

James Bay United Church Board Meeting Minutes

Date: 2026/01/15

Time: 6:30 to 9:20 p.m.

Location: Sanctuary

Chair: Martin Stewart

Secretary: D'Arcy McPherson

In attendance: Martin Stewart (Chair)
Karen Halliday (Trustee)
Gordon Miller (Communications)
Colleen Nichol (Pastoral Care)
Marg Lunam (Thrift Shop)
Mahima Sylvester (HR/M&P)
Diane Monteith (Member at large)
Rev. Greg Powell (Minister)
D'Arcy McPherson (Secretary)

Absent: Scott Jantzen (Member at large)
James Troutman (Member at large)
Joanne Keelan (Thursday Lunch)

Opening Prayer & Lighting Christ Candle: Greg

Personal Check-in: 1-2 minutes each to share where we are at this moment and to connect a little more deeply with each other, as we wish. (Contact Zunaira!!!!)

Covenant: We covenant together... to listen and speak with respect ...to express our views ... to be aware of each other and ourselves ...to be mindful of time, making room for each person to contribute ...to consider prayerfully ... to care about the life of the congregation, the community and the world ... to ask for help as needed ...to meet our commitments.

Approval of Minutes – November 27, 2025 (Colleen/Marg) Carried

Minister's report (Greg) (Please see Appendix A)

- **Worship Planning Team Report:**

The Worship Planning Team, together with members of the Worship Team, met following the Advent season to conduct a debrief. The team reported that they were very pleased with the overall experience of Advent and Christmas worship and remain open to feedback and suggestions for future planning.

A highlight of the season was the joint service with Oak Bay United Church, *Christmas in a Minor Key*. The team noted that this was a positive and meaningful collaboration, and plans are in place to continue working with Oak Bay United during Holy Week. Rev. Sarah Fanning will lead Maundy Tuesday worship at Oak Bay United, and James Bay United Church will host Good Friday worship in partnership with Oak Bay United.

It was emphasized that this is a healthy and productive relationship focused on collaboration in worship, not a symbolic gesture nor a step toward amalgamation. The partnership is functioning well and is seen as mutually beneficial.

The team also noted that a Lenten program incorporating themes of feasting and fasting is currently in development.

Looking ahead, the Worship Team expressed interest in engaging in a future visioning exercise and suggested that this may be revisited at a later time. This was incorporated into a discussion about a Board retreat, later in the meeting.

- Worship Team Governance:

It was noted that Sarah Hovey serves as Chair of the Worship Team. While the Worship Team Chair would normally hold a Board position, the Worship Team is currently represented on the Board by Greg and Colleen.

- Worship Resources – Print and Electronic Distribution:

The Board discussed the distribution of worship resources in print and electronic formats. It was noted that 100 printed copies were produced of the Advent devotional booklet, with approximately 25 remaining.

The default approach going forward will be to circulate worship materials electronically. Printed copies will continue to be made available upon request for those who prefer or require them.

Board Chair's report (Martin)

- Treasurer:

The Board Chair's report began with the following motion:

Moved that the Board elect Gordon Miller as Treasurer for the Pastoral Charge and for the Mission and Service Fund of James Bay United Church effective immediately and concluding at the AGM in 2029 (3-year term). (Marg/Colleen) Carried.

It was noted that, as a result of this appointment as Treasurer, Gordon will be stepping down from his role as Communications chair, which is a Board position. The Board acknowledged that the Communications position will become vacant and may function without a chair until a successor is appointed. Gordon will be stepping back from supervision of the Greeting ministry, as well.

- **Board Resignations, Retirements and Recruitment:**

The Board acknowledged the resignations of Joanne and James, and noted that Karen has advised she will be retiring from the Board at the conclusion of the current term.

It was agreed that recruitment will be a significant priority for the next Board. The Board discussed the need for intentional discernment around the size of the Board, anticipated vacancies and the skills and attributes required for future members.

Members were invited to reflect on their own intentions regarding service on the next Board.

The Board noted with appreciation that Deborah continues to support recruitment efforts for both Board and ministry roles.

- **Recruitment Approach and Discernment**

The Board discussed whether recruitment should focus primarily on filling vacancies or on identifying specific skills and attributes needed for effective governance.

It was agreed that:

- The congregation should continue to be openly invited to consider Board service.
- At the same time, recruitment should be thoughtful and intentional, with attention to the characteristics and capacities needed for strong governance.
- Deborah will support the recruitment process, but the Board will provide guidance on desired attributes, experience, and skill sets.

The Board expressed a desire to recruit members who:

- Have capacity for governance-level work and big-picture thinking.
- Are energized by visioning and shaping the future of the church.
- Are willing to engage in complex, dynamic conversations.
- Bring commitment, curiosity and a willingness to invest fully in the work of the Board.

It was noted that the Board aims for representation across the life of the church, including participation from non-traditional Sunday worship communities and newer members, alongside those familiar with the congregation's history.

The Board confirmed that, under United Church polity, the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer must be members of the United Church, while other Board members are not required to be.

The Board discussed the importance of balancing:

- Institutional memory and historical understanding, and
- Fresh perspectives from newer participants in the life of the church.

It was emphasized that Board members participate in visioning and governance rather than advocating for specific programs or ministries.

Gordon advised that he will reach out to members of the Tuesday Night Jazz community as potential candidates.

- **Board Meeting Structure and Governance Focus**

The Board reflected on the importance of maintaining a governance focus and avoiding being drawn into day-to-day operational matters, trusting ministry teams and committees to carry out that work.

There was discussion about whether a revised meeting schedule (for example, meeting every six weeks) could support Board members in balancing governance responsibilities with other areas of ministry involvement. This will be revisited as part of future planning.

- **Board Retreat and Visioning**

The Board discussed the value of a facilitated Board retreat focused on visioning, relationship-building and shared discernment. Members expressed interest in a retreat that would include time for reflection, shared meals and informal community-building, rather than a heavily structured facilitation model.

It was agreed that:

- A retreat could serve as both a visioning exercise and an incentive for prospective Board members.
- A retreat planning committee will be struck for the incoming Board.
- A spring retreat is envisioned, ideally including at least one overnight.
- Possible locations discussed included Camp Pringle and Tigh-Na-Mara.

Action: A retreat planning committee was formed consisting of Martin and Diane, who will begin preliminary planning for a spring Board retreat.

- **AGM Preparation**

The Board received an update through Gordon from the Interim Financial Team (IFT) regarding the timing of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The team noted that the AGM currently occurs during an extraordinarily busy period, coinciding with year-end financial close and tax receipt processing. Their report to the Board last year had already identified this concern.

While no formal recommendation was being advanced at this time, the IFT suggested that the AGM be scheduled after all year-end financials are finalized, noting that last year's AGM (March 27, 2025) occurred before financial statements were fully complete, which were not finalized until April.

It was noted that:

- The Board is not required to hold the AGM within the first three months of the year, provided it occurs within six months of year-end, in accordance with the BC Societies Act.
- Delaying the AGM would result in a later approval of the annual budget unless an interim operational budget were adopted.
- An administrative AGM could be separated from a fiscal AGM, though many of the discussions are interrelated.

The Board discussed the option of preparing a proposed operating budget by the end of January, allowing the congregation time to review it and enabling the church to operate on an interim basis until the AGM. It was noted that a budget is a planning document and can be adjusted as required.

The Board discussed possible timing and format options for the AGM, taking into account Holy Week and Easter, which falls on April 5 this year.

Options considered included:

- Holding the AGM after Easter to avoid conflict with Holy Week.
- Establishing a consistent post-Easter timeframe in future years.
- Holding the AGM on a Sunday following worship, which would allow for a shared meal and take advantage of an existing congregational gathering.
- Holding the AGM on a weekday evening, which allows for focused attention on the business of the church.

It was noted that recent AGMs have typically been held mid-week in the evening (e.g., March 27, 2025; April 13, 2023).

The Board expressed support for scheduling the AGM in the week following Easter and continuing the tradition of an evening meeting.

Tentative date proposed: Wednesday, April 15, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

The Board also agreed that breakout groups would be removed from the AGM format.

An AGM Preparation Committee was struck to coordinate planning and logistics.

Members: Colleen, Gordon, Martin, Greg, and D'Arcy

Annual Reports: The Board discussed the timeline for submission of annual reports.

It was noted that Candis will send out the call for reports and requires all annual reports as soon as possible in order to compile the AGM materials. Board members and ministry teams are encouraged to begin preparation immediately.

- **Victoria Foundation and Church Painting Project**

The Board received an update on the church's investment with the Victoria Foundation and the implications for funding the exterior painting project.

It was noted that under the Victoria Foundation's investment rules, James Bay United Church has access to the annual interest earned and up to 25% of the capital, subject to approval by the Victoria Foundation Board. The church has previously accessed capital funds and subsequently repaid them into the fund. The current investment balance is slightly over \$120,000. Natasha Benn, Director, Philanthropic Services, noted in an email to the Chari that pursuant to the terms of the Fund Agreement, James Bay United Church can request a retraction of 25% of the current capital balance, which is \$105,600. This means the maximum request is \$26,400.

The painting project has been under review with the Victoria Foundation Heritage Fund. While the Heritage Fund program that would have provided up to 50% of project funding has recently been discontinued, the church's application file remains active and is currently under review. VCHT has subsidized the painting of the church several times. Most recently in 2015. They have referred the JBUC file to the Architectural Sub-Committee to make recommendation on preparing and painting the church to insure a longer lasting finish.

The painting subsidy will come from VCHT. The balance of funds needed to complete the job will come from various sources. Victoria Foundation retraction

(\$26,400), Victoria Foundation annual interest earned on capital, other fundraising activities.

A Victoria Foundation committee is reviewing the historical maintenance record of the church and will be making recommendations regarding eligibility for Heritage Fund support. It is anticipated that the committee may conclude that earlier painting work did not include sufficient surface preparation (e.g., sanding and treatment), which could result in a higher project budget.

The current estimated cost of the painting project is \$100,000–\$110,000.

Additional funding options under consideration include:

- Accessing Victoria Foundation capital funds
- External grants and subsidies
- A congregational fundraising appeal, similar to previous special projects

The last exterior painting was completed in 2015. It was noted that a 10-year interval is not sufficient given modern paint chemistry and current best practices. With proper preparation, a new paint job is expected to last at least 25 years.

It was further noted that modern painting practice requires different treatments for different building exposures (e.g., south-facing versus north-facing walls), and that the majority of the project cost relates to surface preparation rather than paint application.

The Board discussed that, ideally, the project would proceed this year, subject to the timing of the Victoria Foundation's assessment and funding decisions. Decisions will be required in the near term.

CORRECTION TO MINUTES BROUGHT IN FROM FEBRUARY 19 MEETING:

- A clarification regarding the above report on the Victoria Foundation Fund. It was noted that there were some inaccuracies in the January 15 discussion, particularly concerning the total fund value, which is currently approximately \$254,000. It was confirmed that the earlier statement was accurate in relation to the original endowment of \$105,000, which represents the portion accessible for withdrawal in accordance with the fund's terms. The Chair has access to the donor portal and offered to review the information with Board members at the end of the meeting so that all may have a clear and complete understanding of the fund's history and impact from 2004 to the present. It was further reported that the church has received approximately \$185,000 to date in annual disbursements (interest earned on the fund), representing the total amount that has been invested back into the ministry and life of the church through the fund over time.

- Interim Finance Team and Financial Systems Transition

The Board expressed its deep appreciation to the Interim Finance Team (Franklyn, Alan, and Hazel), who served as interim treasurers and bookkeepers for over 18 months. Although now retired from their formal roles, they continue to support the transition process and have been generous with their time and expertise.

It was noted that:

- Gordon has met with the Interim Finance Team to support knowledge transfer.

- The team had been concerned that, in the absence of a Treasurer, much of their work might need to be redone.
- They have emphasized the importance of the Board receiving up-to-date financial reports on a monthly basis.

The Board discussed the transition to a new accounting system being implemented by Cheques & Balances. The current accounting software does not provide reporting in a format suitable for the church’s governance and operational needs. Cheques & Balances is migrating the church to a new system that will support improved reporting and financial oversight.

Key points noted:

- Cheques & Balances is targeting the end of January for implementation, with February as a more realistic timeline for full stabilization.
- January will be used to identify and resolve any initial setup issues.
- February is expected to mark the beginning of regular monthly reporting.
- The new system will allow reports to be generated at the press of a button, eliminating the need for manual report reconstruction.

A draft chart of accounts is being developed and will be refined during the implementation phase. Adjustments can be made as required to ensure accuracy and clarity.

It was further noted that immediate banking adjustments are required, including transferring funds from the annual account into a higher-interest account.

- Signing Authority

It was moved that Gordon be added as a signing officer on church accounts. (Marg, Karen). Carried

- Financial Status

The Board reviewed the year-end financial position.

It was noted that:

- November reflected a deficit position.
- December was a strong financial month.
- The fiscal year-end is December 31.

The Board expressed confidence in the church’s overall financial position and noted that year-end results will be finalized once all reporting is complete.

Ministry updates

- Thrift Store (Marg) (Please see Appendix B)
Conversation about snacks deferred until Marg speaks with Thrift Store leadership team.

It was moved that the meeting go in camera to discuss personnel matters. (Colleen, Karen) Carried.

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- **In Camera discussion.**

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**It was moved that the meeting resume in public.
(Colleen, Karen) Carried.**

**It was moved that the Board terminate Zunaira's contract without cause and that a letter be written by HR/M&P to Zunaira expressing our thanks for her work, to communicate this decision, as well as the provision of two weeks' notice effective January 22.
(Gorden/Colleen) Carried**

**It was moved that Natalia be offered a contract for communications services.
(Mahima/Karen) Carried.**

Other

The Board discussed the opportunity, as part of the upcoming visioning process, to begin a new conversation about the future direction of James Bay United Church.

It was agreed that this work should include engaging a broad range of JBUC stakeholders and beginning to ask reflective and forward-looking questions about who the congregation is becoming and how it is being called to serve in the years ahead.

This conversation will form part of the foundation for the next phase of the Board's spring visioning retreat.

Closing Prayer: Greg

The board meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.
The next board meeting will be held on February 19, 2026.

APPENDIX A

James Bay United Church | Board Report Minister's Report – January 2025

Advent and Christmas were very meaningful and I am excited about what's ahead in 2026.

Here is some of what's been capturing my attention:

1. A review of Advent and Christmas from a worship perspective is [here](#). We are always interested in improving, so please share your perspective of what went well and what we should do differently next year.
2. Advent and Christmas are an intense time for staff, but I think our staff fared very well.
3. We shift our focus to Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. The theme for Lent will be “fasting and feasting”, featuring character reflections like during Advent.
4. Discernment continues for Sunday Kids. There will be changes again as we figure out how to serve this vital demographic. Similarly, youth and young adults' programming remains on my mind.
5. We will be following up from the pledge campaign in fairly short order. This will include making arrangements to change financial giving amounts, but also inquiring about how folks would like to fulfill their time commitments.
6. I am re-evaluating our use of Empower Church. I believe it is the best value software for us, but our uptake has been very low this year so we aren't using its full potential.
7. I have been very impressed by our congregation's response to Cheryl Caldwell's broken hip. Her recovery will be long, but she is supported well by this community.

With much gratitude,
Greg

APPENDIX B

James Bay United Church | Board Report

Thrift Shop Report

The Thrift Shop celebrated another successful year-end in December 2025 and the volunteers were fêted and thanked by the Board at a luncheon on our last day of sales. Our thanks go to all who participated; the party was a big success!

It is our practice to close the shop for a winter break during which time the volunteers gather in groups to thoroughly clean and refresh the shop. This break also allows us to check in with volunteers, to evaluate current practices, tune up procedures and generally spend some time together.

The cleaning is mostly complete; thanks go to Bev who has organized carpet cleaning and will look after a few “property issues” for us.

Between now and February 4, we will continue the “tune up” events and host a casual afternoon for volunteers at the shop.

Our special thanks go to Judy Langford and Lenore Morrey who have carried the leadership role, a role made especially challenging after the death of Aleksa Harkness who was a huge part of the soul of our ministry for 11 years. She is sorely missed.

Our volunteer roster remains strong and we are looking to expand the leadership team this year. For a start, Marg Lunam has returned to a more active role after an extended leave.

Kim Tadie, has decided to take a break after 11 years as a volunteer. Kim contributed to our success in many ways and was a valued member of the team. This leaves her role as “snack provider from the board” vacant; we appreciated her contribution and have thanked her appropriately.

We anticipate long lines outside our doors on February 6 when we re-open to a fresh and sweet-smelling shop! You are all invited.