
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2025

Attending:

A meeting of the UUCOD Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, May 20, 2025.

Board Members attending in person: Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1st Vice President, Claudia Simmons, Secretary, Walter Gendell, Director at Large, John Ressler, Director at Large, Rev. Ian Riddell, Minister

Board Member Attending by Zoom: Jerry L'Hommedieu, Treasurer

Board Members Not Present: Bob Rancourt, President, Frank Riela, 2nd Vice President

Others Present: Mel Wilkinson, Jane Zaun, Julia Bell

Others Present by Zoom: Carol Scanny, Barb Katay, Rod Belshee, Dave Emmerson

Welcome and Call to Order

Julia Alberg-Burbank called the regular Board Meeting to order at 5:00 PDT.

Chalice Lighting.

Rev. Riddell offered inspirational sentiments and lit the chalice.

Check-In

Julia Alberg-Burbank welcomed everyone, and she asked the Board, attendees, and online friends to check in.

Process Moderation

Process monitor was assigned to John Ressler.

Consent Agenda

- The Board reviewed the April 15, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes.
 - No edits or corrections were noted.
 - Jerry L'Hommedieu moved to approve the minutes; Walter Gendell seconded it.
 - With no objections, the minutes were approved by acclamation.
- The April 27, 2025, Annual Business Meeting Minutes were also presented for approval
 - Again, no changes were suggested.
 - John Ressler made the motion to approve the minutes; Walter Gendell seconded it.
 - The minutes were approved by acclamation without objection.

Voices of the Congregation

- Rod Belshee updated everyone on Breeze. 111 members and friends have been added to the new online directory. The steering committee will meet tomorrow to look at next steps.
- Rod Belshee shared reflections on the changing dynamics of volunteer participation, noting that post-COVID, long-term commitments to committees have become increasingly rare. He emphasized a trend seen in UUA trainings, known as "episodic micro-volunteerism"—encouraging short-term, task-based participation rather than long-standing committee roles. This shift could help engage newer members who are ready to contribute but hesitant to make a long-term commitment.
- Rod proposed that committees focus on planning and organizing, while a broader group of one-time volunteers could handle the execution of events and tasks. He cited positive turnout for recent one-off events.
- Rev. Riddell affirmed Rod's points and stressed the need for intentional discernment between responsibilities that truly require a standing committee (e.g., Finance), versus those that can be handled through episodic volunteerism. He suggested that this conversation—about restructuring volunteer involvement—could be pursued further within the Church Council, Board, or Stewardship Committee. This approach could also be used to assess current committee roles and better align them with congregational capacity and interest.
- Fundraising efforts like the yard sale and bake sale were referenced as examples where this flexible volunteer model has already proven effective.
- Jane Zaun joined the meeting at Rod Belshee's request to share context about "episodic micro-volunteering," a concept introduced through the Pacific Western Region Foundation skill-building series in 2022–2023.
- Jane, ever the note-keeper, brought documentation from those sessions and shared key takeaways with the Board.
 - The concept encourages breaking tasks into short-term, clearly defined volunteer opportunities—ideal for those unable to commit long-term.
 - Presenting tasks with clarity and tangible outcomes was emphasized as key to increasing engagement.
 - Jane noted that UUCOD is already ahead of the curve on many of the session's recommendations—especially in embracing technology (e.g., seeing leadership on Zoom) and in how volunteerism is being presented.
- Jane also shared some lived experience about the travel-heavy lifestyle of many UUCOD members:
 - This frequent travel affects committee attendance and consistency, which presents challenges for more traditional committee expectations.
 - Rather than scrapping committees, Jane advocated for rethinking structures, considering flexible roles, realistic expectations, and evolving definitions of participation.
 - She noted that this has come up across multiple committees, including the Committee on Ministry and in board-related work.
- Jane reflected on past Church Council meetings, where committees frequently expressed a need for "more volunteers."
 - The hope now is that with the rise of newer members ready to dip a toe into volunteering, the congregation can better match episodic help with committee needs.

- The key shift is helping people understand that volunteering doesn't have to mean joining a committee—it can be task-based, flexible, and still deeply impactful.

Old Business:

- Review, Consideration, and Approval of Proposed Chair Changes of Standing Committees.
 - Two of the standing committees are changing leadership. The new Chair of the Finance Committee, Jerry L'Hommedieu, will be replacing Chris Eager. Chris Eager will be joining Denise Janssen Eager as Co-Chair of the Social Justice Committee. Additionally, Barb Storms will be taking over as Chair of the Membership Committee.
 - On behalf of the Board, Claudia Simmons made a motion to approve Jerry L'Hommedieu as Chair of Finance, Chris Eager as Co-Chair of Social Justice, and Barb Storms as Chair of Membership. Walter Gendell seconded the motion, and the motion carried by acclamation.
- Nomination and Designation of Attitude of Gratitude Note Recipients.
 - Rob DuWors, via Jerry L'Hommedieu, requested that a thank-you note be sent to Trish Ewoldsen, as she has been bringing great food to share at Sunday Services.
 - It was suggested that a note of thanks be sent to Fran Hoag, Rod Belshee, Barb Storms, and Rob DuWors for all the work that went into transitioning the software from MemInfo to Breeze.

Unfinished Business

- Review, Discussion, and Approval of Sabbatical Leave Plans.
 - Rev. Riddell reviewed his sabbatical leave plans with the Board:
 - The Letter of Agreement with Rev. Everett, who will serve as Sabbatical Minister, has been signed.
 - Rev. Everett will join the Worship Committee meeting next week to get further oriented.
 - Both the AV team and the Worship Team are well-prepared and trained; procedures are in place, and things are looking solid for the summer services.
 - Rev. Riddell has completed all his service articles for September ahead of time.
 - Announcements and communications will also be prepped and ready in advance of his leave.
 - Pam Bibb and Rev. Everett have all of Rev. Riddell's contact information for use only if necessary.
 - Regarding the Discretionary Fund: Rev. Riddell recommends that people pay up front and be reimbursed upon his return. Jerry noted that the Treasurer also has access to that account if needed.
 - Rev. Riddell will write a short note for the June newsletter to let the congregation know who to contact for what during his sabbatical.
 - Supervision of Staff During Sabbatical:
 - The Board discussed interim supervision of the two staff members.
 - Julia Bell will handle timecard approvals.
 - A designated point person was needed for general support or issues that may arise.
 - Rod Belshee volunteered to take on the role of nominal supervisor during the sabbatical.
 - There were no objections, and the Board approved Rod's designation.
- Review, Consideration, and Discussion of Selected Board Learning Readings.
 - There were no readings for this month.

New Business

- Review, Discussion, and Approval of Proposed End of FY 2024-2025 Excess Revenue Allocations.
 - Treasurer Jerry L’Hommedieu shared an overview of the upcoming fiscal year’s budget and highlighted some notable financial developments.
 - The congregation experienced an unexpected revenue surplus of approximately \$85,000 for the current fiscal year.
 - As a result, several strategic allocations were made to bolster key reserves and address upcoming needs:
 - \$25,000 was allocated for parking lot resurfacing
 - \$35,000 was added to the Building Maintenance Fund
 - \$1,500 was set aside for the Sabbatical Reserve
 - \$5,000 was contributed to the Office Equipment Reserve
 - \$1,000 was added to the Minister’s Discretionary Fund
 - Jerry explained that the process of moving excess revenue into reserve accounts is consistent with past practice, much like adding funds to a savings account earmarked for specific purposes.
 - Walter Gendell inquired whether some of the retained revenue might be used during the year to support unanticipated needs.
 - Jerry noted that there are reserve funds available for overages that may arise in other budget categories.
 - Rev. Riddell raised a broader reflection on Church spending, asking the Board to consider how surplus funds might be used not just for internal infrastructure, but also to support mission-driven, outward-facing projects. He posed questions for future discernment:
 - Could we fund community needs, such as showers for the unhoused?
 - Should we think long-term about capital investments that benefit both the congregation and the broader community?
 - Julia Alberg-Burbank requested a motion to approve the proposed additional allocations.
 - Walter Gendell made the motion to approve the proposed additional allocations. John Ressler seconded it, and with no objections, the motion carried by acclamation.
- Consideration and Discussion of Monthly Reports:
 - Julia Alberg-Burbank presented the Board members’ reports. (See attached reports for full details.) Noteworthy to mention:
 - Jerry L’Hommedieu noted that the Board will soon need to discuss the Church’s investment account, as a CD is nearing maturity.
 - The question was raised: Should the funds be reinvested with the UUA or held in the bank? That decision is pending.
 - Jerry also shared that he’s working with Mel Wilkinson on a parking lot resurfacing proposal and that an RFP (Request for Proposal) is being developed and will be circulated soon. The goal is to present a vendor selection to the Board in June and move forward to lock down a project date.
 - John Ressler mentioned the May 3rd Celebration of Life for Diana Leslie, noting that attendees were very pleased with the landscaping services and overall quality of work done for the event.

Process Moderation

- John Ressler reported that the Board Meeting finished a bit ahead of schedule, and everyone had been heard.

Chalice Extinguishment

- Rev. Riddell extinguished the chalice with words of gratitude, acknowledging the responsibility, kindness, and spirit that everyone brings to their work.

Adjournment

- Julia Alberg-Burbank adjourned the regular Board meeting at 6:03 pm.

(closed) Executive Session

- Review, Consideration, and Approval of Personnel Matters.
 - The Board entered a closed executive session to review and consider personnel matters.

Respectfully Submitted,



Claudia L. Simmons, Secretary

Date Approved: June 17, 2025.

Attachments

Monthly Reports

To: UUCOD Board

From: Julia Alberg-Burbank, 1st VP

April 15, 2025

- I met with on 5/12 Rev. Ian and Bob, to help formulate the agenda for this meeting.
- I was worship leader for the 5/4/25 service. I greatly appreciated the support of Rev. Ian, Walter and Mel. They really helped!

Denominational Affairs:

Our 3 voting delegates to the GA. are preparing by reading information on the 3 CSAI's (Congregational Study Action Issues) that are being presented at the GA. All delegates will vote on only one for a year of in depth study by congregations throughout the US

Social Justice:

- April 16th Laundry Love: 6 members & friends volunteered
 - Since the last Annual Meeting, we have held 3 events with 14 members & friends assisting unhoused & those with little economic means do more than 130 loads of laundry for free.
 - A discussion was held sharing positive reports of interactions with the persons served.
- Sunday, April 13, 2025 Listening Session report
 - Members who attended shared ideas regarding types of work and organizations to work with.
 - 16 people in total attended. Three members joined by Zoom.
 - Some people who could not attend that day did fill out and submit written survey responses.
 - People gave input on what ways to alert them work best, such as email or texting. This would be in addition to Constant Contact messaging.
- Backpack & School Supply Drive—here is the timeline:
 - June 27 - July 25: Backpack & School Supply Drive at UUCOD
 - August 6: Filling Backpacks with School Supplies at Galilee Center
 - August 7: Handing them Out at Galilee Center
 - Denise will arrange for collection box drop off and pickup at the end of the drive and handle publicity. Sue will take progress photos as the collection box fills up.

UUCOD Treasurer's Report April 2025

Although the latter months of the fiscal year normally run at a loss, two unanticipated donations resulted in a \$2,400 surplus for April. We received \$1,642 as the final distribution from the Vivian Penniman estate and a \$8,500 gift from a congregant as a charitable contribution. Together, these donations account for nearly 40% of all revenues for the month. UUCOD also received \$640 in quarterly interest income from its CD with our bank.

There were no exceptional or unanticipated expenses for the month. We advanced \$750 for the Harvey Milk Breakfast but this will be reimbursed by members attending the event. We also partially reimbursed registration fees for church delegates to the General Assembly in June. The church provided Alianza Coachella Valley with \$635 from our April Share the Plate campaign.

UUCOD's two investment funds experienced an aggregated decrease in fund value of \$8,774 in April. Fiscal year to date, the funds' value remains at nearly \$12,000 higher than the opening balance for the year.

As of the end of April, we have collected \$38,521 in pledge payments for the coming fiscal year. The proposed FY 25-26 budget was approved by the congregation at the annual business meeting on April 27.

As in previous years, the Finance Committee will review our reserve accounts and submit recommendations to the Board as to the allocation of excess revenue into specific funds to bolster reserves.

Treasurer-elect Julia Bell and I continue to meet regularly for training and knowledge transfer. I have also provided Denise Stevens with some guidance in developing her concept of a Welcome Wall in the church lobby as approved by the board.

Jerry L'Hommedieu
May 5, 2025

Board Member at Large Report March 2025

Hospitality

I received an excellent Committee report from Rob DuWors, parts of which I want to share with the Board:

- **Staffing:** Dirk Sure recently joined the team – he and his husband Denis Peters are great guys who seem to be endlessly helpful. Karen Goodyear will help when needed. Eddy Cardoso may be available more now that the season has ended.
- Rob will be traveling a lot between next week and the middle of September but has been able to get all Sundays covered when he won't be in town.
- Rob (and Jerry) hosted a pizza get-together for the Hospitality team with about 20 people in attendance including spouses and significant others.
- A joint email from Rob and Mel went to the Board and relevant committee chairs asking folks to touch base with them when there is an event involving hospitality and/or facilities. On occasion there have been times when they were surprised and it made for a modest amount of stress on people.
- Hospitality helped plan and execute the gathering after Diana Leslie's memorial service. Her family was very grateful. They also helped with the recent meeting to discuss Rev. Ian's sabbatical leave.
- Sue Caspari continues to keep the Church green ensuring we have eco-friendly supplies and that we recycle and compost correctly.
- Trish Ewoldsen is an ad hoc supporter of the team bringing baked goods almost every week. **Rob would like an Attitude of Gratitude note from the BOD.**
- **Rob is requesting to replace the green vinyl tablecloths – they are looking pretty worn out and frayed and many of stains on them that won't come out. He would like to buy new ones in the new fiscal year.**
- There are currently 18 people on the Hospitality Committee.

Attitude of Gratitude

- In my absence in April, John handled the Attitude of Gratitude for me.

Committee on Ministry - Minister Evaluation

- The Committee on Ministry held a Congregational meeting regarding Rev. Ian's sabbatical. The entire committee was present along with many people from the congregation.
- Linda explained what a sabbatical was - and what it wasn't and Rev. Ian talked about how the Committee on Ministry is working with the various committees to ensure that all church functions and activities will be handled well.
- There were very few questions and everyone seemed satisfied that the COM and Rev. Ian have done a good job in planning for his absence.

Worship Associate

- I was worship associate on May 4th.

Submitted by:

Walter Gendell

Board Member at Large

May 14th, 2025

Dear Fellow Members of the Board:

After a short period of quiescence, the Sacred Grounds Initiative is once again hard at work. It is on the verge of launching two long-delayed projects which will directly benefit our community: 1) Planting a Green Wall to shade the west wall of the sanctuary from solar exposure, and 2) Installing a hard-surfaced pathway between Via Vail and the front Piazza of the church.

The Green Wall project involves purchase and planting three Ironwood trees in a line parallel to the wall at a distance that optimizes the shade that they will cast during the high-sun season. Moon Valley Nurseries has 6-foot multi-stem trees in 24" tubs available at an attractive price. The great virtue of the multiple stems is that they create a fan-shaped crown that spreads laterally more than vertically, thus more readily giving the desired wall-like (or hedge-like) configuration. The larger stock gives us a 4-5 year jump on the wall's "construction." The cost will be less than \$4000, to come from the Sacred Grounds Budget.

Benefits from the Green Wall will include: Lowered cooling costs, increased comfort for all (but especially for those who officiate during church services (not to mention our beloved Steinway)), and enhanced nesting habitat for songbirds attracted to the grounds.

Hard-surfacing the path from Via Vail to the piazza will be identical to the technique used for improving access to the three garden benches. Labor will be supplied by volunteers from the UUCOD community. Material costs will be roughly equal to our sales tax savings from the Tree Purchase, deriving from our tax-exempt status—roughly \$350.

Benefits to the Community are primarily to those members who have to park along Via Vail on Sundays. As our congregation grows, more and more folks are having to park there during the high season. Some simply prefer it.

If you have any questions or concerns about either of these projects, I will be happy to convey them to the Sacred Grounds Committee.

—John Ressler, Director-at-Large #1

Monthly Report – May 20, 2025
UUCOD Secretary Claudia Simmons

1. I was present and took the minutes of the April 15, 2025, Board Meeting. The draft has been prepared, reviewed by Board members, and is awaiting approval at the May 20, 2025, Board Meeting.
2. I was present and took the minutes of the April 27, 2025, Annual Business Meeting. Those minutes will be presented to the May 20, 2025, Board Meeting for approval.
3. I prepared and filed the renewal of the UUCOD Fictitious Business Name Statement.
4. I attended the Membership Committee Zoom meeting on Thursday, May 15, 2025. The meeting was led by Barb Storms. I was impressed by the Committee's robust meeting agenda and the team's competency and knowledge of all topics. This group may be small, but they are mighty and seem to be able to grab volunteers to help with their variety of tasks, specifically during Church services.

Minister's Report to the UUCOD Board

May 20, 2025

The Rev. Ian W. Riddell

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

- 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 hosted a Sabbatical 101 event in early May to share what the plans are for when I am away on sabbatical and answer questions and concerns from congregants. More than 20 people participated and expressed gratitude and appreciation that we were planning so carefully and so far ahead. No major concerns were raised.
- I participated in the Annual Meeting on April 27 and provided a "State of the Congregation Report." I am in support of the idea of creating a clear set of procedures for preparing for the Annual Meeting each year. Pam has already begun compiling a schedule.
- I continue to work with our Breeze team to facilitate adoption and integration of the program into our congregational life and practices.

C. Membership and Committees

- I meet regularly with several committees. I participate monthly with Worship, DIBM, Stewardship, CoM, the Board, and Chalice Circles. I participate in alternate months with Membership and Social Justice.
- I attended and participated in the poetry reading celebrating Earth Day organized by Sheryl Eaton and other on our Labyrinth on Tuesday, April 22.
- When I can, I attend our monthly Men's Breakfast.

D. Lifespan Faith-Development

- I have offered one in-person class called "Responding to the Anti-Trans Movement: A Course for Unitarian Universalists" created by the Transforming Hearts Collective person on Saturday, May 17. I will repeat this offering on Zoom on Thursday, May 22.

- We are hosting a representative of the Agua Caliente Band of the Cahuilla people on Tuesday, June 10, at 4pm. They will be presenting “Agua Caliente 101”

E. Worship

- I led Celebrations of Life for Joyce Osterhaus (04/17) and Diana Leslie (05/03) with the support of many congregant volunteers. Both families were grateful for our care and honoring of their loved on.
- Except for two Sundays, we have service leaders planned through October 19.
- We have worship associates and piano players planned through September (through my sabbatical)
- I continue to lead the weekly Production meetings, though the AV team has been taking a larger role as we get ready for sabbatical. In our production meetings, we continue the practice of reflecting on the service the day before and noting any issues we need to address.
- I led or participated in worship twice over this past month after a long string of no Sundays off.
 - April 20 — “Beloved Garden: Earth Day and Growth of Spirit” with Denise Janssen Eager and the choir under Jim Tong.
 - May 11 — “Songs of Hope, Love, and Inspiration: Music Sunday” with Jim Tong and our choir and percussionists. We had our regular rehearsal pianist, Denis Moreen, accompany the choir for this special service.
- We welcomed Rabbi King to our pulpit again this month and were blessed with a service led by our very own Julia Alberg-Burbank on “May the Fourth Be With You: Resistance in the Context of Community and Covenant.” Our Share the Plate recipient in May “Shelter from the Storm” provided the full service under the care of Bryna Blum and Joni Padduck.

F. Denominational Activities

- 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 worked with a team of colleagues to create a workshop that will offered to people participating in GA about our CSAI: Fat Justice. I’ll provide a link to our congregation as well.

G. Prophetic Outreach, Interfaith Activities, and Local Collaboration

- I continue to reach out to local leaders to find ways our congregation can get more involved in the justice work in our area.

H. Personal and Professional Growth

- 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 will be attending the UUMA Ministry Days and UUA General Assembly online at home from June 16-22.

My weekly schedule is as follows:

My day off is Friday. 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. I am hoping to change my day off to Monday starting after my return from sabbatical.

Upcoming Travel Schedule:

- I will be away on vacation in Mammoth Lakes June 2-8 and will be attending the UUMA Ministry Days and UUA General Assembly online at home from June 16-22. I'll be available for congregational work and communication that week, but will only be attending the Board meeting.

in peace and deep love

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Julica", with a stylized, flowing script.