Unity of Central Minnesota Board of Directors

# Meeting Minutes

# April 26, 2022

## Opening

The regular meeting of the Unity of Central Minnesota Board of Directors was called to order at 4:30 pm April 26, 2022 by President Carol Laudenbach. It was a hybrid meeting, both on Zoom and in person. It was recorded. After a prayer by Rev. Jim, the Board Pledge was read.

## Present

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

**Reports**

Treasurer’s Report

There is a not a Treasurer’s Report at this time. but financial concerns and reporting procedures were discussed. Terri and Carol will meet to define parameters of reporting. The new bookkeeper, Ellen, still needs access to the bank accounts and statements so she can do the two-step verification process in balancing accounts. Carol is working on this, as well as ensuring that Phil’s name is no longer on accounts and that Terri is, so she can receive statements.

The January accounts have been reconciled and February and March are in process. Then they will form a quarterly report. Rev. Jim has great confidence in Ellen’s abilities and skills. Phil used to provide four reports for the Board’s perusal; Carol and Terri will decide if that will continue, or a different process will be put in place.

Secretary’s report

Minutes for 3/22/22 were approved through email. Carol brings up the question of why we have done email review and approval and if we want to continue or change this practice. The main reason is to allow review when it is still fresh, but it is another step and not done like other reports. Carol proposes that, like the financial and minister’s reports, the Minutes be sent with the Board meeting agenda a few days ahead for review and corrections, and then the final Minutes are approved in the Board meeting. This is standard procedure on many Boards.

Another possibility is for Susan to complete them and place them in the Sandbox earlier, so Board members can review at their discretion and Carol can access them there to send with agenda.

**Old Business**

Co-Minister Proposal Follow-up

A congregant sent a letter to the Board expressing disappointment that the Co-Ministry Proposal from Rev. Jim and Rev. Lisa had been withdrawn, with concern that the Board had not acted on the proposal in a timely manner, and that there was no explanation of the reasons for the withdrawal or discussion. Carol explained that she had felt the decision was made so she didn’t press for reasons. Rev. Jim explained that he had not wanted to discuss it then but did not mean they were not open to more discussion.

He also said that there were several reasons for their decision, including the feedback they were hearing that the congregation loved the idea but may not be ready, the time that passed after the proposal with no actions taken (survey or townhall) and answers received through prayer and discernment.

Board members spoke of the timing (holidays and new Board starting) with the proposal being withdrawn at the first meeting of the new Board, so there was no time to plan actions. The question was asked if they might reconsider as the community is in a different place now, and Rev. Jim agreed that he would discuss it with Rev. Lisa and take it to prayer and discernment. It is agreed the Board should take time to consider what further communication the community needs. Once Rev. Jim and Rev. Lisa have talked, he will email the Board who will then decide how to give more information to the community.

This also led to a conversation about the way the Board communicates information to the community. It is agreed that follow-up information needs to be relayed in a timely manner, and regular, structured updates about the work of the Board would be desirable as well. A suggestion was made that Board members regularly give a Sunday morning report of highlights, which would also serve to make Board members more visible and available to the community.

Minister Performance Review

Carol explained that the sub-committee (Carol, Susan, Rebecca Marie and Kris Bahl) has finalized recommended procedures and an instrument for the minister performance review. She shared the procedures and discussed them. Getting feedback from all who have worked closely with him is key. One of the procedures (#3) is to ask congregants to answer two questions and get feedback to the Board. There is discussion about the appropriateness of this. Most other Unity churches do not do this, and there was some concern that the feedback would be based on limited interaction with Rev. Jim or limited knowledge of the full scale of his responsibilities.

Getting feedback from the Board and other leaders (of Ministries, task forces and committees) is already included as part of the procedure. Getting more congregational feedback and input for Rev. Jim but also for the Board, will be addressed at a later date, possibly in a 360 Review or something similar, so it is suggested that this procedure be omitted.

The question was called to consider the motion to accept the recommended Appraisal Procedures, eliminating #3, and this was passed.

Next, Carol reviewed the Appraisal Instrument, compiled from two other documents, and reflecting both the job description and the way the job is performed. There are helpful scaling questions included in the instrument. Carol made a motion to adopt this instrument as our evaluation format now and going forward. It was seconded and passed. The period of time was discussed for returning the completed instruments once they have been distributed and it will be a week. Rebecca Marie and Kris Bahl, as sub-committee members and recent Board members, will be included with other leaders. Terri and others expressed appreciation for the work of the sub-committee.

Board Training

Carol reviewed that Rev. Greg Coles had made a proposal for Board training that included traditional training on Saturday, him speaking at the Sunday service, and then a “Listening Circle” for the congregation. Schedules did not work out, so that is off the table at least until he is available in the fall. There was discussion about waiting or doing some training sooner. Also, the fact that Rev. Greg’s training would have addressed two concerns—regular Board training, and some healing, problem-solving, communication skills training and conflict resolution as well.

The question is whether we want to have this type of training soon or wait until fall. Rev. Jim clarified that there are two directions of training, and we may need to first clarify if we want both at this time.

Carol led a discussion to get input from Board members about their desires and needs for training, and more questions were asked. There is generic training, especially for new Board members that focuses on the nuts and bolts of Board work, and a smorgasbord list of topics available. Goals identified included improved communication, goal setting, board development, and how to get buy-in from the congregation.

Because of the issue of three Board members resigning in the last six months, Rev. Greg’s proposal included the pieces related to healing, listening and moving beyond the tensions. Cristina has also suggested that we do HOPCOF again, though Rev. Greg felt that is not appropriate at this time.

What is needed/wanted now? All agree that a healthy congregation, and a healthy Board, are vital. Knowing how to communicate even when there is disagreement and having tools to resolve issues is desired. It is clarified that training on the basics/fundamentals of Board work could be handled internally, but the other work, of healing and resolving, and having hard conversations should involve an external trainer. There was more explanation of Listening/Talking Circles, and the pros of cons of same.

It is agreed that focusing first on the Board is advisable, so starting with traditional Board training now and figuring out later what else is needed is suggested. Carol proposed that all take some time now to get clear on what we as individuals want to do and what we want to see for the Board in the next 1-2 months. She will send a Survey Monkey to get more clarity. All agreed to this plan.

**New Business**

Live Streaming

Rev. Jim explained that we will not live stream Sunday services for now, because we do not have the person-power to do it well at this time. It is highly technological, and though we have the equipment, there are not enough skilled volunteers to do it consistently and of good quality. He had recorded the Easter service ahead, and it played on Facebook as a “premiere event,” but it is very time-consuming and limited in impact. When we are in permanent space live streaming will start again, as it will be a less complex and demanding process. Rev. Jim will write up a short proposal outlining the plan and then the community will be advised of the decision and its reasons.

Procedure for Counting Money at In-Person Services

A new procedure is proposed that on Sundays the volunteer Platform Assistant will be in charge of counting donations, and they and another Board member or Platform Assistant will count the money together. Jim and Cheryl are working on a new form to be used to track this. It is also advised that the counting be done away from the general community, to ensure privacy. A rotation could be set up so all know when it is their responsibility.

## Survey to Board

Rev. Jim will be sending a Survey to Board members for feedback about re-engaging people to participate in classes and events, as there as been poor attendance at the last few offerings.

## Next Meeting

The next Board Regular Board Meeting is on Tuesday, May 24 at 4:30 on Zoom.

## Adjournment

Carol adjourned the meeting at 6:45 pm with a prayer of thanksgiving.

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

**Board of Director’s Meeting**

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