

TVUUC Board ZOOM Meeting Agenda of February 16, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 6:32.

Present (in alphabetical order):

Matthew Blondell, Chris Buice, Eddie Chin, Denise Coleman, Justina Hyfantis, Heather Kistner, Viren Lalka, Ryan McBee, Jeff Mellor, Nick Potter, Claudia Pressley, Linda Randolph, Taylor Thomas, Jamie Watts, Erven Williams, Alice Woody

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Confirm minutes from January meeting

Denise moved, Eddie seconded acceptance of the minutes of the January meeting. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AGENDA

1. Welcoming Congregations Update

Discussion began on the draft of the Welcoming Charter Matthew distributed that the Welcoming Congregation Committee had submitted for approval. Linda asked about Section B and whether the authority of the committee needed to be spelled out, i.e. if it is explicitly organized under the Program Council. This would bring the Welcoming Committee in line with the other programs under the Program Council. Ryan proposed to general assent that this change could be made quickly and the revised document be presented to the Board for approval by e-mail. Section B would be titled Authority and the subsequent sections reconfigured accordingly.

2. Stewardship Update

Taylor Thomas provided a Stewardship update. The campaign will launch on Sunday with a campaign video already prepared. Pledge packets will be sent out this week via e-mail. Follow-ups for people without e-mail or who have not responded will be done by phone. The donor reception was successful and had already resulted in some submitted pledges. Some of these included an increase of 10% as had been suggested in light of the pandemic effect on the church income. Taylor has produced a ZOOM instructional video showing how to pledge on-line. The Stewardship Committee will meet tomorrow, fine-tune the pledge package and video and expects to send the materials out by the end of the week, i.e. before the Sunday service launching the campaign.

3. COVID Task Force (CTF) update

Discussion turned to the draft COVID waiver Matthew had distributed. Following Matthew's introductory remarks, Nick guided the discussion noting that the church insurance carrier had

informed us that our policy does not cover any liability that is COVID related. The draft waiver was created based on instructions provided by the insurance carrier and was being put forth for preliminary discussion in advance of the church re-opening at a date not yet set.

Erven asked if the church had made any efforts to promote vaccination through its auspices, noting that family members of his in Florida reported that vaccination efforts there had been done in the churches. He proposed that we do something similar. Chris responded that there are churches in medically underserved areas that are being approached to be vaccination sites, but that we have not been approached. Chris reported he had this second-hand from churches approached in KICMA. Claudia reviewed the notifications that had been put on the church website and Facebook page to aid in signing up. She mentioned, and Chris confirmed, that our insurer, Church Mutual Insurance, is specialized for religious organizations and covers many area churches. She also mentioned John Bohstedt's notifications of sign-up opportunities in adjoining counties. Erven mentioned that CVS and Walgreen were being set up as vaccination centers and Claudia indicated that these arrangements differed state by state and their respective guidelines. Other factors, Nick noted, were the limited supplies of vaccine and the cold storage requirements for the vaccines.

Returning to the waiver issue, Nick noted that the State of Tennessee has approved legislation protecting religious organizations from COVID liability claims. Of course, any such claim would still have to pass the test of negligence on the part of the church. The proposed waiver would add assurance that the church has been acting responsibly and with due diligence to protect its members, staff, outside visitors, renters and other attendees notwithstanding the protections of state law. In advance of a CTF Meeting, the question before the Board is whether and how we should address the issue of liability through waivers or other means. He suggested that by late spring whatever measures we craft should be reviewed by an attorney. Alice noted that for outside renters a release would have to be provided by each participant, in addition to a waiver completed by the outside organization itself. Heather confirmed this observation noting that outdoor activities at several small schools in the homeschool community all require signing a waiver at every 'event.' Heather and Denise further endorsed a cautious, careful and proactive approach to liability issues. Matthew noted that the CTF would be discussing how the waiver issue would be addressed in cases of large semi-public events like weddings, funerals and memorial services. In response to a question, Claudia reported that she had not seen any guidance from the UUA on this matter. Also, no clear, relatively uniform response by other area churches to these issues has emerged. In response to a question from Linda, it was not yet clear exactly what specific procedures were envisioned, e.g. a policy issued by the Board or a recommendation by the CTF. The principal reason for airing this matter now, Nick observed, is that the church has significant assets that could be encumbered by a liability suit and preparation and early planning seemed prudent. Matthew said that the CTF would continue discussions on the issue and would be presenting the results of its discussions to the Board.

Finally, it was noted that, as warmer weather approaches, a possible resumption of outdoor activities brings these issues to the fore more quickly than any envisioned resumption of indoor activities in the Fall.

4. Endowment Fund Committee Memo

Matthew noted the Endowment Fund Committee Memo is preliminary, because David Massey will be presenting this issue at the March Board meeting. Matthew requested that Board members familiarize themselves with the memo and review their responses on the issue of an organizational separation of the Endowment Committee and the Church itself. Among the issues David was reported to want to explore were the historical experiences we had had in regard to such separation. In any case, this matter will not be decided in this fiscal year because the Endowment Fund Committee still had internal organizational matters to resolve. Linda reviewed Ryan's discussion from the last Board meeting and reported on the experience of other congregations and their relation to the operation of their endowment funds. Matthew reported that David expected to seek legal advice on these matters. Erven requested clarification of the purpose of the Endowment Fund overall. Ryan summarized his understanding that it consists of a pool of money we don't tap operationally, but use the interest accruing on it to fund special projects from time to time. He offered to provide the official wording as needed. Matthew and Ryan agreed that the Endowment Fund also could act as a source of emergency funding in exigent circumstances. As a relatively new Board member, Heather asked that she be brought up to speed on the issues involving historical frictions between the board and the fund and asked to be included in discussions involving these diverging views. Linda recounted from her experience on the Board and as President that our Endowment Fund in the past had refused to expend any funds at all. She and another Board member surveyed a number of other churches and found that virtually all spent a portion of the accruing interest on projects to benefit the respective congregations. Some even drew on the proceeds for the operating budget. She reported that it is not stated anywhere that our Endowment Funds can be drawn on in emergency circumstances. She referred to the survey documents of other churches she had distributed to the Board, noting that one Endowment Fund was a separate 501(c)3. Erven expressed his desire that, in the case of emergency, some proportion of the Endowment Fund be available for use and that guidelines be established for such cases. Linda observed that some adjustments had been made, for which reason the current use of some interest monies are used for special projects. Historically, one issue had been that some funds had been borrowed to fund moving Chris Buice's resettlement in Knoxville to assume his position as minister. Even though the borrowed funds had been repaid with interest, some members of the Endowment Committee at that time had remained steadfastly opposed to any such use of Endowment Funds. Founding members of the Endowment Committee, prominent among them Kenneth Honeycutt, reported that the original conception was that the Endowment Fund should be built to a million dollars and then, and only then, some of the proceeds could be used for other projects. Until then, the

Endowment Fund was to remain untouchable. This approach had since shifted to its current stance allowing some interest proceeds to be used for various projects. Linda acknowledged some value in the desire of the Endowment Fund to be separate, but wants assurance that there be a clear, reasonable and established relationship between the Church and the Fund. Ryan asked clearance from the Board that he draw up a list of questions for David before the next meeting. Matthew said David was planning to approach Ryan in any case and said that David was open to any questions from the Board. Linda will look for an email from Kenneth Honeycutt providing background on these matters and will distribute what she finds.

5. Financials

a. Update on first Finance Committee meeting

Viren noted that in the Treasurer's Report (1/1/2021-1/31/2021, distributed) the pledge contributions were down a bit from the expected amounts (ca. \$6k = \$34k from an anticipated \$40k). Other than that there was little of great note. The line item for Music Director was still zeroed out. Other than those two matters, we are still meeting our anticipated budgetary allocations. In the continuing discussion, Ryan observed, and Viren confirmed, that this shortfall was simply for the month of January, but that we are still ahead for the year overall. In short, this amounts to a 'speed bump' in the year's budgetary cycle. Claudia noted that such variances in pledge amounts coming in were not at all unusual and that many church members waited until tax returns were completed (and possibly refunds paid) for them to meet their pledge contributions. Some members also fulfill their yearly pledges as a lump sum at the end of June. Viren added that a stimulus check of \$1400 is foreseen for the end of March and that as a result we might see a revenue increase at that point.

b. Budget

In response to Viren's query about timelines, Matthew said the Finance Committee meeting on the Budget would be in April. Last year, Denise recalled, there were three or four meetings of the Finance Committee, January, April, May and June. Following a preliminary meeting in January in April the first proposals came in, in May the remaining structure was worked out and final details were settled in June before the Congregational Meeting. Based on that timeline, Viren proposed he solicit input from the various committees for an April meeting with a follow up in May or June. Denise said that Viren was free to set meeting times, days and dates as needed, because they are likely to be ZOOM meetings. The Congregational Meeting is scheduled for June 13, so a June 2 deadline for the Budget would be needed in order that the Budget be sent out to the members 10 days in advance of the meeting. The Personnel Committee needs to have its proposals in by a May 1 deadline. The worship committee and others need to be contacted in the April timeframe to begin assembling budget numbers. Viren said he would put together a plan in March for these meetings and deadlines.

c. Projects and Building and Grounds updates

Discussion shifted to projects and buildings and grounds proposals. Claudia had received a significant amount of information only this afternoon and screen-shared the Excel spreadsheet she and Viren had put together on that basis. Three categories of projects were discussed.

- (1) those specifically in response to COVID issues and required for resumption of in-building activities;
- (2) smaller (i.e. less than \$10k) projects related to the building and capital plant;
- (3) major, higher cost capital projects, e.g. roof repair of the portion of the roof outlined in the photo distributed. That portion of the roof had not been redone when the solar panels were installed because funds ran out and were postponed until funds became available. Those funds are now available via the Small Business Loan, which is a repayable \$150k 30 year loan at 2% interest. The Excel spreadsheet now includes mostly the first estimates provided by prospective vendors for projects in each category.

Claudia asked whether and how she and Buildings and Grounds could proceed on category 1 COVID projects, e.g. hand-sanitizing stations, touchless towel dispensers, touchless faucets (ca. \$5k), plexiglass front reception desk in lobby, window opening to office so office door could remain closed (ca. \$500). MERV filters (ca. \$1400 annually), additional estimates are being pursued for this. The whole building air filtration project is as yet without estimates.

Category 2 non-COVID projects included automatic door openers, bullet resistant film coverings for glass windows and door surfaces (\$13k), carpeting to replace original carpeting (now 20+ yrs old) (ca. \$15k)

The major Category 3 project is the roof, which is beginning to leak in the unimproved section. The first estimate in hand is ca. \$50k. Other projects in category three: light scoop outside, cleaning of the word stones on the building wall ca. \$1000.

The sum total for all three categories based on estimates on hand comes to about \$88k of \$150k in the Small Business Loan, Claudia noted.

Viren suggested one or two additional quotes for the roof to make sure the estimate was within normal market bounds. He had a couple prospects in mind for these estimates. He further proposed that the category 1 COVID projects under \$10k be done quickly.

Viren moved, Linda seconded approval of moving forward promptly on the Category 1 COVID-related projects, each under \$10k. Unanimous.

In further discussion, it emerged that Category 2 and 3 projects were awaiting additional estimates. One exception to this was the bullet resistant film, for which there is only one local provider.

6. Brief Right Relations update

The charter is in preparation for Right Relations document for discussion at the March Board meeting. Denise, Barbara Taylor and Linda are doing this work.

7. Ruth Martin Chili Cook Off logistics

Matthew reviewed the information already in hand regarding chili pickup. Alice will have and wash the mason jars and get them to church labeled. Eighteen boxes will be available for handing out chili. Jeff has 20 packets of cheese and Heather will provide an additional 19 packets. Eddie will bake 40 corn bread muffins individually packed. Linda will be there 2-4. Matthew will bring his chili in Friday night and put in the refrigerator. Jeff will bring cheese this coming Sunday. Alice will have jars ready before Saturday at noon. Jeff, Ryan and Denise will fill jars and boxes 12-2 on Saturday. Linda 2-4. Eddie 4-6. Last person out of building texts Claudia (865-566-8409) and she locks up from home. Matthew will send out pickup appointments after list is complete.

8. New Business

Denise will forward to Viren Budget worksheets to aid his preparations.

Daniel Buchanan has not yet met with Michael to help with posting items on website.

Chris provided update on Jametta. She is home, in good spirits, improving and doing rehab and gradually integrating herself into her duties. She appreciates the cards and messages she has received.

9. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Mellor, Secretary-Clerk