

# Minutes for the Board Meeting of the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, February 16, 2024

**APPROVED**

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

**Rob Bray, Chris Buice, Bill Cherry, Eddie Chin, AB Coleman, Denise Coleman, Steve Drevik, Mebbie Jackson, Ted Jones, Roy Kersey, Heather Kistner, Maddie Kulpa, Barbara Lamm, Catherine Farmer Loya, Devon Miller, Jeff Mellor, Claudia Pressley, Mary Rogge, Ken Stephenson, Carol Villaverde.**

## 1. Opening Words

Eddie read opening words to open a board meeting in final preparation for the mid-year Congregational meeting. [00:10]

## 2. Stewardship Update - Ted Jones [03:52]

Ted Jones reported on progress in this year's Stewardship Campaign. So far, about 100 people have pledged. Last year's total was 227. There were 7 new pledges this year. Approximately 25% of those pledging had increased their pledge. About 2/3 have stayed the same and only 2 have decreased. Two more testimonials are foreseen and a lunch will be hosted a week from Sunday, concluding the drive on March 3. Roy asked about the way pledges from online attendees and non-member pledges or contributions were handled, possibly to highlight and encourage others to follow suit. Ted stressed that the request to pledge includes even those not promising contributions, as even the promise of 'zero contributions' helps in record keeping. [10:38] Ted ended his discussion with praise for the other members of the Stewardship Team.

## 3. Announcements - Eddie [13:38]

a) Approve Minutes

**Approval of the minutes of the January Board meeting as corrected by Mary was moved and seconded and accepted unanimously.** [14:17]

b) Congregational Meeting

Discussion of the Congregational Meeting was postpone until later in this meeting. [14:42]

c) 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary/Ruth Martin Auction Event

Eddie thanked everybody for their participation and help with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary / Ruth Martin Chili and Games festivities in making it a remarkable success. [15:10]

d) Misc

Eddie noted Jeff Kovac's report that we need additional sound operators for Sunday services, in-person & on-line church meetings. Claudia reported that a detailed discussion of these issues is best left to another forum where Bill Dabbs has time to train additional volunteers for this work. A training manual is foreseen to aid in this process. Another option is having a very thoroughly trained volunteer able to

take over training for individuals interested in getting involved. AB added that a group of audio volunteers will be added under the aegis of the Program Council. [17:28]

#### 4. Minister's Report - Chris [17:32]

Chris surveyed the Minister's Report he had previously submitted to the Board:

##### Minister's Report to the Board for February 2024

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

Reword: **Fan into Flames** the gifts that are within each person so as to empower all to find their ministry.

I am developing a one session SGM style meeting which will help participants identify their own gifts and the best ways to "get in where we fit in." I will offer it as a stand alone session but also offer to be guest facilitator for any SGM that would like a session on the topic.

I met with the management team to begin the process of organizing our roles and responsibilities in a way that is consistent with the Senior Minister being a Teaching Pastor focusing on worship, 'inreach' (pastoral care/education) and outreach (public ministry/community service.)

Leaning into spending more time on education and less on management I will be offering an Adult Education Class in the Spring called *Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography*. This 8 session class will lead to a worship service where class participants who are willing can share part of their stories with the congregation.

Grow TVUUC's financial resources to provide secure and predictable sources of funds and a reasonable cost structure. Reword: Fostering a culture of generosity by encouraging commitment to membership and giving/pledging.

I am working with the Stewardship Team to support this year's drive by our recent "Love is at the Center" themed stewardship service. After the service a congregant said, "Thank you for the positive message without guilt driven motivations." That's always the goal. We are also having weekly testimonies 2/12 Ted Jones 2/18 Sammy Maples, 2/23 Elyse and Noel Arring and 3/3 Sarah and Devon Miller. We will have a special reception on 3/3 to celebrate the success of the campaign.

I am supporting Mark Mohundro and Catherine Farmer Loya in our membership process and Starting Point class. We will be planning another New Member Recognition in the spring.

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

Reword: 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.

Leaning into prioritizing public ministry over daily management I agreed to be the officiant for the memorial service for Todd Crammer, a non-member but powerful ally in our Advancing Equality work, at the request of his husband Ernie Hoskins. This was probably the largest number of people at any worship experience I have ever led in Knoxville with a broad cross section of the community from Appalachian Equality Chorus (LGBTQIA) who performed to truck driving heteronormative religious conservatives (not LGBTQIA.) This request speaks to the trust placed in TVUUC to help build bridges between some of the

polarities in our community (something Todd Cramer did as well.) Both Roy Kersey (TVUUC Board Member) and Steve Drevik (rising Treasurer) were present as were other members of the congregation. This involved at least 20 hours of work as do most memorials/weddings/rites of passage. Click here for more information about Todd Cramer [Knox Pride mourns loss of founding member Todd Cramer | Watch \(msn.com\)](#)

This month I completed Mediation training offered by the Knoxville Mediation Center to the members of Knoxville Interdenominational Christian Ministers Association (KICMA) and we are working with LaTanya Middlebrook, Community Safety and Empowerment Officer for the City of Knoxville on the best way to plug into the city's efforts to reduce gun violence.

TVUUC has been asked to host this year's Good Friday service at noon on March 29. This service will be a Stations of the Cross service with readings and spirituals from the African American Church tradition. Hosting the KICMA Good Friday Service is a great way to build bridges with Knoxville's African American Community. Board members willing to serve as ushers, greeters and host would be much appreciated.

I continue to be an active member of the Justice Knox Clergy Caucus and I am working with church volunteers on the best ways to promote the following actions. Monday, March 18, 2024, 7:00 to 8:30, at First Presbyterian Church (The Rally to prepare for the Nehemiah Assembly) and Tuesday, April 9, 2024, 6:30 to 8:30, at the Civic Auditorium (Nehemiah Action Assembly.)

#### **5. Director of Finance & Operations - Claudia [24:47]**

Claudia reviewed highlights of her DFO report submitted previously to the Board;

#### **Director of Finance & Operations Board Report Jan. 16, 2024**

##### **Welcome Garden**

Key facts: current to 01.16.24

Building and Grounds is the umbrella committee that this Task Force works under. For those who are unaware, at this current time, Building & Grounds is an Executive Team committee (not a Board or Program Council committee), that is advisory in nature and follows the directives of the Director of Finance and Operations. Because of that structure, the DFO will be the Chair of this Task Force.

Our directives are very clear and time sensitive.

Our goals are to develop a plan by Feb 28, 2024, using the key components of:

**Safety** (visibility for incoming/outgoing traffic, police patrolling our grounds as we deal with increasing homeless/transient populations, etc.)

**Aesthetics** (developing a wildflower area that also has a landscaped component. Adam & Oliver Dattillo will be our advisors in this area)

**Maintenance** (what is realistic to expect that volunteers will be able to maintain long term) **Finances** (what increased operating expenses will we need to build into our 2024/25 budget to allow us to maintain this area)

The Task Force is to:

1. Review the original plot map that Doris Gove presented to the Endowment Committee when this project was funded by the Endowment Committee and approved by that year's Board.
2. Using that information, we will identify the original plants and then determine which ones are still flourishing. Of the flourishing plants, we will determine if any need to be relocated to other areas of

the church grounds because of their size or height and replaced with smaller or shorter plants. All other plants that have sprung-up organically or have died will be marked and included in the plan to either relocate or remove them.

3. Looking at the original plants the Task Force will develop a diagram of the Welcome Garden area that will have defined borders so that our lawn care company can maintain our Front Lawn area including the area up to the Welcome Garden.

On or before Feb. 28, 2024, we will present our budget requests to the Finance Team to be included in the 2024/25 Operating Budget.

This group has completed step 1, 2 and 3.

They are on target to complete their goals by Feb 28 to present to the Finance Committee

## **Updates**

January 7, 2024, the Usher Team began implementing a new attendance reporting structure. This will allow us a more accurate count of the number of people in our building on Sunday mornings.

18 new people have been entered into REALM in the last 30 days. There will be follow up with all.

The combined Stewardship/Worship Committee/Staff experiment of not “passing the offering update comparing Dec. 2023 with Dec. 2022

### **Our December Giving trends:**

Week 1 (Dec. 1-2) \$5,062	2022 Week 1 (Dec. 1-3) \$4,142
Week 2 (Dec. 3-9) \$16,932	2022 Week 2 (Dec. 4-10) \$11,486
Week 3 (Dec. 10-16) \$13,849	2022 Week 3 (Dec. 11-17) \$14,978
Week 4 (Dec. 17-23) \$9,968	2022 Week 4 (Dec. 18-24) \$32,511
Week 5 (Dec. 24-30) \$11,756	2022 Week 5 (Dec. 25-31) \$12,228
Week 6 (Dec. 31) \$21,958	2022 Total \$75,345 Total \$79,525

This reflects all total contributions.

We have had 2 first-time givers in the last 7 days.

153 giving units have scheduled contributions (auto-drafts)

### **December Giving by Age**

17 & under – 0

18-24- 1

15-39 – 8

40-59 – 23

60-79 – 46

80+ - 21

### **Constant Contact Email Facts**

Newsletter - Jan. 10, 2024, sent to:

1,211 email addresses

538 opened it. A 48% open rate. 3 email addresses unsubscribed.

On-line Order of Service – Jan. 14, 2024, sent to: 1,186 email addresses  
467 opened it. A 43% open rate. 0 unsubscribed

2024 Snow Policy – Jan. 15, 2024, sent to:  
1,209 email addresses  
545 opened it. A 49% open rate. 0 unsubscribed

Not included in this report but intended for the next report are matters regarding safety and security of our church property, including discussions with Knoxville Police and work to clear the property of underbrush and open it for attractiveness and security. She expressed huge thanks to Ken Stephenson, Bob Grimac and the workers Bob had recruited to help with this task. [28:30]

## 6. Religious Exploration - Catherine [30:39]

### TVUUC DRE Staff Report

February 2024

Catherine Farmer Loya

**Adult RE Programming:** We have a variety of ARE programs in development for this spring! Mark Mohundro and I will be facilitating a series of four one-hour UU history & theology sessions on first Sundays following the Let's Connect lunches from March-June. These are great opportunities for deepening our understanding of who we are as Unitarian Universalists for longtime members as well as newcomers. They include: **March 3** – An Incomplete and Utter History of Unitarian Universalism

- **April 7** – UU Theology: Cathedral of the World
- **May 5** – UU Theology: Our Theological House
- **June 2** – UUism: A Social Justice Story

**Youth Focus Exploring Islam:** Our next unit in the Crossing Paths program we're offering in our Youth Focus RE space for 6th grade & up this year is Islam. We're reaching out to the Muslim Community of Knoxville to arrange a visit to the MCK mosque, likely for a program similar to the Open House nights that used to be regularly scheduled there, and we anticipate being able to make this a multigenerational event, open to all members and friends of TVUUC of all ages who would like to visit MCK for an introduction to Muslim faith and practice. As soon as we have the date of the visit confirmed we'll publicize widely.

**Childcare Requests:** We have developed a policy document and a form for requesting childcare for any church functions other than nursery care during Sunday morning worship, to help reduce confusion and assumptions about how care is arranged. Care must be requested through our request form at least two weeks prior to any requesting meeting/event so we have all of the information we need, as well as sufficient time to recruit childcare staff for care. We will be publicizing this info widely; you can access the document, which includes a link to the request form, at <http://tinyurl.com/tvuucchildcarepolicy>.

**Infant/Child CPR Training:** We have arranged an in-house CPR training for renewed or initial certification for all RE staff (DRE, ADRE & childcare staff) on the afternoon of March 24th. There may be room for additional people to join us for training; we will be reaching out first to other staff & RE volunteers to fill any open spots.

**CDJL-Centered Preschool Curriculum in Development:** We will be working this spring on developing a curriculum to use for our preschool RE program next year that is centered on the best of our preschool-level picture books in the Children's Diversity & Justice Library collection. There are not many UU preschool curricula available and of the few that are out there, most are either old and outdated enough to require significant updating in order to work well. We are very excited about making

use of the wonderful resource that we have in our CDJL, and anticipate that this curriculum is something that would be a welcome addition to UU (and other) programs far beyond our own walls!

**Youth at The Mountain:** We will have 2 or 3 TVUUC youth attending the Elementary Con at The Mountain on March 8-10 (while other TVUUC friends are there too for the TVUUC Spring Retreat). And we have FIVE high school youth planning to go to the High School Con from March 22-24! We're delighted to be building more engagement with our beloved UU gathering place in the mountains. Sustained engagement of TVUUC children and youth will require increased funding, so please anticipate an increase in RE funding in the next year's budget request, to make more scholarships possible. I am not willing to heavily promote programs that exclude those for whom cost of attending is a barrier and as wonderful as The Mountain is, it is very expensive to go. If we are serious about supporting our young people in taking part in these opportunities to build deep connections with one another and with our wider UU community and values, we need to make sure that it is truly available for all.

**Furniture Improvements in RE Spaces:** Thank you, Endowment Committee and the Board, for approving our request for Endowment funding to replace some of the shabby or less than useful furniture in a number of our classroom & gathering spaces! You will see things arriving soon that will greatly improve the usefulness and look of many of our rooms, though we are doing our best to time the arrival of new furniture with the Rummage Sale in March, so we can offer the items we are discarding in the sale.

**Volunteering in RE:** We are continuing to reach out to TVUUC folks to invite them to volunteer as assistants in our RE spaces. Thank you to those who have helped out with our programs, and to those of you who've offered incredibly moving testimonials about your experiences connecting with our beloved kids & youth!

**Evacuation Crib:** A new purchase is an evacuation crib that can accommodate infants in RE for rapid evacuation in emergencies. It is sturdy and already available for use. The older crib had a broken part and could not be repaired.

## 7. Program Council - Barbara [42:39]

Barbara reported on new things that will help with more enduring interconnections in the congregation. 1) A bulletin board in the main hall (Program Council Board) that identifies all the programs with pictures of the people heading those respective areas. 2) Two additional bulletin boards informing the congregation on current events and activities of the specific areas under the Program Council. Each team can access these boards to communicate on a timely basis on current projects. 3) In the Fellowship Hall after the service, there will be four tables set up for representatives of individual programs to enter into dialog with members about the program activities and encourage participation, especially with folks not necessarily on Facebook or communication media. 4) A Program Council Newsletter with informative articles and pictures also designed to attract participation from others. Still in planning stages, the frequency of appearance of the newsletter remains under discussion. [48:15]

Heather praised this initiative to allow members to inform themselves about the myriad activities represented in 27 different Program Council Groups. Additional discussion addressed the organizational 'home' of the Rummage Sale and Auction, that are currently not under the Program Council heading and need to be properly situated. AB noted for information that there are two kinds of teams — **Standing Teams** and **Volunteer Teams**. [56:00] **Standing Teams**, such as Worship or Kitchen, deal with ongoing activities supporting the operation of the church. They remain closely associated with the Management Team consisting of a) The Senior Minister, b) The Director of Finance and Operations, c) The Director of Religious Exploration, d) The Director of Music. **Volunteer Teams** are more flexible and variable in structure, may address transient or short-term projects, and involve persons, especially

younger people, not in the position to commit to longer term and/or ongoing matters. Volunteer Teams address matters not related to worship issues or matters under board governance. [59:40]

#### **8. Finance - Bill, Steve [59:46]**

Bill reported that Steve Drevik, the incoming Treasurer, will be in charge of the next budget for the upcoming fiscal year and will be presenting the budget to the Board in its May 22 meeting and to the Congregational Meeting in June. Bill called on Steve to outline the state of affairs. [60:17] Steve described briefly the Excel spreadsheet he and Bill were working from in constructing the budget. After preliminary review by members of the Management Team, it will be uploaded to Microsoft Teams to permit each player to work collaboratively in refinement of the final product. Target date for input is March 24 toward a semi-final draft. Finance Committee meets April 3 with a view to producing the budget document for Board approval on May 22. [62:03] Discussion followed on the topic of a “Plan B” budget resulting from late pledging commitments and other factors and initiating an additional appeal. Bill noted that we appear to be on track for our original plan and that the very successful auction had provided a certain amount of comfort in projected numbers. Additionally, the upcoming rummage sale provides grounds for an optimistic outlook. [64:19] An additional appeal, while not currently anticipated, remains an option. Ken observed and Bill concurred that RaiseRight™ has not yet brought in funds in the hoped-for amounts. Several suggestions were offered to promote its use because of its substantial potential. [75:32]

#### **9. Congregational Meeting, By Laws - AB, Eddie, Heather [75:41]**

AB began his presentation by presenting the agenda for the planned Mid-Year Congregational Meeting and described the organization (check in, ballot distribution, proxy voting, etc.) that will follow the procedures used last June. There will be a practice run-through this coming Friday to assure sound system, the remaining electronics, ZOOM connections and other matters are in place and functioning. The presenters on Sunday will outline 1) the rationale for changing the by-laws, 2) highlights of the textual specifics implementing the changes. In conformance with current bylaws, the proposed complete text and meeting agenda will be distributed to the congregation in advance of the meeting. [84:52] Prior to the vote, there will be a Q&A session giving opportunity for members of the congregation to ask questions and discuss matters of interest. Following the vote, there will be short presentations outlining NEXT STEPS. [87:48] Physical arrangements for checking into the meeting, distribution of the ballots, collecting them and counting the votes were finalized. [100:43] Arrangements for refreshments were discussed, as were details for parents of children in RE. [115:16]

#### **10. Closing Words, Adjournment [123:15]**

Eddie read a passage of appropriate closing words from Martin Luther King and adjourned the meeting. [123:32]

**Respectfully submitted,  
Jeff Mellor, Secretary**