Unity of Central Minnesota Board of Directors

# Meeting Minutes

# May 24, 2022

## Opening

The regular meeting of the Unity of Central Minnesota Board of Directors was called to order at 4:30 pm May 24, 2022 by President Carol Laudenbach. It was a hybrid meeting, both on Zoom and in person. After a prayer by Rev. Jim, the Board Pledge was read.

## Present

Present were Terri Duncan, Susan Holmen, Carol Laudenbach, Mary Paulson, Cristina Seaborn, and Rev. Jim Ernstsen. Beverly Mallgrave was absent.

**Reports**

Secretary’s report

Minutes for 4/26/22 were sent ahead for review and are accepted as written.

Treasurer’s Report

Terri reported that our bookkeeper Ellen has reconciled all numbers through February and is working on March and April. February expenses were $8996 and income was $6529, so -$2600 for the month. We are averaging -$2300 per month but will have a more complete picture when we see the quarterly report soon. Rev. Jim and Terri will figure out exactly what to track and report to the Board. We report 3-4 months’ income and expenses in the commUNITY News. It is agreed that we will discuss the monthly deficit in another meeting.

Minister’s Report (Attached)

All email addresses are now updated to \_\_\_@unityofcm.org. Old addresses won’t work. Revs. Jim and Lisa Herklotz will attend the Unity Annual Convention in June in Kansas City, but he will be here both the Sunday before and Sunday after for service. They are asked to bring back highlights to share with Board.

The Prayer Chaplain Ministry has been put on hold for now; it will start again after a re-set. Cheryl Perry resigned as lead and as the Prayer Chaplain Ministry is such an integral part it needs to function well. It has not been functioning well for many months, so changes need to be made.

There is discussion about how prayer requests will be handled. Requests can still be made through emails, the UPray app, Silent Unity and our Unity of Central Minnesota website. The reorganization will aim at a restart in 2023, but finding a “third option” is suggested, as well, and will be considered. Rev. Jim will announce this at Sunday service and in the newsletter.

**Old Business**

Live Streaming

Rev. Jim explained that we will not live stream Sunday services for now, because it takes a great deal of effort and skilled volunteers. We need at least two more people every week or a rotating team and we don’t have that now.

He is recording a 30-minute video with announcements and the message that premieres on FB at 10 am Sundays. He had assumed that when we were once again in person live streaming would be discontinued, but asks now, “are we going to be offering live streaming as we go forward?” If we see ourselves that way, we would need to shift resources and rethink how to utilize our human resources (e.g., discontinue the Power Point slide show and recorded music to free up volunteers to live stream).

There is more discussion about hybrid services, using a cell phone to record the service, etc. These are not really viable. The questions about next steps and “what do we want to be?” will be addressed at another meeting.

Spiritual Center Task Force

Carol, as the Board liaison to the SCTF, asks Rev. Jim to give an update on Phase II. Angie is the lead and sends reports to Terri and Lisa. He says at this time they are a bit stuck, as there are no viable sites (old churches or other good locations) available or in our price range. Mall space is available but very expensive. One option is for the SCTF to stop meeting weekly but still be available to view new spaces. Carol will talk to Terri and Lisa about this plan, and Rev. Jim will speak to the realtor.

This also ties to the larger discussion about the deficit, low attendance, no live streaming, etc.

**New Business**

SSAM and T-shirts

Susan explains that SSAM has a plan to order Unity t-shirts members can purchase, to wear at SSAM-sponsored and other community events, starting with Juneteenth. She is asking that the Board approve an initial expenditure to purchase the shirts with payments collected to repay it. There are questions and Susan will get more details and email it to Board members. There are different places we could order a small number with fast turnaround.

Discussion of Rev. Jim’s Video to Board

Rev. Jim had sent a video message to the Board that addressed Board and leadership participation in events, classes, and Sunday services. He also raised the question of the reasons, and what might be missing spiritually, or if there are other causes of low participation. The Sunday service numbers also remain low, even though we are now in person. He challenged the Board to lead by example—to be an active example.

With Mary’s facilitation, where she reminded us of the importance of dialogue, “courageous conversations,” and how to be an effective speaker and listener, the Board discussed reactions and thoughts that arose from the video message. It was not easy to hear his words, but all agreed there is validity to Rev. Jim’s concerns, especially the low attendance.

Comments included reminders of the impact of COVID, the comfort found in attending from home and the habit of not attending; the unique situation we are in (selling building, COVID, Zoom and live streaming, now in person but not in our own space); fears and worries about our financial situation; the desire for connection with others socially and the difficulty in doing that; questions about how to communicate with the congregation and hear their needs and concerns more effectively, and reminders that there is much good to be found in UCM and hopefulness that we will get through this difficult time.

The discussion turned to ideas and thoughts about how to turn things around. It is noted that instead of throwing out solutions, we need to get to the core of the issues and the core of what UCM provides for people. One comment was that the connection to the spirit of others brings joy, and the lack of that connection can bring heartbreak. We know that we have all experienced that connection and it is vital; if congregants are not feeling that we need to find a way to get it back, although things may look very different than they did before. We all had a reason for coming, and a reason for staying; now we need to get clear what this means for the current time and how to attract people (new and old) to attend once again. Although we face current challenges and limitations this is also an opportunity to think creatively and enthusiastically.

It is expressed that the answers will not come from the Board, but from our people. We need to engage our community in authentic and meaningful ways and re-ignite excitement and hopefulness. Our task is to successfully hear from our community and apply what we hear. So, how do we reach them? How do we ask the questions: “What do you want for your spiritual fulfillment? What could this spiritual center do to really rock your world?”

Not everyone is a fan of surveys, and we have relevant data already from surveys done this past year that should be reviewed. Some ideas to generate ideas and interest include a townhall meeting, small group discussions, focus groups, house concerts and phone calls. Given the love our community has for social events, the Potluck Picnic on Father’s Day is important, and getting the word out about it is a priority. Given the gravity of these issues, it is agreed that a Board working meeting early next month is appropriate.

## Next Meeting

As we discussed that there are several concerns we agreed to address later (budget deficit, live streaming, the SCTF efforts, etc.) in addition to low participation and attendance, there will be a working meeting to focus on “Where do we go from here?” on Thursday, June 9, 4:30, at the office and on Zoom. Everyone is asked to bring ideas and suggestions at that time.

The next Regular Board Meeting is on Tuesday, June 28 at 4:30 at the office and on Zoom.

## Adjournment

Carol adjourned the meeting at 6:40 pm with a prayer by Terri.

| Minutes respectfully submitted by: | Susan G Holmen |
| --- | --- |
| Approved by: | Board |

**Board of Director’s Meeting**

**Minister’s Report – Rev. Jim Ernstsen**

**May 24, 2022**

* **Completed**
  + Our old @unityspiritualcentercm.org email addresses is no longer be valid…
    - Please verify your contact information or group lists you may have created
    - New email addresses [XYZ@unityofcm.org](mailto:XYZ@unityofcm.org) (where XYZ = RevJim, Office (Cheryl), Prayers (Cheryl), Bookkeeper (Ellen), Treasurer (Terri), & Cheryl)
* **Ongoing**
  + Our original “World Peace Project” continues in person into the future… Tuesday’s at 2pm (office)
  + Unity’s Five Basic Principles in a Post-Pandemic age (multi-church class led by Rev. Lisa) continues
  + Monthly Pub Theology continues at The Green Mill well attended
  + In person Holiday Inn service is averaging 21 attendees
    - The Holiday Inn space has been booked through the end of July
    - Recorded services are “Premiered” each Sunday at 10am in place of a “Live Streamed” event
  + Rev. Jim plans on attending the June Convention in Kansas City, June 13th – 17th
  + Spiritual Center Task Force continues into Phase II
    - The Task Force continues to look for permanent space (lease or purchase or land)
    - We are currently working with Allan Zolin from Coldwell Realty
    - The Task Force consists of AngieT, RickW, AllenB, Rev. JimE
    - With the low average Sunday attendance, do we slow down the pace of the Task Force?
  + The “Open Projects” list remains in the UCM Sandbox
    - Mary & Cristina have created a proposal for strategic planning
    - Carol, Rebecca Marie, & Rev. Jim have made a rough draft pass at prioritizing the list
    - We are suggesting a future board meeting to set strategic goals
    - Do we have a proposed date for discussion?
  + Technology Grant Project – application to be completed with MaryP’s help
  + Federal Retention Credit application – contacting our payroll firm – Miller Welle Heiser Ltd
* **New**
  + Reservations have been made ($90) for the Lions Club Park, June 19th, for a Picnic after Sunday Svc
    - Father’s Day (the only date available in June), planning assistance from Rebecca Marie
  + The Prayer Chaplain Ministry has been temporarily placed on hold
    - Initial goal is to reorganize (reset) in the new year, 2023
  + 30 day notice has been given to Icon Accounting as our Bookkeeper accepts more responsibilities
  + Questions have been posed to the Board (from the Minister):
    - What would excite you (Board members) to participate more in services/events?
    - What do we think would motivate member participation? (Survey? Conversations?)
    - Do we try something different? Maybe our current model of Sunday Service, Spiritual Classes, & Service to our community is no longer motivating our membership. New focus?
      * Small group ministries? Pod programs? Focus on social events? Musical emphasis?
  + Phil Limerick has asked that we pick up UCM items (piano, TV) being stored at his home

**Ministry Leads reporting to the Minister**

* + - **Adult Enrichment** – Carol
    - **Prayer Chaplain** – **Closed**
    - **Marketing & Website - Open**
    - **Social Media** – Faye
    - **Volunteer Coordinator** – Rebecca Marie
    - **Board Planning** – Carol & Mary
    - **Accounting/Bookkeeping** – Ellen (Express Employment)
    - **Greeters/Ushers** – Monique
    - **Spiritual Social Action** – Susan & Terri
    - **Sunday Service & Technology** – Cheryl & Jessica
    - **Platform Assistant** – Rebecca Marie