

TVUUC Board Meeting

April 21, 2020

Board Members Present: Matthew Blondell; Eddie Chin; Denise Coleman (President) ; Debbie Ellis; Viren Lalka; Ginna Mashburn; Ryan McBee; Robby McMurry; Wendy Syer; Erven Williams; Alice Woody

Ex Officio/Visiting: Claudia Pressley

(Chris Buice had another meeting to attend, but joined the Board for the last few minutes.)

[Meeting held by Zoom Videoconference]

Covenant of Agreement for TVUUC Affiliation of Jon Coffee

After making one small addition to the draft Covenant of Agreement for Jon Coffee's affiliation with TVUUC as a Community Minister, **the Board voted to approve the agreement.** This includes a commitment by TVUUC for church members (invited by Jon) to serve on an advisory committee.

Stewardship Committee Report

Taylor Thomas, Chair of the Stewardship Committee gave a report on pledges received for next year.

So far, a total of approximately \$460,500 has been pledged for the next fiscal year. For comparison, at the time the 2019-20 budget was created, approximately \$468,000 had been pledged. Staff and committee members continue to call those who have not yet pledged, making sure that a welfare-check call has been made to that household before they receive a pledge request. In light of a possible decrease in income this year, the Stewardship Committee has considered calling some donors to ask if they will consider increasing their pledge. Some members have donated all or part of their \$1200 COVID virus payment to the church. It is also possible that some members will need to decrease their pledge due to a loss of employment.

Taylor also reported that the Stewardship Committee has created a video about the campaign which can be posted on social media sites.

Some UU churches have decided to postpone the budget process for a few months until they have a better idea of how their finances have been impacted by the pandemic. The TVUUC Finance Committee will consider doing this.

Financial Report

Robby McMurry (Treasurer) distributed the financial reports through March. Year-to-date spending continues to be less than the amount budgeted for that period. Money collected during the three on-line Sunday services in March was similar to amounts normally collected. So far, pledged contributions have continued as expected. Spending, therefore, has not exceeded income.

The Endowment Committee has reported that they will consider making a grant from the Endowment funds to help make up any losses due to the pandemic.

TVUUC did apply for a loan from the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) and was approved for a payment of approximately \$70,000. Prior to that application, another application had been filed for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration (a program which pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic), but we have not yet received a response.

The Board had a discussion about the necessity and advisability of filing these applications. Some felt that it was not necessary in light of the (apparently) minimal financial impact on the church of the pandemic, and the fact that other businesses will suffer greater financial losses than we will. Others felt that the applications were justified, in light of the continued uncertainty of church income, and the importance of continuing church staff salaries while they work extremely hard to serve the congregation. Claudia reported that, unlike other for-profit and non-profit businesses, churches do not pay an unemployment tax, meaning that any church employees laid off or furloughed could not file for unemployment payments.

The majority of the Board seemed to feel that it was wise to apply for the financial assistance, as a contingency plan, while it was available. If it turns out that the church's income is not greatly decreased during the pandemic, we can repay the loans, even if the loan guidelines do not require this.

In light of the current uncertainty of church income, Viren Lalka (Treasurer-Elect) suggested that we prepare separate budgets for four different scenarios, so that we can present one of them at the annual church meeting. Robby suggested that we identify areas to be cut in case of decreased income, rather than doing separate budgets. The Finance Committee will meet to discuss options before the next Board Meeting.

Denise mentioned that the Personnel Committee has recommended that the 2020-21 budget include a 1.8% cost-of-living increase in all staff salaries, in keeping with UUA guidelines. The Finance Committee will take this into consideration as they prepare the budget for the coming year, noting that such an across-the-board increase may not be the most practical way to calculate salaries.

Opening the Church Building

Claudia reported that the church staff and the Leadership Team (which meets weekly) are ready to discuss when and how TVUUC should open the building after the current "shut-down". The Governor of Tennessee has announced that the state will allow the opening of some closed businesses beginning on April 27. The mayors of Knoxville and Knox County may choose to extend the closings in our area. Even after businesses are permitted to open, however, the church can choose to keep our building closed for a longer time.

When we do open, there will still be many questions to consider. For example:

- Will we limit the number of people in the building or sanctuary at one time? How?
- Could we begin with Sunday services in the sanctuary with no congregation present?
- Could we gather outdoors?
- What other meetings will be permitted in the building?
- What about Religious Education classes or Choir?
- Will face masks be required?
- Will we monitor temperatures?
- How and when will the building be cleaned?

At this time, all in-church meetings have been cancelled through May 31, and scheduled groups have been notified.

A question was raised about equipment such as non-contact thermometers and face masks. Claudia reported that they have tried to order these but have not been successful. The Board suggested that we could obtain home-made face masks and make them available to anyone who arrives without one, but we would need to ensure that the masks are clean.

As the Leadership makes these decisions, the consensus of the Board seemed to be that we should err on the side of caution, making conservative decisions that will protect everyone's safety (e.g. not opening immediately, requiring face masks, etc.)

One positive result of the shut-down has been the outreach made possible by the on-line services. The staff hopes to continue and improve this effort, even after the regular services resume. For example, the current services are actually pre-recorded in pieces and then combined into one program to be played on Sunday morning. In the future, they want to live-stream the whole service in real time. Another suggestion is to have a service conducted by Zoom so that congregants could see each other.

The Board expressed its appreciation to Chris Buice and the rest of the staff for continuing the work of the church during this current crisis, for keeping cool heads, and for modeling a rational response during the Sunday services.

A question was asked about church members who have lost their jobs or otherwise been affected financially. Chris replied that he does not have an accurate count right now, but noted that the church Helping Fund is available to provide assistance to church members and friends who have experienced financial hardships.

Miscellaneous

- Mark Mohundro has been conducting daily on-line Chalice Lightings and Closings, with short readings. He is seeking volunteers to do some of these readings.
- Claudia relayed a message from Barbara Lamm thanking the Board for its support of the Memorial Garden, which has remained a quiet place to sit while the church building is closed. This week, a small group of volunteers will be replacing some of the rocks in the garden.
- The church is still seeking volunteers to be trained as Sound Assistants to work during Sunday services (when regular services resume.)
- The Strategic Planning Committee has not met for the past two months, due to the shut-down of the church, but they plan to have a Zoom meeting soon and will have some recommendations for the Board in May.
- Chris noted that he and Jametta Alston have continued to hold UU101 classes with prospective members during the shut-down (via Zoom.)
- Debbie Ellis has been trying to contact companies to get a quote for mulching the Welcome Garden, but has not had any luck reaching anyone. She did ask for some clarification about the services needed. Claudia replied that the mulch project is on hold for now, but that the Buildings and Grounds Committee has asked that no leaves or cardboard be used for mulching.
- The UUA General Assembly to be held in June has been changed to a completely on-line gathering.

Submitted by Wendy Syer, Secretary to the Board.

4/30/20