

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, March 21, 2024 – 4pm

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5627250899>

*Inspiring, Challenging, and Empowering Faith and Justice Communities Across the West*

**Present:** MaryEllen Beltracchi, Sarah Linn, Kari Collins, Teresa Campbell, Adam McCoy, Eleanor Downey, Laura Guerney, Erin Gilmore, Allyson Stauffer, Karen Caton, Marta Fioriti, Peter Sawtell

**Absent:** Brent Gundlah, Ian Wrisley, Mallory Everhart

1. **Welcome / Personal Check-Ins** – Sarah – Hooray for spring, new growth
2. **Centering Moment** – Sarah (Brief reflections on Numbers 13:17-33)  
Shifting into a new season, easy to spy out ahead of us and be fearful of the giants we perceive. Some are threatened, and others see possibility.
3. **Approval of Minutes** (February 15, 2024, monthly meeting and March 7, 2024, Special Board meeting). Allyson/Karen, **Approved**
4. **Outlining Board Oversight Responsibilities - Sarah**
  - We're here to steward vision, which involves staffing that vision and having financial & legal oversight.
  - Spending a lot of energy establishing and documenting these items.
  - All in service to identity and how we can be faithful to our mission.
  - Seeking to work through trust rather than control.
5. **Tributary Funds Discussion – Eleanor**
  - Churches to find creative ways to be, or be in the community
  - Historically, the Vice Moderator chaired, and association reps were the committee.
  - Then a place for new ministries was created on Board, which worked with Assoc input. Eleanor's involvement began as Platte Valley rep.
  - Midyear reviews were added this past year. In the past, TF also asked for budgets from recipients. One project didn't launch and returned their funds. One recipient (Juniper) has added many ideas for support beyond financial that may be part of larger plan.
  - Each project reapplies yearly for its grant/continuation of funding.
  - Marta valued the culture of creativity and innovation, echoes need for support in implementing the grants in various ways.
  - Kari suggests waiting on funding decision, pending sale of Conference office building.
  - Sarah recognizing Eleanor's lone efforts and need for a mix of people to support these ideas and help Eleanor carry the work.
  - Allyson in finding a new way forward, in finding a path toward resurrection, we still need to be aware of finances, what are we trying to decide?

- Teresa advocates for timeline aligning to fiscal years, so that the applications/approval occur in same year as funding.
- Erin added: When a person is called to ordained ministry, she or he becomes a “Member in Discernment” and enters a relational process with a team that helps to affirm, shape, and cultivate the sense of call. The Tributary Fund uses a similar process. Those who see themselves as Call-Bearers for new ministry, new churches, or ministry revitalization, enter a discernment process to affirm and shape the call and help to bring the ministry into fruition. Erin also supports aligning applications and funding with the fiscal year.

**Document:** *Eleanor’s Rational for Funding the Tributary Fund and In the Mud Grants at the full amount (from TF PowerPoint in February and March BoD meeting folders)*

- *Consistent with our vision and mission*
  - *The Rocky Mountain Conference exists to inspire, challenge, and empower generous faith and justice communities across the West.*
  - *Our Core Values*
    - *Covenant – While honoring autonomy, we engage in covenantal relationship with the Holy, our neighbors, creation, and ourselves.*
    - *Enduring Faith – We express enduring faith in the transformational work of the Spirit.*
    - *Continuing Testament*
    - *Extravagant Welcome*
    - *Changing Lives*
  - *We have been challenged to find new and creative ways to be the church which requires resources.*
  - *At a time when our membership is decreasing, and churches are closing, we need to find new ways to share our message to the wider community.*
  - *A way to make our voices heard in the community.*
  - *Our commitment to social justice cannot always happen without funding.*
  - *The success of many of the projects*
  - *We need to put some of our resources into honoring who we are.*
- funding for existing grants ’24-’25 (see meeting folder) can be moved to a later date...meanwhile focus on reinforcing the committee, the skills that can be supported (marketing, publicity, support) and publicize how we are moving forward in the next few weeks.

**Approved by Consensus:**

- Align funding requests/grants with FY,
- authorize Eleanor to draft a TF process document,
- consider funding for ’24-25 after closing the sale of the Conference office building.
- Eleanor, Sarah, and MaryEllen to draft an informational article for distribution to the Conference in an upcoming weekly newsletter.

**6. Additional Reports/Action Items:**

**A. Treasurer/Finance Committee:**

- Financials** – Teresa:

- Income and Expense (through 2/29/24) line 3 OCWM is 71% (approx. 5K) behind last year.
- Special Offerings is lower as well
- Line 15 major gifts---10K from Pueblo Christ Community – allocation TBD by the Board
- Have received endowment distributions.
- Expenses...under spending on church vitality, racism cultural shift, LF share per capita is lower than expected but will even out.
- Teresa: How do we oversee line items that don't have board reps? We need a process for ensuring needs are financed.

ii. **Preliminary Budget Review** – Kari

- continuing to clean up the balance sheet.
- draft budget presents a real “reality check”: \$151, 471 deficit expected for FY '24-25
- \$45K held in BoD reserve funds.
- Need to look at the income side of the ledger to come into balance.

B. **Reauthorizing Conference Inclusion Team** – Sarah

- Per RMC By Laws, CIT requires annual re-authorization (each January). The Inclusion team exists, currently has 252 dollars available, and hopes to reactivate their work in 2024-25. Sarah/Karen, **Approved**.
- Q re: Global Partners: GP was established to support specific ministries in Venezuela but stopped activities about 10 years ago, due to the political instability there. \$11K is available to use in a manner consistent with the original intention for GP. Perhaps at least some could be used to support job training efforts for Venezuelan Refugees in Denver (being carried out by *El Centro Humanitario*)? Teresa: UCC “Make A Difference” in the ‘90’s provided original funding. Perhaps some of the remaining funds are from that distribution and should be returned to national? **Teresa** is checking.

C. **Board Rep to Nominating (*Ex Officio*)**

- needs to be someone not eligible for re-election (who is available?)
- the next Nominating Committee meeting is on 3/26;
- Erin will be attending/assisting.

D. **Adoption of Conflict of Interest Policy and Disclosures** (see meeting folder)

- response to CapinCrouse input.
- Thank you, Laura, for developing the current draft.
- **Adam** will look over, present final draft for Board approval.
- Once approved, the policy and disclosure documents will be distributed to the Board and Conference staff immediately, then annually.

E. **Office space rental update/agreement**

- draft rental agreement between Sixth Avenue UCC and RMC (see meeting folder).
- 12-month, maximum; 30-day notice.

- Concerns re: how this agreement came about and appearance of conflict of interest (Gilmore siblings).
- Melissa (admin), who accesses the site most frequently, expressed preference for 6<sup>th</sup> Ave, as it's closest to her home. Also the rent was less expensive than the church or shared office space options explored (non UCC/RMC related). Pressing need to find secure space, as the building is under contract. Intention: Giving ourselves time to do a comprehensive search during the lease with 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.
- The agreement is between BoD and the office mgr of Sixth (not between Erin and Chris), but we need to be aware of how the connection and the process are/may be perceived. Discussion.
- **Kari** will work with Erin on revising the contract to make it an explicitly month-to-month lease and to include internet access.
- **The Board will vote on that draft by email**, rather than wait until the April meeting.

## 7. Annual Meeting Update & Decisions

A. **Contract for 2025 AC** at Embassy Suites -- **Board will ratify via email**

B. **Approval of Standing Rules** (*see meeting folder*):

- Laura (*this took place between items 5 and 6, above to allow Laura to leave the meeting*). Laura has worked with Derek R to review/update standing rules.
- Long game: Begin community norms to replace Robert's Rules of Order, make consensus model our Standard Operating Procedure outside of business meetings, and use RRO in Business meetings (with By Law change). Desire parliamentarian who will move within rules to facilitate free discussion.
- Lola Fair (Greeley) is available to serve as parliamentarian at AC this year.
- Discussed timeframe for resolutions: Invite resolutions/provide forms 60 days in advance of AC, resolutions returned within 45 days of AC, docket of resolutions distributed to Conference for review 30 days out.
- **Approved by Consensus:** Standing Rules, timeline for resolutions.

8. **Informational Items** (*See informational reports in meeting folder*):

9. **Acting CM Report/Action Items** – Erin

Presented the registration pricing matrix for AC – **Approved**.

Motion (Allyson/Sarah): Empower Erin to make the decisions needed to structure and implement programming for the Annual Celebration. **Approved**.

*Document (ACM report in March BoD meeting folder) – Italicized items were not discussed in meeting due to time constraints and have been copied here for information purposes:*

*Most pressing and top of the list*

*Two fitness reviews*

*Building move*

*Moving bookkeeping in house*

*Annual Meeting*

*Supportive oversight of the CWCOM*

*Nominating Support*

## Ogden UCC

### Staff Update

Allison is in her 6th week with the Conference. We are working on an updated website, getting her up to speed on annual meeting, salesforce, datahub, email lists, and she is beginning to make connections with people in the conference.

David and Martha Jones have been cleaning, organizing, and migrating all our files on Google Drive to shared folders, so that when people come on or off committees we will be able to automatically add/remove them to drive.

Brianna has been taking more and more responsibility of the bookkeeping, we will be ending contract with Ellis on the bookkeeping side beginning April 1, we will continue to have Ellis do our payroll..

### Real Estate

1. Closing on the building is still moving forward, anticipated closing on April 15. Following inspection we had to obtain bids for several different issues – we decreased the price to accommodate for those necessary fixes and the buyer agreed so we will not need to do any repair on the building before it is sold. Now just waiting on SBL Loan. Kevin Lentz, our realtor continues to show the property in case this offer falls through,
2. Temporarily moving office to room in 6th Avenue UCC. Draft rental agreement here. This will give us time to continue exploring other possibilities. Closest to Melissa who will be using the office most frequently.
3. We have secured a mail box at a UPS location on Broadway. Address here.
4. Reviewing Endowment Fund bylaws I realized we may need to amend bylaws to recognize new address? Where else does that need to be changed?

### Ogden Church

The Rocky Mountain Conference has been approached by the Council of the Congregational United Church of Christ, in Ogden UT with a request to “steward” the final disbursement of the sale of their building as a “seed” fund for future Open and Affirming ministry in the Northern Utah area. I have drafted a beginning Memorandum of Understanding that we will not vote on today but as a beginning to this congregation.

### Search and Call

1. First Plymouth in Denver continues its search for a Designated Pastor – have met twice with this committee.
2. New pastor Quinn Gorges will begin at Parker Hilltop on Easter Sunday
3. Community Spirit in Montrose – Rev. Karen Winkel resigned to take care of her mother
4. Hayden UCC
5. Plymouth in Ft. Collins – Rev. Hal Chorpening has announced his retirement, Dec. 2024
6. Longmont UCC – Rev. Sarah Verasco has announced her retirement, last Sunday Aug 11.

### Nominating

Meeting March 26th – need board rep to the Committee

Several positions to fill – will need help in identifying people gifted in various areas of leadership.

### COM

Accountability Committee

Currently processing two fitness reviews.

### Supportive Oversight

*With Karen Winkel resigning from Montrose as well as Wider Church roles, the SOS has been regrouping and adapting, and has been working well together to meet the most urgent needs as well as carry forward their ongoing work. The most urgent is that there are several people seeking to be authorized as licensed pastors, the SOS has created a process to move them forward and is aiming to meet with them in May.*

### Formation and Authorization

*We have a whole host of MID's as well as pastors seeking privilege of call.*

*Josh Rumble passed his EC on March 11 at 7 pm, via Zoom.*

*Anticipating another EC for Samantha Bronson in coming months as well.*

*New Church approaching FAS to join the UCC*

### Annual Meeting, June 6-8, at La Foret, 50th year anniversary of the RMC

- *Theme: Blessed Flexibility: Bending towards community/Leaning into Possibility*
- *Focus back on congregations and the changing landscape of church. Practical focus on issues facing congregations and leaders.*
- *50th anniversary celebration: Past, Present, Future.*
- *Scripture for the meeting this year from 2 Corinthians 3:8-10, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies."*
- *Because we are at La Foret the idea came up of having a youth track at the annual Meeting, inviting a few youth from every church to join in Youth @ Annual Celebration.*
- *NEEDS:*
  - *50th anniversary help*
  - *Hybrid team/tech team*
  - *youth track leaders (done)*
  - *a small group to work on the standing rules with Derek Ritenour (done)*
  - *business items – budget, nominating, designated term proposal, compensation guidelines*
- *Secured space at the Embassy Suites in Loveland, CO for 2025.*

### OCWM/Stewardship

*I had a wonderful conversation with Andrew Warner, he works part time for Wisconsin Conference and part time for National setting. In his national setting hat he works with conferences and churches to help them learn more about the practices of philanthropy and stewardship as well as ideas for increasing giving and OCWM. Excited about continuing conversations with him and bringing him to future board meetings and potentially webinar for the conference.*

### Western Regional Youth Event

*We have a few people from Plymouth going to the WRYE in Long Beach, CA this year. June 23-27.*

### First year pastors coaching pilot program – experiment in leadership

## **10. Moderator/Vice Moderator Report – Sarah/MaryEllen**

**Ministry season conversations status:**

- will hold first discernment team meeting on March 23

- inviting two reps from each Association (at least one officer and another rep)
- hope to meet as large group after Easter, then report to the Board

#### 11. **Final announcements**

- Items for April:
  - vote on term/timeline/title for ministry season?
  - discuss connections with related entities (La Foret, Archway Communities)?
- Next Board Meeting – April 18 at 4pm
- Look for email vote, as noted above.

Adjournment

compiled by MaryEllen Beltracchi