

TVUUC Board Meeting

February 18, 2020

Board Members Present: Eddie Chin; Denise Coleman (President) ; Debbie Ellis; Justina Hyfantis; Viren Lalka; Ginna Mashburn; Ryan McBee; Robby McMurry; Wendy Syer; Jamie Watts (via ZOOM) ; Erven Williams; Alice Woody

Ex Officio/Visiting: Chris Buice; Claudia Pressley; Reyn McMurry

Stewardship Committee and Campaign

Taylor Thomas gave an update by telephone of the Stewardship campaign. The official pledge campaign “kickoff” was on Sunday, February 16. Pledge requests had been sent out by e-mail prior to that date. This year, the official pledge period was reduced to one week with the hope that pledges would be submitted more quickly. After this week, members who have not pledged (but have done so in previous years) will be contacted by phone or e-mail. Those who have made pledges are receiving thank-you notes from the Committee. The Stewardship Committee is making a video which will be shown at the end of the pledge campaign.

So far, 121 “pledging units” have replied, pledging a total of \$291,063. Last year at this time, we had received pledges of about \$243,000 from 232 pledging units. The Stewardship Committee set a [hopefully] realistic goal this year of \$500,000, rather than the higher goals of previous years which reflected the true needs and desires of the church, as requested by staff and committees.

During the February 16 Sunday service, members completed pages with the statement “I ❤️ TVUUC because _____”. These pages will be distributed by social media and also displayed in the church.

Board members were again reminded to make sure they have submitted their own pledges. One Board Member suggested that a minimum pledge amount should be set for all Board Members, but this suggestion was not supported by the majority of the Board, recognizing that the Board should reflect a diverse congregation with a wide range of income levels.

The Board expressed its appreciation to Taylor Thomas for chairing the Committee this year. He replied that he had enjoyed it and would be willing to chair again in the future.

Financial Report

Robby McMurry (Treasurer) distributed the monthly Financial Report, showing spending and balances through January 2020. Revenues so far this year again exceed the budgeted amount for that period, and expenses have been less than the budgeted amount.

Claudia Pressley has discovered why spending on utilities has been so far below budget. It seems that the company that owns the solar panels has, since last July, been sending bills to a long-unused e-mail address. They have now promised to send the accumulated bills to the correct address. As a result, the next financial statement will probably reflect a substantial increase in spending for utilities.

It was noted that the restricted account for WUOT radio ads contains \$300. **Ginna Mashburn will contact WUOT to inquire about placing an ad and report back to the Board.**

Money continues to be paid into the Auction account. A question was raised about whether all bids from the Auction have been paid, but this information was not immediately available.

The issue of the recent sale of remaining Earthfare gift cards was also discussed. When Earthfare announced that it is closing, messages were sent to the congregation via social media and e-mail, encouraging people to buy the remaining gift cards. Following this e-mail, a decision was made to sell the cards at a discount. Some church members were frustrated that everyone did not know about the discount, allowing those who did know to have an advantage in buying the cards. Denise has responded that a decision was made quickly, based on the information on hand at the time, fearing that the church would experience a greater loss if the cards could not be sold quickly.

The church's bank accounts have not yet been moved to a different bank.

Strategic Planning

Denise Coleman reported on activities related to the goals of the Strategic Planning Committee and on feedback received from members and staff in various meetings and focus groups. One goal is to get more [high school age] youth involved in church activities, including having a representative on the Board. During focus groups, the youth have indicated that they want to be more involved in Sunday services, but their schedules sometimes make it difficult to attend meetings and programs during the week. They also reported that they often don't know about programs that they might be interested in. It was suggested that someone visit their Sunday meetings to let them know of possible activities.

Other suggestions have been:

- We should increase contact with the University of Tennessee Campus Ministries, to attract college-age adults. (John McNair has indicated that he is willing to work with someone else to do this.)
- The annual budget should reflect more emphasis on youth programs.
- The church should encourage greater participation in the Gift Card Program. It may be time to do some educating about the cards as some members may not understand how the program works.

One Board Member asked if the feedback from focus groups was being relayed to the relevant committees. This has not yet been done, but it will be soon.

Denise is also encouraging greater use of the *Basecamp* software. Board-related documents are now being stored in *Basecamp*. Until she is sure that everyone is using *Basecamp*, she will continue sending documents to Board Members by e-mail, as well as placing them in *Basecamp*.

Worship Committee

Eddie Chin, the Board liaison with the Worship Committee, reported on some of their current concerns and requests. They want the representatives of Share-the-Plate organizations to limit their pre-offering talks to 2-3 minutes, and request that there not be a lengthy introduction of the representative.

Organizations should receive this request well ahead of the service, so they can prepare accordingly.

The Board seemed to feel that the Share-the-Plate Committee should pass this request on to organizational representatives or the church member who invites them.

The Worship Committee would also like to recruit and train more Worship Associates, Ushers, and Sound System Volunteers. Mark Mohundro will be conducting the training of new Worship Associates, Bill Dabbs will be helping to train new Sound System Volunteers, and Allan Morgan has recently taken

over coordination and training of the Ushers. The Board discussed ways that these opportunities might be advertised and encouraged. It was suggested that the high school youth might be good candidates to help with the sound system.

The Committee would also like to increase the visibility of, and attendance at, Forums and Vespers services. [Vespers Services are occasional services held at times other than Sunday morning.] While these programs are mentioned in the Newsletters, Board Members and others could use “word-of-mouth” to increase awareness of them.

The Worship Committee also urges Board Members to support Catherine Farmer Loya in visioning for Middle and High School Youth.

Miscellaneous

- Catherine Loya has requested Board support for the Heart to Heart groups. This relatively new program of small groups, formed for six-month periods, has proved to be quite popular and successful. After the six-month period, some participants may want to join a long-term Small Group. Current Small Groups that have openings for new members can notify Catherine. The Small Group Ministry Program still falls under the Program Council.
- The UUA General Assembly (GA) will be held in Providence, RI, from June 24-28. Board Members and other church members are encouraged to attend. TVUUC is allowed to send up to eight official delegates, but we often do not have that many. It is also possible to attend the GA without being a delegate, and it is possible to attend “virtually” (either as a delegate or not) via computer link. Denise reported that she did that last year and found it useful, although not every session was available for on-line participation.
- Diane Fox, the Chair of the 2020 Auction, has reported that it is not possible to change the date of the auction this year, due to prior commitments of some auction committee members. It has been scheduled for December 5. They will consider a change to an earlier date in 2021. It was also noted that Family Promise is scheduled to be in the church during the auction. **The Board requested that TVUUC switch dates with another Family Promise church to avoid this conflict.**
- A Board Member inquired about church policy on contacting church members for business solicitations. Someone may have obtained his contact information in *Realm*. This led to a conversation about the privacy of *Realm* information. **Ryan McBee offered to draft a privacy policy which can be discussed at a future meeting.**

Related to this, it appears that many members are still unfamiliar with *Realm* and that committees and groups may not be making full use of *Realm* for communication or storing documents. We are unsure of how best to educate members in the functions of *Realm*. While some members and friends may not want their contact information to be public, others may want to be public but do not realize that they must actively change the default privacy setting in *Realm*. In theory, the privacy settings of new or prospective members can be set during the TVUUC 101 class, but we are not sure if this is currently being done.

- A suggestion was entered in the “Red Book” for TVUUC to participate in a program to assist local community members to reduce their medical debt. The Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church has done this. **Chris Buice will gather more details about this program and report at the next Board meeting.**

Submitted by Wendy Syer, Secretary to the Board.

3/9/20