

TVUUC Board Meeting

March 17, 2020

Board Members Present: Matthew Blondell; Eddie Chin; Denise Coleman (President) ; Debbie Ellis; Justina Hyfantis; Ginna Mashburn; Ryan McBee; Robby McMurry; Wendy Syer; Jamie Watts; Alice Woody

Ex Officio/Visiting: Chris Buice; Claudia Pressley; Taylor Thomas

[Meeting held by Zoom Videoconference]

Block Grant Funding Policy/Procedure

The Program Council has drafted a new policy to be used when approving block grants.

After some discussion, the Board passed a motion to approve the policy, with the following changes:

- Reword Section 10 for more clarity. Grants may not always be given in one lump sum, but will be paid to the recipient according to standard TVUUC fiscal policy and practice for reimbursements, up to the amount awarded.
- Take out the specific amount of the maximum grant in Section 14. The maximum amount to be awarded will be set each year, according to the church budget.
- Other, stylistic or grammatical changes can be made before the policy is final. (Ginna Mashburn will help with re-wording.)

A question was also raised about the necessity to use the grant before the end of the fiscal year, as this may allow only 6-7 months to use the grant. However, exceptions to this can be approved on a case-by-case basis, if necessary.

Covenant of Agreement for TVUUC Affiliation of Jon Coffee

The Board received a draft of a Covenant of Agreement which would be signed by TVUUC and Jon Coffee giving Jon formal affiliation with TVUUC as a Community Minister. The Board agreed that the agreement needed to be re-worded using language more appropriate to TVUUC, but **a motion was passed to approve the spirit of the affiliation agreement. The Board will vote again on the final document during the next Board meeting.**

The question was raised about a reference in the draft to a Committee on Ministry. This does not refer to any existing TVUUC committee, but rather a committee which Jon will put together to advise him during this affiliation, in keeping with UUA policies for new ministers working to become Full Fellowship Ministers. The church has had a similar arrangement in the past with another UU Minister working to achieve Full Fellowship status.

Stewardship Committee Report

So far, a total of approximately \$422,000 has been pledged during the recent pledge campaign. The total amount pledged in the 2019 pledge campaign was \$482,274. It appears that limiting the official pledge period to one week did succeed in getting pledges submitted more quickly. There are about 120 "pledging units" which have been contacted but not yet pledged, including about 50 that did pledge last year. The Stewardship Committee is in the process of contacting these people individually to

encourage them to submit pledges now so that we have a good idea of the money available for the next fiscal year before drafting the budget.

The Committee has also been mailing thank you notes to all those who have pledged. With the church office closed now (due to COVID-19), they will be sending these thanks by e-mail.

Financial Report

Robby McMurry (Treasurer) distributed the monthly Financial Report, showing spending and balances through February 2020.

Questions were raised about the money available for patio furniture which appears to be listed in two accounts. (One with a negative balance and one with a larger positive balance.) These two accounts should be combined into one restricted account, eliminating the negative balance. Robby and Claudia were not sure if all bills for the patio furniture have been paid.

The Board also discussed how the church finances will be affected by the current closing. While some operating expenses will be reduced with the church closed, staff salaries continue, and it is likely that amounts collected during the Sunday offering will be reduced. At the time of the Board meeting, the church had held one on-line Sunday service, and \$125 was collected (considerably less than usual). The postponement of the Rummage Sale may also affect the income for the year. By the next Board meeting, we should have a better idea of the weekly collection amounts as well as other changes in expenses and income. During the services, there will be a button on the computer screen to facilitate giving. Money can also be given through the TVUUC website, clicking "Give Today" under the "Give" pull-down Menu.

Conducting on-line services is a new experience for TVUUC. After assessing the success of these services, it is possible that we will want to invest in some new technology for the future. It is hoped that a grant from the Endowment Fund could assist with this expense.

On-line Services and Ministry

In the four days since the church was closed, the TVUUC staff has been busy reconfiguring all the services of the church. This includes conducting on-line Sunday services and trying to help the congregation to feel connected to the church and to each other throughout the week. The first on-line Sunday service (put together in two days) was visited on Facebook by over 2000 people from all over the world! (We cannot tell how many stayed for the entire service.) Senior Minister Chris Buice said he embraced the challenge of this new form of ministry; he and the other staff members will be exploring new ways to reach our own congregation and others using on-line technology, now and in the future.

Robby reported that the live stream of the Sunday service became the main picture on the TVUUC website during the service. It was suggested that the Zoom instructions Catherine Farmer Loya provided on the Facebook page also be added to the TVUUC website.

TVUUC Welcome Garden

Buildings and Grounds Committee has been exploring ways to maintain the new native plant Welcome Garden in front of the church. Some church members have requested that the garden have a more manicured look, and controlling weeds is proving to be quite labor-intensive. One solution would be to mulch the garden on a regular basis. Due to the expense this would incur, the Board held an extended discussion about this suggestion. The committee has gotten a quote from our regular grounds maintenance company which would charge an initial \$2000 and then \$1200 every six months to

distribute and replenish mulch on the garden. This would cover the cost of both mulch and labor provided by the landscapers. The committee has asked if the Board wants to authorize this expense which would exceed their allotted budget for this year. Robby reported that the money for the initial payment would be available from money in reserve, but we do not know what the state of the church finances will be in the future, especially after the period of closing.

Several Board members wondered if there would be a cheaper way to do the mulching, either with a different company or using church volunteers to spread the mulch. There was also a concern about authorizing unbudgeted spending right now, given the uncertainties created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Claudia also reminded the church that we are a certified Green Sanctuary, under UUA guidelines, and we do not use Round-up or other environmentally harmful weed killers. Acceptable weed control sprays are available, but they are more expensive.

The Board decided to postpone the decision about the mulch until the April meeting, giving us time to explore other options and to better assess the financial health of the church. **Debbie Ellis promised to work with Barbara Lamm (on the Buildings and Grounds Committee) to explore various options.**

Other Issues Arising During the Period of Closing

During the period when the church building is closed, a number of issues will arise. One of these is the Rummage Sale, which has already been re-scheduled (for now) for May 2.

Another urgent issue is the Family Promise guests who are scheduled to be at TVUUC from April 19 to April 26. In their Board meeting last week, Family Promise decided, for now, that they will not accept any new families into the program, but they will continue their regular church rotation for the families already in the program. They will check the temperature of every Family Promise guest before he/she leaves the Day House, and they will not let them come to a church with a fever. For those guests who have not been at the Day House during the day, churches are urged to check their temperatures before admitting them to the church. They also urge churches not to permit at-risk person to work with the Family Promise guests. So far, we believe no host church has cancelled the Family Promise invitation. Obviously policies may change as the situation in Knoxville develops.

The Board discussed our options. For example, we may be able to host the Family Promise program during the week scheduled, using church volunteers who are not in the "at-risk groups" for COVID-19, and modifying our services somewhat (possibly getting take-out food instead of cooking.) No decision was made about this. But, because the Board will not meet again until the week scheduled for Family Promise, **we urged Chris and Claudia to work with the three TVUUC Family Promise Coordinators to discuss our options with the Family Promise program as soon as possible. The TVUUC Leadership Team will then decide whether we are able to host the Family Program in April.**

Related to this, Claudia reported that the church had been cleaned quite thoroughly before closing. No events are currently being held in the church. Church staff are in the building, as necessary, and the FISH Program is continuing because it involves only a few individuals, and because of the necessity of continuing food distribution at this time. There are local services that can do a special anti-viral cleaning but they are all booked up right now. John Montgomery will work extra hours, if necessary, to do extra cleaning.

Submitted by Wendy Syer, Secretary to the Board.

3/30/20