

Governing Board of Contemplative Outreach
Zoom Meeting Minutes October 4, 2022
Approved

Governing Board Members Present: Jenny Adamson, Phil Jackson, Pat Johnson, Jim McElroy, Diane Ryan, Julie Saad, and Carol Quest

Also Present: Mary Jane Yates, administrator

1. Opening Reflection: “Listening” from a homily by Father Tom Nelson followed by 10 minutes of Centering Prayer.

In every moment of time listening, especially to God, but also to another person, there is a mysterious moment in which the one who listens steps out from behind a fortress of self-concern and dwells silently in the presence of the one who speaks. This is a moment of great risk and great courage, because it invites us into a different way of being/living in the world; and over time we may cease being people who listen and become listening people, people whose very being is shaped by the posture of listening.

This is the posture of the Servant – of a life lived ever more fully in the Spirit of Love.

2. Board’s Role: Diane provided background and context for The 2022 Contemplative Outreach Governing Board’s Reflection on Its Role document.

Many have asked what is the role of the Board in light of the evolution and expansion of COL (Guideline #1). With Father Thomas’s encouragement the Board, along with the whole organism, is transitioning to be less hierarchical. The By-laws state:

The Governing Board provides governance-level leadership to the organization ensuring it fulfills the vision and mission of COL which are entrusted to it by the Holy Spirit.

The 2022 Contemplative Outreach Governing Board’s Reflection on Its Role explores what is *governance-level leadership* and how can we *ensure the Vision* when all is dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit. The document also looks beyond the Board’s responsibilities to consider the role the Board plays within the organism.

To compose the document, the Board prayed and discussed The Vision, Principles and Guidelines, and the Bylaws. The Board also studied Board responsibilities of other Non-profit and Non-Hierarchical organizations. The Board offers this document to communicate its understanding for right now and for moving forward— for leading from the future and leaving space for evolution and further revisiting as needed.

From the COL Vision document Guideline 4 for Contemplative Service states:

Those who serve in leadership ordinarily do so in a voluntary capacity. We employ staff and contractors as needed.

We depend on the enormous generosity of those serving Contemplative Outreach and performing innumerable tasks without remuneration. ...

The board acknowledges that it has an oversight or “crow’s nest” role and that the chapters and local volunteers also have a certain leadership role.

3. Discussion of evolving roles: Considering that roles within COL continue to evolve, today’s discussion between the Board and Mary Jane Yates, the Contemplative Outreach administrator, explored how the roles of the Board and the Administrator complement each other.

The Board acknowledged that Mary Jane’s extensive involvement with the International community aligns with the Board’s intentions to support those who serve and to invest in the divine economy. Other exciting opportunities for sharing the gift of Centering Prayer have emerged and Mary Jane’s work to support the initiatives of the Staff as well as volunteers in both US and international communities again aligns with the 2022 Intentions. The Board noted that multiple efforts by the Staff to connect under-represented populations (Theological Principle 12) was an example of The Staff and Board collaborating to invest in the divine economy.

Mary Jane offered ongoing areas for further collaboration include The Circle of Friends and future development of intentions.

Theological Principle 13 states

Following the teaching of Jesus, we endeavor to exercise leadership in a spirit of service, utmost charity, and unity.

The gathering of the Board and Staff was marked by a spirit of unity. The Board observes that fostering unity requires continuous intention and effort.

—It is important to listen with open hearts and with the intention to see things from the other person’s point of view.

—Sticking points and disagreements are part of the process. They are opportunities for growth. For that reason commitment to discussing sticking points or disagreements is how they get resolved. During this process it is important to keep in mind that we are evolving.

—Unity depends on individuals addressing problems and difficulties directly with one another before taking the issue to anyone else.

4. Board Meetings: The Board plans to meet monthly with the administrator attending the monthly meetings every other month.

5. Administrator travel request. The Board agreed that COL will cover the travel costs for Mary Jane to visit a number of European Centering Prayer communities following her retreat in Ireland.

6. Summary remarks: The work of the Holy Spirit is spreading out to the whole universe on its own. The Spirit guides and we respond—including the responses being offered by volunteers throughout the organism.

—The balance between Staff and volunteers flows as the organism evolves. Maintaining this balance demands that we learn how to collaboration in changing circumstances.

—The Board is determined to maintain a “crow’s nest” perspective, actively listening for and observing the move of the Holy Spirit throughout the organism and offering support as is appropriate.

—This current moment might be an appropriate time for Mary Jane to review the evolving role of the administrator and propose a job description that more clearly reflects that evolving role.

7. Closing reflection:

God’s diversity is manifested in the multitude of reactions of human beings. This diversity is not meant to lead to wars, as it has in human history, but to the enrichment of perceiving God from the infinite number of perspectives that human beings can perceive. Thomas Keating, “That We May Be One”, pg. 28-29

8. Next Board Zoom Call – October 18, 2022

9. Volunteer for reflection for next call: Jenny Adamson

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Quest, secretary