

Under the Same Tree Board Meeting Minutes

Date: January 18, 2025

The purpose of this board meeting is to discuss the transition in leadership for the Executive Director role of Under the Same Tree.

Members Present

- Matthew Strathman, Board Member
- Shawn Eaker, Board Member
- Amber Kraus, Board Meeting

Meeting Notes:

1. **Introduction of Jennifer Prophet:** Amber introduced Jennifer Prophet, highlighting her extensive background in education, international travel, and community development. Jennifer shared her experiences and qualifications, including her work in Haiti, Chicago, and with Lutheran Hour Ministries.
 - **Jennifer's Background:** Jennifer Prophet has a diverse background with a Bachelor's degree in elementary education, English as a second language, and special education. She has extensive international travel experience, particularly in Haiti, where she did a lot of mission work. She has also worked in community development in Chicago and with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in their international program, sending short-term mission teams internationally.
 - **Professional Experience:** Jennifer's professional experience includes teaching in the inner city of Chicago for five years, working with community groups, and designing programs for kids in the inner city. She has also worked with Lutheran Hour Ministries, a non-profit organization, and is currently involved in the Hopeful Neighborhood Project, a community development program based on asset-based community development.
 - **Personal Insights:** Jennifer shared personal insights about her cross-cultural knowledge, having married someone from Haiti and living in a cross-cultural environment. She emphasized her passion for community development and her belief in the potential of Africa as a continent, despite its challenges.
2. **Board Member Introductions:** Matt and Shawn introduced themselves to Jennifer, sharing their backgrounds and involvement with Under the Same Tree. Matt works for Microsoft and has been with the organization for 7-8 years, while Shawn has a background in finance and works part-time as a pilot.
 - **Matt's Introduction:** Matt Strathman has been with Under the Same Tree for 7-8 years. He started when he was asked to run a trivia night as a fundraiser and later joined the board. He works for Microsoft in technology and the cloud, primarily dealing with government agencies. Matt works from home and travels occasionally to meet clients.
 - **Shawn's Introduction:** Shawn Aker has been with Under the Same Tree for about the same time as Matt. He was recruited by a mutual friend at church and

has a background in finance, having worked as a CPA and in various roles in healthcare and auditing. Shawn currently works part-time as a pilot for a survey company, flying twin-engine Cessnas.

3. **Jennifer's Interest and Contribution:** Shawn asked Jennifer about her interest in the organization and how her skills align with its mission. Jennifer expressed her passion for the model and her desire to contribute her international experience, community development expertise, and programmatic thinking to the organization.
 - **Interest in Organization:** Jennifer expressed her interest in Under the Same Tree due to her passion for the model, which focuses on microfinance and providing structure and hope to individuals. She believes in the potential of Africa and the importance of supporting women and children, aligning with her background in education and community development.
 - **Skills and Contribution:** Jennifer highlighted her international experience, particularly in Haiti and Africa, and her expertise in community development and asset-based community development. She believes her skills in program design, efficiency, and effectiveness can contribute significantly to the organization. Additionally, her MBA provides her with a solid understanding of financial management, which she sees as beneficial for the board.
4. **Governance and Friendship Dynamics:** Shawn inquired about the potential challenges of Jennifer's friendship with Amber in a governance role. Jennifer explained that their professional relationship would allow them to work together effectively, despite their personal friendship.
5. **Board Commitment and Travel:** Jennifer asked about the level of board involvement and potential travel commitments. Matt and Amber discussed the minimal time commitment outside of special projects and the possibility of requiring board members to visit program locations in the future.
 - **Board Involvement:** Matt explained that the board's time commitment is minimal outside of special projects. Board members may need to take on specific tasks during special projects, but regular involvement is limited to board meetings and occasional additional responsibilities.
 - **Travel Commitments:** Amber raised the question of potential travel commitments for board members. While it has not been a requirement historically, the possibility of requiring board members to visit program locations in the future was discussed. The group acknowledged the challenges of travel, including funding and personal commitments, and agreed to consider this further in future discussions.
6. **Potential New Board Member:** Amber mentioned Adeta Paply, a web developer from India, who expressed interest in joining the board. The group discussed the potential benefits and challenges of having an international board member.
 - **Adeta's Interest:** Amber mentioned that Adeta Paply, a web developer from India, expressed interest in joining the board. He has been involved in developing the new Under the Same Tree website and is enthusiastic about the organization's mission.

- **Challenges and Benefits:** The group discussed the potential benefits of having an international board member, such as increased diversity and international perspective. However, they also considered the challenges, including time zone differences and the relevance of his contributions to the organization's current focus areas.
7. **End of Year Donation Campaign:** Amber provided an update on the end-of-year donation campaign, which raised \$1,125 from 12 donors, including four new contributors. She acknowledged the need for more work to increase donations and maintain recurring contributions.
- **Campaign Results:** Amber reported that the end-of-year donation campaign raised \$1,125 from 12 donors, including four new contributors. Although the amount was significantly less than the \$25,000 goal, the campaign provided valuable insights into the current donor base and the work needed to increase donations.
 - **Future Efforts:** Amber acknowledged the need for more work to increase donations and maintain recurring contributions. She emphasized the importance of building relationships with new donors and improving communication to achieve better results in future campaigns.
8. **\$5000 Donation from Microfinance Partners in Africa:** Amber announced that the organization would receive a \$5,000 donation from Microfinance Partners in Africa, thanks to Tom's efforts in meeting with their new executive director and repairing the relationship.
- **Donation Details:** Amber announced that the organization would receive a \$5,000 donation from Microfinance Partners in Africa. This was achieved through Tom's efforts in meeting with their new executive director and explaining the impact of the funding on the organization's programs.
 - **Future Potential:** Amber mentioned the potential for continued partnership with Microfinance Partners in Africa. The new executive director expressed interest in supporting the organization further, and there is potential for future collaboration and additional funding opportunities.
9. **Grant Applications:** Amber updated the team on grant applications, including an invitation to apply for a \$2,000 grant from the Circle of Sisterhood Foundation and letters of inquiry submitted to the Youth Bridge Community Foundation and the John and Susan Dewan Foundation.
- **Circle of Sisterhood:** Amber received an invitation to apply for a \$2,000 grant from the Circle of Sisterhood Foundation, which supports organizations empowering and educating women and girls. She plans to apply for funding to cover two student mentorship workshops in 2025.
 - **Other Grant Applications:** Amber submitted letters of inquiry to the Youth Bridge Community Foundation and the John and Susan Dewan Foundation for smaller grants. These foundations prefer to support smaller, grassroots organizations, making them a good fit for Under the Same Tree.

Follow-up tasks:

- **End of Year Donation Receipts:** Complete the mail merge, printing, and stuffing of envelopes for end of year donation receipts and ensure they are mailed out by Monday. (Amber)
- **Grant Application:** Apply for the Circle of Sisterhood Foundation grant for \$2000 to cover two student mentorship workshops in 2025 by February 15th. (Amber)
- **Board Membership Invitation:** Extend an invitation to Jennifer Prophet to join the board of Under the Same Tree. (Amber)
- **Board Travel Commitment:** Discuss the potential requirement for board members to travel to program locations and determine the policy regarding travel commitments and funding. (Amber, Matt, Shawn)

Signatures

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Kraus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "A" is large and loops around the "Kraus".

Amber Kraus, Board Member