steps to our plaza.

<Hiroshi submitted pictures of the art and the locations>

c. 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Barbara Storm's written report:

**Stewardship at UUCOD is defined as strengthening our community by deepening our quality of belonging and connection within and between members of our community.** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President will chair the Stewardship Committee (Bylaws, p.15).

**Stewardship Goal 1: Plan, offer and assist with social activities to encourage fellowship (e.g., Auction, Social BUUterfly events, Pledge Drive kickoff)**

- Five Social Butterfly events were organized or publicized by Sheryl Eaton (Stewardship Committee) in the last month including Gals & Pizza (12 attendees), four Community Concerts (from 4 to 9 attendees per concert)
- The Stewardship Committee did most of the organizing and publicity for the auction (Carol Lavoie and Barb Storms co-chairs) and much of the managing of the event. (See separate Auction report)

**Stewardship Goal 2: Provide volunteer opportunities and encourage volunteer participation in activities in order to build relationships with other congregants**

- Stewardship Committee members served as volunteers for the auction and recruited other volunteers to assist. A total of 23 volunteers helped put on the auction.

**Stewardship Goal 3: Strengthen connections with the Care and Membership Committees to better define how each committee is connecting with and supporting members and friends.**

- Organized a joint meeting between Stewardship, Care and Membership committees to discuss needs of the community and what each committee does. Another meeting will likely be arranged in a few months to continue the conversation.
- The three committees agreed to set up a subcommittee (1 representative from each committee) to develop a system for tracking member and friend engagement in various church activities and worship services in order to identify members and friends who need attention from Stewardship, Care or Membership
- I continue to attend Membership Committee meetings to ensure communication between Membership and Stewardship Committees. Much of the discussion at the Membership meeting was about recruiting and training greeters (LeGrand Velez, lead) and distribution of the directory (Mel Wilkinson, lead).

d. Treasurer Fred Bloss's written report:

As of October 29th, the church held cash assets of \$286,475.23 in its bank accounts. Reserve and restricted funds totaled \$182,963.16, leaving a balance of \$43,049.24 in unrestricted funds.

**Pay-Down-the-Mortgage:**

This topic has, unfortunately, become an area of great conflict, controversy & spongy accountability. I have done my best, since July 1, 2021, to get a handle on the numbers needed to achieve a final payoff of the outstanding principal balance of UUCOD's mortgage. The sources of data I was able to accumulate and tried to reconcile were varied, not easily verifiable and questionable from long before July. As such, I managed, after a week of prodding, to get an accounting of our mortgage situation from the UUA according to THEIR records. They sent me a report showing their recorded activity on our loan since January 2021. Here is a link to that report:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-01ox9mmQ-MNtpoS9FcCxYtBCfZjw3-3/view?usp=sharing>

This document shows, as of November 2, 2021, a principal balance of \$44,089.64. There has been another regular payment of \$1,901.15 sent in, not yet posted to their system. This would bring the principal balance down to the \$42,500.00 range.

**Share the Plate:** October's collection raised \$522.50 for Well in the Desert.

e. Director at Large Bob Rancourt's written report:

**CHOIR**

- UUCOD Choir is on hiatus
- Worship has a virtual bank of selections that the choir previously recorded and is available for use
- UUCOD is following national guidance
- UUA, citing national experts, recommends no indoor singing
- Further updates “when appropriate”
- Choir Director position selection process is in progress

**WORSHIP**

- Recently assessed “Why We Worship”
- No known or reported incidents or problems with current re-opening protocols permitting all vaccinated individuals to attend
- Services planned through year's end
- Worship leaders include Rev. Riddell, Ian Challis, Rabbi King, and a 12/26/21 “Favorite Hymns” service by Sarita and Betty
- “Share the Plate” recipients include Harrison House, SafeHouse of the Desert and Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest
- Most January 2022 services have been planned
- Worship leaders are Revs. Riddell and Dr. Stouder

## f. Director at Large Rod DuWor's written report:

### **Diversity Ministry**

The Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Ministry continues to evolve into a rich and important function of the church. We are working to finalize our goals for the current fiscal year (and will begin working on next year's goals much earlier!), developing our approach to adopting the Eighth Principle into the UUCOD Community, and engaging with Beloved Conversations: Among. Our Beloved Conversations Mentor, Reverend Joseph Santos-Lyons, met with us once and appears to be a great friend and mentor in this work.

### **Liaison with Social Justice Committee**

I participated in my first Social Justice Committee. I will plan on attending these meetings when I am available, but it's likely I won't be attending all of them. They are a very energetic and engaged group. I raised the issue of how we might partner with/support activities of the Cahuilla. We viewed the Eighth Principle video produced by UU Kentucky (the one shared at Church Council) and had a good discussion. The committee feels strongly that they are already an integral part of the Eighth Principle conversation and are already doing the work. I will share this information with the Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Ministry at the next meeting.

### **Attitude of Gratitude Notes**

Completed in October: Sheryl, Peter, Mel, Reign, Carol, Pam, Mack.

Suggested for November: Folks involved with producing the auction plus any other suggestions.

### **Archives**

A new archivist is needed. What are the next steps in identifying a candidate?

### **Other**

The film class that is being led by Margaret and Sandy is awesome. It is a great model for advancing our diversity goal discussions and building positive congregant relationships.

### g. Minister Reverend Ian Riddell's written report:

Hello, friends,

I hope this finds you well.

The world feels like it's moving into a new phase every day, with more and more of our daily lives moving on post-pandemic.

And yet, so much remains uncertain and unresolved. And we face the prospect of learning to live in new ways into the future as we adapt to the ongoing presence of COVID in all of our lives.

And we are only beginning to deal with the trauma that this pandemic and our response to it has brought to all of our lives. Even those of us who have not been impacted directly by illness during the pandemic are dealing with wounds and stresses. I can see it in myself—and I can see it in the way I notice how we are not always treating each other with kindness or patience. I hope we can all grow to see how we are being called now to nurture each other back to health.

Over the next months, I'll be working with Rev. Don Stouder and others to provide opportunities for us to care for each other, to make space for grief and woundedness, and to find gentle and loving ways back to health for all of us.

I continue to be grateful to be in this larger ministry with all of you.

in peace and love Rev. Ian

*Summary Outline of the work I've been involved with for the past month. This is not an exhaustive list, but is meant to give you a general idea of what I've been up to as your minister.*

#### **A. Counseling and Pastoral Care**

- Met with Mack Rogers to plan Celebration of Life service for his husband. Lead COL service on November 13.
- I met with the Care Team for our regular meeting this month. This month we discussed asking for more volunteers from the congregation to offer rides to congregants in need.
- We also developed a draft policy about cards and gifts for congregants who experience loss. We will share this with the Membership and Stewardship teams as well. We want to be careful and intentional about responding equitably and comprehensively to all congregants.
- Our plan is that we will send a card to congregants who are ill as well as offering food and needed rides. If a congregant or congregant's spouse dies, we will send a card along with a live plant (not cut flowers) as well as offering food.
- We continue to check in and share our contacts with congregants and offer each other guidance and support in our support of congregants' needs.
- I continue to meet with congregants in need of connection and conversation by phone and Zoom.
- The Care Team will be welcoming a new member this month, Reuben Gallardo.

## **B. Administration, Governance, and Staff**

- I worked with Pam Bibb to shift responsibility for creating our print orders of worship to her (from me). We continue to work together to ensure that the online, e-mail, and print orders of worship are accurate and attractive.
- I participated in the Church Council meeting on October 9.
- I met weekly with the COVID team and worked with the BOT to create new protocols for Sunday morning attendance, adding the need for proof of vaccination and removing the restrictions on who could attend.
- I met several times with members of the Choir Director hiring team. We are currently scheduling interviews and hope to have our best candidates audition with the choir some time in December.

## **C. Membership and Committees**

- The Care Team, the Membership Committee, and the Stewardship Committee participated in a joint meeting this past month to connect with each other, support everyone's ministry to congregants and to clarify which team would address which needs that congregants had. Out of this conversation it became clear that we needed to better communicate among the groups and that we needed a consistent way of tracking and assessing congregant attendance and participation. I will be convening a group with representatives from each committee to develop plans for this tracking.
- I met with the Chalice Circle facilitators for their monthly meeting.
- I attended the S2S2S production of *Auntie* on October 22.
- I participated in the 2021 Auction and was grateful to win the bidding for the Rhinoceros tour at the Living Desert! Such wonderful hard work from Carol Lavoie and all the volunteers.
- I met with the Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Ministry team for our monthly meeting.
- Linda Savard and I met to begin to revive the Committee on Ministry. So far, two of the people we've invited to be part of the group have said yes. We will share the full slate with the Board soon, as the BOT must appoint one of the members (The minister appoints the other two). Once formed, as part of its work, the COM will help me in sharing the Right Relations Policy.

## **D. Lifespan Faith-Development**

- I am preparing to offer my first "contemplative spiritual practices" class on Lectio Divina (sacred reading) on Monday, November 29. This will be followed by Crafting and Singing Meditation in the new year.
- I am also planning my class on Unitarian Universalist Worship to be offered in January.

## **E. Worship**

- item

## **F. Denominational Activities**

- I began serving as a mentor to a seminary student as part of the UU Ministers Association's Ministerial Formation Network. I will meet with my mentee monthly by zoom.

## **G. Prophetic Outreach, Interfaith Activities, and Local Collaboration**

- I met one-on-one with our Beloved Conversations Among coach, Rev. Joseph Santos Lyons and participated in our first large-group gathering on November 4.
- I traveled with members of the Desert Interfaith Council to the Salton Sea on November 1 as part of our planning for an interfaith prayer vigil to be held there on February 20, 2022.

#### **H. Personal and Professional Growth**

- I was grateful to take vacation with my husband October 24 to 31. We had a restful trip.

#### **My weekly schedule is as follows:**

Currently, my days off are Thursday and Friday; I'm in the office Monday and Tuesday and available for meetings/appointments on Wednesday and Saturday.

**Upcoming Travel Schedule:** I will be taking a week of vacation to visit my family in Ontario, Canada, for the first time since December of 2019.

## h. AV written report:

### AV Project

- Since Sept. 12th, our Sunday Service has been dual platform and the systems have been progressively tuned to minimize complexity, automate operation, and increase quality. While the startup was rough (particularly stream audio) we now seem to have reached acceptable quality.
- Single push-button operation now controls the cameras, images, videos, audio tracks, captions, recording, and even projecting different visuals to the sanctuary screens and the stream. Our #1 constraint in designing the system was the number of and skills of volunteers. We can run the service with just two volunteers, better than the design estimate of three.
- Rod has trained several people to operate our AV equipment. Both operation and programming are now documented with training guides and Checklists. Most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> level technical information is now documented, and documenting 3<sup>rd</sup> level configuration details has started. The link to the AV site is <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sBAf4KHELDmVnPgZ9AaEKBRkjSXgrvpb?usp=sharing>
- The weekly programming process varies between 2-5 hours depending on the service complexity.
- New capabilities will be slowly added to meet worship needs.
- On November 18, a streaming AV professional will come to assess our system and offer quality improvement suggestions. The intent is that this professional can then serve as backup in the event of significant equipment problems and serve as a certified operator for rentals. We have also trained operators for DOS (Matt) and for ICD (Adrian).

### Streaming

- Zoom is working okay and leads to conversation after the service. Of the streaming platforms it has the lowest audio and video quality but has the most interactivity.
- Our posting of services to Facebook has been hit and miss, resulting in low hit rates. We have greatly de-emphasized Facebook due to the problematic copyright issues.
- We are now streaming live to the YouTube UUCOD channel (as a technology demonstration) but the links remain hidden until UUCOD makes decisions on streaming. YouTube is the better approach for us as it is more universally available, is more searchable (meaning better for outreach), and less encumbered with copyright issues. Our new website has already embedded the past three services (as a technology demonstration) transparently using YouTube. We are ready to move forward technically whenever we have a clear direction.

### Rentals

- Desert Outreach Synagogue has now used the AV equipment for three Sabbath events plus a Bar Mitzvah. They too experienced some startup challenges but the November services were actually very amazing. The audio quality was excellent and included several instruments, choir and vocalist. It was the first event to really show the potential of our AV system.
- Last month the Board discussed the need to update the Building Use Policy and fee schedule to reflect the new AV capabilities. No progress has been made to date; a request has been made to the Facilities Committee to pursue this.