

Summary of 2024 Bylaws

This is a summary of the proposed bylaws that reflect the current operational procedure of Unity of Fort Collins. The complete document has been made available on our website and printed copies are also available today.

We thank the Council of Unity of Fort Collins that has reviewed and approved this initiative, and deep thanks to Courtney Fuchs for her detailed editing skills. Also, the Support team: Anne Hudgens, Julie Schoenbauer, Rev. Sharon Bush and Rev. Jim Yeaw due to the numerous discussions about the text and operating procedures. Finally, Rev. Joanne Burns of Unity Worldwide Ministries who has lent her experience and expertise in crafting the wording.

Much of the text is derived from the 2022 version that was updated by Anne Hudgens and approved by the membership in 2022. It is the foundation upon which this bylaw version is built.

This document is a review of procedural changes reflected in the text.

Section 1.01 Previously stated that Unity Church of Fort Collins is open to Unity students. The proposed bylaws now state “open to all who identify with the community, resonate with the teachings and desire a deeper connection to one’s own unfolding spiritual path.”

Section 4.02.1 This section requires that the Spiritual Leader(s) must be ordained or licensed Unity Ministers or serve under special dispensation approved by Unity Worldwide Ministries. Special dispensation is a process where the individual has completed background checks, a psychological review and is seeking Unity ordination.

Section 4.02.4 This section redefines the duties of the Spiritual Leader. The leader is primarily a “encourager, coach and resource individual.” Although a collaborator with the Council, the individual is responsible for spiritual direction. Previously the Spiritual Leader directed employees and was responsible for managing the ministry. This management role is now filled by Ministry Teams. See Article VI.

Section 4.03.A1 This section provides that the Council, because of individual association with Teams, is to be expanded to “at least 6 members” instead of the current Council of 5 members. The expansion allows all who desire, who qualify, and are needed, to serve as Council members. Normally this would be 6 or 7 members.

Section 4.03.A2 This section increases the term of office of Council members to three years from two years. This is in keeping with Unity Worldwide Ministries “best practice” and resolves the problem of 50% of the Council being up for re-election every year.

Section 4.03.B This section clarifies that the Council, as with the Spiritual Leader, is not engaged in management. As a governing body it is engaged in planning, implementation and evaluation. It approves a budget, and appoints Teams that carry on the daily operations. Sections on financial oversight, legal compliance, training, monitoring the pulse of the community and resolving conflict are also added.

Article VI This article that defines committees has been expanded to include Ministry Teams. Committees are short-term task-oriented bodies such as the Nominating Committee. Teams are appointed by the Council with a scope and, in some cases, an assigned budget. Teams carry on tasks within their scope and budget and are specifically limited in authority where the Council carries that authority.

There are other editorial changes to clarify, but most are not related to procedural changes.

Teams at Unity of Fort Collins

In August of 2022, your Council looked at various approaches to the structure of a church ministry. The most common structure is a minister-centered ministry where the minister, as an employee, manages, directs, and is responsible for all aspects of the ministry under some direction from a board or council.

Unity of Fort Collins has a long-practiced and appreciated tradition of being a member-directed and member-managed community. The council made the decision to take this foundational practice and expand it with formalized teams.

The benefits to this approach are:

- Congregants take ownership of a portion of the management and programs. All are asked to involve themselves in at least one team. We now have engaged more than 75 individuals in one or more teams; no one individual or group “runs” the church.
- Teams are small groups having the challenge, but also the benefit, of working together, creating a meaningful and appreciated program.
- The council works in a governing process as visionaries, charting a future course. They are the “possibility people.”
- After the recent pandemic, income to compensate ministers and other staff has been restricted. Teams offer a do-it-yourself approach to the ministry.
- The approach coincides with much that church growth and managements experts report as the church of the future. This has been shared with us by Rev. Jim and Rev. Sharon. An example is *Weird Church: Welcome to the 21st Century* by Beth Estock and Paul Nixon.