

**Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church  
Annual Congregational Meeting  
June 14, 2020**

**DRAFT**

**Meeting held by Zoom video conference**

**Call to Order; Covenant for Virtual Meeting**

Denise Coleman, TVUUC President, called the meeting to order at 12:45 p.m., and confirmed that a quorum was present. (Participants had registered prior to the meeting and then checked in with a Board Member as they joined the meeting.) Because the church building is closed due to the pandemic, **the congregation voted on a covenant to hold the meeting and vote electronically through Zoom video conference.** The procedure for on-line voting was explained, as well as some rules for participation in the discussions.

**Thanks to Staff, Volunteers and Departing Board Members**

Denise Coleman thanked the following for their work throughout the year, with special notice of the extraordinary efforts made since the church building closed on March 20:

**Volunteers who have provided services during the pandemic:**

Sewing Masks:

Beck Chaffee

Managing and Selling Gift Cards:

Dee Stephenson

Eunice Turner

Maintenance of RE Entrance:

Barbara Thayer Bacon

Maintenance of Memorial Garden:

John Bohstedt

Eddie Chin

Grier Novinger

Terry Uselton

Maintenance of Community Garden:

Terri Combs-Orme

Barbara Lamm

Nick Schultz

Emmy Taylor-Hulse

Maintenance of Welcome Garden:

Awan and Zaffar Castaneda

Doris Gove

Bob Grimac

Laurie Knox

Jeff Mellor

John Montgomery

Allan Morgan

Ken Stephenson  
Dick Trowbridge  
Assistance with Sunday Morning On-line Services:  
Bill Dabbs  
Will Dunklin  
The Incidentals  
Guest Musicians

**Board Members completing their terms at the end of June 2020:**

GINNA MASHBURN – Past President  
ROBBY McMURRY – Treasurer  
WENDY SYER – Secretary  
DEBBIE ELLIS – Board Member at Large

**TVUUC Staff:**

Chris Buice  
Claudia Pressley  
Jametia Alston  
Catherine Farmer Loya  
Miriam Davis  
Michael Miller  
Alison Mann  
Chaz Barber  
Mark Mohundro  
Cyndi Buchanan  
John Montgomery

**Music Director Position**

Denise announced that Alison Mann will be leaving her position as TVUUC Music Director after July 2020, as she will be leaving Knoxville. She is also expecting a baby in September. Senior Minister Chris Buice will assemble a Committee to discuss plans for a replacement.

**Voting on Candidates for 2020-21 Leadership Positions**

The congregation was given the names of candidates for leadership positions, as forwarded by the Nominating Committee, chaired this year by Ted Jones. Based on recommendations from the UUA and the logistical difficulties of an on-line meeting, the congregation had been informed that we would not accept nominations from the floor.

Candidates are:

President-Elect:	Ryan McBee
Secretary to the Board (One-year term):	Jeff Mellor
Board Member (One-year term, completing Ryan McBee's term)	Heather Kistner
Board Member (Three-year term)	Linda Randolph
Board Member (Three-year term)	Alice Woody

Program Council Chair-Elect	Allen Braswell
Endowment Committee (Three-year term)	Gail Anderson
Endowment Committee (Three-year term)	David Massey
Nominating Committee Chair-Elect	Mark Mohundro
Nominating Committee (Two-year term)	Krista Schadt
Nominating Committee (Two-year term)	Jenny Snead

**The congregation then voted electronically on each candidate. Results were announced later in the meeting, and all candidates were approved.)**

**Financial Report and Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21**

Robby McMurry, the current Treasurer, presented the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21 which begins on July 1. The closing of the church building caused by the pandemic has resulted in significant changes to both anticipated expenses and income. Because we do expect the building to be closed for many months, there will not be a need for Childcare Workers and Sextons for much of the year. These employees have continued to receive their pay until now, but their employment and salaries will end on July 15. All other staff will continue. Although there would be a reduction in some operating expenses and RE supplies, there is also a need for new equipment such as touch-free sinks and improved video equipment.

Robby was happy to report that annual pledges have increased this year, to a total, so far, of \$474,124. However, the church cannot assume any income in the coming year from the usual auction or rummage sale. Fortunately, the church was approved for a loan of \$71,000 from the federal Payroll Protection Program, which can be forgiven if all employees have been paid through July 15, 2020.

Robby also noted that TVUUC will increase its annual contribution to the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) by 10%, as required by the UUA. (An alternate calculation offered by the UUA would have required an even larger donation this year.) The budget also includes \$1000 for the Children’s Diversity and Justice Library, as requested during last year’s congregational meeting.

Following this report, Robby made a motion that the proposed budget be approved, and opened the floor for discussion.

Most of the questions were about the effect of Alison Mann’s resignation on the budget and on the music program. In response, Chris Buice and Robby McMurry explained that the budget presented was prepared before Alison announced her departure, and there has not been time to make adjustments. By approving this budget, we are approving that the amount of her salary will be available for the coming year. Chris will form a committee to make plans for church music for the coming year; the committee will include some of those already involved in the music program. He stressed that music needs during the pandemic will be very different than those in years before and after. Even after in-person services resume, there may be a further delay before the whole choir sings. It is possible that we will not have a full-time Music Director for the coming year, but the money allotted for her salary could be used for such things as non-choral music or increases in salary for other staff. Chris reminded us that the by-laws do have a stated procedure for making changes to the budget during the year, involving the Board and other church members.

In answer to other questions, Robby observed, while a few people have adjusted their annual pledge downward, even more have increased their pledge since the pandemic began, so we do not anticipate a net decrease in pledged income. In response to another question, Claudia Pressley clarified that the budget includes an amount of \$13,000 for creating and improving on-line services.

**The congregation then voted to approve the budget as proposed.**

### **Approval of Minutes**

**A motion to approve the minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting was made, seconded and then approved by electronic vote.**

### **Review of Board Activities**

Denise Coleman gave a summary of the priorities and achievements of the TVUUC Board during the 2019-20 year. At its annual Retreat in August 2019, the Board selected priorities to focus on this year. In keeping with these priorities, the Board has done the following:

- To increase the commitment and involvement of the congregation, Board members attended focus groups of long-term members and visioning sessions of the church youth.
- To increase membership and giving levels, Board Members attended a Stewardship Workshop and supported a successful Pledge Campaign, headed by Taylor Thomas.
- To improve marketing efforts, the church increased its efforts to be active and visible on social media, and purchased announcements on WUOT public radio.
- Another priority was to increase the church's ability to distribute its message through several media. This effort has been assisted by the on-line services and on-line Zoom meetings and programs.
- After the church building was forced to close in March 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Strategic Planning Committee recognized the need to shift its focus. The top priority now is to create and continue to update a phased plan for re-opening the church building, in line with UUA guidelines, advice from local medical experts, and the local status of the pandemic. These plans will be shared with the congregation which is invited to give its feedback.

Other projects and activities of the past year include:

- A committee has been formed to conduct the full evaluation of the Senior Minister, required every three years. The Committee is chaired by Linda Randolph and includes Denise Coleman, Ryan McBee, and Elnora Williams; the evaluation will take place from June 15 to 30, 2020, and will solicit feedback from Community Leaders and Lay Leaders.
- The Board has reviewed and approved revisions to the Recruiting and Hiring Policy, the Personnel Committee Charter, and the Policy and Procedure for the Program Council Block Grants
- The Board also approved the church agreement with Jon Coffee to serve as a TVUUC Community Minister.

Denise again expressed her gratitude to the 2019-20 Board for their hard work and their ability to adjust to on-line meetings.

## **Report of the Endowment Committee**

Committee Chair Ken Stephenson gave a report from the Endowment Committee. The current balance in the Endowment Fund is approximately \$446,800, representing a 9.1% increase from last year.

Recent projects funded from the Endowment Fund are the Welcome Garden in the front of the church (headed by Doris Gove) at a cost of \$15,670 and the patio behind the church, next to the Fellowship Hall (organized by Barbara Lamm) at a cost of \$16,000.

The Endowment Committee had planned to fund a number of smaller projects this year, rather than one large one. Due to the disruption of the pandemic, the Committee decided to limit grants this year to those needed for church life and security during the pandemic. So far, grants have been given for the following:

- New video equipment to facilitate on-line Sunday services (\$3000)
- A lockable tool shed behind the church, at the end of the patio (\$4000)
- Funding to the Religious Education Program for a storage area and other equipment (\$3500)

The 2020-21 Endowment Committee will determine the procedures and priorities for grants to be given in the coming year. They are also receptive to requests for emergency needs of the church during the year.

A question was raised about the plans for the solar panels on the church roof. Ken responded that the Endowment Committee is not involved in this decision or funding, reminding us that Endowment Funds are not used for normal maintenance needs. Will Dunklin added that the Building and Grounds Committee will be making a recommendation concerning the future of the solar panels. He invited interested church members to ask him, Gene Burr or other committee members about this.

Ken also announced that, in October 2019, the Endowment Fund was moved to a Vanguard investment account which has lower fees and higher returns than the previous account.

Members of the Endowment Fund this year have been:

- Ken Stephenson, Chair
- Bill Cherry
- Betty Coleman
- Don Dougall
- Bill Hotz
- Grier Novinger
- Andria Yates

## **Share-the-Plate Program**

Terry Uselton, Chair of the Share-the-Plate Task Force, was unable to attend the meeting due to a death in the family, but Denise gave a report on behalf of the Task Force. During the 2019-20 year, twelve organizations were chosen for the Share-the-Plate program, in addition to the six organizations funded as "Designated Offerings". (The Share-the-Plate collection is made on two Sundays of the month and donates 50% of the offering to the organization chosen by the congregation for that month. The

Designated Offerings take place on six Sundays during the year, when the entire collection is given to an organization with strong TVUUC ties, chosen by the Share-the-Plate Committee.)

Although the Share-the-Plate and Designated Offering programs have continued while services are held on-line, the Task Force felt that the amounts collected may have been affected by the closure. For this reason, they suggested that we not have a selection of organizations for the coming year, but rather keep the same list of eighteen organizations.

Therefore, for the 2020-21 year, the organizations benefitting from these two programs will continue to be:

Share-the-Plate:

1. Highlander Research and Education Center
2. Lonsdale Environmental Camp
3. Remote Area Medical (RAM)
4. Ijams Nature Center
5. Bridge Refugee Services
6. SEED (Socially Equal Energy Efficient Development)
7. Beck Cultural Center
8. Beardsley Farm
9. Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi
10. Interfaith Health Clinic
11. Tennessee Health Care Campaign
12. Appalachian Community Fund

Designated Offerings:

1. Family Promise
2. FISH Food Pantry
3. Lonsdale Mentoring Program
4. TVUUC Community Gardens
5. Volunteer Ministry Center Meals
6. TVUUC Advancing Equality Fund

The list of organizations currently chosen for these programs can be seen on the TVUUC website at: <http://tvuuc.org/contributions/share-the-plate> .

**Results of Voting**

It was then announced that all of the following were approved by the congregational votes:

- Use of on-line meeting and voting
- Election of the full slate of candidates of officers and leaders for 2020-21
- Proposed budget for 2020-2021
- Minutes for the May 19, 2019 annual meeting

## Concluding Comments

In closing, Denise Coleman stated that it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as President during the last year. She appreciates the support and patience of the congregation, especially during this time of pandemic.

She also expressed thanks to the following team that assisted her in the planning of this on-line congregational meeting:

Matthew Blondell  
Justina Hyfantis  
Catherine Farmer Loya  
Ryan McBee  
Robby McMurry  
Wendy Syer

Denise then introduced Matthew Blondell who will become President in July of this year.

Matthew thanked the congregation for joining this on-line meeting and showing that we as a church can evolve and adapt. He pointed out that we are living through a period of change and turbulence, social upheaval and new directions for social justice. This has, in turn, affected how we do church.

He thanked Denise for her work as President, guiding us through the transition to a new style of worship, helping us to use reason and intelligence to fashion a new direction for our congregation as we adapt to the unfolding events of COVID-19 and laying the groundwork for him as the new President. She has been, he noted, a tremendous leader and has done "a whole lot of heavy lifting".

He also thanked Robby McMurry for the technical support given to make this meeting possible, thanked the outgoing members of the Board and welcomed the newly elected ones. We are living in interesting times, he said; with the help of the Ministers, the Staff, the Board and the Congregation, he hopes the church will be an example of how to live through these times using compassion, love and community. He invited everyone to reach out to him and to remember that Love is the Spirit of This Church.

The meeting was then adjourned.

*Submitted by Wendy Syer  
Secretary-Clerk  
July 11, 2020*