

# **Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church**

## **Annual Congregational Meeting**

### **June 27, 2021**

**Meeting held by Zoom video conference**

#### **1. Call to Order: Covenant for Virtual Meeting**

Having established a quorum of at least 73 participants, Matthew Blondell, TVUUC President, called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m.

(Participants had registered prior to the meeting and joined the meeting via a ZOOM link sent out in response to an RSVP.)

**Because the church building is closed due to the pandemic, the congregation voted unanimously to approve a covenant to hold the meeting and vote electronically through Zoom video conference.**

The procedure for on-line voting via an on-screen voting link was explained, and guidelines for participation in the discussions were given.

#### **2. Thanks to Staff, Volunteers and Departing Board Members**

Noting that many more people than could be mentioned had provided valuable service to TVUUC since the church building closed last year, Matthew Blondell singled out the following for their work:

##### **Staff, Full Time, Part Time, & Independent Contractors**

- Chris Buice
- Claudia Pressley
- Jametta Alston
- Catherine Farmer Loya
- Miriam Davis
- Michael Miller
- John Montgomery
- Chaz Barber
- Cyndi Buchanan
- David Asbury
- Mark Mohundro
- Christopher Watkins-Lamb

##### **Board Members completing their terms at the end of June 2021:**

- Denise Coleman – Past President
- Erven Williams – Board Member at Large

##### **Volunteers who have provided services during the pandemic:**

##### **Grounds:**

- Doris Gove
- Bob Grimac

- Ken Stephenson

**Food Pantry:**

- Barbara Lamm
- Dick Trowbridge & Greg's Group

**Online Services:**

- Bill Dabbs
- Eric Hansen
- Little Brother and Sisterhood (Carolyn Rogers, Denise Coleman, Paul Davis)

**Technology:**

- Bill Pierce

**Managing and Selling Gift Cards:**

- Dee Stephenson
- Eunice Turner

**COVID Task Force:**

- Nick Potter
- Angela Hoffman
- Keith Hulse

**Stewardship:**

- Taylor Thomas

**3. Nominating Committee Report:**

On behalf of the Nominating Committee Laurie Knox presented this slate of candidates for the election to the following positions:

- Ken Stephenson, President Elect
- Jeff Mellor, Secretary (One-year term)
- Bill Cherry, Treasurer Elect
- Mary Rogge, Board Member
- Heather Kistner, Board Member
- Melissa Reed, Nominating Committee Chair Elect
- Sue Kersey, Nominating Committee
- Seema Singh, Nominating Committee
- Grier Novinger, Endowment Committee Position 1
- Stephanie Seay, Endowment Committee Position 2 (1 year)
- Joy Fels, Endowment Committee Position 3
- Robby McMurry, Endowment Committee (3 years)

In light of COVID-related suspension of in-church activities, Laurie Knox noted that her Committee had acknowledged this by recognizing a 'pause year' for Program Committee Chair Elect and had re-nominated for the coming year:

- Allen Braswell, Program Committee Chair Elect

She concluded her presentation by calling on the congregation to update their information in the REALM directory so as to enrich our community by sharing their skills, judgment and capabilities when future nominating committees call.

**The congregation unanimously voted acceptance of the slate in its entirety.**

#### **4. Financial Report and Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-22:**

Viren Lalka, TVUUC Treasurer, presented the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2021-22 which begins on July 1. He highlighted three facts from the outset:

- 1) he was presenting a deficit budget of \$31,601.97;
- 2) the financial health of the church is strong, and there are anticipated improvements to revenue, for example, from Generosity Sunday contributions and recovery of prior year pledges;
- 3) the budget is a reflection of the church as a whole and our planned capital and personnel expenditures highlight careful attention to the future of our community.

He emphasized that the cost of living increases were an opportunity to reward the valiant service our staff had provided under trying circumstances. The number one challenge in today's market, he added, is not capital, but labor and the difficulty of recruiting and keeping quality employees. Our staff and team are our assets, and it is the task of a Treasurer always to guard these assets. He reviewed how this budget reflected how the Board — guided by our UU principles and priorities — had judiciously and rigorously slimmed down an earlier budget proposal with a much larger deficit. Our ability to do a range of COVID-related capital improvements is assured by a Small Business (SBA) grant. Concluding his remarks, he cited a Gujarati proverb "If you cannot bring a flower to the banquet, at least bring a petal" to exhort members of the congregation to donate whatever they can in time, talent and treasure in common cause to meet our needs. He opened the floor to questions, but hearing none, Matthew Blondell called for a vote on the budget.

**The vote was 96% in favor, 4% abstain. [40:37]**

#### **5. Approval of Minutes of 2020 Congregational Meeting:**

**The minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting as provided in the meeting materials came as a motion and second to approve as distributed. 89% votes in favor, 11% abstain.**

#### **6. Report from the Endowment Committee: [42:29]**

Speaking for the Endowment Committee, David Massey summarized the 2020 Annual Report and First Quarter 2021 Report and highlighted the following points:

- 1) the TVUUC Endowment Fund exists to provide long-term financial stability to the church and its mission;
- 2) donations to the fund are invested permanently in a mix of stocks and bonds with a moderate growth income strategy;
- 3) earnings from the fund support a mix of projects beyond the reach of the operating budget;
- 4) the Fund is managed by a committee of seven members elected by the congregation to staggered terms at our Annual Meeting;
- 5) the balance of the Fund as of today is \$633,463, up slightly from the June 2021 reported amount.

He emphasized that the market since April 2020 has been quite robust, but noted the Fund can

in the normal course of events suffer both gains and losses. The most reliable way to have the Fund grow in size is through contributions, whether by legacy gifts, such as a bequest in a will. Of equal importance are the outright gifts members can make on a regular or occasional basis to the Fund. He closed with an expression of deep appreciation for the members leaving the Committee, Andrea Yates and Don Dougall. He encouraged members to address any questions about the Fund by calling or writing any member of the Committee. [45:03]

### **7. Welcoming Congregation Committee Report:**

On behalf of the Committee, outgoing Chair Mark Mohundro reported the election of the following committee officers: Meris Porter, Chair; Elaine Smith, Secretary. He updated the congregation on the annual updating process necessary to maintain status as a LGBTI+ Welcoming Congregation. We have successfully made it through the first and second annual rounds as a Charter Member Congregation thanks to the hard work of the committee members. Board President Matthew Blondell, also a member of the committee, expressed his thanks to Mark for his endeavors. [46:31]

### **8. Strategic Planning Committee / Technology Task Force Report:**

A.B. Coleman reported on the efforts of the Task Force to find means for congregation members and other interested parties to participate effectively in our community through available technology. Particularly younger people, who principally communicate by text, not email, were ‘targets of interest’ in these discussions. The focus was to provide clear, broadly inclusive means of communicating on and implementing the strategic plan. Of particular concern was the disparity of preferred communication methods and the resultant uncertainties regarding responsibilities and deadlines. The Committee decided that the tools of Microsoft Office 365 could most effectively facilitate and integrate work done in REALM and WordPress to provide greater consistency in church work. The following people were involved in these deliberations: Ryan McBee, A.B. Coleman, Denise Coleman, Michael Loo, Chloe Airoidi-Watters, John McNair, Cyndi Buchanan, Daniel Buchanan and Bill Pierce. A.B. gave special recognition to Bill Pierce for his long-time participation in technological innovations in the church that has earned him a 30 year achievement award for his efforts. He issued a special invitation to anybody in the congregation interested in participating in the areas of

- 1) audio-visual support for choir and services,
- 2) main communication infrastructure,
- 3) services and user privileges,
- 4) obtaining and tracking input from church members and stakeholders such as Endowment Committee,
- 5) attractiveness and usefulness of the church website.

Matthew thanked A.B. and the committee for this complicated and important work. In response to a question from Viren, A.B. clarified that Microsoft Teams would be ‘the glue’ between REALM and the website so that the information on REALM is also on the website. [54:40]

### **9. 8th Principle Statement Report**

On behalf of the 8th Principle Task Force, Co-Chair Mark Mohundro updated the congregation on the work beginning in 2013. The working text provided by the UUA Board is “We, the

member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.” Several congregations in the UUA have already adopted this principle. Input will be received by the UUA next January and the 8th Principle will be discussed at General Assembly next year with final vote on acceptance to be taken at the General Assembly in the following year. Mark thanked the Task Force members, Eddie Chin, Alice Woody, Soriya Cooper, Chloe Airoidi-Watters, Seema Singh, Sarah Holsenback, Aisha Brown, Chris Buice, Matthew Blondell, and Co-Chair Jametta Alston, for their amazing work. [56:58]

**Motion to adopt the 8th Principle was 97% in favor, 3% abstain.**

## **10. Bylaw Revision Discussion**

Discussion of proposed Bylaw Revisions began under the leadership of Linda Randolph. Among the issues discussed:

- term of the Treasurer Elect (begins in odd year or even year? Odd was declared definitive.)
- Susan Kovac raised the issue of the titles Membership Coordinator and Office Administrator. The corresponding duties, tasks and titles were not commensurate, and job titles had been changed, so the Bylaws should not specify titles that had been changed or refer to titles that do not or no longer exist. Underlying issues that emerged in discussion: 1) an unclear assignment of duties in the resulting in haphazard or uncertain performance of particular tasks, 2) perceived need to specify tasks in the Bylaws to assure their prompt and continued performance, 3) assignment of duties in the Bylaws to titled positions that do not exist, 4) complexity of amending the Bylaws, which requires a full congregational vote and takes a year to do, 5) inflexibility of Bylaws resulting in inability to accommodate more rapidly shifting administrative needs. e.g. in case of resignations. [66:41]
- David Holden offered the generic correction that the incoming Chairs should be titled Rising Chairs, not Chairs Elect whenever the position is appointed, not elected.
- Mary Rogge asked for clarification of the process of membership status and reinstatement.
- From the perspective of database management, Miriam Davis questioned the ways in which the terms presence, absence, removal, reinstatement of individuals from the church database were used. Status terms in a Member Status field such as active, inactive, moved away, resigned, former member, deceased, visitor, prospect are acceptable, whereas removal or deletion from the database is not good management practice. She offered to supply language that would address these issues. [78:50]
- Claudia Pressley reminded discussants of the way REALM functions: If a person is a member and has pledged or contributed funds in some fashion, that person is listed in our database and cannot be *deleted*, but only *deactivated*. If somebody who has been deactivated because they have moved away, they can request reactivation. [82:30] Only cases in which a sometime visitor in the distant past whose address and phone number no longer permit contact are truly deleted.
- Jeff Kovac moved that in light of the extensive changes and discussion, Bylaw revisions be referred back to the Committee for presentation to the Congregation at a later meeting. It

was seconded, and discussion on a variety of additional other matters continued. In response to Seema Singh's point of information, it was established that, if the issue is referred back to the Committee, an additional congregational meeting with a quorum of 50 members would be needed to approve the result. [85:32]

- Jeff Mellor asked if there were issues in the Bylaws that required immediate approval to permit the Church to function until the next congregational meeting, and if these issues, if such exist, were separable. Jeff Kovac said by parliamentary procedure that his motion had to be voted upon before Jeff Mellor's question could be dealt with. [87:45]
- Matthew Blondell requested that Mark Mohundro set up a vote on Jeff Kovac's motion. While Mark's efforts were in process, discussion on other substantive matters for the Committee to consider continued, among them the status of Youth Members of the Board and the weight of their vote (1/2 vote or 1 vote) if they were over 16 and, thus, full members of the church.

**Motion to refer Bylaws Revision back to Committee passed 82% yes, 11% no, 7% abstain.**

## **11. Election and Results**

**The slate presented by the Nominating Committee was approved 95% Yes, 5% Abstain.**

## **12. Introduction of New President**

Matthew Blondell briefly reviewed the tumultuous COVID year that the church had successfully negotiated during his presidency and expressed his profound thanks to Denise Coleman and Ryan McBee, his predecessor and successor, for their immense guidance and support. He then turned the meeting over to Ryan McBee expressing his support and confidence in the direction of the church in Ryan's capable hands. Ryan in turn thanked Matthew for his leadership and expressed confidence in the Board, staff and volunteers who make the work of the church possible.

**13. Ryan McBee moved adjournment, which met with general assent at 2:05 p.m. [99:04]**

**Respectfully submitted**

***Jeff Mellor***

***Secretary-Clerk***

***July 20, 2021***