

TVUUC Board ZOOM Meeting January 27, 2020

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm.

Members and Guest Present (alphabetically):

Matthew Blondell, Chris Buice, Denise Coleman, Justina Hyfantis, Heather Kistner, Viren Lalka, Barbara Lamm, Ryan McBee, Jeff Mellor, Mark Mohundro, Claudia Pressley, Linda Randolph, Taylor Thomas, Alice Woody

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Confirm minutes from December meeting

Matthew moved, Denise seconded approval of the minutes of December meeting as distributed. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AGENDA

1. Little Pantry Project Proposal

Barbara Lamm led the discussion of construction and erection of a free food distribution Little Pantry on church property. She noted that our location is in the middle of a USDA designated Food Desert, one of 19 in Knox County. Food and nutrition shortages exacerbated by the pandemic make this timely. In addition to food, other personal toiletries (e.g. toothbrushes, toothpaste) are foreseen for distribution.

Discussions with personnel in other churches with such pantry boxes indicate that they have been popular, necessary and welcome. The design of the distribution box follows the one at the Bearden United Methodist Church on Sutherland. The detailed design will be done by Dick Trowbridge. The pantry will be adjacent to the RE lighted entrance where the wide sidewalk allows safe and easy access. A sign closer to Kingston Pike is foreseen to draw attention to the pantry. Building and Grounds committee has approved the project, but requested Board approval since it is a structure. Several church members have expressed general approval of the project and Greg's Group will cover the financing of the project so that no church funds will be required for its completion. Stocking and upkeep will be accomplished by Barbara, members of the Caring Committee and Jametta as her recovery permits, and even several Church members who have expressed willingness to help. Jamey Dobbs will be contacting local businesses to help with items for stocking. Some items will also be stored in the church for restocking purposes.

Jeff moved, Viren seconded Board approval that the project move forward as proposed. Unanimous.

2. Stewardship Campaign

Fresh from a meeting with the Stewardship Campaign Committee, Taylor Thomas reported on plans and progress for this year's campaign. Campaign kickoff will be February 21. The committee is currently updating the pledge packet, which will be distributed virtually this year. Plans call for members to contribute virtually through REALM. Instructions for doing that are in preparation, including a video of Taylor completing his pledge. A virtual evening reception for donors over a certain threshold is planned for February 7 to include music, a talk from Chris and a presentation by Taylor as well as a feedback component to evaluate how the church is meeting people's needs and suggestions for improvement. Since some loss of revenue may result from the pandemic and economic exigencies, as well as loss of auction and rummage sale income, those who can will be asked to consider a modest increase of pledging as an offset. Special thought is being given to the fact that people forced to restrict their pledges remain a welcome and vital component of our congregation. In discussion, the issue of encouraging members to steer some or all of their stimulus checks to the church arose. Likewise, some consideration will be given to those members not very tech savvy (despite online ZOOM services etc.) to make sure they are included in the Stewardship Drive. Announcements in the Newsletter will encourage members who would like a reach-out phone call to request one. This may also affect people who don't know how to use REALM to make pledges and contributions. Answering the question of the up-to-date status of REALM, Claudia noted that REALM is as up-to-date to the extent members keep information current, e.g. by updating a changed email address or change from landlines to cellphones, etc. One issue is that, for example, the Auction website data is completely separate from that in REALM. Likewise, the Newsletter information is also separate and independent. Updating one of these information sources does not automatically carry over. Additional steps are required to keep all databases coordinated. The policy is that when people join as a members, their information is entered on the REALM database by the staff member registering their addition to the church roster. Members who joined before REALM were automatically entered in REALM. We do not have a procedure for automatically dropping people from membership status, as some UU churches do, for reasons such as not pledging for some years, etc. As a result, some people may be listed as members who no longer consider themselves as such. Persons who over the years have contributed or in other ways have supported the church are listed as 'friends 'and are in REALM. They are regularly contacted about the Stewardship Campaign. One possible advantage of the REALM process for organizing pledges is that persons in financially embarrassing situations can alter their pledges without having to speak personally with a church official. Viren mentioned that the Oak Ridge Senior Center has a "Call Week" or "Call Month" program where they just call seniors in the

community to check in, see if the people are lonely. He suggested the possibility that the church consider developing a reach out program of this sort to strengthen community ties in the congregation. Such a program, he thought, might extend throughout the year or on some continuing basis and not necessarily be tied to Stewardship. Matthew noted we should see how this fits in with Jametta's program of outreach. This discussion concluded with an anticipated report by Taylor at the February Board meeting.

3. Financials

Viren discussed the financial picture of the church, as illustrated in the budget documents he had distributed to the Board. Overall, the church is in good financial shape, despite a financially challenging year. Some revenue sources such as building rentals, auction proceeds had virtually disappeared. Claudia strongly praised Robby's construction of a balanced budget last year that removed these revenue sources out of the operating budget, with the effect that those revenues that did accrue essentially amount to 'free money' that could be applied as needed to unforeseen purposes. Further praise went to the Stewardship Committee and to the Auction organizers for having done an excellent job that made this fundraising effort work smoothly and efficiently. Church expenses are generally running in the expected range. Congressional negotiations are ongoing regarding possible new, increased stimulus monies, the outcome of which remains uncertain. TVUUC had already received monies from the first round of the PPP loan program. the forgiveness application for these funds will be submitted as soon as that becomes possible. It is possible the TVUUC may qualify for a second PPP round, depending on the drop in revenue in FY 2020 vs. FY 2019. Once completed, the worksheet for capital improvements and other long-needed projects, e.g. roofing, will enable us to move forward on these issues. An increase in software and computer expenses results from the shift to virtual services. Gift card inventory fluctuates sometimes rather dramatically, since some vendors require purchase of a substantial 'chunk' of cards at one time for Eunice to keep in stock. To the question whether the PPP money was principally responsible for the balanced budget this year and how next year's budget might look in the absence of such funds in the coming year, Viren and others expressed the objective of adjusting expectations to craft a balanced budget that does not require or anticipate these funds. Linda reported that the Personnel Committee wanted to know when their recommendations would be due as input for the next budget. That deadline has not yet been set. Claudia observed that the Congregational Meeting is scheduled for June and that in the past these numbers need to be in hand a couple of months in advance so that the eight to ten financial meetings prior to the Congregational meeting would have them in hand to advance their discussions.

Additional discussion centered on the installation of bullet resistant film for doors and windows and the associated expenditures. This matter, though long of interest, had risen in priority because of the recent Homeland Security alert warning of increased danger from possible domestic terror incidents. Will Dunklin, Chair of Buildings and Grounds, learned of this alert today during a meeting at a military installation in El Paso and judged that this project should be undertaken very soon as a result. The window film has two functions: 1) it is bullet resistant, 2) it helps in climate control for the church interior. At least three different sources of funding were discussed: 1) Endowment Funds, 2) the ca. \$14,000 un-budgeted auction proceeds, 3) the PPP Capital Improvement funds. Viren advocated that this project be integrated into a larger context of security measures where priorities can be debated and decided in a more comprehensive manner. Chris supported this procedure for setting priorities for the range of envisioned capital projects. Matthew said he would put this on the February agenda for debate and decision. Ryan asked who would assemble the list of all the projects to be considered in this debate. Claudia noted that Building and Grounds was tasked with creating this list. Chris observed that the Buildings and Grounds Committee as a whole should provide this list, especially in the event that other items and projects might be deemed to be better uses of available funds to provide security. This will also provide an opportunity to get more current bids for these projects. Viren asked what photo surveillance was currently in place and if other measures, such as warning signage or 24-7 surveillance, might be considered.

3a. Endowment Committee request

The Endowment Committee asked that the Board consider constituting it as a separate 501c.3 from the church, as a possible way of shielding the Endowment from possible suits against TVUUC. Viren expressed doubts that a different tax ID would in fact achieve such protection. Matthew charged Viren to talk to David about this issue. Linda expressed extremely strong objection to the Endowment Committee becoming a separate entity based on past experience with such separation. In the past, the Endowment Committee had resisted any input or requests from the Board regarding its actions. The re-integration of endowment matters into church affairs subject to Board purview had proven inordinately difficult. Viren expressed similar sentiments. Ryan asserted the need for a very detailed proposal of the ways these two entities, if approved as separate, would interact in view of the fact that we are a democratically run congregation. Board consensus was that Matthew would ask David to come to the February meeting for these discussions.

4. Transparency, Posting board minutes and budget information

Claudia reviewed this matter because it interacts closely with personnel matters. Michael Miller has budgeted time which could allow him to take over these tasks. Claudia has spoken with Daniel Buchanan who will formulate a set of instructions for Michael to update the church website with minutes and similar documents. Daniel and Cyndi Buchanan, Claudia and Mark will subsequently confer on updating the appearance or design of the website. Ultimately Michael should be getting items like minutes and other documents, but in the short term, Jeff needs to send Board minutes to Claudia. Linda promised to send updated personnel items to Michael when he is ready to post them.

Matthew announced that other Board members need to produce videos of the Affirmation for the Sunday services. At this point, only Matthew, Eddie and Jeff have done so. Ryan has one prepared. It was agreed these files be sent to Mark.

5. 8th Principle Task Force update

Mark reported that the committee had accelerated its meetings from biweekly to weekly in anticipation of next steps. Chris had introduced the 8th Principle in his most recent Newsletter column and Mark had written an introduction to the issue with a request for questions and comments. The next big task is the February 28 service devoted to the 8th Principle, followed by Coffee Hour breakouts on the topic. The Nashville Congregation has already adopted the 8th Principle. Eddie added that the document *Widening the Circle of Concern* would be available for interested members to pick up. The document can also be downloaded from the UUA website Commission on Institutional Change <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening> . The document, as well as new TVUUC yard signs, can be picked up at church Monday (9-3), Wednesday (1-3), Thursday (1-3), Sunday (2-3). Times will be posted in *Newsletter*. The Task Force may be expanded in view of Jametta's recuperation.

6. Ruth Martin Chili Cook-off

Matthew distributed Excel spreadsheet with names and orders. Jeff will update it with further information.

- a. The following offers of items and decisions were made:
- b. Matthew - 10 qts. vegetarian chili
- c. Ryan - chicken chili
- d. Heather - big pot meat chili
- e. Jeff - big pot meat chili

f.Linda - Fritos from Aldi, shredded cheese (not rebagged!)

g.Eddie - cornbread/muffins

h.Denise - chocolate chip cookies

i.Alice - 40+ mason jars

j.Date Saturday Feb 27 afternoon

k.Shifts to be decided

l.Boxes stowed in car trunk when people drive up.

m.Reminders to customers will be made closer to the event.

n.Further decisions will be finalized at February 16 meeting

7. New Business/Adjournment

There being no New Business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Mellor, Secretary-Clerk