

	<p style="text-align: center;">Minutes for the Board Meeting of Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday, Dec 16, 2025 APPROVED</p>
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Attendees (virtual attendance marked with *):

- Board Members – Maddie Kulpa, Lynn Hixson*, Devon Alley, Steve Drevik*, Rob Richardson, Roy Kersey, Ed Mohundro, Bella Thomas*
- Ex-Officio Members – Chris Buice, Gillian Denham-Jones, Catherine Farmer-Loya, Carol Villaverde*, David Asbury*
- Guests - John Montgomery, Nick Potter*, Barbara Lamm, Mark Mohundro, Awan Castaneda*, Chance*, Mary Rogge, Ted Jones

Meeting chaired by Board President Maddie Kulpa. Minutes recorded and submitted by Secretary Devon Alley.

1. Chalice Lighting & Opening

- The meeting was called to order at 6:01PM EST by Board President Maddie Kulpa. Opening words and covenant were offered, affirming the Board’s commitment to integrity, compassion, accountability, and constructive dialogue.

2. Announcements & Updates

- A card for Noel and family was made available for board members to sign.
- Update shared that Noel and family arrived safely and are settling in.
- **Strategic Planning Committee:**
 - Mary Rogge agreed to co-chair the committee for the remainder of the fiscal year.
 - The committee roster will be reviewed for approval in January once membership is finalized.
- **Board Member on Duty Script – Emergency Exits:**
 - The Board discussed recent language added to the Board Member on Duty script regarding verbal identification of emergency exists.
 - Discussion highlights:
 - Concerns raised that verbal references to exits may be triggering for members affected by past violence.

- Noted that exits are clearly marked in the sanctuary.
 - Alternative accessibility-focused approaches were discussed, including directing attendees to ushers for attendance.
 - Consensus:
 - Remove explicit verbal references to emergency exits.
 - Add language directing congregants to ushers for assistance with accessibility, emergencies, or other needs.
 - Supplement with a printed welcome map for first-time visitors showing key locations, including exits.
 - Action Item: President Kulpa will revise the script and distribute an updated version.
- **Transition to Paperless Board Materials**
 - Discussion:
 - The Board discussed reducing printed materials for meetings.
 - Decision:
 - Board materials will be distributed digitally via Teams.
 - Printed agendas will continue to be provided for guests.
 - Printed copies may be provided upon request.
 - Consensus:
 - Unanimous agreement to move toward paperless materials.

3. Congregational Comments

- Awan Castaneda introduced Chance, a young adult attendee, who proposed offering a creative writing workshop, aligned with church values and inclusivity.
- Board Response:
 - The Board expressed strong support.
 - Chance was directed to submit a proposal to the Adult Religious Exploration team.
 - Contact information was shared and next steps explained.

4. Consent Agenda

- The following items were presented as part of the consent agenda:
 - November Board Minutes
 - Financial Report
 - Management Team Report
 - Membership Report
- Maddie moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Devon seconded. The vote was approved unanimously.

5. Treasurer's Report

- Treasurer Steve Drevik provided a summary of the October financials:
 - Revenue and expenses are tracking close to budget.
 - Slight revenue shortfall offset by lower-than-expected expenses.
 - \$1,500 approved from the Solar Fund for a solar panel efficiency study.
 - Auction and end-of-year pledges expected to improve year-end results.

6. Financial Forum Review

- Ted Jones presented a high-level overview of long-term financial and membership trends, with emphasis on patterns rather than specific data points.
- Key observations included:
 - Membership, attendance, and pledge units have declined from peak levels (circa 2010)
 - Average pledge amounts have increased significantly over time.
 - Total pledge income has plateaued due to declining participation despite higher per-household giving.
 - Approximately half of pledge income comes from a small number of households.
 - The congregation compares favorable to peer UU congregations in average pledge size.
 - Operating expenses are heavily weighted toward staff costs.
 - Data gaps exist around attendance tracking, online engagement, and long-term capital needs.
- Purpose of presentation:
 - To establish a shared understanding of current financial realities.
 - To inform upcoming congregational forums and strategic planning.
 - To contextualize stewardship conversations without immediate pressure for increased giving.
- Planning for December 28 Congregational Forum on Finances
 - The Board discussed details related to the upcoming December 28 congregational forum focused on financial transparency, stewardship, and shared understanding of the church's financial context.
 - Discussion highlights included:
 - The forum is intended to generate interest without conflict and encourage informed, values-based conversation.
 - Strong encouragement for Board and Finance Committee members to attend and participate.
 - Initial preference for the forum to be in-person, with materials shared afterward for those unable to attend.

- Agreement that transparency is important, including sharing slides and written summary, even if the session is not recorded.
- Board members expressed willingness to meet individually with congregants following the forum to answer questions.
- Hospitality considerations raised:
 - Light refreshments and snacks
 - Childcare availability
 - Informal tone to encourage participation

7. Coordination with Strategic Planning Consultant

- The Board discussed how the December 28 forum content may overlap with the upcoming strategic planning consultant's work and presentation.
- Decisions and clarifications:
 - The January agenda will retain a placeholder for a Finance Committee update.
 - Closer to the meeting date, leadership will determine whether the Finance report will be:
 - A standalone update
 - Integrated with the consultant's presentation, or
 - Structured primarily as Q&A
 - The consultant's presentation is expected to be approximately 30-45 minutes.

8. Preparation for Congregational Meeting

- Publicity, Communications, and Volunteer Coordination:
 - President Kulpa reported on communications and logistics planning for the congregational meeting:
 - A "Save the Date" graphic has been submitted for the newsletter and will be posted on the community bulletin board.
 - Announcements will be made during the services leading up to the meeting.
 - Constant Contact emails will be sent, potentially in two phases:
 - Save-the-date and sign-up
 - Agenda and supporting documents
 - A SignUpGenius will be shared to recruit volunteers for hospitality and logistics.
- Technology, Moderation, and Security Planning:
 - The Board reviewed technology and security needs for the congregational meeting.
 - Technology:

- A meeting will be scheduled with past tech volunteers and Gillian to determine whether Zoom or Live Control is the better platform.
 - Live Control was noted as easier for in-room logistics but more complex for online engagement.
 - Two people may be needed to monitor online participation and chat.
 - Assignments:
 - Mark agreed to serve as moderator again.
 - Additional support will be recruited to assist with chat monitoring.
 - Security:
 - Standard security procedures will be followed.
 - Leadership will confirm door access and space usage during the meeting.
- Congregational Meeting Agenda & Voting Items
 - The Board reviewed and confirmed items and procedures to be brought forward for the upcoming congregational meeting.
 - Agreed-upon actions included:
 - Approval of the proposed congregational meeting agenda and ballot items
 - Confirmation that ballots would be distributed in person and counted using a double-counting process to ensure accuracy
 - Verification procedures at the registration table to ensure alignment between eligible voters, ballots issued, and votes cast
 - Agreement that board-approved budget areas would be used to cover food expenses for the meeting, including pizza and refreshments
 - Commitment to offering vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free food options
- President Kulpa reviewed the items that will be included on the voting slate for the congregational meeting:
 - Approval of minutes from the June Congregational Meeting
 - Welcoming Congregation Bylaw Change:
 - Maddie moved to present the bylaw change at the congregational meeting; Rob seconded, and the board unanimously approved. However, pending feedback from the Beloved Community on the verbiage, this will be tabled for the next congregational meeting.
 - Bylaw Amendments and Committee Charters
 - The Board reviewed proposed bylaw amendments related to committee structure and governance language, including revisions affecting the Program Council and Leadership Development Committee.
 - It was noted that:
 - The bylaws currently do not include a charter requirement for certain committees.

- Proposed language would clarify that additional duties of the Leadership Development Committee would be described in a congregation-approved committee charter, aligning with language used elsewhere in the bylaws.
- The Endowment Committee charter is already in effect and does not require further congregational approval unless modified.
- The Building and Grounds Committee, as a board committee, does not require congregational approval of its charter.
 - Maddie moved to recommend the proposed bylaw amendments to the congregation for approval, Rob seconded, and the vote is unanimously approved.
- **Nomination Slate:**
 - Vacant Board Seat – Stephanie Kuryasis through end of the year (6-month seat)

9. Safe Deposit Box Authorized Signer and Closure

- The Board discussed the church's safe deposit box held at Home Federal Bank, noting that:
 - The current authorized signers are no longer active in their roles.
 - The contents of the box are believed to be minimal and may include only historical documents such as the building deed.
 - No key has been located, and the box will need to be drilled open in order to access and close it.
 - The church has incurred an annual cost for maintaining the box for many years.
- Maddie moved to remove the current authorized signed on the Home Federal Bank safe deposit box, add Gillian Denham Jones as an authorized signer, and proceed with accessing and closing the safe deposit box. Roy seconded, and the Board unanimously voted to approve.
- The Board acknowledged the anticipated cost to drill the lock and confirmed the intention to close the account once access is obtained.

10. Board Training Review

- Lynn Hixson reviewed the UUA board training session focused on anxiety, conflict, and strategic governance within congregational systems. Key themes included:
 - Understanding how anxiety impacts individual and congregational functioning
 - Recognizing that anxiety is contagious within systems
 - Differentiating between productive and reactive responses to conflict
 - Encouraging leaders to focus on mission, values, and desired outcomes rather than problem-fixation

- Using conflict as an opportunity for adaptive change rather than avoidance
- Lynn also previewed an upcoming UUA training module on strategic boards, including a video resource addressing how boards can transform anxiety during conflict into constructive leadership.
- The Board received the training and discussed its relevance to current and upcoming congregational conversations.

9. Closing

- With no further business, Maddie shared some closing words, and adjourned the meeting at Meeting adjourned at 7:57PM EST.

Respectfully submitted,
Devon Alley, Board Secretary