



Annual Summit Minutes
Tuesday, February 6, 2018
Unity Renaissance, Chesapeake, Virginia

Prayer led by Rev Paulette Pipe

1. Unity World Headquarters [UWH] Presentation

UWH's CEO Jim Blake spoke about new resources available. Daily Word has developed affirmation cards titled: "Healing," "Family" [Parent & Child Editions], and "Peace." A new book has been published based on lectures compiled from Eric Butterworth titled: *Practical Metaphysics: A New Insight in Truth*. Unity Online Radio has a new Director of Programming Diane Ray formerly with Hay House. A recent broadcast featured Spiritual Teacher, Author, and Evidential Medium Suzanne Giesemann. New booklets available through the Outreach Program: *Caregivers*; and, a blessing booklet *I Am God's Song* with a collection of James Dillet Freeman's poems. There are currently 200 churches signed up with the Outreach Program. For more information, contact Director of Outreach and Engagement Rev Mark Fuss or Cheri Jamison (outreach@unityonline.org) at UWH. Currently UWH is working on a comprehensive land plan—more information to come later once funding is developed. Silent Unity is testing online chats for teenagers and young adults. Also testing fifteen employees working remotely for Silent Unity; as the need for prayer grows it will allow UWH to expand their staff base outside of the local area.

Discussion:

- With the comprehensive land plan you are working on, is there a place for a retirement community? [answer - Yes, we are looking at co-ops, possibly two phases of care; also looking at modular homes as a possibility]
- Have we lost the name Wee Wisdom? [answer - No, the trademark was about to expire, but we are currently working on a children's book in order to renew the trademark]
- What would be the biggest challenge facing you and the Village that we can hold you in prayer with? [answer - Fulfillment of the grand vision we have pulled together, not 'our' vision, it came through all of us; standing here today I can say I have never felt more clear than I do now with the vision we have today; hold that vision and continue to hold all of those at the Village in prayer; emergence and resurgence is happening now that is bigger than all of us.]

2. Unity Worldwide Ministries [UWM] Presentation

UWM's CEO Donna Johnson shared that UWM moved its central office back on campus last August 2017, into the first office building built at Unity Village, on the same day as Charles Fillmore's birthday and the eclipse (Aug 22). We have been working with UWH in looking into merging departments, such as our Media Departments, in supporting the work we both do without duplication. A Core Team was established with members from both UWH and UWM [UWH - Board Chair Marilyn Muehlbach, Board member Carolyn Mathlin, Guy Swanson, and Jim Blake; UWM - Board Chair Richard Bunch, 1st Vice-Chair Sharon Ketchum, Bruce Verkruyse, and Donna Johnson] have been meeting on a regular basis;

and, are currently interviewing someone to help navigate the team through in a synergistic process. The goal is to come out as one Unity movement working and communicating together.

Jim Blake and Donna [Johnson] are serving on the Leadership Council for AGNT. Other ministers serving on this council are Kenn Gordon with CSL, Michael Beckwith with Agape, and Barbara Fields who is the former director for the Parliament of World Religions. AGNT held a rally at Unity Village last September and their motto was “Bolder Together.” Unity is being lifted up by other people who are interested in our message and want to partner with us to make a difference in the world. AGNT is currently having a membership drive - opening up to individual members; they are also encouraging organizations to show the film *White Like Me*. Donna Johnson will be hosting salons for AGNT (Divine Feminine Peace Spa) beginning in June around the face of the divine feminine leadership and how it shows up in our lives. Each month prominent women throughout the world will be highlighted.

Our Member Services Director Cynthia Vermillion-Foster has moved onsite from Canada where she had been working remotely for over a year. Unity Worldwide Spiritual Institute (UWSI) has been amazingly successful in its first year; we have many students who are not Unity but are taking classes. We hope to be working with Trozzolo Advertising on promoting UWSI as we work toward an international connection with our educational program. Would like to acknowledge Jacquie Lenati, our Media Production Coordinator, who is livestreaming the Annual Summit with Facebook; and the work she, along with her Media colleagues, produces out of our Media Department. The department is housed with UWH’s Media Team so there is synchronicity and collaboration with our media productions.

Discussion:

- Can you tell us more about the upcoming Parliament of World Religions? [answer - It will be held in Toronto, Canada, in November; AGNT will have an auditorium and a panel of people to speak and answer questions; [Donna Johnson] will be a member on the panel; will talk about our beliefs - will have subgroup/breakout rooms available.]
- Unity will also have a room available for meditation at the Parliament.
- Has UWSI connected with countries outside the USA and Canada? Would there be a willingness to have instructors outside the USA? [answer - We would like to do so and there are challenges with time zones, language, and technology; there are students now from Panama and England who watch our class recordings and then do their work.]
- Is Unity Christian? [answer - Yes, although not mainstream Christian; we follow the teachings of Jesus, not the stories of Jesus.]
- We approved, through our conference body years ago, that we are a “positive, practical approach to Christianity.” [from our pamphlet *What Is Unity?*]

3. Focusing Forward 2030

Richard Bunch presented information about the work of the Focusing Forward Task Team. The team is discovering - designing - discerning Unity’s future. This task team was approved by the UWM Board of Trustees last year with Julie Armour leading the team as their Chair; they meet twice a month. Sub-teams have formed through the Focusing Forward Team exploring different areas such as: “worship trends of today and tomorrow”; “global ministry for UWM”; and, “technology.” There are a total of 35 serving on the task team and would like to have as many as 100 serving. This task team will continue to work and report to the board in the coming years. A more formal report of the task team’s work will be given during our upcoming annual convention in June. We have to have “buy-in” as we move forward with what ministry will look like in our future—the change will be huge for our culture.

Recently the task team conducted three interviews with: (1) John Petersen - futurist; (2) Mark Platten about generational effects in education; and, (3) Rev John Upton - head of Baptist General Assembly of Virginia. A short compilation of the interviews was presented.

Futurist - John Petersen

- Ww will never in our lifetime have seen the amount of change that will occur within the next two decades; contributing factors to this change:
 - **3D manufacturing** - is like an ink jet printer that will eliminate the need for people to do the work.
 - Couple this with **artificial general intelligence** that has the ability to make decisions.
 - Both of these will be well-established within the next twenty years, so problems that were unsolvable are now solvable.
 - When you marry 3D manufacturing and AGI [artificial general intelligence], 80% of current jobs will be gone due to this automation [e.g. attorneys, bank employees, etc.].
 - **Block change technology** like bitcoin - if you put it together with AGI and 3D you get a change in the job market.
 - Socially, governments can't stand by as this happens because human beings are valued as the commerce of the economy and we are remunerated for that—it's how you value a human being.
 - So then you begin to see a whole new regime and we will have social upheaval.
 - **Universal basic income** - just because you are a human being you will have value and get a certain amount.
 - Fundamental change and transition - People will struggle and have to adjust to this change.
 - We will be looking for islands of stability to find some direction, companionship.
 - Your business will be from home and you must be creative in what you do.

Side Notes from Richard Bunch:

- Stockton, California, will likely become the first city in the nation to test out a version of universal basic income, an economic system that would regularly provide all residents enough money to cover basic expenses, with no conditions or restrictions. They will pay every resident \$500 a year so as businesses lose employees they are willing to give up profits to people who used to work for them.
- Currently the generations/job market is as follows:
 - Traditionalists - age 72 and up make up 1%
 - Baby Boomers - age 53 to 71 make up 34%
 - X-Generation - age 37 to 52 make up 12%
 - Millennials - age 17 to 36 make up 53%
 - I-Generation - age 0 to 16 make up 0%
- Millennials:
 - Will volunteer, but not join an organization.
 - Giving habits are about \$25 a month to 4 or 5 organizations.
 - They are short-term and move around a lot.
 - Meaningful - something that has a social value and makes a difference in the world.
 - Want to lead and be in charge.

- Can do it faster, quicker, better - wanting to know the how and why.
- Career choice relates to community service - like to use what they learn for the change that is coming.
- 85% don't attend a church.

Head of Baptist General Assembly of Virginia - Rev John Upton

- Traveled to 165 countries and became more inclusive instead of exclusive.
- Attended a meeting with a NASA scientist who was assigned to get a spacecraft to Mars in thirty-days when it normally took 1½ years.
 - So he came up with a system called 'back-casting' where he imagined he was already on Mars and thought about how he got there in thirty-days.
 - When you forecast you stand in the present and the only way to get there is by extrapolating where you are.
 - To back-cast you imagine yourself already there and then determine how you got there; for us to get to 2030 there are things that don't exist today and we will have to invent them today to get us to 2030.

Side Notes from Richard Bunch:

- *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* by Tod Bolsinger is about the Lewis & Clark expedition and how it relates to churches.
 - They had to find people to guide them in their expedition and learn how to canoe the mountains without canoes and then rebuild the canoes.
 - So they did things differently: (1) they voted; (2) they had a slave with them that could also vote; (3) they had Sacajawea and gave her a vote; and, (4) they changed how they operated because they were moving into the unknown.
- So we need to select seven areas that we will invent to carry us into the future with this Focusing Forward Team.
- At Unity of Richmond, we are creating an Advisory Team to educate them on the future.
 - Then we are setting up dinner parties with people in the community that have an interest in talking about the future.
 - We will also invite leaders in the community to see what they think will happen in the future.
- "All that we have assumed about leading Unity ministries, all that we have been trained for, is out of date. We have left the river. We are in uncharted territory, and it is different than anything we have ever experienced. We are river rafters who must learn to be mountaineers."

Discussion:

- Not clear about if we have a vision for 2030 yet? [answer - We are inventing it now; we don't have to change who we are, or, our Principles.]
- John Petersen will be a speaker at our annual convention; when we begin to shift we might be asking "how do we find value" and "what do we focus on as spiritual leaders?"
- Relationships are why we are here - 10 years from now we won't be having a conversation about whether we are Christian or anything else; John Petersen even said global warming will not be an issue, or, other areas we see as issues now.
- Do you already have the 7 areas identified? [answer - No not yet we have to create the areas.]

- I have been railing that the church of the future doesn't look like my grandparents; I'm excited to be in this question right now asking "who do we want to be"; I have many ideas about what church looks like - sanctuaries are wasted space and we know this old model is not working and my boomers are with me.
- There are a few things we can start doing such as relaxing into an attitudinal change to move from "be, have, do" into "do, have, be" and we will flow more naturally.
- Need to be the change before the change happens, or, we will be out of business; we have more small churches closing now than we used to have; 40% is the average number of churches without ministers.
- Curious about how do you live in 2030 when you need to learn to invent what you need to be? [answer: Pay attention; follow Spirit, so I can be of something greater than myself.]
- Met John Upton and spoke with him about the innovative things the General Assembly is doing; we have a program called Unique Expressions that came from John which they call Fresh Expressions—they gave us their manual to Unitize the program. It's an alternative type model that allows you to go to the people and be where they are; principles we would follow, they follow within themselves - they gave an example of skateboarders; Deborah Frownfelter is trained in this model of Unique Expressions and has done classes at our annual convention and we have the resources to assist you with this program; an example of Unique Expressions: Lonnie Vanderslice has started a ministry working with women in rehab to come learn life skills such as sewing and upholstery. She talks about Unity when they come together to learn these skills and she is meeting these people where they are.
- My training has been with pastoral care in ministry. Even though traditionalists are a small part of our church, what came up for me is what are we going to do with these people as they still exist in the church and we have a responsibility to minister to them? Does the church not have a responsibility to take care of them? I feel Unity is about being *both/and*, not *either/or*; and, I like to operate in the present.
- Idea for me is I can still do a Sunday service and I have people who go out into the community to spread the word for me so I don't have to do it all.
- David Ridge is starting a program called "empowering your elders"; the number one thing with their wellbeing is how well they are connected. He is bringing these people together so they can support organizations; if you are interested in more information you can contact David at david.b.ridge@comcast.net.
- Not either/or, it's how we integrate; in 2024 they will be creating, through 3D manufacturing, livers for transplanting. We will be seeing medical advances happening faster than in the last 50 years. People may live to 120 or 150 because of medical breakthroughs. We will have a 5th generation Internet where you will have a chip in your clothing. Go to YouTube and listen to other futurists and you will see they are all talking about the same thing.
- Everything cycles; look at the tiny homes concept. A lot of smart businessmen are buying up land and putting these homes on them; churches with land can put these homes on their land and have people work for them for room, board, and community; Unity Village had this at one time with tents on grounds. We may see a return to this type of living; people live and work in the same space, so this concept is the new economy of trading skills for room and board.
- Our theme for the annual convention this year will be centered on the Focusing Forward Task Team information gathered.

4. Member Services

Cynthia Vermillion-Foster gave a brief presentation outlining the following:

- Standards Ministry Team is meeting at the Annual Summit; the team meets face-to-face twice a year; team members present were introduced.
- Member Services is conducting a review of external policies and in doing so kept in mind we do not want to become compliance officers; attempting to ground policy revisions in Principle.
 - **Continuing Education Units [CEU] Policy** - newest policy created by the Standards Ministry Team/Credentialing Team that will roll out in January 2019 after discussion and feedback from the field.
 - Policy will allow us to increase our capacity to serve with excellence.
 - All ministers required to take 15 CEUs every 3 years with a minimum of two CEUs to be taken yearly. Will be aligned with our standards and rubrics.
 - Intention to make classes available as much as possible to the field through workshops at convention, UWSI, regional trainings, webinars, etc. Lombard Mennonite training taken will be approved as a CEU.
 - Mandatory requirement of one hour of Ethics & Boundaries Training and one hour of Inclusivity Training every two years; both classes will be as accessible as possible in order to meet the requirements.
 - Workshops at regional conferences must be pre-approved through Member Services for CEU credits.
 - **Special Dispensation Policy** - policy has been revised for clarity.
 - Allows someone who is not an ordained Unity minister to go through a process for six months which can then be renewed three times for a 6-month period of time in order to continue serving the church as the spiritual leader.
 - During this time the individual under special dispensation is being asked to sign an agreement where they and the ministry commit to a path and timeline for the spiritual leader to become a Unity minister.
 - Licensed teachers serving as spiritual leaders of a church will also have to commit to this path.
 - Since enforcing this policy, we have added 20 ministries under special dispensation with 18 individuals waiting to begin our new field program.
 - UWM policies are listed in a virtual library on our website: <http://www.unityworldwideministries.org/bylaws-policies>

Discussion:

- How will CEUs be tracked? [answer - If classes are taken regionally we will need to create a form for who was in attendance; at the annual convention we will have a record.]
- What does it mean if you do not take the classes as required? [answer - We will review your credits before you can enter the employment/re-entry process.]
- You might want to consider using the Annual Summit as a way to earn credits.
- How long does it take to complete the program with special dispensation? [answer - Once you are committed to a path it can take as long as needed to complete toward ordination; there is a 3-way agreement with UWM, the ministry, and the leader. We do background checks and have the ability to review the leader through our review process if needed.]
- What is the new field licensing path? [answer - Currently have a team working on the specifics of the program; the program will be more customized to the individual and their needs and to what the individual has already accomplished and demonstrated.]
- What happened to the Alternative Path? [answer - We combined that path and the Field Licensing Program to create one field program.]

- What about a study group? If they don't have a Unity minister, would special dispensation apply? [answer - No, we no longer have study groups, although we do send out guidelines to start a study group. Many times they are not led by someone who has credentials for Unity and we are not staffed to follow up.]

5. Breakout Groups

Everyone was divided into small groups giving them the following to discuss:

“What suggestions/questions do you have with the CEU Policy from the standpoint of the year 2030?”

Sub-groups Responses:

- We are intentional in seeing behaviors that leave people out - e.g. saving seats for loved ones and a new person doesn't have a seat at church.
- We are clear and celebrate our differences; honor our boundaries of personal/emotional space.
- Unity is the gold standard for training the world in living from your oneness.
- Golden rule is working both ways: If done to my brother, you have done it to me.
- In 2030 we have successfully built a culture of accountability. 15 credits every 3-years may be too low so see it increased. Ethics review is clearer, changing the culture by implementing accountability at the beginning of ministerial schooling, more creditability as a movement. See new ways to embrace ethics/inclusivity as an ongoing process with cultural change; we look back and feel organically successful and see our accountability repercussions.
- Training on how to leave a ministry clear through transition, leaving gracefully and in ethics.
- We are grateful CEUs were put into place as it brought professionalism/education that trickled down into the churches. Some churches were independent, breaking away, and, then came back because they wanted boundaries, ethics, and, accountabilities. Not wounded, but practicing wholeness on a new level; see ministers attending trainings where they are led in ethical ways that uplift people.
- Millennials want to be involved, volunteer, and find ways to go out in the community to learn lessons; for those who have been involved - e.g. YOU - they have gone out into the community where we have seen homelessness cured. Inclusivity has moved outside the church and into the community with communion; partisan politics are abolished.
- Artificial intelligence will serve humanity at the highest level to communicate and connect. Barter system is developed and we are working together in the system as one. Virtual summits can be put on a screen in a sanctuary to share with congregations—no isolation anymore.
- Questioning if what we are asking about CEUs is going to be needed in 2030; focus on interspirituality and taking what works for you, and, then letting go what doesn't. Having fluidity in where you go to church; honoring and supporting individual growth more than a church congregation.
- Need to prepare for 2030 in how to get ministers in the field; autonomy/independence of Unity ministers and how they value this. How do we have a more high-touch system for this change? How do we honor people in this process so they feel seen, heard, and we are listening to their concerns and really hearing them as people? Pulling them into a greater vision.
- Rolling out a communications plan from those who know about media; invite people into the change knowing it is okay to feel resistance, or, have a different opinion and they are still welcome. Call ministers to tell them of the changes and talk to them about their questions, foster a connection for change, bring healing into the field. Accountability for consequences without complying with policy.

- Created a culture of self-accountability that was adopted under the saying “a rising tide lifts all boats” benefits Unity movement as a whole. Created an abundance of Unity ministers with centers competing to get the best minister because so many are out there. Saw a peer-to-peer accountability that eliminated the accountability of oversight. Held both the administration and movement to accountability because it was something we needed to learn. High variety of ministers—some having served for years and others newly graduated—creating a new plethora of what people wanted to learn. New Thought model has become model of what awakened world looks like.
- CEUs - beneficial, accessible, meaningful, substantial, evolving, foster connection, and reviewed constantly. Churches will look at accountability differently and see necessity to start training and cultivating the shift in us. Many ministry paths and ways of being a minister, may have more spiritual leaders serving one community.
- 2030 will need individually designed programs. See training practically applied and not just textbook; tailored so you know how to apply your desire for ministry. Need for sacred space - safe space - may be the network we run on and not the building we sit in. Some may want to come to the center, others may be in other locations and actively involved - different ways of connecting. Skills to connect through the network which may have no boundaries in the capacities developed; they have developed their capacities to surpass.

6. “Global Initiative for Interfaith & Multicultural Connections”

Rev Victoria Etchemendy shared her enthusiasm to have the opportunity to promote her vision for a new ministry team that is a compelling voice for connections. The newly created team would be comprised of Unity ministers who have experience in building bridges in their local areas and have participated in Interfaith events. Purpose of this will be to “promote local, national, and international goodwill and cooperation in expanding common ground.”

7. Miscellaneous Closing Topics

Bruce Verkruyse asked the question of “how can UWM best communicate with the membership with topics in a more global fashion?” Currently UWM does dialogue calls and we wonder if those are working. Not certain of if we are reaching people outside of this type of format where we meet face-to-face.

Discussion on communication question:

- Julie Armour, Chair of Colleague Connections Team, has assigned ministers/leaders to make calls so field ministers/leader feel supported. So, maybe we could be given specific questions to ask those we are calling; in our region we call our members so we could connect with how to support.
- The International Advisory Council had its first online meeting this month and we will begin having monthly meetings up to convention. We are addressing our education on an international scale—feel we are all thinking along the same lines. Challenge is the language and we have a team of English-Spanish translators to assist.
- I won’t get on a dialogue call unless I have to be there; it’s not my preference to communicate; I will respond to a survey because it can be done on my phone. Will engage in chat rooms if in written format where you can think before you have to talk.
- We share with our congregations where we travel to events and inform them of what we discussed. Sharing helps me to be able to attend other meetings.

Richard Bunch asked: “We just had sub-groups report out what they thought about accountability in 2030 with CEUs and special dispensation. Wonder what your thoughts are after hearing all the reports?”

- In our group we talked a lot about accountability and some may leave if held accountable, but, they may then come back because it was what they really wanted.
- If we do set boundaries, we might lose membership. Is it more important to have clarity and accountability than it is to have membership?
- See this as a bigger conversation. Feel we need enforcement and if someone is not an ordained minister leading one of our churches, then they shouldn't be in a Unity church.
- If we implement this now, hopefully people will come on board knowing this is a professional organization; and, rather than enforcing the policy, we can realize it is a cultural shift in the movement, allowing it to be there merging into the system with those who are coming out of ministerial school. Those who push back may need to be retiring; feel it needs to be more organic.
- As a standard for our movement, we need to ask “what is our movement accountable to the human race for”; and, when we take on accountability to the human race then we can ask for accountability in the Unity movement.
- Don't believe accountability and membership are mutually exclusive.
- For purposes of what was proposed, we are basically saying we are growing up somewhat in our movement; and, it's okay to hold ourselves to a higher standard of accountability. When we do that, it raises the quality of the movement/ministers/churches.
- Accountability is about safety.
- This is an evolution of our education program. Don't think there is anything wrong with having standards going forward and there also needs to be a reflection of where we came from. If we pre-determine an outcome, we can become rigid. Accountability is to reach, but not cut people out.