

TVUUC Board Retreat

August 18, 2018

Board Members Present: Athanasios Bayiates; Matthew Blondell; Denise Coleman; Debbie Ellis; Ginna Mashburn; Robby McMurry; Bill Myers; Wendy Syer; Terry Uselton

Ex Officio: Chris Buice; Claudia Pressley

Visiting: Keith Hulse; Pam Johnson

Introductions and Overview

After brief introductions, Ginna Mashburn gave an overview of Board responsibilities, referring us to the Board charter, the Board Covenant, and the church organizational chart. The Board is responsible for approving church policies and overseeing church operations and committees, including the Finance, Strategic Planning, Stewardship, and Personnel Committees. It is also responsible for the annual evaluation of the Senior Minister. The Endowment Committee, which falls under the Finance Committee, reports directly to the Board several time a year.

Ginna also reviewed the process of Policy Governance. Once the Board has approved a policy or charter, church staff and members may make decisions based on that policy, without asking for Board approval for each action. Chris stressed that this process makes his job much easier as it allows him to respond to various situations quickly and efficiently. Note that all of the approved charters are available on the TVUUC website, under "Governance Manual" on the Board of Directors page.

Note: All charters should comply with the mission and bylaws of the church. David Holden has volunteered to review all existing charters and see how they align with the church bylaws, as required by policy governance.

Both Ginna and Chris recommended the book Governance and Ministry by Dan Hotchkiss for further explanation of the Policy Governance process, suggesting that the Board might discuss the book in a future meeting.

Vision and Strategic Planning

Denise Coleman gave a presentation about the Strategic Planning Committee and the results of feedback gathered during the most recent stewardship campaign.

Starting rules and assumptions of the Strategic Planning committee are:

- Agree on common definitions
- Define results and methods
- Collaboration and meaningful conversation are critical
- Agree on expectations and method of measuring them

Denise also gave brief definitions of the following terms:

Mission: Statement of why the church exists

Vision: Picture of the Future

End Statement: Translation of the vision into priorities for specific actions

Goal: Broad statement of an expectation

Objective: How the goal will be reached

The Strategic Planning Committee is using the following statements for TVUUC:

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church is to create a welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth and challenges us to transform the world through acts of love and justice.

Vision:

Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church will be a spirited, compassionate community committed to living with profound respect and caring for each other, our community, and our world.

End Statements:

- TVUUC is a diverse and dynamic congregation welcoming across all dimensions including age, race, religion, gender, education, ability, sexual orientation, and economic means; always evolving, open to new ideas, new ways of doing and being, and to fresh talents and perspectives of all members and friends; and alive with fun and creativity, a hub of activity for all.
- TVUUC is a leading advocate for social and environmental justice.
- TVUUC is a democratic association with transparent processes of decision making, offering abundant opportunities for leadership and participation in governance by all members.
- TVUUC is a sanctuary for seekers of a warm spiritual community offering safety, acceptance, and mutual caretaking; deep and wide networks of friendship and personal regard; and support for each person's spiritual growth along their chosen path.

With assistance from Robby McMurry, Denise then gave a summary of the feedback gathered during the stewardship campaign. They have put the members' comments into a database using the xmind software program which allows them to sort the comments into themes. The comments were also divided into "Positive comments" and "Opportunities" or constructive suggestions.

Some themes that emerged are:

- The church needs to make greater use of technology.
- Some members would prefer a quieter, more meditative service.
- Some would prefer more intellectual sermons.
- Several people mentioned the need for a full-time Pastoral Care Minister.
- Some expressed a desire for more activities in small groups.

Although the xmind mapping of comments and themes was displayed on the screen, it was difficult to read and absorb it all during the meeting. The Board asked how we can get the results to read by ourselves. This would be possible if a Board member had the xmind program (which is downloadable). Denise also stated that she would try to convert the data into a more familiar program (such as Excel), and she assured us that the Strategic Planning Committee is already incorporating the comments into the Strategic Plan. The comments can also be used during the next Stewardship Campaign.

There was some discussion about the request for more small-group interactions. The Program Council will be trying to revive or expand the Dinner Groups; Chris suggested that existing programs (such as Adult RE) could be used to break into smaller discussion groups.

Logistics of Future Board Meetings

This year, the Board has decided to hold its monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm. However, the September Board meeting will be held on September 25 and not September 18. Ginna hopes to use a "consent agenda" as much as possible, urging Board members to read materials

thoroughly before the meeting so that decisions might be made quickly during the meeting. Board members can ask questions and discuss issues by e-mail before the meeting. If necessary, discussions can continue during the Board meeting. However, Ginna did emphasize that we should take our vote seriously and not hesitate to raise concerns or questions before voting.

Note: As Wendy will not be able to attend the September meeting, Terry Uselton agreed to take minutes at that meeting.

Other important dates

The Stewardship campaign will officially begin **on January 13, 2019** and end on **March 17**.

Chris Buice will take a four-month sabbatical beginning in April 2019, returning on August 1. (This is the second part of his one-year sabbatical, which he split into two parts.)

The annual congregational meeting will be held on **May 19, 2019**.

Facilitating Communication Between Board and Congregation

One goal for this year is to increase the visibility of the Board and facilitate communication between the Board and the membership.

The “Red Book” will remain in the Fellowship Hall, for members to record questions and comments. The Board will review any new comments in each Board meeting and decide the appropriate response. In addition to this, the following measures will be added:

- Each week, the Board Member on Duty will sit in the Fellowship Hall for a “Fireside Chat” with anyone who wants to ask questions or provide feedback on church issues. Wendy will make a sign that can be displayed near the fireplace to identify the available Board Member. The Board member should record comments in the Red Book or keep a record to report to the Board, as appropriate.
- Ginna will revive the “Planks from the Board” column in the TVUUC Newsletter, reporting on recent Board activities and decisions. It was suggested that we start a collection of these columns in print form and make it available in the Fellowship Hall, near the Red Book.
- During the Board announcement at the start of every Sunday service, will remind everyone that they can contact the Board by e-mail, using a link on the TVUUC website. This link has rarely, if ever, been used. If/when people start using this tool, the Board will determine how to respond. It was also suggested that the Board email address could be added to the Order of Service, next to the address for Pastoral Care.

We will continue to discuss how we can record our responses to issues raised so they can be seen by the congregation.

Instructions for e-mailing the Board:

- Go to www.tvuuc.org
- Choose “Get to Know Us” tab (Pull-down menu) near the top of the page
- Choose “Board of Directors”
- At the bottom of the page, click on “Email the Board”

Alternatively, send e-mail directly to: board@tvuuc.org

Program Council

Keith Hulse, the current Chair of the Program Council, raised a question that the Program Council has been considering: Is the role of the Program Council to lead or to follow? Should it initiate and participate in management of church programs, or should it only monitor and support programs created and run by committees and members? The Board agreed [without formal vote] that the Program Council should be playing a pro-active role in the creation and direction of programs. Because this is not clear in the current charter, we agreed that the Program Council should draft an amended charter which will reflect this mandate and also clarify what programs fall under the purview of the Program Council (e.g. "What is a "program"?). The amended charter will be presented to the Board for a vote.

Report from Senior Minister

Chris Buice shared his thoughts on his role in the church, his relationship with the Board, and some of his vision for the coming year. Major points included:

- He greatly appreciates the Policy Governance process, as it enables him to make quick decisions without referring to the Board on every situation that arises. He also supports the efforts to move to a "consent agenda" for Board meetings.
- He encouraged Board members, as well as church members to talk with him if there is ever a concern or issue that cannot, or should not, be resolved by the other staff or church leaders. He also reminded us that he must sometimes keep information confidential, and is not always able to share the background behind a decision.
- He encouraged Board members to refer to the Personnel Manual when questions arise related to staff.
- He is particularly proud of his partnership with KICMA (Knoxville Interdenominational Christian Ministerial Alliance.) Working with this primarily African-American group can help bring diversity to TVUUC programs, bringing people from many churches and faiths to TVUUC for programs (such as Interfaith Dinners) , and taking TVUUC members to programs at other churches. It has also led, in part, to the creation of ACT. The Board suggested that we might call on this group to provide (a) guest minister(s) during Chris's upcoming sabbatical.
- He noted that TVUUC is widely recognized and appreciated in the Knoxville community for its social justice work.
- The newly formed (or reactivated) Worship Committee will bring a change to some procedures for assisting lay or visiting ministers. Chris noted that he would like to clarify to the congregation how Sunday service topics can be suggested, and he welcomes ideas for getting more congregational feedback on Sunday services. [The Board noted that the activities of this committee will be especially important during Chris's sabbatical in 2019. For this reason, it will be important to find committee members very soon.]
- He plans to be more actively involved in the stewardship campaign this year. One Sunday per month will be designated "Stewardship Sunday" and provides an opportunity to publicize financial needs of the church and the concept of stewardship. He supports Ginna's suggestion of hiring a local (Knoxville) consultant to advise on fundraising, someone who understands the local culture.
- Another priority for this year continues to be the establishment of a "Right Relations" group or similar program for conflict resolution within the church.
- Before leaving on sabbatical in April , he will submit a plan for his activities and goals. Current plans include doing some writing, and leading an educational trip to Paris.
- He has agreed to serve as the chaplain to the UUA Board, providing pastoral care to UUA Board members, as needed.

Realm

Claudia Pressley gave a brief report on Realm. Using Realm to manage the church calendar provides the opportunity to give detailed information about events. If one clicks on the event name in the calendar on the TVUUC website, a page will open with detailed information. She urges event organizers to provide full information about an event to be shown in this space.

She reported that new members and visitors are automatically entered into Realm. Efforts continue to get "old" members registered and active.

She also acknowledged that Realm works better with some browsers than with others.

Miscellaneous

The Board approved the minutes for the May and July Board meetings. They will now be posted on the TVUUC website. The initial draft of the minutes of the annual congregational meeting, held in June, will also be posted. The congregation will vote on final approval of these minutes at the next meeting in May 2019.

Bill Myers will be Chair of the Stewardship Committee and campaign this year.

This year, Jeff Kovac will direct the annual job evaluation process for the Senior Minister. This will need to be completed before Chris goes on sabbatical.

The agenda for the September Board meeting will include:

- Discussion of goals for the coming year (in cooperation with Strategic Planning Committee)
- Selection of members for the Worship Committee
- Chris's response to the job evaluation conducted this summer
- Vote on amended Program Council charter
- Formal recognition of ACT (Alliance for Community Transformation)

Submitted by Wendy Syer, Secretary to the Board.