Minutes for the Board Meeting of the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church,

November 21, 2023

APPROVED

In attendance, virtually and in person (in alphabetical order):

Rob Bray, Chris Buice, Bill Cherry, Eddie Chin, AB Coleman, Denise Coleman, Miriam Davis, Jack Hulse, Roy Kersey, Heather Kistner, Barbara Lamm, Catherine Farmer Loya, Devon Miller, Maddie Kulpa, Jeff Mellor, Claudia Pressley, Ken Stephenson, Carol Villaverde, Bella Thomas-Wilson.

Introduction / Chalice Lighting / Covenant

At Eddie's invitation, Bella began the meeting with a reading to set the tone for our deliberations. [01:12]

2. Announcements [01:54]

Eddie opened with the previously announced agenda items.

a) Minutes of September 19 Board Meeting

Rob moved, Heather seconded acceptance of the minutes of the September 19, 2023 Board meeting. Unanimous.

b) Minutes of October 17 Board Meeting

Rob moved, Heather seconded acceptance of the minutes of the October 17, 2023 Board meeting. Unanimous.

c) Online vote on Bobbie DeRidder's Property

Eddie reviewed the results of the following motion and vote taken online on October 24:

MOTION:

I [Eddie] move that we release the property that we have been talking about from Bobby DeRidder (Michael Miller's Mom) that was supposedly gifted to the church some 15-20 years ago. There is no evidence that the gift was ever accepted by TVUUC. Family members recall in conversation way back about the church not accepting the land gift. Chris Buice said that it is not unusual to refuse gifts that were hard to sell off and not cost efficient to turn over. We have never paid a penny of property taxes, and there is no record of it in our files. I vote to release the property to Bobby DeRidder's son Michael Miller our Church Administrative Assistant & Bookkeeper. I believe it is the right thing to do.

SECONDED:

Motion has been seconded by Heather Kistner.

Motion passed. [04:50]

d) Auction item: Board Chili Dinner in Memory of Ruth Martin

The dinner will take place on Saturday, February 17 following Valentine's Day. All-hands-on deck by the Board are needed to make this a continued success. [05:12]

e) Heska Amuna Developments

The Heska Amuna congregation has not yet succeeded in mustering the votes to proceed with renting our space in the immediate future. Discussions with their representatives indicate that further decisions will probably take place by March of next year.

f) Staff Retirement Benefits Change [05:59]

Eddie made the following announcement regarding staff retirement benefits. The UUA recently moved their Retirement Plan from TIAA-CREF to Empower Retirement and updated some of their directives. Going forward, all employees eligible for retirement must receive the same percentage and all percentages must be in whole, not half percents. Our Sr. Minister was at 7.5% so he had to move up to 8%, requiring all of our other eligible employees (who were at 7%) to also move to an 8% contribution.

The bi-weekly increase for TVUUC is: \$84.23, broken down as follows: Rev. Chris Buice: \$19.26, Claudia Pressley: \$23.91, Catherine Farmer Loya: \$22.37, Michael Miller: \$12.08, Miriam Davis: \$6.61. Please note that the UUA recommends retirement contributions of at least 10%.

g) Stewardship Program [07:09]

The Stewardship Program will proceed under the theme Gratitude.

3. Minister's Report for November 2023 [07:47]

I worked with the President Eddie Chin and President Elect Heather Kistner to develop goals for the 2023-2024 year that are in alignment with the goals established by the TVUUC board. In the below report I state the goals as adopted by the board and then offer a friendly rewording more congruent with the minister's role, shifting from managerial language to language in keeping with language to come from the pulpit. I submit this document as my report for your review and feedback.

Identify, develop and grow the necessary human resources essential to TVUUC's growth and influence as driven by its mission:

Fan into flames the gifts that are within each person so as to empower all to find their ministry.

- 1 Make myself accessible after each Sunday service (when present onsite) to visit with newcomers in order to learn more about what their gifts for ministry might be and help them connect with the work of the church. To help folks "get in where they fit in."
- 2 Schedule regular office hours for pastoral care and to assist individuals in their own discernment of gifts. Advertise that this "get in where you fit in" is an integral part of pastoral care.
- 3 Prioritize preaching on Sundays where there is a "Let's Connect" event that highlights ways people can connect with volunteer opportunities.
- 4 Celebrate the Volunteer of the Month in cooperation with the Let's Connect team by offering a written/verbal tribute and representing the church in presenting plaque/gifts and being available for picture.
- 5 Support new member orientation classes by offering an Introduction to TVUUC talk.

Grow TVUUC's financial resources to provide secure and predictable sources of funds and a reasonable cost structure.

Fostering a culture of generosity by encouraging commitment to membership and giving/pledging.

- 1 Work with the stewardship team on developing a worship service to launch our annual pledge drive that is in line with the year's theme.
- 2 Offer pastoral care to stewardship drive leaders mindful of the challenges unique to that role.
- 3 Be present and supportive of an Advanced Givers event which is an integral part of any successful pledge campaign. My goal will be to be a "listening ear" as our advanced donors share their own ideas about how to best fulfill our shared mission.
- 4 Follow up on pastoral care concerns identified by the stewardship team.

Create a fast, focused and flexible structure to optimize and focus TVUUC's resources on accomplishing its mission and shared vision.

Empower TVUUC to be a visible, vocal, leader in the community able to act quickly in the interests of social justice and environmental responsibility. Foster a culture of hospitality so our congregation can be a meaningful community center where people of all faiths find common ground and work for the common good.

- 1 In the role of pastoral care provider I will help people to understand how to make their efforts more successful and navigate the system created (and not yet defined) which will help them bring new ideas and programs to fruition.
- 2 Offer two adult education classes per year (one in autumn and another in the spring) on themes that can be advertised and promoted to the larger community in order to attract new members.
- 3 Offer pastoral care to the board and program council leaders as they work to identify annual goals and priorities.
- 4 Serve as institutional memory whenever possible to ensure that leaders can achieve goals over 5 to 10 year periods or longer.

In discussion following the report, Chris mentioned working to reach out to activities where he could best engage with young people and social activism. Public ministry initiatives such as Justice Knox is one such possibility. His work with the Knoxville Mediation Center - the use of which is free of charge - and his mediation training is another, especially with the goal of violence reduction. [16:22]

4. Strategic Planning

AB started off this section of the meeting by reviewing some highlights of this process, long in the making. One important issue is the discontinuity in church direction. Initiatives begun and decisions taken by one set of leaders often do not consistently carry forward, but dissipate under later leadership, possibly because these decisions have not been communicated in a way that later leaders are aware of them so that they can continue advancing them. *External events have repeatedly loomed large in this discontinuity*. The shooting in the church was one such critical event. Some also can be attributed to the disruption caused by COVID, where meetings and group work was severely limited and unprecedented challenges shifted attention from projects underway to dealing with pressing unforeseen and novel emergencies. [22:13] Tracking progress in almost any initiative set by church leadership became more difficult. Coordination and communication between and among committees, task forces, interest groups, etc. have been haphazard to the extent that somebody looking for information on a certain project would be stymied because 'no one' knew where to look. Somebody obviously did, but a robust reporting and communication structure was lacking that would have made it easy to find out where to look and who to ask.

AB characterized this as a 'reactive' culture, not a 'proactive' culture. [26:41] Partially in response to the pandemic, a reactive culture is focused on short-term impromptu 'survival' solutions, whereas a proactive culture fosters developing systems and structures that are long-term, consistent and stable. Shifting to a proactive culture also means consolidating our **core values**, **mission**, **vision** into a form we can state in a

covenant to realize the shared goals we aspire to. [27:54] This consolidation helps recruiting and keeping new and younger members in order to benefit from their talents as current church leaders age.

The question then becomes how does our church structure help us in this endeavor? What structural improvements can we suggest to enable us to better achieve our ends? [28:21] Following the shooting, then-President Alan Moore approached the UUA seeking guidance on possible improvements to our church governance and the UUA recommended adopting a 'policy governance' organization. As a result, we attempted to realize a 'policy governance' structure with mixed success. [29:38] Responding to problems emerging under the 'policy governance' model, further analysis suggested moving toward a 'policy and direction governance' structure.

This structural revamping has four principal aspects:

- 1) **Establishment and Empowerment of an Executive Committee** This committee would consist of ex-Presidents and Program Chairs to which the Board delegates some of its authority. One major advantage of this would be to ensure continuity and follow-through from one Board administration to another.
- 2) **Refinement of the Senior Minister's Role** This would allow the Senior Minister to emphasize Faith Development, Pastoral Care and Community Outreach by lightening the minister's burden of ongoing management duties.
- 3) **Redefining the role of the Church Administrator** This would clarify the administrator's role in coordinating the disparate aspects of TVUUC's operations and finances and strengthen staff development in order to advance the Church's Mission/Goals.
- 4) **Define the role of staff and invest in them more authority to manage their activities** This would improve and increase information flow among their constituent parts and to the Church at large. Resources permitting, additional roles may be identified requiring expansion of responsibilities or additional staff to meet them.

AB reminded the Board that the Strategic Planning Committee has no authority to mandate this structural change. Its function is to research and recommend changes. The Church has to endorse and approve the suggestions they are making in light of the committee's consultations with UUA and extensive deliberations they have had within the committee and with other long term church leaders over years of preparation. [32:59] To successfully realize this restructuring, the must first adopt a **Shared Vision for TVUUC.** Our shared vision grows out of the following four components. Under each component is listed who has primary purview in that area.

1. **Core Values** - What is at our core? Why are we here?

primary purview: Senior Minister

2. **Covenant** - How will we bring those values into the world through relationships?

primary purview: Committee of Shared Ministry

3. **Mission** - What are we here to do? What is our work?

primary purview: Board

4. **Vision** - What do we want to be?

primary purview: Congregation [35:28]

AB illustrated how our revamped website <https://tvuuc.org> can project our reality to the public, increase engagement with the church and facilitate feedback from people who come to it. It is the result of two years' work by the Technology Task Force.

Improved communication and coordination among church staff and volunteers is achieved via the internal <truet> domain using these programs: Microsoft 365 for Non-profits, Azure, Microsoft Power Platform, Viva Goals, among others.

Information exchange with the general public, staff, members and friends occurs via the public **<tvuuc.org>** domain using such programs as WordPress, Realm, Constant Contact Google for Non-profits, Zoom, Facebook, YouTube, Live Control. [35:50]

The recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee is to develop a system of two kinds of teams:

- 1) Teams directed by staff that support the ministry
- 2) Volunteer teams that are focused on short-term projects [38:45]

Heather urged each Board member to review the characteristics of 'surviving'/'reactive' vs. 'thriving'/'proactive' congregations from their individual perspective as the way to best achieve a sense of the necessity and advisability of the structural changes being proposed, given that these changes will crucially affect the remainder of Eddie's term as President and hers as incoming President under the new system. [42:48]

AB will start a Chat for discussion of these matters in weekly 'sprints' with a view to shaping a preliminary draft for the changes under discussion to be presented at the next Board Meeting. [45:02]

4. Membership Changes [47:02]

Mark Mohundro opened the discussion of proposed streamlining in the membership process by asking for any additional input not already presented by those present. The current draft is as follows:

A. Purpose of this Policy/Procedure

This policy/procedure addresses:

- 1. requirements for membership in Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church
- 2. procedures for welcoming and embracing new members into the TVUUC community $\ensuremath{\mathsf{TVUUC}}$
- 3. procedures for resigned members to rejoin the TVUUC community

B. Scope

This policy will apply to all members and all persons who wish to become members of the TVUUC congregation.

C. Responsibility

The membership services coordinator and/or the chair of the membership committee will be responsible for seeing that the terms of this policy/procedure are carried out.

D. Policy Statements:

- 1. Bylaw requirements The policy statements listed here are included in the church bylaws and repeated here, edited, for convenience. Should there be any discrepancy between these statements and the bylaws, the bylaw version shall prevail.
 - a. Membership Eligibility A person may become a member of TVUUC who is at least sixteen years of age, who subscribes to the mission and values of TVUUC, who considers TVUUC their primary place of worship, who intends to actively participate in the activities and programs of the church community
 - b. Register of Members There shall be a register of all members. Membership shall be reviewed annually. Members who have requested resignation shall be removed from the register immediately.
 - c. Resignation of Membership Any member may resign at any given time

by giving notice to the church office.

d. Reinstatement of Membership - Anyone who has been dropped from the Register of Members may be reinstated by requesting the New Membership Coordinator and/or the senior minister for reinstatement.

E. Procedure

- 1. Becoming a member
 - a. If a person has been a member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation and is interested in joining Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, that person will be offered an interview with the senior minister and/or a representative of the new membership committee. After the interview, the senior minister may recommend the person for membership.
 - b. All other persons wishing to become members of TVUUC who have Met membership eligibility as stated above (Section D, 1a):
 - i) Attend one or more QUUestions and Landing Points sessions (recommended).
 - ii) Attend the Starting Point sessions. This class will include an introduction to TVUUC, an exploration of individual spiritual journeys, an introduction to and discussion of the church's mission statement, as well as a discussion of opportunities to have deeper connections to the church.
 - iii) If the membership services coordinator or anyone else on the membership committee or any member of TVUUC has any concerns about offering membership to any candidate, these concerns should be conveyed to the senior minister before proceeding further.
 - c. Only by signing the membership book does one officially become a member of TVUUC.
 - d. New members will then be offered an opportunity to attend a membership recognition service on a Sunday following the date they sign the membership book and become members. At this service, they will take part in a membership ritual and be officially welcomed by the congregation.
- 2. Reinstatement of Membership
- If a former member wishes to be reinstated, they will arrange a meeting with the senior minister and/or a representative of the New Membership Committee to discuss it. After which they may be reinstated
- 3. New Member Orientation
 - a. As soon as possible after the new member signs the membership book the membership services coordinator will present the new member with a new member packet. Contained in the packet may be letters of welcome from the senior minister, the president of the congregation and the chair of the Finance Committee. Also included in the packet may be a statement of Unitarian Universalist principles and purposes; instructions on how to Access the Let's Connect survey from the TVUUC website, a list of Board of Directors members and Program Council coordinators and instructions on how to contact the church administrative assistant for the purpose of signing up for the newsletter, the discussion and announcement lists and any other resources which may be accessible.
 - b. The New Membership Services Coordinator will send an email notice to the senior minister, president and president-elect of the Board of Directors, and the chairs of the Stewardship, Spiritual Care Team, Finance, Membership and Religious Education committees. The notice will contain the name(s) of new members, contact information, and signing date. Within two weeks after a new member joins, a member of Let's Connect will phone (and meet, if possible) the new member.
 - c. Within two weeks (if there are children in the new member's family)

the Religious Education committee will contact the new member and make them aware of programs offered.

- d. Within the second two-week period the Spiritual Care Team committee will contact (and meet, if possible) the new member.
- e. At the end of one month, the President-elect will ask the Program Council chair(s) of committee(s) the new members have expressed an interest in to contact the new member.
- f. Finance chair and Stewardship chair will contact the new member after a month has elapsed, first assuring that the above-mentioned contacts will have been made.
- g. New members are not eligible to serve in church leadership for ninety days from their signing the membership book. Exceptions may be made by the Senior Minister in consultation with the New Membership Coordinator.

Among the changes here is a reduction from seven class meetings to two to qualify for membership. Rewordings were made to make the process of joining TVUUC less daunting and more friendly. Stress on assimilation and adoption of a given structure and ethos was also reduced in the wording. Bill offered to provide some edits in writing and Miriam had also offered some suggestions as well. Mark invited other Board members to provide suggestions and offered to make himself available to discuss these individually. Mark touched on some history of this process reaching back to initiatives by Jametta Alston and characterized the proposal as emphasizing a process where prospects and TVUUC members become mutually acquainted as opposed to instruction on facts and our views on UU. This Starting Point framework has worked very well. Because of the ongoing nature of the discussion with additional comments yet to be integrated, final Board adoption will be postponed until appropriate updates can be provided. Mark agreed with this suggestion, noting that the current charter for the Path to Membership had been written by Jerry Bone when Chloie Airoldi-Watters was President, but was still listed as 'pending' in available church records. Mark said he was offering his remarks as a status and progress report on this living document to get the sense of the Board about whether we are going in a good direction. Roy endorsed the additional user-friendliness proposed and the increased emphasis on dialog evident in the proposal thus far that will attract persons seeking to align themselves with TVUUC. Mark recalled how the experience of other UU congregations had been consulted to establish what works best and that the goal was to build confidence and commitment in the mission of TVUUC among prospective members so that they would be eager to commit time or treasure in solidarity rather than requiring some contribution upfront.

By consensus, the Board affirmed the work Mark had presented as they work toward a proposal suitable for final adoption by the Board, tabling a final vote. [55:55]

Mark invited those present to attend Starting Point or Landing Point sessions as they provide great avenues for existing members to refresh and reinvigorate connection with the church, its mission and with newcomers to our community. Eddie said that John Buehrens's inspirational November 17 talk "Transcendentalism - Then and Now" reinforced his gratification at being a UU because it offered a renewed sense of our proud history of advancing progressive causes. He suggested that the video of his talk be integrated into our efforts at membership growth. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTd5VET9UfY Catherine indicated she was developing adult RE workshops for next year on similar topics. [59:36] She especially noted an informative and entertaining 25-minute video on UU history produced by a minister who had given permission for us to use it in adult RE. AB expressed his hope that the issue of democracy [5th principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large] be emphasized in our efforts. [63:13]

5. Changes in Youth Charter

Catherine called to our attention that our By-Laws need updating with regard to the position of our Youth Board Members. [64:50] By-Law changes must be voted on by the Congregation, but she and Miriam were presenting

draft changes to the Board for consideration in advance of final presentation at the next Congregational Meeting. The current wording in the by-laws (Article IV Section 1, c "Youth Representative") currently reads:

One or two additional directors may be elected by the High School Youth Group. If two are elected and both are present at a Board meeting, they shall each have one-half vote. One representative present at a meeting shall have one vote. Candidates must be members of the Church and active members of the youth group. Religious Education staff shall oversee the election and communicate to the Congregation the name(s) of the youth(s) elected.

They proposed the following rewording in part to conform with current practice and in part to conform with UU principles of democracy and equity:

One or two additional directors may be elected solely by TVUUC youth registered as High School students in the TVUUC Religious Exploration program. Any candidate must be enrolled in high school, must be registered in the TVUUC Religious Exploration program and must be, by the time they begin fulfilling their role on the Board of Directors, a member of TVUUC. Each youth representative at a Board meeting shall have one vote. Each youth representative shall serve one year and may be elected to serve a maximum of three years. Religious Education staff shall oversee the election and communicate to the congregation the names of the youth(s) elected. Vacancies arising mid-term will be filled via the same process of election solely by TVUUC youth registered as High School students in the TVUUC Exploration program and must meet the requirements listed above. [70:02]

More detailed specification of church membership, electoral process and voting status are the principal changes in the new wording. Catherine and Miriam seek Board endorsement of these changes in anticipation of putting these by-law changes before the Congregation for a final vote on adoption in January. In discussion, it was clarified that this wording does not exclude home-schooled persons and that the eligibility for election (but not service does not end until completion of elected term) ceases at graduation.

Jeff moved acceptance of the by-law language as proposed and just now clarified in discussion. Jack seconded. Unanimous. [75:15]

It was noted that these by-law changes would be presented at the Congregational meeting on January 28.

6. Program Council - Barbara [77:06]

Barbara reviewed her consultations, mostly with Claudia, Chris, Betty Bumgarner and Eddie, to sort through the organizations of all the entities under the Program Council with a view to clarifying and streamlining their grouping on programmatic grounds. Various libraries (RE and Kraeger) were discussed as examples. [81:57] 'Standing committees', ''clusters', 'programs', teams', 'leaders', community partnerships' (Family Promise, FISH, Justice Knox) and other groups with their associated titles and terminology await clearer definition as discussion progresses. The goal is to streamline and organize the current list of ca. 50 initiatives in the church into a simpler, more easily comprehended, structured set of 9 clusters, each containing initiatives sensibly grouped by tasks and objectives. [86:19] In keeping with this goal is the development of organizational statements that are more uniform in character to foster communication and cooperation among different groups. With more clearly formulated mission statements, synergy among groups should increase. [92:00]

7. Seventy-fifth Anniversary

Eddie began discussion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of our church by saying that we need to organize events of celebration. Chris plans a commemorative service on Sunday, February 4, close to the actual anniversary date of Wednesday, February 7, 2024. There will also be our First Sunday potluck. The anniversary will follow soon after the January Congregational Meeting on January 28. The Stewardship Campaign commences close afterwards. A guest speaker is scheduled in this time frame. In short, there are several important events in this period. This launched a brainstorming session about other tie-ins to possibly making the month of February a celebratory month for the church. [94:17] Other ideas floated for inclusion were Valentine's Day, Article II deliberations, Ruth Martin Chili Dinner. Additional suggestions include having long-term church members reminisce about their memories when they first came to the church, memories of persons who grew up in the church and kids just arriving in our midst giving their impressions. This could invigorate the Stewardship Campaign as well, since so many people will be gathered for these events. The question of a Church Historian was raised. No one is currently fulfilling this role. Jeff Kovac is writing up a church history, but that is independent of the ongoing role of historian or archivist. [98:19]

8. Congregational Meeting

Regarding the January Congregational Meeting on January 28, the deadlines for action items were discussed. Members must receive relevant materials for action items (3 days?) in advance. A review of the governing rules will determine the date for their dissemination. Jeff said he could provide the minutes of the June Congregational Meeting immediately for action in January. One principal reason for the additional of a January Congregational Meeting is the accumulation of by-law changes in connection with our Strategic Planning process. [100:01] Action in January will smooth the changes since rules will be in place **before** the new slate of Board Members will be voted on in June where a known organizational framework is already in place for which candidates are recruited. The process for calling a Congregational Meeting was discussed.

Jeff moved, Heather seconded, that the Board call a Congregational Meeting in January. Further discussion specified the date as January 28 after an appropriate interval following the service. Unanimous. [106:55]

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned following a closing reading given by Bella. [109:46]

Respectfully submitted, Jeff Mellor, Clerk-Secretary

Additional Board action via email Motion by Eddie Chin, President, no second required

Dear Board Members:

After more work by Susan Kovac from the Personnel Committee and Claudia, they came up with a proposal that was simpler to understand and perceived as fair by staff according to Claudia and Chris.

The below added requirement for the future is part of this proposal:

In the future, the Personnel committee will require approved performance appraisals as part of criteria for considering bonus, salary or incentive increases for church staff.

The Personnel Committee has approved this proposal and is recommending something different for \$15,000 bound distribution for 2023. This is easy to explain but it does take math. We have no more than \$15,000 to spend without the need for a Congregational Vote. They propose distributing it according to hours. A full-time employee will receive a full share; a half-time employee will receive a half share. Has nothing to do with salary and is a one-time deal. Uses up \$14,976. With staff input provided, this scheme might (will) provide for cohesive acceptance by staff.

Chris	Full-time	Full share
Claudia	Full-time	Full share
Catherine	Full-time	Full share
Michael	35 hrs./week	0.875 %
David	30 hrs./week	0.75%
Miriam	20 hrs./week	0.50%
John	13.4 hrs./week	0.34%
Mark	12 hrs./week	0.30%

^{***}Please give reply to this email with a Yay or Nay.

Vote Tally as reported:

Here is our final tally on Board Voting to approve the Personnel Committee Proposal. I closed the voting as of 9AM this morning.

Church Officers - All Voted "Yay" - 5
(Treasurer-elect does not get a vote)
Members-at-large - All Voted "Yay" - 7
Youth Board Members - 1 of 2 Voted "Yay" - 1/2
(Member Jack Hulse did not submit a vote)

Final Tally: 12.5 "Yay" Votes with 1 Youth Member (1/2 Vote) not responding.

I think that is a go. We should move forward and process this asap.

Claudia - if we can get this processed asap for an off-cycle payroll that would be great. I think getting it to the staff before Christmas would be nice, but I will leave it up to you. Taking out the normal deductions like a regular payroll is the easiest way to go rather than the gross amount mentioned.

Doug - need you to come up with the letter from the Personnel Committee that we can send out to the staff.

Thank you both for all your help in getting this done! The whole Board was really behind this idea from the beginning.

Sincerely, Eddie Chin President - TVUUC

^{***}Need to get your Vote ASAP so that we can get the Staff Bonuses out for the Holidays.