

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

April 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, Lynn Hixson, Jack Hulse, Mebbie Jackson, Roy Kersey, Heather Kistner, Maddie Kulpa, Barbara Lamm, Catherine Farmer Loya, Jeff Mellor, Devon Miller, Claudia Pressley, Mary Rogge, Ken Stephenson, Bella Thomas-Wilson, Carol Villaverde

1. Opening Words - Maddie

At Eddie's invitation, Maddie opened the meeting with an inspirational reading from Michelle Collins at 6:01 pm.

2. Announcements - Eddie

a) Approve March Minutes

Heather moved, Maddie seconded approval of the Minutes of the March Board Meeting. Passed unanimously. No negatives, no abstentions. [2:41]

b) Rummage Sale

Discussion then turned to the very successful just completed Rummage Sale (Eddie termed it "a bang-up job this year.") The pent-up accumulation of items from pandemic times seems to have led to a significant improvement in the quality and quantity items and number of satisfied customers. [3:27]

c) Good Friday Service

Discussion of the Good Friday Service was postponed to Minister's Report. Eddie's impression was that many laypersons attended and were pleased with the event.

d) 8th Principle Task Force

In Mark's absence, Mary reported that there were plans to rotate the chair and to begin generating minutes. [4:56]

e) Ministerial Intern

Eddie reported briefly on the status of our acquiring Helen Cassara as a Ministerial Intern. Helen currently presides at the Westside congregation. Eddie got a very favorable impression of her at the recent service he attended and recommended viewing the service on line to Board Members. He described her presentation on path to becoming a minister in glowing terms. [6:05]

f) Interfaith Pride Knox

Lynn reported on the possibility of TVUUC joining the group with a membership contribution of \$100/yr. Claudia was called upon to report on some financing details from restricted funds set aside for that purpose. We have a fund that can easily be used for this purpose. She noted that the title of the funds ("Advancing Equality") is slightly misleading and is a candidate for a name change though its function will remain the same and is appropriate for this purpose. A request from Lynn or Carolyn would be the way to access the necessary funds via check, website or Paypal, etc. [8:58]

3. Minister's Report - Chris

Chris began his Minister's Report for April 2024 with remarks on the KICMA Good Friday Service.

- I want to begin by thanking all the members of the Board who served as ushers, greeters and hosts for the **KICMA Good Friday service**. We had a great turnout from our church and the rest of the community. I think we have laid the foundation for greater participation by our congregation in other KICMA events throughout the year strengthening TVUUC's ties with historically African American churches in our community. We have also created the Beloved Community choir, composed of members of many different churches, and we are looking for more opportunities for the choir to perform together which might include MLK Interfaith Service or Juneteenth service. Thanks to our choir, our reception organizers and everyone else who pitched in.
- Harold Middlebrook has asked Chris to be Vice-President of KICMA, a note of distinction and signal of the growing prominence of TVUUC in the greater interfaith community.
- This month I have a lot of **memorial services**. One is for an old friend of the church, Bill Dockery, who was so instrumental in our congregation's trauma recovery after the shooting in our church on July 27, 2008. Bill took on the role of media coordinator, helping guide our interactions with the local, national and international media. He really helped us navigate the whirlwind of the media coverage with calm, professionalism and protective care. I will be speaking at his memorial which will be held at Central Methodist Church. The other two memorial services are for young people, Tony Webb and Arlanna Gray, who died from fentanyl overdoses. Tony is the foster child of Mark and Sue Ladish. Arlanna is the daughter of Arlene Rose. Tony and Arlanna did not know each other but both spent time in our RE program and their separate deaths of the same cause demonstrate the need for very candid conversations with our youth about the dangers of drug addiction and the hope of recovery.
- When I went to the **Justice Knox** Rally at the Civic Coliseum on April 9th I was surprised and impressed to see that the two people holding up our church sign "TVUUC" were folks I'd never met before. Similarly, **Family Promise** week showed an uptick in new people volunteering including two overnight hosts I hadn't met before. This is a sign of congregational health that newcomers are being invited into the work of the congregation. Both Justice Knox and Family Promise involve a lot of heavy lifting where 'many hands make light work' and so it is very gratifying to see older and newer members/friends cooperating together and getting to know each other.
- TVUUC for its size contributes mightily to a great variety of initiatives - Family Promise, Justice Knox, Rummage Sale, Small Group Ministry (the list goes on). Many churches only succeed in supporting one major cause and we do many more, a fact we need to acknowledge and appreciate.
- The success of the **Spring Retreat at the Mountain** is leading to an effort to have a similar kind of event in the Fall (to replace the Fall Retreat at Pickett State Park that is no longer an option.) This might take the form of an off-site retreat somewhere or an Intergenerational Conference/Lock In here at the church. This is an effort that will continue through the Program Council. A Fall Leader is needed. There seems to be a possibility that Pickett may be open to hosting events like ours.
- On Sunday April 14 we held our first post pandemic lockdown **child dedication** where we welcomed four kids into our community Margot McBee, Nathaniel Hoffman-McConchie and Dean and Felix Weaver. We are already planning another child dedication for those who couldn't make it this Sunday and for the baby born this week.
- The last thing I will mention is that the **Management Team** (consisting of Claudia Pressley, Catherine Farmer Loya, David Asbury and myself) have planned a half-day retreat for Monday April 22 to beginning planning for the launch of new church program year (August - June 2024) The goal is to start the process of establishing a church year calendar that will include big events (Water Communion, Flower Communion, Auction, Rummage Sale, Family Promise Weeks etc) In our preliminary planning we have identified the following potential goals.
 - 1 Coordinate New Members Classes with the launch of new Adult RE classes so new people can connect with programming better.
 - 2 Host periodic social Mixers for new people/older members to get to know each other.

- 3 Increase Video Introductions of Programs on our church website.
- 4 Explore broadening our social media platforms (Tik Tok?)
- 5 Increase online programming (adult educations, small group ministries etc)
- 6 Better coordination of our church calendar with community events aligned with our mission such as the various Pride Fests, Juneteenth parade, MLK Week etc.
 - Small Group Ministry expansion
 - Need to find way to fund Ministerial Intern. Upcoming meetings will explore options.
 - Chris has been invited to give the ordination sermon for Lori Stevens in Nashville. Lori will succeed Jake Bohstedt/Morrill at Oak Ridge UU Church. [25:37]

4. Director of Finance & Operations (DFO) Report - Claudia

Because most of what Claudia would report is already in Chris's report, in the Management Team discussion or what Roy includes in his Building and Grounds report, she told us she would not provide a separate written report. She offered to address any questions that Board Members have, but in the interest of moving along expeditiously she deferred to the next agenda item. [27:14]

5. 2024-2025 Budget - Steve

The Budget Committee will meet next Monday and we're still waiting for final numbers, in part because the Personnel Committee had to delay their meeting. Currently, it appears that we have a \$41k shortfall in the projected budget. Some pledges typically come in late and the pledges on record have dropped from ca. \$533k to ca. \$500k, which makes up the bulk of this projected shortfall. Reaching out to frequent attenders and community members who are not members is one proposal to increase income. In response to Mary's question, the number of pledging units this year in 191, down from 194 last year. [29:46] At the same time, the average pledge per unit rose. Claudia noted that the New Membership classes will put more emphasis on the importance of pledging. Though pledging is not a requirement for membership, it is essential for the financial health of the church. It was suggested that information about **RaiseRight** be included in the membership packet, because the money returned from vendors on purchase can exceed the percentage return from gift cards Dee Stephenson and Eunice Turner faithfully sell each Sunday. Projected expenditures include proposed 7% raises for staff. Chris reminded the Board that a number of pledges came in last year in April, May and June after the Budget Committee had deliberated, giving the final \$533k number. The value of *prompt* pledging prior to our drawing up the budget for the coming year was highlighted. An unsuccessful attempt by Bill and Heather to bolster (and reconfigure) the Fundraising **Task Force** as a Fundraising **Committee** floundered on the inability to identify 4 or 5 prospective members to take on this work. Eddie remarked that his initiative will be taken up again next year. [35:34] From TVUUC history and pledging, Chris recounted the use of the so-called Green Book, which helped members gauge appropriate levels of pledging. This had been successful, but pledging processes had changed over the years. Another initiative that had proved successful was a special event for bigger donors. Every time this had been done, pledge income had increased, but feelings in the broader congregation had put a damper on this, but also on pledge income. Such special events for big donors are commonplace, if not universal, among non-profits, he noted. One way out of this tension-producing quandary is to hold the event, but not make it generally known. [36:39] Another possible solution is to encourage 'early pledgers' in some fashion. A survey of best practices in the UUA to bolster the budget seems advisable. [37:40] Chris recounted a pledge drive experience in a church he had served in Ohio. That pledge drive was widely regarded as the worst pledge drive members could recall. Chris looked into the records and it had in fact been the drive that had raised the most money, BUT it was a pledge drive that clearly talked about *money*. Moral of the story: *Talking directly about money is uncomfortable to the membership*. [38:07] Among the things that have changed in the fundraising atmosphere: costs of college education and loans, which makes the former language that used in the pledging discussion out of date and ineffective. Mary suggested there might be Federal funds that could be used and offered to join forces with anybody else willing to explore this opportunity. [39:54] Roy indicated he would help. Noting that many new families with kids in the RE program sometimes give more than old line members, Chris floated the idea of putting forth in the entire congregation an appeal of the sort "*We need ten (or 20) more*

pledges (no amount specified) by the Congregational Meeting” as a way to fashion a goal and build support. The use of a thermometer graph to track pledge progress was raised. Claudia noted we had done this in past years. She also noted the critical role for demographics of church members that REALM can play IF people enter their birth day and year. This data is not made public, but helps church administration in many valuable ways. [43:37]

6. Program Council – Barbara

Barbara presented a chart with photos of people in charge of over twenty-six programs in three color-coded clusters illustrating for the church community at large what all we volunteer to do, how to join in and who to buttonhole on any relevant issue. This chart is posted in the main hallway. This was a massive simplification and organization of a very broad span of activities.

- **GREEN is for JUSTICE.** This **Group** includes the **Teams** 8th Principle, Community Garden, Family Promise, FISH, Green Sanctuary 2030, Justice Knox, Little Food Pantry, Refugee Assistance Program, Reproductive Justice, Volunteer Assisted Transportation, Volunteer Ministry Center Meals, and Welcoming Congregation.
- **BLUE is for CONGREGATIONAL CARE.** This **Group** includes the **Teams** Caring Table, Caring Network, Memorial Garden Committee, Memorial Service Coordinating Team.
- **YELLOW is for FELLOWSHIP.** This **Group** includes the **Teams** All-Church-Retreat-Fall, Alliance, Garden Club, Laughter is Good for the Soul, Let’s Connect, Science Fiction Club, Sing Out!, Wednesday Afternoon Gaming Group, Women’s Table.

This organizes and consolidates dozens of programs into three areas of easily understood focus.

A fourth PURPLE chart **Group** includes all the STANDING TEAMS. AB clarified that **Standing Teams** are stable in character and support the ongoing functioning of the church. They comprise Coffee Service, Flowers Team, Greeters, New Member Program, Sound Team, Special Events Team, Ushers, Welcome Table Worship Committee, whereas Green, Blue and Yellow are volunteer teams that are more fluid in nature and responsive to the various projects for which they are organized.

Additional **GROUPS** include the **TEAMS** Music, Religious Exploration, Fundraising that perform essential services to our community. Given the initial state of this organizational process, some issues were identified for further attention and development: avoidance of ‘silos’ that hamper cross communication between groups, development of a fundraising group. Claudia noted that the use of AI during ZOOM Meetings which can develop minutes or notes could foster cross-group communication as well as communication to the Management Team. [52:47]

6. Buildings & Grounds – Roy [57:14]

Roy reviewed the matrix chart delineating the officials and responsibilities in church affairs.

Management Team Responsibility Matrix (Working)

R - Responsible for decisions and taking action	DFO – Director of Finance and Operations
I - Must be informed after the decision is made	SM – Senior Minister
A - Final say/accountable for decisions and actions (veto power)	DRE – Director of Religious Exploration
C - Must be consulted before decision or action	MD - Music Director
? - Don’t know	BOD - Board of Directors (Officers)
	PC – Program Council
	GC – Governance Committee
Board Committees: Finance, Personnel, Stewardship, Strategic Planning, and Building and Grounds	
Elected Committees: Leadership Development and Endowment	

Major Tasks, Activities or Decisions			Key Position and Groups				
	DFO	SM	DRE	MD	BOD	PC	GC
I. Ongoing Church Cross-Functional Operations							
Facilities Management: -							
• Identify and prioritize maintenance needs and proposed actions	R				C	I	B-A
• Weekly inspection and maintenance of church facilities	R	C	C	C	I		B-A
• Promote sustainability and energy efficiency in the management of facilities and grounds	C				I	C	B-A
• Weekly inspection and maintenance of church grounds	C				I	I	B-A

Major Tasks, Activities or Decisions			Key Position and Groups				
	DFO	SM	DRE	MD	BOD	PC	GC
• Schedule regular cleaning and sanitization, especially in high-traffic areas	A				I		B-I
• Ensure safety equipment and fire alarms are in working order	C				I		B-A
• Accepting bids and entering contracts for small repairs (<\$5000)	A				I		B-C
• Entering contracts for large repairs (e.g., replace HVAC)	C				A		B-R
• Manage requests for rental of church space for events	A	C	C	C	I	I	B-I
• Act as point of contact for lawn services	R				I	I	B-A
• Manage projects to evaluate church aesthetics	C	C	C	C	I	I	B-A
• Provide budget input for B&G issues and projects	C	C	C	C	I		B-A
• Maintain Inventory of building assets	A	C	C	C	I		B-I
•							

Some general points: Claudia is responsible for projects under \$5k. Buildings and Grounds is responsible for projects over that amount. Claudia is responsible for daily maintenance. B&G focuses on ongoing projects. Three additional security cameras will be set up to monitor blind spots behind the building. Carpet replacement in the offices was poised for action, but then the water heater broke and the decision was made to postpone carpet replacement until next year. All this goes to illustrate how this responsibility matrix works well in reality. [59:22] An example of area for improvement was the weeding of the beds in the church entranceway. Some complaints were made. A weeding party was set up, but this was done after 5 pm and, as a result, certain emails via REALM were not read. We therefore identified a lack of coordination in a project set up ‘on the fly.’ Better coordination will be needed.

Roy proposed some ‘walk arounds’ in the church grounds to familiarize members with the Welcome Garden, the Vegetable Garden, the fire hydrant, solar panels and numerous other features. Jeff suggested the tree plantings on the hillside between the upper and lower lots be included. Barb recounted how she had done such a virtual walk around with her phone for people attending via ZOOM and that it worked very well. [66:38] Claudia extended this by suggesting we do this for new Board members as well, so as to assure members have a broader perspective on the Church grounds and the many features not readily obvious to observers, even including long-term members of the Church. Roy recounted how the familiarization with the grounds and our building that he undertook when he became Board liaison to B&G revealed many features to him as a long-term Church member. [68:30] Timing and organization came up for brief discussion and suggestions, especially as an ongoing feature of fostering community through shared appreciation of our facility. Mary observed how our Green Sanctuary’s Clean Energy Team, including Steve Drevik’s contribution, to obtain an EPA and TVA energy audit provides a great opportunity to learn about our solar facility and other matters.

A proposal for a maintenance contract was tabled pending further discussion between Claudia and John Montgomery about expanding his duties and financial clarity on means available to set a contract (for which she has good information in hand), but where the resources may not suffice. [71:57]

7. DRE Report - Catherine

Catherine discussed the report she distributed previously to the Board on the activities in her area of responsibility.

Planning for 2024-25: We are beginning to work on our planning for the next program year in the RE Leadership Team for children & youth programs, as well as with the Adult RE Team for offerings for adults. Here's what is shaping up for launch in August:

- Children's RE: continuing our Choose Your Own Adventure program model for elementary & up, but returning to our pre-pandemic focus on aligning with the spiritual theme of each week's Sunday service, underscoring that TVUUCers of all ages are exploring the same things, in a variety of experiential ways. We are also developing a new preschool RE curriculum focused on exploring core UU values using books from our Children's Diversity & Justice Library collection, in collaboration with Kristen McBee.
- Youth RE & Youth Groups: Our middle-and-high school Youth Focus Sunday morning program will also work with these themes, and we're adding a new Middle School Youth Group that will meet once a month on Sunday afternoons, in addition to our ongoing monthly youth social outings as well as our High School Youth Group.
- Adult RE: The Adult RE program will be partnering with the re-emerging Membership Committee to focus on developing educational programs designed to help new members, after participating in the Path to Membership, connect with and deepen their understanding of the congregation and UUism through a Path to Engagement, with programs to be developed that will include in-person programming opportunities through Adult RE as well as on-demand short videos introducing a variety of aspects of church life, history and governance.

Upcoming Adult RE Programming: In addition to the ongoing Membership-sponsored programs led by Mark Mohundro including Starting Point, Landing Points and QUUESTions, here are Adult RE opportunities on upcoming Sundays:

- April 21 – Wait a Minute! A Diverse Multicultural Beloved Community
- April 28 – Sunday Forum: I Get By With a Little Help From My Friends (help TVUUC General Assembly delegates consider changes to articulation of core UU values/principles in UUA bylaws)
- May 5 – Foundations of Our Faith Series - UU Theology: Our Theological House
- June 2 – Foundations of Our Faith Series - UUism: A Social Justice Story

Youth Representatives to the Board: The High School Youth Group will be holding an election next month for youth reps to the 2024-25 Board. We have invited both of our current youth reps, who will still be in high school this coming fall; one has already indicated eagerness to do so, and we are following up with the second. Thank you to the Board and our youth representatives for making 2023-24 the first year in many with official youth representation!

Furniture Improvements in RE Spaces: The furniture has arrived! We have beautiful new couches in Room G, adjustable-height folding tables in rooms D, E and F, new bookshelves, easier multi-use space. Thank you, Endowment Committee and Board members for approving this Endowment-funded project!

RE Sunday May 5: Board members, please make it a priority to attend the Sunday service on May 5th, if you can, to show support for and help celebrate our RE participants, our graduating high school seniors, and our RE volunteers during our RE Sunday multigenerational service. The theme of this year's service is Joyful Discomfort: A Celebration of Growing Together at TVUUC
Is making meaning together uncomfortable? Sometimes YES, in the very best of ways! Join us for an all-ages service celebrating the growth we find as we build beloved community, nurture spiritual growth, and seek to transform the world through acts of love and justice. We'll celebrate our high school seniors, recognize Religious Exploration participants and the volunteers who make our programs possible, and reflect on ways our young people invite, inspire, and even compel us to break out of what is comfortable and into new life for ourselves and our TVUUC community.

Summer RE Planning: On Sunday mornings from the beginning of our summer RE program on May 19th through the first Sunday of August, we'll be offering a Global Summer multiage program, focusing on a different culture, tradition or country each week. We'll be drawing from our extensive Cultures & Traditions collection in the Children's Diversity & Justice Library for a story to begin our exploration, and will be inviting members of TVUUC with connections with particular cultures, traditions or countries to join us for the morning to share their experiences and help the kids engage with a hands-on activity that furthers their exploration. A member of the RE Leadership Team or RE staff will coordinate and lead the standard elements of each Sunday's plans, to make it easy for one-time guests to join us and help our young people explore the world right here at TVUUC this summer. We'll also connect with our community garden throughout the summer, in support of its Global Garden focus for this year's planting.

Camp Critter Help Needed: Our summer day camp enrollment is nearing capacity, with much eagerness for this year's animal-focused program! We are in the midst of lining up many animal visitors (so far: reptiles! baby chicks! retired therapy dog! wildlife rehab/rescue disabled bunny! more to come!) and are gathering adult volunteers to help make camp possible. Several of our stalwart camp volunteers are not available this year, and we are in need of helpers: this is a FANTASTIC way to support our kids and our RE program. Camp week gives adults at TVUUC a unique opportunity to get to know and connect with our kiddos, and I LOVE that our kids get to connect with fabulous adults they may not already know well, too! Board members, I'm lookin' at you, if you have daytime availability for a couple of hours, a full day, or the full week from May 28-31! The number of hours our kids spend with us in four days of camp may be as much or more than we get them for the entire rest of the year; it proves to be a core experience of UU identity formation and connection with our TVUUC congregation and friends of all ages, for kids as well as adults who join in.

RE Staff Evaluations: As requested, we are conducting evaluations of RE departmental staff and will have them completed by the end of the month for our Assistant DRE as well as our childcare staff.
[80:36]

8. Strategic Planning Update - AB & Denise

AB provided the Board a list of the items they are working on.

- Management Team Responsibilities Matrix
- Board Policies for Governance Committees
- Board Policies for Volunteer Teams
- Charters for Building and Grounds, Personnel Committee, and Strategic Planning

- Co-Chair and New Member for Personnel Committee
- Research Options for Capital Campaign
- Proposed Board Bylaw Change (8 Member Board + 1 or 2 Youth Representatives)
- Working with Leadership Development Committee to Nominate Leaders

As seen earlier in Roy's Report, some of these items are already in progress as seen in the Management Team Responsibilities Matrix. Completion is targeted for the end of the month. Drafts are already completed for Board Policies for Governance Committees and Board Policies for Volunteer Teams. [85:40] Charters for Buildings and Grounds, Personnel Committee and Strategic Planning are in the works. Ryan McBee has accepted to be a new Co-Chair of the Personnel Committee. Kristen McBee will be a new member of the Personnel Committee. Both Ryan and Kristen have considerable managerial experience in these areas. Strategic Planning is research options for a Capital Campaign and he has been conferring with church officials in Atlanta and the Southeast at large looking for ideas and consultants that we can use. Another consideration is a in the bylaws to reduce the membership of the Board to 8 members, which is more in line with what he has observed in other churches of our configuration and which can streamline communication and decision-making. He has been working with Leadership Development Team members to begin recruiting future church leaders. Of greatest interest is the Vice-President position, which is new. All the items on this list should be complete by the May meeting. [88:44]

9. Miscellany

Eddie thanked the Board for important and productive discussion. Heather announced our sponsorship of an RE Camp running May 28-31, Tuesday through Friday. Volunteers are critically needed to make a camp a success. She appealed to Board Members who can spare chunks of even one hour duration to help on Camp days. Roles needed are things like meal preparation, set up in the morning and many other tasks. The Camp has been growing year after year and maintaining that momentum highlights the value of volunteer help. Enrollment currently stands at 6, but as many as 30 are expected. Those that come bond with their leaders, each other and TVUUC, a great basis for future support. [92:24]

10. Adjournment

To close the meeting, Maddie read inspiring words from Richard Gilbert reminding us that each day brings us more than we can do. May we be at peace with what we can achieve. [93:50]

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Mellor, Secretary