

UCO Board of Directors

Douglas G. Emslie, MHA, Board Chair has an entrepreneurial background and a great commitment to non-profit endeavors. He founded two companies, a non-emergency medical transportation company specializing in dialysis and chemotherapy patients and an emergency medical services creating Lifeline Medical Transportation which offered highly targeted interfacility critical care ambulance services primarily for neonatal and cardiac patients. These companies were merged into MedTrans, a multinational corporation, which is now the American Medical Response. He was Director of Operations, Director of Marketing and, Director of Critical Care Services. He currently works with food services in the film and entertainment industry. He has served on the Board of Managers-South Pasadena-San Marino (L.A. Metro) YMCA; Board of Directors-Visiting Nurse Association of Greater Los Angeles; Board of Directors-Partners in Care; Board of Directors (past president)-California Medical Transportation Association; Board of Directors (past treasurer)-Private Ambulance Providers' Association of Los Angeles; Commissioner-Los Angeles County Emergency Medical Services Commission; Board member (past president)-Los Angeles County Ambulance Association; member Ventura County Ambulance Advisory Board; Board member (past president)-Oneonta Club.

Teri Brewster, MBA, Treasurer works for KFICO Insurance Solutions on the life and individual health insurance, servicing the clients for 3 insurance brokers. She has been a member of First Congregational Church of LB since 1982 and is currently assistant treasurer and Co-Chair of the Board of Social Justice and Outreach. She also sings in the choir. She has a BA from Cal State Fullerton, a California teacher's credential in Elementary Education from Cal Poly Pomona, and an MBA from the University of Southern California. She was a legal assistant for Mutual Service Corporation, a broker/dealer for four years. She was presented the Ralph Pillsbury Award, First Congregational Church of LB in 2010 and Herrington Pathfinder Award, First Congregational Church of LB in 2013 for her various ministries within the church.

Alison Morales, MA, Secretary graduated with a degree in Special Education from the Pennsylvania State University in 2005 and earned a Master of Arts in Teaching from National University in 2007. For the past ten years, she has served as a special day class teacher for the Long Beach Unified School District, specializing in working with students with significant cognitive and physical delays and those requiring access to mobility opportunities and augmentative and alternative communication programs. From 2006-2008, she served as the Director of Youth Programming at Community Congregational United Church of

Christ (UCC) in Los Alamitos, CA. From 2010-2013, she served as an Adviser for the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC Youth Roundtable. From 2011-2012, she served on the Pilgrim Pines Board and the Outdoor Ministry Team for the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC. She has been a member of First Congregational Church, Long Beach since 2011.

Richard H. Graves, DPM, Website Director is a Board Certified podiatrist practicing in the Long Beach area since 1995. He graduated from the California School of Podiatric Medicine in 1993 and was valedictorian of his class. Dr. Graves grew up in Long Beach and is a graduate of Lakewood High School, Long Beach City College, and UC Irvine. He earned honors in track and cross country at each of those schools including high school and junior college state finalist and NCAA All-American. He still holds the 5000 meter record at Long Beach City. He continues to participate in long distance running events and finished the Boston Marathon. Dr. Graves' interest in running is what fueled his desire to be a podiatrist. He now has two offices in Long Beach and specializes in sports medicine. He is also the team podiatrist for UC Irvine athletics. He has volunteered with Special Olympics for the past 15 years and is the Clinical Director of their Healthy Athletes-Fit Feet program. Dr. Graves enjoys his work and charitable efforts very much, but his favorite time is spent with his three granddaughters.

Laura Lafoia Ava-Tesimale, Community Relations Director is a Pacific American businesswoman, humanitarian, community organizer, and interfaith peace activist. Her professional career spans over 30 years in Mortgage Banking holding positions such as Branch Manager, Account Executive, and Corporate Executive—managing production and operational divisions of multi-million dollar real estate lending firms. Since 2001, Laura has also been the CEO of AVA Consulting & Management, as well as Founder and President of One Global Family Foundation. In 2015, she established the Council of Interfaith & Indigenous Women. Laura has extensive experience serving on boards and committees, organizing and marketing events and conferences, as well as fundraising efforts. She currently serves as: Director of the Pacific Region for Give Light Foundation (building sustainable orphanages, providing sponsorship support and educational scholarships for children around the world); Global Ambassador for Free Wheelchair Mission since 2006 (serving the disabled poor in over 90 countries, including the Pacific Region); and through the collaborative efforts of her One Global Family Foundation and its community partners such as Be The Cause, Manav Sadhna, Project ALOFA, First Drops, RStar Foundation, Tiyya Foundation, UCO-DIC, SARAH, VICC, PICP, PACCC and others... thousands of underprivileged children and families, homeless communities, immigrants, refugees, and disabled poor are served both locally and globally. Laura is active on several interfaith council boards which work in alliance with the global Parliament of the World's Religions, United Religions Initiative, Unity and Diversity World Council, and the Orange County Interfaith Network.

Eillen Badilla-Ford, BA, Event Planning Committee Member and Social Worker Volunteer is a recent graduate of Chapman University with a BA in Sociology, emphasis in Social Work. This accomplishment marks the completion of a journey that began when she moved to the United States in 1998. Originally from Costa Rica, Eillen worked as a high school science teacher for five years prior to coming to the U.S. in search of a new opportunities and a less socially conservative community. She began taking ESL courses and worked as a housekeeper for several long-term clients. In 2005 she began working as a paid caregiver for Cambrian Homecare. In that position she developed her love of caring and serving others. She became a member of First Congregational Church of Long Beach in 2013 and immediately joined the Board of Parish Life on which she currently serves. Her next goals include securing employment in the social services area, volunteering and /or academic endeavors (MSW, graduate school).

Martha Duncan, BS, CP, Grant Writing Committee Member is currently a Provider Contracts Manager at Molina Healthcare in Long Beach. She obtained her B.S. Public Administration degree from the University of Arizona and a Paralegal Certificate from Cerritos College. She holds a Certified Paralegal credential and worked as a paralegal for the Disneyland Resort. She is a veteran of the United States Army, serving as an Intelligence Analyst. She has been a member of First Congregational Church since 2005, serving on the Boards of Stewardship and Finance, Parish Life and Diaconate. For each of her board terms she served at least one year as Chair. She is currently the co-leader of the “Guest Chef” program at First Church that works with the Catholic Charities shelter in Long Beach to provide homemade dinners to their guests. She is also active with the Long Beach Playhouse as a performer and director.

Reverend John Forrest, Associate Minister of First Congregational Church of Long Beach is a native of Ripley, Tennessee, graduated from Millsaps College in 2007. From 2007 to 2011, he worked in various agencies dedicated to serving people experiencing homelessness in the Washington, DC area. During that time, he began his course of study at Wesley Theological Seminary in DC. He earned his Masters of Divinity from there in 2011. In 2011, John Forrest began a position as the Interim Director of Children and Youth Ministries at Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ in Bethesda, Maryland. In his time there, he oversaw the Christian Education programs as well as the youth group. During the spring and summer of 2012, he completed Clinical Pastoral Education as a chaplain at Johns Hopkins Hospital-Bayview in Baltimore, Maryland. In 2011 and 2012, he served as a teaching assistant for the introductory worship course at Wesley Theological Seminary. He is deeply influenced by process theology. He loves the stories of the Bible and believes that we have the responsibility to take them seriously without taking them literally. He enjoys yoga, running, reading, cooking and baking bread.

Advisory Board

Michele Dobson, Esq, Advisor is a native of the City of Long Beach, California. She has had extensive experience in civil law from working with low income and disadvantaged citizens to Legal Aid in the areas of landlord/tenant and family law and Domestic Violence Clinic at the Superior Court in Norwalk. She held positions of a Congressional Intern in the City of Long Beach for the United States House of Representatives and as a District Office Field Representative for the California State Assembly.

After beginning her career as a Criminal Defense Attorney with the Public Defenders' Office, Ms. Dobson joined a large, corporate firm in the civil defense area defending Physicians, Acute Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Skilled Nursing Facilities and Their Staffs before starting her own firm in 2005. Currently she has her own practice, the Law Offices of Michele Dobson.

John Taylor Kness, Advisor retired as a Director of Current Schedules from America West Airlines in September of 1999. He has been in the airline industry since 1967. Since retirement, he has done consulting work with Sabre Technologies in Bahrain and Polar Air Cargo in Long Beach. Mr. Kness has a Masters Degree in Education from Northern Illinois University. He is a Viet Nam veteran. He has been a member of First Congregational Church of LB for ten years.

Rev. Jerry Stinson, Advisor was a magna cum laude graduate of Occidental College and the Divinity School at Harvard. He retired as Senior Minister of the First Congregational Church of Long Beach at the end of December, 2012. He has served as a United Church of Christ minister for 41 years. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors for the following four organizations: The Southern California American Civil Liberties Union, Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace, The Christian-Muslim Consultative Group and the Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition. He is also a volunteer staff member for the Center for Progressive Christianity.

Each board member contributes annually to Urban Community Outreach.