

**Unity Church of Raleigh**  
**Annual Membership Meeting Minutes**  
**June 11, 2023**

*Approved at the June 9, 2024 Annual Meeting*

**Opening Prayer**

The meeting began with an opening prayer by our minister, Rev. Ellen Barron, at 1 pm.

**Call to Order / Welcome**

Board President Clara Davis welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. There were 27 members present.

**Introduction of Board Members**

Clara introduced the board members and their current roles: Nitia Steward (Vice President), Betty Sari (Sectary); Laura Dearth (Treasurer), and McCale Penven-Crew (Members-at-large), and Rev. Ellen Barron, Ex-Officio Member.

Clara noted the purpose of the meeting is to look back over the UCR fiscal year (May 31, 2022 to May 31, 2023), report on activities, and look forward to what's ahead in the coming year.

Clara explained that everyone should have received today's meeting agenda when they signed in on the Membership Sign-In Roster, and this meeting includes an election of 1 board member, the Nominating Committee for 2024, State of the Ministry Report which includes a financial report, team reports, and Q&A. She further stated that eligible members were requested to vote, sign-date and return the 2023 Elections Form by regular mail, e-mail, or drop off at the church.

**Presentation of the 2022 Minutes**

Secretary Betty Sari requested that everyone take a few minutes to review the minutes from last year and invited members to ask questions or make comments. There were no other questions or comments. A motion was made by Melanie Raskin to accept the minutes and was seconded by Ken Sari. The minutes were approved with a verbal vote: All in favor with no one opposed.

**Board Member Requirements**

Clara then called upon Betty Sari, to read the portion of our Bylaws (Article 6 – Section 2a and Section 10c) regarding elections, qualifications and voting?

**Board Elections**

Betty stated that there are 1 open board slots with a 3-year term: 1) McCale Penven-Crew slot and term ended May 31, 2023. Betty thanked Andy Anderson for his service on the board. Andy has completed being the board before his term ended because of medical reasons. The congregation all stood up to acknowledge Andy for his service on the board. Board voted that this position would not be filled and we would have only five board members instead of 6. This year's candidate consists of Annie Nelson of whom is a member in good standing.

As per Robert's Rules of Order, Betty invited nominations from the floor. There were none. She then called for a motion to accept the slate of 1 candidate. A motion was made by Doug

Walters and seconded by Mary Butler to accept the nominee. Betty called for a vote by asking for a show of hands from the membership. The 1 nominee was elected unanimously. No one opposed.

### **Nominating Committee Elections**

Betty Sari, Chairperson, announced the incoming 2024 Nominating Committee members, who will recruit and interview the Board Member candidates. They are Nancy Davison and Bonnie Patrick. Betty explained that Bonnie is an alternate and will serve if Nancy is not available. A motion was made by Doug Walters to accept the slate for nominating committee. Mary Butler seconded. The motion was approved by a verbal vote. Betty then thanked the outgoing Nominating Committee members Rev. Ellen, Nancy Davison.

### **State of the Ministry Report and Minister's Report**

Rev. Ellen combined these two reports and reported on accomplishments during the past year, as follows:

- ❖ Our state of the ministry is good.
- ❖ The Wellness Center still impacts what we do with the workshops, yoga, Tai-Chi, etc... It's been demonstrated that people outside of the church that are attracted to the wellness center often gravitate to become church members or participants because of our like-minded messages.
- ❖ New program being added to the Wellness Center is Conscience Aging, which Rev. Ellen feels will be an additional draw to our church community.
- ❖ Also, the New Mothers Organization program is being added to addresses the current mortality rate occurring in new mothers in the country, and helps show them what is next for their lives in this changing world.
- ❖ The Wellness Center has received a testimonial from a regular Center participant acknowledging how much her participation has positively affected her life. This testimonial will be part of a video used to apply for a LEAP Grant. This participant also wants to be part of the team that will be generating the New Mothers Organization program in the Center along with Dr. Pazzino. In sharing this information with her neighbor during a dog walk, the neighbor was very excited about the new program, saying this is exactly what she wanted to do after retirement, and will also be part of the team. The program will be scheduled to start around July.
- ❖ This past year, Rev. Ellen has put on several church classes.
- ❖ In the summertime, it was evident the church was having a prosperity struggle, using its savings to pay for church expenses, so we as the church leaders stepped in to address how we can shift the consciousness into divine abundance, which became our theme for the year.
  - Members attended a class by World-Wide Ministries on prosperity options and ideas.
  - These members then met for a brainstorming session about ideas we can use.
  - We then strategized to choose teams to accomplish the ideas, firstly to have 3 dinners with 12 to 15 church members attending, which was open to group discussion.
  - She also started a class on the Deepak Chopra's book on prosperity.
  - Things started to shift; 3G giving increased, fundraising events were scheduled quarterly. In July, the fundraising event will be a raffle of items contributed by

church members and business solicited for this purpose. Church members will be able to sell to family, friends and neighbors.

- This mindset needs to be ongoingly to maintain a prosperity-consciousness to have us generate additional events similar to these.
- ❖ Rev. Ellen feels blessed to have this church and community, and she's grateful to be supported during her recent challenges with the loss of her husband. She really feels the connection to the church, and feels we need to keep this consciousness so we can keep our building.
- ❖ The new theme for this year is, "How I Live from Divine Consciousness", which ties into "What is my Purpose?". This, she feels, will help assist congregants with understanding why they are members of the church, and will help our church community stay together consciously prosperous, rather than fear-based. This will help our community grow.

**Finance Report:** Laura said you all should have our financial report in your package. I will start with our profit and loss statement, but first I wanted to echo what on what Rev. Ellen said on our income.

After Oct when we started the big discussions about finances, we increased our 3G Program about \$1,000 dollars a month, almost a quarter of what it was before, so that's a 25% increase. It's currently about \$4,500 a month, which is about half of our tithes and love offerings. She stated the importance of 3G to help to sustain our church.

Some of the things we are working on for income:

- Increasing the building rental for workshops and Wellness Center practitioners. Currently, practitioners account for \$300/month. We also get money from the Wellness Center and the workshops they do here at the church.
- We are starting see money from the eBay sales that Elaine is running. Laura commented to have members contact Elaine if they have items they'd like her to sell, or to look at her eBay store to purchase items. Elaine said not a lot on eBay at this time but she is working on it.

Laura said our fundraising last year raised \$10,786, including our Hearts in Unity dinner, Yard Sales our Super Sundays, and we will keep having those fundraisers to supplement and help build our savings backup to where it was before. Our next Fundraiser will be a raffle that we can extend to our communities and not just church members. Rev. Ellen said that there will be a meeting to talk about this fundraiser on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> at 7pm on zoom for anyone that wants to join.

We have been working a lot on our prosperity consciousness and you can see it in our numbers and we see the numbers continually growing. Laura said our total income for the year was \$136,352. Expenses that include minister, office manager and our other staff that help with running the church, Sunday guest speakers, workshops etc. Laura said we are spending more on marketing trying to increase people attending the church. Our total expenses are \$130,630 so are net income was \$5,721. Laura asked if there were any questions on the profit and loss statement. Elaine asked what is a restricted contribution. She replied that it is a donation that is donated for a specific thing, and Laura said that a person tells us what they want that donation to go for and we have to follow their wishes. Laura reiterated a reminder to the congregation to check on the website about renting the building and you can share that with your friends and family members for gatherings or parties etc. this helps to increase our income Laura said it's not

just the income but having good things happening in our building. Laura said the next page is the balance sheet this year at the end of the year we had \$5,000 in our bank accounts. We kept up with our mortgage and our mortgage is \$397,000. Laura asked any questions on the balance sheet? There were no questions she asked to accept the financials. Rebecca a member asked who is our CPA and Laura said this was what she does for a living I'm not a CPA and Louise also worked in financials so we don't have anyone in that CPA position at this time and if we feel it's necessary, we can get someone to review our financials.

Andy Anderson made the motion to accept the Finance Report; and Mary Butler seconded. The motion was approved by a show of hands.

### **Team Reports**

**Fundraising Team:** Betty Sari shared the fundraising team's accomplishments from June 2022 until now.

They put on 2 fundraising events since last June; the first was the annual Hearts in Unity Lasagna cook-off. The second was the yard sale that was led by Sharon Shehdan. They also supported and put on the Homecoming event June 10th. The Hearts in Unity event this year was the 7<sup>th</sup> one. It's a favorite of our church, and is always lots of fun to create with the team. There were over 80 participants in the event. That's a great turnout and they raised over \$2,000. Thanks to Nitia and friends for managing the entertainment this year. Everyone enjoyed the music and dancing.

The Homecoming event is not a fundraiser but the fundraising team supports it every year and the team really enjoy doing it. The bingo was a big hit and the raffles raised over \$500; enough to pay for the event with some left over.

Betty shared it's been her honor working with such an incredible team of people; Nancy, Melanie, Pat, Andy, Elaine, Morgan, Ken, and Jackie and Laura were new to the team this year and it was great having them join the team. They all started the fundraising team in 2014. During these 9 years, most of the team has been a part of every event put on. They have donated food raffle items, money and time for every one of the fundraising events we put on. Betty acknowledged the team and volunteers for the events, and feels that creating fun events and being a part of a team that are all very committed to the success of the church and its congregation.

The team is looking forward to having another great year of fundraising, and would welcome anyone that wants to join them.

Betty also manages the childcare/classroom schedule with Laura Dearth. Their goal is to make sure we have providers up on the schedule each month for any children that come in. Thanks to Karl, Mary, Laura for making yourselves available each month, and invited other church members to be a part of.

The annual Yard Sale was managed by Sharon Shedan, and she will share about this event next. Sharon stated that we have been doing the yard sales 10 yrs. starting back in 2013. This year we raised \$3,142 and we have more things to sell and will have them on eBay and other places the total will be higher. Sharon said thanks to all the people that donated their items, and all the volunteers, if possible, start saving your items thanks again to all the volunteers and for your items a yard sale this size takes a lot of people.

**Prayer Ministry:** Melanie shared that the Prayer Ministry: has 30 members, 193 prayers since January (this is much higher over last year), most prayer requests in 1 week were 21. Prayer Ministry Pastoral Care calls are a big success--shout-out to the team (Mary, Dianne, Elaine, Jackie, Betty, Ruth, Mel, Rev. Annie, and Al) for making these calls. We have a fun plan coming up for World Day of Prayer in September, which will involve our membership in August. Melanie said all are welcome to attend our first Thursday Zoom meeting: They are free and include a check-in and a mini workshop on a prayer topic. Always fun.

**Welcoming Team/Usher Team:** Melanie said many thanks to Ruth, Malcolm, and Elaine who are our warm and welcoming greeters. We'd love to have another person join the usher team.

**Caring Hearts Team** Melanie said the Caring Hearts Team has 7 members, four to five of whom are active. We send 1-4 cards per month and make pastoral care calls and provide food to folks needing support.

**Hospitality Team:** Melanie thanked Mary Jane, Sharon, Laura, and Doug who join me in Sunday Hospitality duties. Always fun. We also support special events in the church: special services, fundraisers, etc.

**Community Voice** speakers have performed fantastically during Sunday Services.

**Platform Leader's:** Melanie thanked Mary, Betty, Nancy and Doug for being on the platform at the Sunday services.

Melanie said she would love to have folks join any and all of these teams.

**Sound-Music-Video Team:** Gregg Bockover said thank you to all our volunteers sound, video, live-streaming and music teams you assistants has been invaluable this past year and we are pretty much over the pandemic we can look forward to more participation in these programs.

Gregg said the members on our sound team are Bob Casey, Melanie, our newest member Gary Evans, Mary and Sharon Shehdan.

The video team consist Sharon, Louise, Kat, Anne and Melanie. And our live-streaming has Sharon, Sadie and Emily they make sure our services get out to everyone that can't attend in person.

Gregg said finally our amazing music team Allen, Peggy, Anne, Nita, Susan and myself. We love what we do I guess that's why we are still here.

Gregg is inviting anyone that would like to join any of these teams everyone is welcome.

**CORE Team:** Sharon said since last June I am pleased to report that the CORE Team has sponsored:

1. Two blood drives,
2. A children's coat drive for the Raleigh Rescue Mission Day Care Center,
3. A food drive for the VA Hospital,
4. A holiday card collection for the USO,
5. A food drive for two animal shelters,
6. Assisted with the church yard sale, and
7. Collected peanut butter and jelly for the NC Food Bank Summer Lunch Program.

For the balance of 2023, we plan to:

1. Collect school supplies for the Salvation Army Women's Shelter or Raleigh Rescue Mission children,
2. Support the Prayer Team's World Day of Prayer outreach plan,
3. Collect winter coats for the Raleigh Rescue Mission Daycare Center,
4. Collect food for the VA Hospital Food Bank, and
5. Write holiday cards for armed service personnel visiting the USO at the Raleigh-Durham airport.

Sharon said I would like to recognize and thank: Nancy Smith, Laura Dearth, Nancy Davison, Melanie Raskin, Mary Butler, Karol Turner, Nitia Steward, Rev. Annie Nelson, Bob Barron, Louise Smythe, and everyone at UCR who supported our community outreach ministry this year.

**Building & Grounds Team:** Sharon said thankfully there have been no major issues with our building since the last Annual Meeting other than a couple of minor repairs. She said part of the tile in the Men's Bathroom was replaced thanks to Lin Shehdan, who also recently replaced one of the front entry lights and did some repair work around the back door and the garage door. And the roofing people have been out several times to look for and repair our ceiling leak, and it seems to be ok most of the time. Sharon asked to please let her or Louise know if you notice any problems around the building.

Sharon shared that the Landscape Committee (Mary and I) have decided to cut back somewhat on the flowers this summer due to the time and water required to maintain them. Sharon asked to please thank Mary for the beautiful flowers you see at the front door every week! And if you are available to help water the azaleas and crepe myrtles this summer, please let me know, we could really use your help. Sharon said in the children's playground area the picnic table and the noise board was disposed of due to rotting, splintered wood that was hazardous. She also said there is a possibility we may plant some vegetables in the playground area this fall, please let me know if you are interested in supporting this.

### **Question and Answer Time**

There were none.

### **Adjournment**

In closing, Clara wanted to thank all the board members and asked them to raise their hands as she called out their names. Laura, McCale, Nita, Betty, Rev, Ellen and myself. Clara said these are our bright and shining lights they bring creativity, sunny smiles, and just holding us in that prosperity consciences and the vision that you hold for the church. And special thanks and our appreciation to our outgoing member of the board McCale for his service on the board. Clara asked if our new member Annie Nelson would like to say something and Annie stated she is honored to serve and looks forward to being on the board. Clara asked with no more question do I get a vote to close meeting the motion was approved by a show of hands.

Rev. Ellen then gave the Closing Prayer, and the meeting adjourned at 3 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

**Betty Sari**

Board Secretary