
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2024

Attending:

A meeting of the UUCOD Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, September 17, 2024.

Board Members attending in person: Bob Rancourt, President, Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1st Vice President, Jerry L'Hommedieu, Treasurer, Claudia Simmons, Secretary, Walter Gendell, Director at Large, Rev. Ian Riddell, Minister.

Board Member Attending by Zoom: Frank Riela, 2nd Vice President, John Ressler, Director at Large

Board Members Not Present: All Present

Others Present by Zoom: Tracy Flynn

Welcome and Call to Order

Bob Rancourt called the regular Board Meeting to order at 5:00 PST.

Chalice Lighting

Rev. Riddell offered inspirational sentiments and lit the chalice.

Check-In

Bob Rancourt welcomed everyone, and he and the Board checked in.

Process Moderation

Process monitor was assigned to Julia Alberg-Burbank.

Consent Agenda

- The Board made a motion to approve the July 16, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes. Minutes passed by acclamation.

Voices of the Congregation

- Jerry L'Hommedieu proposed that both the congregation and the Board make a greater effort to sign up to bring flowers for the Sanctuary each Sunday. He mentioned that bouquets could be purchased for as little as \$6.50 from stores like Albertsons and that vases are available in the kitchen storeroom. He added that the Stewardship Committee would discuss this matter with

other committees, but in the meantime, he requested that each Board member commit to bringing flowers one Sunday.

- Bob Rancourt shared feedback from Mel in Facilities that Jane Betts Stover needs tables for the upcoming yard sale. Board members are encouraged to let Jane know if they have long tables available to loan for the event. It was suggested to make an announcement at the end of church and include a notice in the newsletter.
- Frank Riela suggested starting a reading circle focused on Brené Brown's latest book, encouraging members to participate in discussions around the readings.

Old Business

- Review, Discussion and Planning of First Church Council.
 - Julia Alberg-Burbank reported that the first Church Council Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, October 19, 2024, from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. The agenda will include committee reports, discussions on how the group is supporting its goals. There will also be a review of the mission and vision goals. Julia will prepare and send out the meeting announcements.
- Review, Consideration, and Discussion of FY2024-2025 Board Learning and Reading
 - Rev. Riddell shared a plan to introduce something new each month, such as reading an article or providing a set of reflection questions. The approach will be more flexible this year, with conversations likely being more focused on the work currently being done.
 - At the next meeting, the Board is encouraged to reflect on questions such as "Who are we?" and "Who do we belong to?" Additionally, members are asked to consider: when they said yes to Board service, on whose behalf did they agree, and to whom are they accountable for their work? This includes reflecting on the Board's broader accountability. While some answers may seem straightforward, the goal is to think more deeply and reflect on these questions collectively.
 - Rev. Riddell will send out a page on this subject.
- Review, Consideration, and Approval of Rev. Riddell's Sabbatical Leave
 - Rev. Riddell is starting to plan for next summer's sabbatical, including the possibility of hiring another minister for a two-month period. Over the coming months, conversations about this plan will need to take place. Additionally, Rev. Riddell intends to speak with the congregation about the concept of a sabbatical and work with the Board to communicate this information effectively.
 - Rev. Riddell will explain the concept of a sabbatical, emphasizing its focus on rest and renewal for the minister. The discussion will highlight the benefits to the congregation, including the opportunity for revitalized leadership and enhanced ministry upon the minister's return.
- Nomination and Designation of Attitude of Gratitude Note Recipients
 - It was suggested to send a card for LeGrand Velez for his work in continuing the Men's Breakfast each month.
 - Steve Toporoff has served as the chalice circle coordinator for the past year and is now considering the future direction of the program. Frank suggested sending an appreciation note to Steve to acknowledge his contributions. A note should also be sent to Diana Leslie for her work on the chalice circles as well.

Unfinished Business

- Further Review and Planning of Visioning Process and Possible Revisions of Mission, Vision, and Values
 - The Board's first Retreat will be held in the Community Room on Sunday, September 22, 2024, from 11:30 am-4:00 pm.
 - Rev. Riddell plans to outline a map of his vision for the Board's role in facilitating broader conversations with the congregation. This will help guide discussions and engage the community in an effective way.
 - Rev. Riddell's plan will include some elements modeled after what the church committee previously implemented, providing a framework for engaging the congregation in meaningful conversations.
 - Rev. Riddell will provide a general outline for the Board's discussions and will seek input on establishing a timeline and a roadmap. Once finalized, he plans to present this roadmap to the congregation during a church service.
 - Some of activities will come up to create a broader perspective.

New Business

- Review and Discussion of Monthly Reports
 - See attached detailed monthly reports. The following are highlights:
 - DIBM policy statements are close to being finalized per Bob Rancourt.
 - Walter Gendell reported that the Personnel Manual and Policies will be coming up with revisions.
 - Rev. Riddell reported that research continues for a replacement for Meminfo.
 - Rev. Riddell briefly touched on the idea of having a gathering after November's election to discuss and process the results.
- Review, Discussion, and Approval of UUA Retirement Plan Restatement
 - Jerry L'Hommedieu reported that the UUA has made a very minor change to the Employer Participation Agreement. As required for any changes, the UUA asks each congregation to vote for approval and send back verification of that approval. Claudia Simmons made a motion to pass the document, which was seconded by Walter Gendell. There was no opposition, and the motion passed. President Bob Rancourt and Secretary Claudia Simmons signed the document..

Process Moderation

- Julia Alberg-Burbank reported that the Board Meeting ran ahead of schedule and that everyone had been heard.

Chalice Extinguishment

- Rev. Riddell extinguished the chalice with words of gratitude that we bring our hearts and minds and spirits to this work.

Adjournment

- Bob Rancourt adjourned the regular Board meeting at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Claudia L. Simmons, Secretary

Date Approved: October 15, 2024.

Attachments
Monthly Reports

President's Report



MEETING DATE:	September 16, 2024
REPORTING PERIOD:	July 17 to Sept. 16, 2024
TYPE:	Monthly Board
AUTHOR:	Bob Rancourt

My assigned Board liaison constituencies are the Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Ministry (DIBM), Leadership Development Committee, and Personnel Advisory Committee. Additionally, I prepare agenda for and preside over Board meetings, and, as time permits, I volunteer as a greeter and usher for the Membership Committee (July 21, August 11 and 25).

During this reporting period, I took a welcome break from most of my duties for the month of August. I prepared no monthly President's Column for the monthly newsletter.

DIBM

Members are continuing to study possible accessibility recommendations to enhance diversity and help the community continue to work on being more welcoming to all. Soon, we anticipate making recommendations, including possibly an accessibility website statement, policy, and related procedures. The accessibility website statement is close to final presentation to the Board. Proposed Board policies on accessibility and anti-racism are up next. We have also successfully recruited two new members to serve with us.

Leadership Development Committee

Given the recent change in members, the committee was not planning to meet until after the new fiscal year begins.

Personnel Advisory Committee

Pursuant to prior Board referral, the committee presently is considering possible employee manual and policy changes. The working group met (September 11), and revisions are being drafted. The referral was substantial, so response and recommendations are likely to take some time.

Additional Information

I volunteer with the Social Justice Committee's Pride Planning Subcommittee, and we have been accelerating our meetings (July 23, August 27, September 16) as the

Greater Palm Springs LGBTQI+ Pride Festival approaches in early November. We are looking to have our most robust attendance and participation yet this year!

I reached out to several Members and Friends to gauge interest in helping plan the Bake-Off fundraiser I'm spearheading that we approved for January 19, 2025. Several individuals expressed interest and agreed to help.

To: UUCOD Board

From: 1st Vice President, Julia Alberg-Burbank

RE: September 2024 Board Report

- I am in the beginning stage of planning Church Council. Church Council will be held on October 19, 2024. Time to be determined.
- I served as Worship Associate at September 8th service
- I attended a Worship Associate committee meeting on September 10, 2025.

Denominational Affairs: Nothing to report

UUCOD Treasurer's Report August 2024

This Treasurer's Report includes highlights for both July and August.

Donations and plate collections were low in July and August, similar to previous years. As of the August month-end, UUCOD has received \$79,240 in pledge payments for the year toward the annual target of approximately \$190,000. A remaining item from last year's auction was sold in July, netting \$868 for the church. At \$1,837, rental income from Desert Outreach Synagogue was particularly strong for the summer months.

There were no exceptional expenses for July and August although we did see an uptick in electric costs and usage due to the hot summer months. The Galilee Center was the Share-the-Plate recipient in both July and August, receiving a total of \$730.

Cash and short-term investments currently stand at \$287,904. Designated and restricted account balances are \$225,420, leaving \$62,484 in available unrestricted funds. The MacLean Endowment Fund and the UUCOD Investment Fund values continue to increase and are at all-time highs.

Work to close out UUCOD's Script2Stage2Screen program has been substantially completed and we have archived documents which need to be retained. All expenses have been paid and we will transfer approximately \$5,700 from the S2S2S checking account into UUCOD's checking account and post the proceeds to Miscellaneous Operational Revenue sometime in September. We will then close the S2S2S checking account.

The Treasurer completed a draft of a procedure for payroll and retirement processing and is circulating the procedure for comments. We anticipate Julia Bell will assume responsibility for these functions shortly.

We are currently working to update and activate our brokerage account with Charles Schwab so we may process transfers of stock for pledge payments. Charles Schwab purchased TD Ameritrade, our previous brokerage firm, so we need to establish new credentials.

The Finance Committee is seeking new members who would like to learn more about our church finances. Interested parties should speak with Chris Eager or Ginger Hemingway to learn more. The committee is also renewing its audit process to ensure the integrity of our financial procedures.

I am part of a working group that continues to assess potential member management software to replace MemInfo which will be retired next April.

Jerry L'Hommedieu
September 6, 2024

**2025 Restatement of the
Unitarian Universalist Organizations Retirement Plan**

UUA has made some minor changes to the retirement plan which appear insignificant to UUCOD and our employees. UUA requires UUCOD's board to approve the changes if we want to continue participating in the program. In addition, UUA has requested we submit a form identifying UUCOD's employer retirement contribution elections and a list of current employees.

UUA provided a sample board resolution form which I have modified slightly to provide all the information currently requested. If you review the attached document and want to suggest changes, please do so well in advance of the board meeting. My goal is to have the board approve the resolution at the board meeting and have Bob and Claudia sign the document so I can return it to UUA. Once UUA receives the requested information, they will send us an updated Employer Participate Agreement for signature by the Board President and Treasurer. Let me know if you have any questions.

Jerry L'Hommedieu

**Motion to Accept
2025 Restatement of the**

Unitarian Universalist Organizations Retirement Plan

Whereas the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert (UUCOD) is committed to assisting all of its employees 18 years and older to prepare for their retirement years, and;

Whereas the Unitarian Universalist Organizations Retirement Plan (the "Plan") is the retirement plan sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association, therefore;

Be It Resolved that the UUCOD hereby adopts the 2025 Restatement of the Unitarian Universalist Organizations Retirement Plan with an implementation date of January 1, 2025, and commits to complying with all the provisions of the Plan and the elections made by UUCOD in the 2025 Employer Participation Agreement that we submit to the UUA Retirement Plan Committee, and they acknowledge receipt and approve via counter signature of same.

Furthermore, UUCOD agrees to continue its current rate of 10% of eligible employee pay as its Employer Base Contribution percentage. Current employees include the Rev. Ian W. Riddell, Pamela Bibo, and James Tong. James Tong is currently ineligible to participate in the retirement program.

This motion was approved by the UUCOD Board of Directors on September 17, 2024.

Robert Rancourt
UUCOD Board President

Claudia Simmons
UUCOD Board Secretary

UUA Retirement Plan Committee

Board Member at Large Report September 2024

Hospitality

- **Nothing to report other than a big thank you to Rob and his team for doing such a terrific job!**

Minister Evaluation

- **The Committee on Ministry met (with two new members – Sarita and Linda) to review and discuss the evaluation form and process. The Committee reviewed the form one last time with no further changes being made.**
- **The evaluation process was discussed and it was agreed that Sarita, Linda and Walter will now move this part of the process forward. Rev. Ian will of course be kept informed of any changes should they occur.**
- **The number of people completing the evaluation form will include approximately 30 members of the church. All committee chairs, members of the various church committees, the Board and staff will be participating. The evaluation will occur sometime in the late fall.**
- **An instruction sheet has been created and will be used as an attachment to the emails going to those completing the form as well as part of Constant Contact's email (this is who we will be using to distribute and compile the results.)**
- **The next meeting of this sub-group will be October 1st.**

Personnel Policies and Employee Manual

- **I met with Rev. Ian, Jerry and Bob to review a number of potential policy additions to the manual. After discussion the following policies are being recommended and will be brought to the Board for review and approval in November:**
 - **Jury Duty – new policy**
 - **Holiday Pay – new policy**
 - **Partial Work Days - clarification**
 - **Vacation Policy - enhancement**
- **Additions to the manual will also include a section on retirement and medical insurance. There is no change to these policies but were needing to be included in the manual.**
- **Other changes are required as a result of changes in California law and will be reviewed with the Board in November.**

Submitted by:

Walter Gendell

Board Member at Large

June 14, 2024

Minister's Report to the UUCOD Board

September 17, 2024

The Rev. Ian W. Riddell

And we begin another church year. I'm glad to be in this work with you all.

Each year for the past few years, the Board has engaged in reading a book together and discussing and exploring its themes and ideas. This year, as we enter into a year of discernment about our mission and vision, I have been searching for the "perfect" book – and it has eluded me!

And so this year I am proposing a different plan. Each month at our Board meeting, I will share an opportunity for reflection and collective discernment around a different question or idea each month. My plan is to share materials for each meeting in the week ahead of the meeting and to lead us through a discussion. This will enable us, I hope, to focus on some specific ideas and themes.

And this is an experiment. We may love this. We may find it difficult or unsatisfying. I'm hoping you'll dive in with me with intention and attention and share feedback along with participating in our discussions and wonderings.

Know that you have my appreciation, gratitude, 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

- The Care Team restarted its monthly meeting and continues to check in and share our contacts with congregants and offer each other guidance and support in our support of congregants' needs.
- The Care Team will be talking together about learning opportunities for the team this year.
- Our Circles of Caring Energy are continuing to bring comfort and a strong sense of connection to congregants dealing with surgery and illness.
- I continue to meet with congregants in need of connection and conversation by phone and Zoom and in person.
- I am heartened, as always, by the ways I see you all take care of each other when people are in need.

B. Administration, Governance, and Staff

- I meet weekly with Pam Bibo (except when one of us is on vacation or study leave) to check in on work expectations and how things are going.
- The Committee on Ministry for this year will be Walter Gendell, Sarita Gonzales, and Linda Savard. Walter will be serving for one more year and a new member will be added next summer. We had our first meeting and are beginning to set our plans for the year's work.
- Upcoming shift in services from MemInfo: The taskforce met this past week and made plans to finalize our list of requirements, set up interviews with salespeople from the three applications that we are looking at, and try out demos of each application.
- I met with Walter Gendell, Bob Rancourt, and Jerry L'Hommedieu to review possible additions/changes to our personnel policies and manual. Walter will bring requested changes to the Board in November.

C. Membership and Committees

- I meet monthly with the DIB Ministry team. We have crafted some information for our website about accessibility and accommodations and will be coming to the Board soon with a plan to identify a leader who might act as the congregation's accommodation point person in the future. We are planning to work on an accessibility policy and to return to work on an anti-racism policy for the congregation this church year.
- I Planning for the Pride Parade in November continues. We are inviting members of other nearby UU congregations and local organizations we are close to (DOS and Insight) to march with us in the parade.
- I will be meeting regularly with several committees. I will participate monthly with Worship, DIBM, Stewardship, CoM, the Board, and Chalice Circles. I will participate in alternate months with Membership and Social Justice.

- The Choir resumed its Wednesday rehearsals with Choir Director Jim Tong on September 11. It sounds like there's a great year ahead with some new members joining.
- I met with Carol Lavoie and Jane Zaun to support the Stewardship plan to invite leaders of social groups (crafting, Scrabble, book groups, etc.) to offer announcements/invitations as part of Congregational News in our worship services.

D. Lifespan Faith-Development

- Chalice Circles are in a period of discernment. The group of leaders is assessing their capacity and looking at various ways to organize our circles. Existing circles may continue this year, but we are not currently planning to offer new circles. We will work this year to figure out how to continue this important offering.
- Lauren Nile will come to our congregation and share a workshop called, "Becoming Conscious of Unconscious Bias: An Important Journey of Personal Growth" on October 26 from 9:30 to 2:30. We are working together on the details and logistics.

E. Worship

- We have service leaders, worship associates, and pianists planned through the end of 2024.
- Jim Tong and I have begun planning the choir's participation in worship this season. Their first Sunday singing will be October 13
- I continue to lead the weekly Production meetings, though others take the lead when I am out of town or away. In our production meetings, we continue the practice of reflecting on the service the day before and noting any issues we need to address.
- We have had some trouble recently with streaming. We are pretty much certain that this is a technical issue with Vimeo—the link is malfunctioning in a way we don't have control over it seems. Fran has been working with Vimeo to resolve this issue.
- We have been using DOS's Vimeo account informally for the past year and have now more formally agreed to share this account and the cost of it.
- I led or participated in worship several times:
 - July 28 — "Racing Home: A Reflection on Super-Heroes and Love" with Julia Alberg-Burbank as Worship Associate.
 - August 11 — "Shame and Growth" with Walter Gendell as Worship Associate.
 - September 8 — "Messy and Imperfect: Crafting Relationships" with Julia Alberg-Burbank as Worship Associate.
 - September 17 — "Circles of Connection: Our Larger Faith" with Mel Wilkinson as Worship Associate.
- We welcomed several excellent UU Ministers to our pulpit this summer, including Rev. Kathleen Owens, Rev. James Ishmael Ford, and Rev. Barbara Fast. Steven Toporoff also led a service as well as hosting the Rev. Frank Dunn for a Sunday.

F. Denominational Activities

- I traveled to Las Vegas the weekend of July 20-21 to offer a memorial service for a man who was a congregant while I served there. They do not currently have a minister. I also led their Sunday service that weekend.
- I regularly consult with local and regional colleagues on issues affecting our congregations.
- I have been meeting monthly as a mentor to a new minister as he works through his Preliminary Fellowship.
- I am working with a group of UU clergy, professionals, and lay leaders on issues of fat liberation and fighting weight bias. Our current work is planning participation in next year's GA and proposing a Congregational Study/Action Initiative for next year.

G. Prophetic Outreach, Interfaith Activities, and Local Collaboration

- I volunteered at Laundry Love on Wednesday, August 21.

H. Personal and Professional Growth

- I participated in a workshop called "Intro to Allyship" sponsored by DRUUMM last week.
- I continue meeting monthly with a coach for ongoing support, learning, and accountability as I minister to the congregation in our diversity transition work. My coach is Rev. Julica Hermann de la Fuente
- I meet monthly with a small group of colleagues in our region in reflection, sharing, and collegial support and learning.
- I am grateful for the two weeks of study leave and two weeks of vacation over July and August. In August I was delighted to participate again in a men's knitting retreat in the Seattle area. This gave me an opportunity to visit with friends as well as engage in some rest and rejuvenation of my spirit ahead of the beginning of the church year.

My weekly schedule is as follows:

My day off is Friday. Starting August 1 my writing/reading day, which I try to keep free of meetings, will be Mondays and I will work in the office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

Upcoming Travel Schedule:

- I will be attending the UU Ministers Association Pacific Southwest chapter retreat from the afternoon of Sunday, September 29, to Wednesday, October 2.
- I do not have other travel planned before the beginning of 2025.

in peace and deep love

