

**Called to Order:** 4:06 p.m. by President Tom Mosher. **Note: Resulting action items are highlighted & bolded**

**Board Attendees:** Trustees (Position): Tom Mosher (1), Doug Deaton (2), Dick Burkhardt (3), Sue Stiritz (4),  
Quorum Present Luba Johnston (5), Cindy Fine (6), and Justin Bell (7).

Minister: Todd Eklof (ex-officio)

**Guest(s):** Lynn Jinishian

**Agenda:** Approved as presented.

**Minutes:** Minutes of the November 2024 Board of Trustees (BoT) meeting were approved as presented.

**Next BoT Exec Committee Meeting:** January 15, 2025 4:00 p.m. (L Johnston floating Trustee)

**Next BoT Meeting:** January 22, 2025 4:00 p.m.

**Minister's Report:**

- 1) T Eklof shared several concerns about BoT Email Use Policy changes adopted during the November meeting, which he was unable to attend. (See Attachment A.)
  - UUCS staff, especially Rebecca, are overwhelmed trying to read and sort through emails. T Eklof told the staff only to respond to emails approved by the BoT that come from L Johnston, the BoT and Operations Committee Liaison. He requested the BoT respect this boundary.
  - A few BoT members indicated that some of the information T Eklof cited was inaccurate.
  - Possible use of emails within subcommittees without copying everyone was discussed, but many questions and much confusion remain. Therefore, a special meeting may be needed to clarify issues and how to best operate while being transparent.
- 2) The January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting regarding UUCS membership in the UUA is planned for 12:30 p.m. with attendance both in person and via Zoom.

**President's Report:** T Mosher reported the following:

- 1) The BoT decided the difference between the church mission statement on the UUCS website and what is posted on a kitchen wall is not a big issue and won't be worked on for now.
- 2) Sponsoring a weekly KYRS Spokane community radio station program, like "Democracy Now" or "Free Range", would cost about \$312/year, which T Mosher offered to cover. He drafted a potential public announcement message, which he plans to review with the Operations Team in January. T Mosher indicated this is his personal endeavor and not a BoT initiated or supported effort.
- 3) T Mosher reported he sent a suggested possible motion wording to the Social Justice Coordinating Council (SJCC) that they could present to the BoT for a congregation-wide vote about becoming an Apartheid-Free Congregation during the Annual Meeting. This was in response to the newly adopted BoT policy to assist members and teams to put a resolution on a Congregational Meeting agenda.
- 4) T Mosher explored the UUA's inquiry about congregation safety concerns and found that UUCS is doing what it can with ushers monitoring and locking doors during services. The UUA Pacific Northwest Region did not have any more safety information to offer UUCS.

**Operations Team Report:** L Johnston's report from the December Operations Team meeting is in Attachment B.

**Treasurer's Report:** None.

**BoT 2025-26 Budget Priorities:** The BoT narrowed the list of Possible 2025-2026 BoT Budget Priorities, which was presented in the November meeting, to the following three: **Action: C Fine will send list to Rebecca.**

1. Non-pledge income enhancement.
2. Outreach to attract new members.
3. Increase Capital Reserve funding.

**Reports:** The Operations Team has initiated activities, via the Social Activities Team and the Welcoming & Membership Team, to help increase in-person attendance.

The BoT has just selected 2025-2026 budget priorities to send to Rebecca.

**New Business:** n/a

**Unfinished Business:**

Income Enhancement Subcommittee: (T Mosher and D Deaton) See the Income Enhancement Subcommittee Report in Attachment C, in which the idea list was narrowed. **Action: Work continues.**

In-Person Attendance Subcommittee: (C Fine, L Johnston and J Bell) J Bell reported they reduced ten ideas down to five ideas, of which two are in operation (Potluck Dinners and Poetry Group). The other three are:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Champion</u>
After Service Feedback Group	C Fine
Heather Cox-Richardson Discussion Group	tbd
Ecology/Environmental Group	J Bell

J Bell is also interested in running a Computer/Malware Group.

It was suggested that the groups gather in meeting rooms and be announced in the SUNN and on the screen-projected, pre-service announcements slide. Then, see if they grow to help build community. (These would need to be coordinated with whomever organizes and produces announcements in the SUUN and other means of informing the UUCS members and friends.) **Action: Work continues**

Shadow Treasurer: **Action: T Mosher will publish something in the SUUN periodically to try and locate someone with an accounting background.**

**Future Business:**

Items not to be forgotten:

- 1) Review End Statements with church membership
- 2) 2025-2026 Update Strategic Plan, possibly with review of End Statements and a visioning process
- 3) 2025-2026 Review Ministerial Agreement

**Member Input:**

L Jinishian acknowledged that many churches are currently struggling with finances.

She also encouraged board members to stay focused only on important, big-picture issues and whenever approached about something to ask themselves:

***Is this a Board of Trustees item?***

If not, refer people to the appropriate team/committee/person.

If so, put it on the BoT meeting agenda.

**Adjournment:**

6:01 p.m.

**Attachments:**

- A. Minister's Report
- B. Operation's Team Liaison Report
- B. Income Enhancement Subcommittee Report

Submitted by M Johnson, Recording Secretary.

## **Minister's Report to UUCS Board of Trustees**

**By**

**Rev. Dr. Todd F. Eklof**

**December 18, 2024 | 4:00 PM**

I've written my report for the record, and to be as clear as possible. To begin, I am troubled and disturbed by the Board's recent decision to alter its Email Use Policy. I hope you're not offended by me saying so. Respectful discussion, debate, and disagreement is what's supposed to happen in Board meetings before decisions are made. What is not appropriate is to let such dialogue be stifled by those who might threaten to walk away if they don't get their way or to tolerate the continued violation of your own approved norms and policies by those who say, "I'm happy to break them and continue doing what I think is right." As Board members, you have been entrusted to discuss, debate, disagree, listen, ask questions, and then abide by what decisions you have democratically derived at together. Disagreeing with others can be incredibly uncomfortable, believe me I know! You wouldn't believe how many nights I have lost sleep just thinking about this very report. Nevertheless, as leaders we have to lead and sometimes that means disagreeing and sometimes it means not getting our way.

This is a serious concern for me because there have been repeated instances of one person making decisions outside of board meetings and nothing is being done or said about it. For example, when Tom recently took it upon himself to meet with those who attend on Zoom, in "his role as president," as he put it, he did so without any prior discussion in a board meeting. Of course, it is a great act of care for him to have done so, but I don't believe he can represent himself as the Board President if the board didn't discuss and approved this meeting in advance. Remember, we don't have a "president." We have a "Board president" chosen by just five people to help set your agendas and run them during your meetings.

What disturbed me about this particular meeting was his suggestion that the Zoom attendees be surveyed about us going to one service during my sabbatical. I have discussed my strong feelings about this matter numerous times over several years with the Board. It is widely known that this is my decision, not the Board's, how I feel about. This request should never have been made, especially since it was never discussed in a Board meeting. That is to say, if you didn't discuss it and decide the matter, it should never have happened.

Another example is the recent request to have our new Social Activities team meet with the Board, despite my having twice stated this is a new team that has only met once, and please give them the space they need to develop. When was the decision made by the Board to override my request? My guess is it wasn't. Remember, as a Policy Governance Board, you create the wider coral in which our teams operate, you don't micro-manage the teams.

Another behind the scenes matter has been asking members about painting the partition wall in our fellowship area so that its rendition of our mission statement perfectly matches what's written on our website. Was this approved and discussed during a board meeting? If

not, why are plans being explored to change a statement that has been here since the building was built? And is this board business? No! Painting a wall is a detail not Policy Governance.

I ask you to please pay attention to these sorts of events and to address them in your Board meetings if you see individuals acting on your behalf when they are not, meaning matters you haven't discussed and decided upon during a formal, regularly scheduled board meeting. Confrontation can be hard, but that's what leadership sometimes means and it's what you've been entrusted to do, and I know you can do it in a way that is kind and respectful because that's who you are.

Alas, after encouraging you to stick with your broader responsibilities as a Policy Governance Board, I have to say, again, that I am troubled by your recent decision to alter your Email Use Policy. I also know that most of you are new enough to our Board that you likely don't know the history and reasoning behind it. In short, after the destructive 2019/2020 Board, which operated in secrecy and deception, having had more unannounced, closed-door executive meetings than regular meetings, the Board that replaced them, led by Richard Steele, was committed to reestablishing complete transparency in Board proceedings. This was when and executive team was created so that three board members, not just the Board president, would meet to prepare our Board agenda, without any discussion of the agenda items themselves. It would be inappropriate for board members to discuss how best to get an outcome they might want in advance of meeting with the entire Board.

This had been working well, and it seemed the transparency our church expects and that is part of our democratic tradition had been restored. This was so until the start of last year's Board when some began discussing and debating board business in emails. Knowing how damaging this can be and how it undermines the transparency we had worked so hard to reestablish, our Share Ministry Team created the aforementioned Email Use Policy and recommended it to our Board, which unanimously adopted it.

It is your decision and job to create, clarify, and change policies if you wish. But I disagree with the way you have changed this one, which I presume happened because many of you weren't aware of its history. One blatant problem is that the policy now contains a major contradiction, meaning two statements cancel each other out. The recent change now allows the Board to "**engage in discussions ... regarding church business**" via email so long as "**all Trustees are included as contacts during such an exchange.**" But the policy statement right before this, 3.4 a1, says "**Trustees shall not use email to deliberate or to make decisions affecting the Board, UUCS Members or UUCS.**" Since deliberation involves discussion, no matter what spin is put on these words, which are often used synonymously, the new language is in violation of the policy as it stands.

More troublesome to me is that I have often argued in favor of the policy, as some of you know. So, it came as a surprise that it was suddenly bumped to the top of the agenda for the one meeting that I gave advance notice I was unable to attend, especially given that it's been on the agenda for months. It is a matter I care about, and it could easily have waited longer. I also saw Lynn Jinishian's request that it be postponed and two responses to her indicating it would be. So I was surprised that it wasn't. More disturbing to me was that unprecedented restrictions were put into place in advance of the discussion, limiting the discussion to the Board, then asking that only one person from the Shared Ministry Team offer any comments

they might have after the primary discussion had ended. Were these unusual restrictions approved by the Board in a Board meeting? I don't think so. What other issues have ever been limited in this way, especially when stifling such an important team, the very team that initiated this policy? At the very least, you must agree that having this issue become front and center at meeting it was known I was unable attend with unprecedented restrictions on the team that authored the policy, doesn't look good.

There have already been repercussions on the morale and health of certain individuals due to the change in this policy, but, more so, due to the greater issue of the Board, as a whole, not making certain that any Board actions or communications are first discussed and approved, formally or informally, in a proper Board meeting. My health has been impacted by the worry leading up to tonight's meeting due to many nights of restless sleep. It is precisely this kind of stress that is leading me to take a six-month break from most of my management responsibilities. Although I'm now worried about what will happen when I do, especially given the recent inquiry into moving to one service while I'm away, which is not the Board's decision and reflects some intention to cross into areas not its own while I'm taking my break. But I will not be gone for six months. The church cannot afford that. I'll be around and aware, and if I feel I must step back into management, I will. Just preparing this report took my entire day; time away from other matters that I should have been addressing, and now likely will not.

But I am especially concerned about the repercussions this decision has had on our irreplaceable Operations Manager, Rebecca Adams, especially on her morale. I have been asking for months that our Board communicate to Rebecca solely through Luba Johnson, who is your approved liaison to the Operations Team, and that she only communicate what has been decided, formally or informally, during an official Board meeting. This has not been happening. She frequently receives emails making requests upon her limited time regarding matters the Board, as a whole, did not request or address. Since the changes to your email policy, she has received more than 50 emails from Tom, only two which fell within her responsibilities. Imagine coming into the office on Monday to find 15 to 20 such emails awaiting—which has been the case for her—when you already have much to do and know what it is you are supposed to be doing. Rebecca wishes to be helpful, but she is understandably overwhelmed. In our conversations, which I repeat with her permission, she has used terms like, "I'm blue in the face repeating myself," "I've never been in this situation before," "I'm miserable," "It feels like harassment," "This has been a nightmare unlike any other board but Susan Virnig's, maybe even worse."

Most of these emails end up being emails she, and sometimes me, are copied on. But we still need to look at them before knowing if they are legitimate or not. Some of them would take time to respond to, including coming up with information we don't readily know or have. There are also some emails making suggestions as to what we ought to be doing with our time. Some of them are good ideas, some ideas we've already considered as an Operations Team, and some are bad ideas. Whatever the case, we know what our jobs are and what we ought to be doing with our limited time. We don't need new ideas. People who have ideas should make them happen themselves. As a Board, please keep this in mind. If you are working on lists of ideas for someone else to execute, you are wasting your time. You'll need

to execute them yourselves. But it'd be better if you focus big picture Policy Governance matters, which is your job.

I bring this up not to single anyone out or to make anyone feel bad, not Tom Mosher who has been working tirelessly, too tirelessly in opinion, nor anyone else on the Board. I bring it up rather, because I know you are caring people who don't want this troubling situation to continue any more than I do, let alone any more than Rebecca can bear. So, difficult as it is, I am bringing it up because you need to know what's happening before you can do anything to correct the situation, which I know you will, and thank you in advance for doing so.

Some fault is mine, for not having addressed these concerns sooner. This is due to my own discomfort with confrontation, having felt the painful sting of doing so far too often in my life. For my failure as a leader, I apologize to you and to our congregation, which ultimately bears the worst consequences from inadequate leadership. I also apologize to Rebecca, whom I have agonized about these matters with, but done too little to address until now. But tomorrow is a new day, everyone is informed, and we can now all do better together.

With this in mind, I have a couple of policies I have put into place for myself and our staff that I want you to be aware of. Firstly, I've instructed them, especially Rebecca, not to respond to communications from Board members that do not come through Luba and that have not been approved, formally or informally, by the entire Board during a Board meeting. And please do not ask us to try to distinguish between your role as a Board member and a church member. Secondly, neither my staff nor I will engage in email conversations about business that hasn't been discussed in open and transparent regularly scheduled board meetings.

I'll close by asking you to please respect these boundaries, and to thank you for your time and commitment to the healthy and productive functioning of our congregation.

## December Ops Team Report

The church business is at the beginning the budget process. The bookkeeper is working hard in anticipation of February Budget Summit.

Building and Grounds updates: new refrigerators are priced from 2,000. to 1,200. The old frig is in need of repairs that are very costly, though the church has an annual repair fund.

Lynn Diddens came up with a creative idea of improving the entry way and the foyer (new paint, TV screen with information).

Social justice team will evaluate the problem with the coffee stand; it might have a better location in the Friendship hall, not opposite a welcome table.

The period of COVID halted prior teams activities, that's why new and separate teams are forming. We have a new Welcoming and Membership Team (Dianne Cook, Lany Prell and Lynn Jinishian) and the Social Activities Team ( Lynne Diddens, Michelle Atwood and ?). They may collaborate for the annual or monthly projects, like Holiday events, cookies sales, a monthly potluck on the third Sunday of the month or the annual dinner.

Clarified: any of the groups or teams are self-governed. Approved either by the Board or by the Operations Team, these groups will report to the Board or the Ops Team, the latter will keep track of all the teams.

There's a suggestion to create after the sermon podcast which is different from a complete recorded service. This way the people will go to the website to listen to the podcast as well as coming to the church in person. Michelle will see to it.

## SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT (11/18/24 ~~10/23/24~~) regarding budget shortfalls - Doug D and Tom M (by Doug D)

- Hold a potluck kickoff dinner at the start of our Generosity Campaign.
- Hold a fundraiser art sale after getting members and others to donate artworks of all sorts.
- ~~Have a monthly special collection for UUCS at Sunday services — "keeping UUCS sustainable."~~
- Compile a list of local nonprofits and communicate that UUCS has rental space available & include list of local wedding consultants.
- ~~Compile a list of local wedding consultants and do likewise.~~
- ~~Ask Madeline and Dan Gore to create a music concert; promote it well and share the proceeds with them.~~
- Communicate via email, perhaps monthly, to SUUN email list, explaining our financial status and need, asking for suggestions. Provide a specific email address for them to respond to.
- ~~Send out a simple, carefully crafted questionnaire/survey via email, to as many UU congregations as possible, asking for fundraising ideas.~~
- Contact Pacific Western Region (UUA) with same/similar questionnaire as above.
- ~~Contact some selected non-profits with same/similar questionnaire as above.~~
- ~~Place ads in local media (radio, TV, FaceBook, etc.) inviting non-profits to consider UUCS as a meeting place (for a reasonable fee — similar to the local Bluegrass society).~~
- Enhance income from our annual auction with a potluck dinner followed by a live, in-person auction along with remote bidding via zoom; with some entertainment between dinner and auction.
- Have outreach tables at farmers markets and other events, similar to our LGBTQ PRIDE PARADE table.
- Invite Terry Anderson to solicit suggestions from his email list