

TVUUC Board ZOOM Meeting October 19, 2021

<<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87166384192>>

Having established a quorum, President Ryan McBee called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Present (in alphabetical order): Matthew Blondell, Chris Buice, Eddie Chin, Bill Fields, Justina Hyfantis, Angela Hoffman, Viren Lalka, Ryan McBee, Jeff Mellor, Nathan Paki, Linda Randolph, Mary Rogge, Stephanie Seay, Ken Stephenson, Jamie Watts.

1. Approval of Minutes for September 21, 2021 Meeting of the Board

Jeff referred the Board to the draft minutes most recently distributed that included minor revisions as the basis for discussion.

Mary moved, Ken seconded approval of minutes as distributed. Unanimous.

2. Financial Review

Because Viren would have to leave early, the financial review was taken up next. [00:44] Referring to the Treasurer's Report, Viren drew attention to the unusual spikes in payroll, payroll taxes, health and retirement numbers. He asked Claudia to clarify how this came about. The budget is done on an annual basis, she explained, but the payroll is bi-weekly. As a result, there was an additional payroll cycle in September (total of 3 in September) resulting in an apparent jump in these outlays. In October, the numbers will be lower, because there will be fewer payroll cycles then and the numbers will even out on the annual basis. Viren noted that pledge contributions had increased substantially over budgeted figures. [3:00] An update on the roofing work revealed that Claudia had spoken earlier today with Ken, the second signer on the contract, because the roofer had asked that the signing of the contract be postponed briefly until he was closer to beginning the work. Ken will be signing his part of the contract on Thursday, after which Claudia will sign, and work should be starting very soon. The amount in the contract is not expected to rise above the numbers discussed in the previous Board meeting. Responding to discussion in the September Board meeting about why we had not engaged the roofer who had done the work when we installed solar panels, Claudia informed the Board that the current roofer is actually the same company, but that the company name that does not include the personal name obscured the fact that the same person was involved. [4:57] Viren informed the Board that he is conducting a financial review of procedures and policies and will make some recommendations pending awaited input from individuals on the finance team by the deadline of November 15. He will present these recommendations to the Board at its December meeting. Responding to Linda's question, Viren said his recommendations will propose updates to the Finance Manual, as needed. [6:12] Ken brought up his role as a co-signer for contracts. There is currently no requirement for a double signature on church expenditures, but since the roofing involves substantial outlays, he wanted to know if a second signature should be required on checks issued by the church. Viren recommended that a second signature be required for expenditures over \$10k. Ryan asked if the bank would accommodate this procedure. From her experience, Claudia understood that it would be an 'either/or bank policy' for **all** checks whether \$5 or \$25k. She further noted that procedures in other churches mandated that for large expenditures two designated signatures were required on the invoice to ensure the legitimacy of the transaction, but then there would still be one signature on the check. Viren thought that having a second account

specifically for large amounts would unnecessarily complicate accounting procedures, but reminded the Board of the advisability that having a second, backup, signatory would help in the case that the first signatory were on vacation or otherwise unavailable. [10:18] Claudia agreed to ask the bank about authorizing a second person to sign checks on behalf of the church and could report back to the Board, in case action is required before its next meeting. Robby McMurry had been a second authorized signatory, but is no longer. Viren is not so authorized. [13:47]

3. COVID Survey Request

The next matter before the Board involved a request to make public the results of the survey of church members regarding opening of the church for a wider range of activities. This would include the full responses by members to the open-ended questions on the congregational survey. Ryan invited Stephanie Seay to address the Board on this topic in response to her email to the Board, which was specifically requested to be included in these minutes: [14:20]

“Hello again, Ryan -- and thank you for the details on the upcoming meeting.

In response to your points on the survey results, on the outdoor service risk levels I see a different set of numbers. A majority indicated they are comfortable attending outdoor services at our highest risk categories. Ninety-seven of 128 respondents said they would be comfortable gathering outdoors while the region’s risk level sits at High, Very High and Severe: 58, or 45.3% at High; 24, or 18.8% at Very High; and 15, or 11.7% at Severe risk.

These answers on outdoor services, plus the fact that the survey itself was flawed in its design and thus yielded problematic data, lends itself to the release of the full results, including the open-ended responses with names redacted, which I am requesting.

The flaw I refer to is that respondents to the survey were able to choose multiple levels of risk in the matrix questions regarding willingness to gather. As such, if respondents chose to reply that they would gather outdoors, for instance, at High, Very High or even Severe risk, they would also logically have chosen all or at least some of the other risk categories -- since they would also be willing to meet during periods of lower risk. Thus, the lower-risk numbers were almost certainly inflated.

In fact, on the question of outdoor services alone, a whopping 260 responses on risk level were recorded, when there were only 128 unique respondents.

Our current TVUUC framework would allow outdoor services today, yet we refuse to offer even that. This issue is one I highlighted in my letter to the Board on August 30. I am frustrated that we have let half the year of seasonable weather, May through the present, pass by with no opportunity to creatively gather regularly for Sunday morning services outdoors, before or after the broadcast of the pre-recorded service. We chose business-as-usual instead and missed a valuable opportunity for those who desired to gather safely in-person to reconnect and heal. Now we sit at the threshold of colder weather when gathering outdoors becomes problematic. I understand that this responsibility of how services are conducted (rather than if) sits not with the Board, but with the

executive team and the worship committee. So thank you for listening as a Board member to my diatribe again on this topic.

I am proud that the survey results reveal a vast majority of us are wholeheartedly adopting the safeguards of vaccination and mask-wearing to protect ourselves and others. I was thrilled to see TVUUC host a vaccination clinic, and I am grateful to the staff who supported the event. Overall, our TVUUC community is a safer space than elsewhere in the region. This needs to be recognized and incorporated into our decision-making for reopening. It is fine to quote regional vaccination levels, but I repeat -- we as UUs have adopted vaccines and mask-wearing far beyond the general population and this fact needs to be considered.

On the question of feedback regarding resuming services, you mention speaking to friends and receiving feedback from folks who attend virtual events. I suggest one more source for your consideration. In the TVUUC Members and Friends group on Facebook, a post by Bill Fields on September 29 regarding the worship survey results has generated 41 comments so far; the most recent was three days ago. I recommend the Board and the executive team read those comments. They are on the whole well reasoned and worth your time.

We face the prospect of a diminished community the more we delay our reopening. Even when we do reopen, it will take time to regain interest and trust. I have served this congregation proudly for 20 years as a teacher, as mentor and advisor to elementary, middle- and high school youth, on planning and hosting events for both youth and adults, cooking, cleaning, gardening, fundraising, as a chaperone for some rather adventurous lock-ins and youth group trips to neighboring congregations and The Mountain, in the heavy lift of healing when our congregation was physically attacked, serving proudly on the RE, ministerial evaluation, endowment fund and other committees, and working in the office as an administrative assistant for nearly a year. I'm still here, and I am ready to engage in the long work it will take to rebuild our community. Those who believe in science and have embraced vaccination and mask-wearing and are willing to gather safely are an asset to the church, not a problem to be managed or derided as angry people.

Here's a final thought -- how about we establish a Reopening Task Force? Or rename the CTF? Would love to give people some hope, especially as our days shorten into the winter and the holidays approach.

Thank you again, Ryan, for engaging in meaningful discourse on this topic. It is a difficult time to be leading the Board and your service is highly valued, even moreso when we don't see eye to eye. That willing engagement is at the heart of being UU. I look forward to attending the virtual Board meeting this week. I'm also open to a phone call any time at 865-604-3384. And if you ever want to meet in person, I'll buy you a beverage of your choice and we can sit outside. I'll bet we both have some interesting stories to tell, and I'd love to hear yours.

Best,
Stephanie"

Stephanie began by thanking Ryan and the Board for conducting the survey and the opportunity to talk about the issues from her perspective and expressed her willingness to answer questions at the conclusion of her remarks. In what she termed an unaccustomed role for speaking out on issues at church, she wanted to call attention to others in the congregation who do not feel comfortable in reaching out or asking for help and support from the Board or Caring Committee in the situation imposed by the COVID pandemic. With permission from another congregant, she shared that woman's situation whose mother was afflicted with COVID at a care facility in another state and the difficulties she had communicating with her mother in dire distress. This person did not speak with anybody at church about her situation, but felt that simply being able to commune with other church members on Sundays would have provided great solace. Stephanie said that she was motivated by this story to see from the survey results if there were others in need of the support a church opening and/or other initiatives might provide. [17:56] The quantitative portion of the survey does not reveal this information valuable to our community, but does reveal that as a congregation we are overwhelmingly vaccinated and ready to employ other necessary precautions to protect others. She believes that the construction or filling out of the survey might have skewed the results. For example, filling out the survey by one member of a household could mask the fact of multiple household members each with differing needs. Alternatively, if each member of a household filled it out, that might also have resulted in a shifting of statistical results. Release of the comment part of the survey might provide a fuller picture of our situation and members' needs that might otherwise go unnoticed or unheeded. Because of our high rate of vaccination and widespread commitment to additional measures, she asked the Board to consider if we had given enough weight to these facts in formulating our policy of opening the Church. In conclusion, she said "We miss the Church!" and asked "Does the Church miss us?" in reclaiming and restoring the fraying sense of beloved community we have suffered in the pandemic. In conclusion she thank the Board for listening and asked that we give our members an increased sense of HOPE. [24:00] In further discussion, she expressed a concern for the varying needs and risk tolerances of individual members and households and how that might help adjust the procedures and guidelines for re-opening. The matter of live-streaming and the capabilities of the camera system being installed was discussed. Claudia outlined that the camera system currently being installed was quite unobtrusive. Two wall-mounted cameras over the exit signs can rotate, but do not swing out in the room space are capable of zooming in on the speaker at the pulpit or pan over to the members on either side of the sanctuary, with broad or narrow view as desired. Additional cameras could be added to the system as desired. [28:50] Ryan asked Angela Hoffman of the COVID Task Force (CTF), who was participating from out of state, to review how the survey was put together and how the results came in. Angela constructed the survey, summarized the data and drafted the report to the Board. [29:44] The formal request for a survey came on September 1. The survey draft was completed by September 10 and was circulated for further input to the Foothills congregation and Catherine Loya, who provided many of the open-ended questions. The survey was then distributed for 10 days of data collection (September 11-19). Ten day turnaround for surveys is pretty fast, but an remarkably high number of responses (128) came in. On the risk level question, the directions specifically asked that checkoffs at every level be completed, so that the gradation of responses to various risk levels could be accurately assessed. Seven people checked off that they were comfortable attending indoor services with protective protocols in place at risk level SEVERE. At VERY HIGH, only 8 said they were comfortable with indoor attendance. This was assumed NOT to be aggregate (i.e. 15 Yes @ VERY HIGH), but simply 8 Yes @ VERY HIGH (=7+1). These uncertainties are inherent in surveys not conducted in person. As the risk level decreases, the number of people ready and willing to attend rose. These risk levels were chosen because they

mirror (A) the five levels the <CovidActNow.org> website uses, (B) the levels used in UUA guidelines. Whether a single household may have responded as one unit or as individuals could not be controlled under the time pressure. [34:00] Even given the fact that those producing the survey are unpaid volunteers lacking professional survey construction expertise working under the Board direction to produce a survey, Angela expressed confidence that the survey reflected substantial reluctance among the congregation at the current (VERY HIGH) risk level in Knox County. She observed that the actual question before the Board is not whether the survey was flawed in some way, but rather the Board decision of whether the qualitative responses should be released to a broader population or not. [36:19] Ryan added that the Board was not specifically guided by the statistical responses of the members: i.e. “If the majority says LOW is necessary to re-open, then LOW would automatically mean re-open” but rather “How do we allocate our resources to serve the most members?” Under these circumstances he interprets the breaking point between **majority are comfortable** and **majority are not comfortable** with opening to be critical. The survey indicates that a majority of the congregation are not comfortable with opening at the current risk level. The matter of the confidentiality of qualitative responses was stated on the survey as follows: “Only those on the Board and COVID-19 Task Force will have direct access to the survey results, and all responses will be stripped of names and other identifying information before being shared beyond those groups.” [38:30] Chris added that the results reflect that the congregation was comfortable with attendance as a HIGH level of risk, but not VERY HIGH or SEVERE. At this moment, community risk level is VERY HIGH, but moving rapidly toward HIGH. At the date of the survey, community risk level was SEVERE. The plan is to move to open the sanctuary for vaccinated at HIGH. [39:00] Jeff recalled Angela’s remarks, that, even when stripped of names, the responses still could be attributed to individuals, so the matter of confidentiality remained important. Stephanie repeated that she wasn’t interested in complete release of the results, but rather in addressing the needs of some members that may be hurting and release of just that information for the purpose of addressing that segment of our congregation. Chris noted that if a pastoral care need is seen in the responses or becomes evident by other communications, the church responds to these needs and even initiates contact under certain circumstances. [41:20] “In truth, everybody in the church is suffering and often in very different ways and in connection with the pastoral care group is trying to create different ways to respond to the various needs.” [42:00] Bill Fields then was recognized to address the Board. He began with these issues. (1) “To what degree is the survey used to determine what the Church will do?” The vaccination rate for the community at large (~52%) and the church (~97%) are radically different. No single survey question asked “Are you willing to come to church with mask, etc.” (2) The survey seems weighted toward asking about families with children. Because we have no control over when kids can be vaccinated, this shifts the way we decide to open. (3) His and others’ remarks on the members and friends apparently were characterized on the CTF meeting as “angry.” He wanted to stress that people are not angry, but are hurting because they miss their church. People are leaving the church or believing there is no place for them anymore. He believes we may lose a shared sense of belonging, trust and a sense of caring. As a caretaker in a nursing home, he acknowledges that he has been outspoken, but he has been at work every single day long before there was even talk of a vaccine. He believes we can and should find a way to move on and institute procedures that permit that, as he has had to do in his daily work life in a world that will always have COVID in it. The church must find a way to serve those who desperately want to go back to church. [46:46]

Bill requested that this Facebook thread be included in the minutes saying ‘as it is the

conversation that was called “angry”:

THREAD OF A TVUCC CONVERSATION ON REOPENING CHURCH BEGINNING SEPT 29, 2021 to OCTOBER 17, 2021

Names of participants are highlighted. Not all entries were dated other than the week of time posted at end of post.

Bill Fields

September 29 21ua08stl0 r8:4e14d PM ·

I appreciated getting the new guidance for reopening today and the results of the reopening survey. I do have a couple of questions about the guidelines. I did see the web links and am familiar with most of them. Are we using a combination of all the sources or is there one specifically we are relying on? And I wonder how the vaccination rate plays in with TVUUC as the Knox county rate is just under 60% while if I added right from our survey about 97 % of eligible folks at TVUUC are vaccinated. (Which is wonderful!) My other question is about the format of the services. I noticed that for “Very High” and “Severe” the term “streamed online” is used for the service format. I don’t know the nuances of the various types of technology but does that mean pre-recorded and on YouTube as it has been for the last 18 months or so? I know that when the plan was to open on Aug. 15 that included live streaming services from the sanctuary rather than the recorded services for folks who didn’t feel comfortable coming into the church. I know the necessary equipment was to be purchased and ready by that August date. Does streaming mean the services will be held in the church on Sunday morning but without a “live audience” so to speak and live streamed or that they will continue to be pre-recorded. And if “streaming” does mean they are continuing to be pre-recorded is the other not a possibility? Since I presume we have gotten the equipment can we not put it to use now? It would allow for church service on Sunday morning in real time which is certainly one step closer to being “regular” church. Thanks and thanks for the reports!

Angela Hoffman

Hi, Bill – Thanks for your post and for your questions. I can respond on behalf of the task force to most of your query, and Nick Potter has also provided some input, which I’ve incorporated into my response below.

For the reopening guidance chart, we used the community risk levels described by CovidActNow, and our recommendations under each of those levels are a synthesis from multiple sources (all listed in the intro piece). Of the different recommendation models, ours most closely mirrors that provided by UUA.

Regarding vaccination rates, you’re absolutely right that TVUUC members are doing great on that front! We, too, were really encouraged by the survey results. Because the task force is also looking at county-level data, though, we’re also considering vaccination rates among those eligible by age group for the entire population, not just our congregation. Our policy regarding risk level triggers of

moving from *requiring* vaccination to only *recommending* vaccination was crafted with this in mind, in that there's a range in vaccination status locally. Vaccination rates and availability did actually encourage us to be more liberal with reopening recommendations when compared to our previous model from December 2020. For example, under that guidance (which we have now sunset), we didn't recommend any indoor, in-person worship options until we entered the Low risk category, but we are now allowing that at the High category for vaccinated folks and at Medium for the general population. We also added options for outdoor worship gatherings at any risk level, which hadn't been included before.

Regarding streamed services, that language was intentionally left open to allow for either live or pre-recorded services. That decision is left up to the discretion of staff, and they or the worship committee should be better able to answer your questions about available technology and what plans they have going forward for services during Very High and Severe risk levels.

If there's anything else I can clarify, please let me know. Otherwise, thanks again for your questions and for your continued engagement on this issue.

Best,

Angela Hoffman

Bill Fields

Thanks Angela (and Nick). I appreciate what you're saying. Certainly, the Knox County positivity rates are important as TVUUC draws most of the membership from Knox county (but not all Walter and I being case in point). All those local and regional numbers and trends are important. We use the same data at work but admittedly we use it differently. It determines HOW we are open not IF we are open. And that's what I keep coming up against when I look at the guidelines and the survey. While community metric are important, the fact is the real community in question is the TVUUC community. You have a survey that says that community is 97% vaccinated. You also have that same survey saying that 68 % are comfortable going to outside services and 52% to indoor. Admittedly, you have to come at those numbers sideways because they're imbedded in the larger question of whether kids getting a vaccine is an issue. There was not a simple question saying are you, with proper precautions, ready to come to an indoor and/or outdoor services right now. Which would have gotten to the heart of the matter. In any case, it seems to me the survey of our TVUUC community is the one which should take priority. It says over half the folks are ready to come back to an in-person service. Despite that and despite what may or may not happen in the larger community, it appears staying closed for the foreseeable future is a done deal. We got a card today telling us that the auction this year would be online again and the party by Zoom. That says we are again already not planning to be open for an in-person activities in December which would mean there would again be no in person Christmas Eve Service. Already we're projecting a three month future of being closed. I'm left

with my same perpetual question. When? When can those of us who are ready to go back to church have the opportunity to do that? If we can live stream why don't we live stream? Even if we live stream badly. If 97% of the congregation is informed and aware and responsible enough to get vaccinated surely if we simply offer a service in the church on Sunday morning and let people decide on their own if they wish to attend those that do attend know how to be safe doing it. We just need to give people that option.

· Reply · 2w · Edited

Betty Bumgarner

Sue,

There is a worship committee at church. I'm assuming that executive leadership means Chris.

Betty Bumgarner

Oops. Executive leadership means the Board. I do believe Chris has the final say so.

Gordon Gibson

I do know that it was slower than expected to get the equipment in and installed. We may be almost ready to use it, but programmatically I don't know what that means.

Stephanie Gott Seay

It's beautiful weather, and we're overwhelmingly vaccinated. Let's at least have outdoor Sunday morning worship services. If staff doesn't want to serve, this can be lay-led. Right now only folks who want church on the couch on Sunday mornings are being accommodated, while those vaxxed and willing to gather safely are being ignored. I see longtime members drifting to other churches, and I am deeply concerned that our community has significantly eroded.

Bill Fields

Stephanie, I think you're absolutely right about the community eroding. I'm not sure at this point I could even tell someone exactly what the TVUUC community is. I see more effort going into somehow protecting us from ourselves than bringing us back to ourselves. It's no secret I've been frustrated for months with the pace of the reopening. I hesitated to ask my question yesterday and I hesitate to continue to engage in the discussion because I'm not sure doing it is not just driving me further toward being seen as some fringe crazy guy who can't get with the program. But, at least I hope, I'm still a part of this community and I don't like the program. It bothers me when we've talked so much about white privilege and class privilege, we're not able to understand how that's playing out in our community right now. That we feel we have the option to stay

closed as long as we want, to craft long, involved processes, to engage in long discussions, and move as slowly as we like seems to me very telling. The reality is most working folks and folks of color have no choice every day but to engage with the world, work in the world, move through the world, live in the world as it is, Covid or not. What we're doing seems to me the very definition of white middle class privilege. As is the assumption that everyone has access to and is comfortable with technology, that Zoom is a part of everyone's normal day, that anyone can get on line and is in a position to be on line at any time. I think in trying to be safe and cautious we are destroying the very community we are trying to protect.

Anne Whitney

I've been giving this more thought. I'm a psychologist in private practice and went to totally telehealth as did everyone in my practice early in the pandemic. Once I was vaccinated, I began to give vaccinated clients the option of

in person sessions. I did not change this when we surged again, despite slightly higher risk to myself, because I believe in person sessions are better than telehealth in many ways. I respect anyone's wishes to remain in telehealth and about a third of my clients continue in that mode. Perhaps this is why I don't understand TVUUC remaining closed. People can have the option to remain distanced, and those willing to assume a slightly higher risk to get the enhanced benefit of in person church services should be, in my opinion, accommodated.

Aisha Brown

I know people are afraid of this "break through" virus idea among the vaccinated. This may help someone. An elder physician explains why he thinks that vaccinated people are not carrying enough virus to spread the virus as much as people fear.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU1JMwCmZR4&t=377s>

Indya Kincannon

Is the member survey still open? I didn't see the link in my email or on here, though that is likely my oversight. FWIW, I would welcome a return to in-person services, with COVID safety protocols, for those who feel safe doing so, while continuing ... See More

· Reply · 1w

Angela Hoffman

Indya Kincannon No, the survey has been closed; we collected responses between September 10 - 19. A summary of the results can be viewed at the link below, along with the updated TVUUC COVID-19 policy guidance document that was released at the same time.

<https://tvuuc.org/tvuucs-updated-covid-19-policies-and.../>

Kenneth M. Moffett

The community has indeed eroded, that seems clear to me. In-person gatherings are essential for a sense of community.

Steve Seay

Kenneth M. Moffett Thank you and Mayor Kincannon for your comments.

· Reply · 6d

Barbara Catherine Johnson

I agree with all those who feel our reopening response has been so extreme we've eroded our church community. Every day I go to work, go to the gym, go to stores, go to restaurants, but I can't go to my church, even though it's probably the most vaxxed place in town. It's been so long now I don't even feel like I have a church anymore.

· Reply · 3d

Stephanie Gott Seay

Barbara Johnson I'm so sorry, Barbara. Please know that you are loved and valued. We who are willing to gather safely are still here and we are becoming more vocal and working for a lay gathering on Sunday mornings. For many folks, just the opportunity to gather on Sunday mornings in the reclaimed, sacred space of our sanctuary and be present with our community — with full precautions — would be a lifeline. ❤️ · Reply · 3d

[47:00]

Ken added that he knows of some individuals who had not filled out the survey either because they were unaware of it or of the associated deadline. He said that he had not reviewed the comments and was uncertain of the degree to which they governed or guided Board decisions. The same holds for comments on social media that he does not participate in. He believes there is a considerable sentiment in the congregation for opening the church. Although personally inclined toward opening, he supports the framework in part because the statistics are moving in the direction of the threshold supporting opening also and he looks forward to getting together again with Stephanie and other church friends. Stephanie reminded him of the 'Church of the Crafty Bastard' meeting often on Sunday afternoons. Chris reminded anybody who wishes to bring any matter to church attention to send email to <Board@tvuuc.org> because the Board is the policy making body and the executive operates within those parameters. [49:28] Ryan noted that the survey comments are one tool and avenue of communication about these issues in addition to the Coffee Hour, emails addressed to Board members and via other small groups. He reflected that much of this feedback reflected sadness and frustration among members rather than anger, but that the decision to remain closed in the face of rapidly rising delta variant numbers was the right one. He noted that there are a number of members who are scared and that resource allocation forces consideration of the burdens upon staff by reopening when certain segments of the population, especially children and the immunocompromised, may be indirectly affected by this or may still be reluctant to return. Finding the balance between conflicting demands is essential and though it may be we have not yet found that balance, that is the

necessary goal. [51:41] Chris noted that, when the delta variant emerged, groups that had been meeting in the church on their own stopped doing so. These behavioral changes were also monitored in the decision-making process. Now that there is increased readiness to return, that also must be taken into account. The changes in the outside reality over time have necessitated parallel changes in policy. As someone who has been involved in the RE Program, Stephanie expressed appreciation of Catherine Loya's implementation of outdoor RE activities for the children who cannot be vaccinated. She stated parallel programs for adults, even those who have received boosters and willingly mask, have been lagging. Linda noted that a degree of uncertainty in the policy oriented church community exists about who makes decisions. She has heard, for example, (1) that the COVID Task Force makes these decisions or (2) that Chris makes them or (3) that the Church won't open until anyone can come, vaccinated or not. Chris clarified that, acting as an executive, he can make immediate decisions within the parameters set by the Board without further consultation. A recent example of this was a warning from the FBI that on a certain date liberal churches might be targets of violence. On that date, as an executive decision, he told the staff not to come in to maintain safety. The same will apply to opening in the face of the coronavirus. [56:00] Noting the power of rumors in the congregation, which in his experience can be utterly false, Chris repeated his openness to calls and emails to set things straight. Different definitions of the relevant population to be considered in opening the Church emerged: (a) Knox County?, (b) Knox Metro?, (c) TVUUC members only?, (d) anybody from anywhere is welcome, as our front door sign proclaims?. Because all of us interact with others in the public outside the narrow TVUUC group, different conclusions will be drawn. [59:37] Mary expressed her growing appreciation as a new member of the Board of the myriad events and initiatives taking place in the Church, all of which point to reopening giving a growing sense of hope. In concluding, she expressed her feeling that the promise to survey participants that their responses would remain restricted to the Board, COVID Task Force and staff should be honored, lest any respondent feel betrayed. For the future, a content analysis requiring expertise she values but does not claim would be a valuable to help inform Church policy.[66:57] Claudia reported that the survey instrument was sent to 1,309 email addresses. Thirty-two point five percent (32.5%) opened that email. It was re-sent three days later to people who did not open it the first time. In the end, 316 people actually opened the email. After resending, an additional 119 people opened the survey email. She noted and others confirmed that this response rate was **excellent**, much higher than the Newsletter, for example. Additionally the survey was shared via various social media. She stated that the staff is ready and eager to resume services in the sanctuary. She has prepared it to accommodate 70 attendees in the sanctuary, the number that seemed reasonable resulting from social distancing. If more arrive, the Fellowship Hall and Lizzie Crozier French and Rooms A, B, and C can be used. We are ready when conditions permit! Ryan called on Angela to sum up before exiting from the ZOOM meeting because she is on vacation. She reported that when 128 people responded under such tight time pressure, that was a phenomenal response rate with a really large sample. She compiled and reported on the data in less than 24 hours. (Secretary's comment: that too is phenomenal.) Though the names have been redacted, several of the responses refer so clearly to life events that they are even identifiable to her as a relatively newcomer to the church. To preserve confidentiality and balance, those remarks would have to be pulled entirely, further skewing the picture. She noted for Bill's sake that she had intentionally not used the word 'family' in the survey. At this point, it was decided by consensus to include several emails to the Board in the minutes, which appear here if not included elsewhere:

Dear Board,

I filled out a questionnaire a while back about reopening the church; here I hope to better explain my responses.

I need the fellowship of human beings in person. Masked is fine, but online is not. I need to run into old friends, hear stories, give hugs (after respectfully asking first!), hear music (and sing, even masked), and meet new people. The church was long an anchor of shared community for Ken and me among our otherwise disparate interests.

I need a church that is open, not closed; that is welcoming, even if carefully so; that reflects and accepts our mostly vaccinated congregation. If some people do not feel safe attending, they should not, of course. But the majority should not be denied for the sake of a very few.

Ken and I attended one of the July Fellowship Hall viewings of an online service. About 15 people were there. When Ken later asked via email for volunteers to join the art committee, almost every respondent was someone who attended that same July service -- people we had recently seen in person. There is no substitute for personal contact.

We have a large sanctuary that generally allows plenty of room for spacing.

It is possible that the original metrics for reopening, which were established in the early days of Covid, under different information, are no longer the best metrics. Perhaps they could be reconsidered.

Respectfully,
Cindy and Ken Moffett

[75:27]

4. Role and Authority of the COVID Task Force

Discussion turned to Nathan Paki's concerns with the Church COVID policy. [77:00] Nathan began by thanking the Board and Church staff for their good work. He wanted to address what he called "COVID Task Force overreach." Referring to his October 4 online request for using Church space, he was informed by the Church office that his request had been forwarded to the CTF for consideration at its meeting on October 7, where it was denied. He stated that "the decision was unilaterally made by Ms. Hoffman without consulting other members of the task force." He said that he had been told several times that the CTF acts in an advisory capacity and the Board and Executive remain the ultimate authority on usage requests. He asked these questions: (1) If the CTF is acting in advisory capacity and the Board retains ultimate authority, why is the CTF making rental decisions? [79:17], (2) Shouldn't the CTF refer requests to the Director of Administration for decisions? (3) Why does one person on the CTF have all the decision-making power without input from the Committee or the Executive Team? He made the following additional observation: At the last CTF meeting, Ms. Hoffman referred persons questioning the church re-opening policy as "angry people." In almost twenty years of association with the church, even in contentious situations, he had never heard people being called "angry". This conflicts with the Church covenant and he questioned whether Ms. Hoffman should continue to serve on the CTF or, if the Board does not remove her, she should recuse

herself from decisions regarding use of Church facilities. Chris responded by saying that Angela was speaking to the policy, which was about eating and drinking and the necessity of keeping the masks on. It was a Board policy that was applied to other groups, including the Art Committee Music Committee hosting events where snacks and drinks were to be provided, where permission was denied. The Church understanding was that Nathan's request included the providing of drinks, which was the decisive point in declining the request. She was speaking in conformity with policies set by the Board. [81:46] Nathan said that he had not seen statements to this effect in the Board minutes he had examined. If the Board has established the policy, the office should be communicating these decisions. It should not be going through the CTF where one person denies the request. Chris repeated that it was not a one person decision, though one person spoke in the meeting on the issue, because the policy had already been set. [82:34] Nathan expressed that he did not appreciate that persons dissenting from the closure policy were referred to as "angry people". Chris noted that the Church welcomes dissent and disagreement and welcomed presentations to the Board as the appropriate place to raise these issues, but the CTF was operating within policies set by the Board. [83:00] At Chris' invitation, Claudia clarified that any email addressed to CTF is automatically also sent to Chris, Claudia as Church Administrator, the entire Executive Team, Board members and TVUUC staff as well as certain members of the congregation with health and medical backgrounds. [84:51] The typical process is that one person from the CTF may respond, but that does not mean that the CTF as a whole has not seen, discussed or made a finding on the issue. That could partially explain why it looks like a specific person has made a decision, but this appearance is inaccurate. Because the rental policy is new, the proposed event by Nathan and the Art Committee were the first two such events on which a decision had been made. [86:10] Whereas, previously, rental requests were made with the Church Administrator and run through the Executive Team to ensure lack of conflicts, the process has become more complicated because of the Board-established COVID safety guidelines. As a result, Claudia says she consults with the CTF on the current community COVID status and its effect on the decisions to be made on rental requests. Bottom line, a number of people are in on these discussions and decisions, even though only one person makes the final statement of approval or denial. [87:20] Linda observed that she had not seen this request. Nathan said he had submitted it on line through the website. Chris confirmed that the application and approval process is in a process of change with a goal to providing a check-off list to streamline both applications and decisions given the stages of COVID in the community and the coordinated differences of permissible activities. [88:09] Jeff called attention to the fact that the September 21 minutes just approved earlier in this meeting contained these details of COVID levels and permissible activities for each level. Until they were approved, the minutes of the September meeting were not made available to the congregation at large. These policies governed what Angela, speaking for the Board, had said. Ryan confirmed that the decisions made on October 7 were subject to the policies decided by the Board on September 21, but had not yet been promulgated to the congregation. [89:40] Stephanie observed that Nathan believed Angela had made a decision without the authority to do so. Chris reiterated that Angela was stating Board policy and articulating decisions on that basis, not making an individual decision. Both the Art Committee and Music Committee proposals had already been denied on the same basis and that there was no difference in treatment of Nathan's request from others. [90:20] Stephanie asked if there had been a specific vote on Nathan's request. Chris said that the question was if his request was in compliance with the decided policy, and it was not. There have been other requests for events with food and drink and they had been uniformly denied on this same basis of conformity with Board policy. As a result, no vote had seemed necessary. [91:13] He stated his conviction that, given the promising and rapid downward trends in community risk levels, events with food

and drink will soon again be ok. Like others, he looks forward again to potlucks. Matthew said he could not quite understand Nathan's objections. He believed in the light of collaborative procedures among the CTF, the Board and the Executive, the decisions were not singlehanded, but that all these groups eventually speak with one voice. With particular regard to the CTF, Nick and Angela are co-chairs. Matthew stated his agreement with Angela's assessment that food and drink sufficed to deny the request and was puzzled why Nathan believed Angela was acting unilaterally. Nathan said he expected a deliberation and a vote. [92:43] Chris suggested that the process of decision may need to be made more visible and clear, but reaffirmed that the CTF through discussion and debate had hammered out a policy as a basis for consistent decisions on rentals of Church space. He welcomed the suggestion that votes be made known and the basis for decisions be stated and expressed the hope that policy decisions and differences not be personalized, but that a system for decisions be developed. Nathan clarified that his request was solely for Angela to recuse herself from rental decisions. [94:33] Matthew noted that Angela and Nick had been the glue holding the CTF together and praised the "incredible amount of work" she had done "going above and beyond" anything that could have been asked of her. Ryan echoed this sentiment noting that Angela has been very careful to distinguish her analytical views from her opinions in CTF proceedings. He noted that Angela has reached out to him several times on congregational concerns in opposition to CTF and Board policies she had identified as needing his attention. [95:40] Chris added that she had also passed on to him pastoral care concerns that she had learned of through her work. He invited Nathan to consider that he had gotten an opportunity to reconsider his views after having learned additional information of which he may not have been aware and encouraged his continued engagement with the Church and continue engagement on matters of concern. [96:00]

Matthew moved, Ken seconded that the Board direct the CTF to record their votes on each application for Church use to report the reason(s) for denial (based on Board policy) in such cases. This motion included Linda's friendly amendment. (NB: Vote taken about 20 minutes later.)

Chris made a plea for patience, noting that the delegation of decisions from the Board and Executive to other entities such as the CTF was to facilitate MORE rather the FEWER activities and events, which had actually been the case. Making the transition from our previous in-person church services to live-streaming has been very time-consuming and has strongly impinged on his other pastoral duties. This is one compelling reason for such delegation. [105:52] Stephanie noted that the absence of a charter for the CTF was a factor obscuring the decision processes. Matthew reminded discussants that the title Task Force, not Committee, was chosen specifically because their work to be done was conceived as of [hopefully] short-term duration. [107:03] Jamie asked that we all must show some patience grace in this unprecedented and extraordinarily fluid situation requiring action at a pace faster than guidelines can be crafted, meetings be held, minutes be distributed. [109:33] Chris pointed out that we, as a welcoming congregation, must be especially welcoming of members new to the congregation who have voluntarily taken on burdensome duties. We need to remain aware that a word used may be perceived in a way that was not intended. [110:00] Claudia reminded participants that the CTF meetings every other week are open and she will post the ZOOM link for them. Further discussion clarified that proposals to the CTF or various committees are welcome and not pre-judged. [114:35]

Mary called the question on Matthew's motion. Eight in favor, Linda opposed. [118:30]

In response to Linda's question, Ryan and Chris said that Church re-opening will occur at the HIGH risk level identified on the website <CovidActNow.org>. Knox County had been at

SEVERE, was currently at **VERY HIGH**, and **HIGH** is expected very soon. Attendance will be permitted for those masked and vaccinated, but the determination of vaccination status will be on the honor system, another possible point of contention. Exit Bill from meeting. [120:57]

5. Technology Task Force

In view of the length of the meeting, Ryan provided an informational update on the Technology Task Force. A charter has been drafted and will be circulated to the Board in advance of the next meeting. The intent of the charter is to turn the TTF into a standing committee that will help set policy for the Church use of technology and create procedures for that. [121:31]

6. Personnel Committee

The next issue was the reconstitution of the Church personnel committee that had fallen dormant. He invited Linda's input on this matter. Linda reported that the committee should have at least five members. John McNair has indicated he would not continue to serve. Whether Susan Kovac would continue on the Committee was uncertain. Barbara Taylor is a continuing member. Rhiannon Ducey has agreed to serve for another year, so we will need possibly three or four additional members to bring the committee to full strength. She reported discussions with Ryan about whether Board members could serve on the Committee. Claudia confirmed that that had been the case in the past. Further discussion turned on the question of how personnel committee members were to be identified and installed because of decisions taken at the last congregational meeting: Is the Chair identified by the Nominating Committee or appointed by the Board? Ryan clarified that under current procedures the Board appoints the Chair. [126:51] Ken asked if the Board is in a position to identify and appoint members at this point. Further discussion of procedures and candidates was deferred to the next Leadership Team Meeting. [127:51]

7. Membership Committee

Linda confirmed that a charter for this committee was needed to identify its purpose. That was also the consensus of the committee members. Trevor Palmer was mentioned as one committee member, but it seemed unlikely that he would be the person to draft a charter. Jody Hamilton is listed on Realm as a member, as was Justina as a Board member. Other names mentioned were Ted Jones, Ken Kitchen and Paige Shimer as people to reach out to as possible continuing members. [130:56] A clear role for the committee going forward was not formulated. In the past, the committee members assisted in the membership classes and planning a new member brunch. The disruption of in-person events by COVID had interfered with this. Linda expressed willingness to help with the charter. Chris said he would look for documents regarding past committee organization. Justina agreed to continue as Board liaison and she asked Claudia to provide the names of those who had worked on these issues in the past. [132:31]

8. Other Committee Issues

The matter of committee reporting was discussed briefly and Chris expressed his willingness to circulate a document with a summary of previous reporting procedures for Board consideration. [134:11] Mary reported from the Stewardship Committee that Taylor Thomas was set to complete his calls to people who had pledged and that he was happy that pledges had increased to

more than \$500k. Chris reported an anonymous contribution of \$10k expressing gratitude from a homebound individual who had been coming to Church **more** during the pandemic because of virtual access. He contrasted this increased connection to the Church via livestreaming for people in nursing homes with the earlier sense of disconnection people unable to come to church had exhibited.

9. Adjournment

Ryan concluded the regular Board meeting at 8:49 p.m. so the Board could enter into Executive Session on confidential matters. [136:00]

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Mellor, Clerk-Secretary