

Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church
Annual Congregational Meeting
June 12, 2022
DRAFT MINUTES PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL

Hybrid meeting in person and via ZOOM

1.Call to Order: Covenant for Virtual Meeting

Having established a quorum, Ryan McBee, TVUUC President, called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m. (Participants either registered in church prior to the meeting or joined the meeting via a ZOOM link sent out in response to an RSVP.)

Because of lingering concerns related to the pandemic, the congregation to hold the meeting and vote in a hybrid in-person and virtual.

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

Ryan McBee reviewed the agenda items as follows:

- 1) Covenant for meeting
- 2) Approval of minutes from June 2021 meeting
- 3) Nominations and voting for candidates
- 4) Budget
- 5) By-Law revisions
- 6) Endowment Fund Charter
- 7) Strategic Planning Committee Update

1.The Covenant statement was read by President McBee and the following motion to meet in a hybrid forum with was adopted unanimously.

We, the members of the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Church, vote to have our Congregation meeting in hybrid form for the 2022-23 year. Though our by-laws do not officially say this is not allowed, we are affirming that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and because our church is following proper COVID-19 protocols, we are voting virtually through a Zoom congregational meeting. All votes from this meeting will be valid, just as if we were meeting in person, in the church space. We recognize the need to adapt, and that our church is not the building itself, but the people of which it is made.

2. Approval of Minutes of 2021 Congregational Meeting:

The minutes of the 2021 Annual Meeting as provided in the meeting materials came as a motion and second to approve as distributed. Approved.

3. Nominating Committee Report:

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Mark Mohundro presented this slate of candidates for the election to the following positions:

- Eddie Chin, President Elect
- Alice Woody, Secretary-Clerk (One-year term)
- Mebbie Jackson, Board Member
- Lynn Hixson, Board Member
- Wendy Syer, Board Member (One-year term completing term of Alice Woody)

- Rob Bray, Board Member
- A.B. Coleman, Nominating Committee Rising Chair
- Chloe Airoidi-Watters, Nominating Committee
- Trevor Palmer, Nominating Committee
- Maureen McBride, Endowment Committee
- Stephanie Seay, Endowment Committee
- Betty Bumgarner, Program Council Rising Chair

Congregation members were instructed to fill out their ballots in person or virtually so that the votes could be tallied and reported at the conclusion of the meeting.

4. Financial Report and Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23[06:25]

Treasurer Viren Lalka reviewed the income and expenditures for the fiscal year coming to a close. He explained the role of the funding through the SBA loan that enabled the church to sustain operations and cover the substantial costs of needed repairs to the leaking roof. A further portion of the SBA funds were to be transferred to a restricted account to cover anticipated future capital repair and replacement expenditures.

He turned the floor over to Bill Cherry, the incoming Treasurer, for presentation of the budget picture going forward. After thanking the leadership of the Church, Bill began by stressing that the deficit shown in operating for the concluding fiscal year was actually canceled by the SBA funds and that future expenditures will be in part addressed by the restricted account just established. The new budget presented to members for approval is a balanced budget, as required by the Board Charter, but not yet been entered into the policy manual. Establishing a balanced budget policy is acknowledged to be best practice and it is expected that this will be entered into the policy manual soon.

Projected expenditures in the upcoming budget are approximately 10% less than the average of recent years because revenues have decreased. Most expenditure categories have remained flat, except for a few categories necessitated by a return to in-person worship, for example, childcare. Personnel costs represent the largest portion of outlays and this budget reflects the loss of the assistant minister position and no increases in compensation or benefits. Because our staff already is compensated at a level considerably below UUA guidelines, this is a matter of concern that can only be addressed with an increase in revenue. One question from the floor asked about provision for expanding the solar array on the roof from funds it generates. Funds for this are available in the Buildings and Grounds budget. A second question asked about personnel for audio and visual support. This results from the ongoing virtual church service component and the requirement that virtual parishioners' needs be met. Claudia Pressley provided details of these costs. Up to this point, we have relied on three volunteers to provide these services, but the needs exceed what the volunteers can provide. She urged others to come forward to be trained for these needs as that would reduce costs. [23:33]

Ginna Mashburn moved, Joe Touchton seconded a motion to accept the budget as presented to be voted on by the congregation. [36:05]

The budget will be voted on via the hybrid balloting procedure.

5. By-Law Revisions

Ken Stephenson presented the revisions of the bylaws distributed to congregants for consideration and adoption. For background, he pointed out that the revisions proposed at the 2021 Congregational Meeting had been tabled. As a result, the Board had appointed a committee consisting of Ken Stephenson, Heather Kistner and Alice Woody to revisit the issues raised in the previous Congregational Meeting. First off, wording suggested by the Sustainable Strategies Task Force under the leadership of A.B. Coleman had been adopted, particularly in restating the duties of the Board and volunteer teams. Changes in titles include Director of Finance and Operations, which is the UUA approved title for the position Claudia holds, and a renaming of the Nominating

Committee to be Leadership Development Committee, acknowledging the requisite of backing and training for persons who step up into leadership roles. Pronouns have been adjusted to appropriate gender-neutral forms. Additionally, language protecting the perpetual status of the Memorial Gardens had been crafted in the extreme event of dissolution of the church. Also, provisions for the protection of the Endowment Fund in this situation was addressed. The title Rising Chair replaces Chair Elect for non-elective positions. He emphasized that the changes proposed were not major structural changes, but minor adjustments to changed circumstances. Two meetings, open to all interested parties in the church, one in-person, one virtual, had been held to review in advance issues of possible concern. With approval by those present, the title concerning religious education was corrected to **Lifespan Religious Education**, the UUA-approved title, was incorporated in the document for consideration. [31:40]

The document was then referred for approval on the virtual and in-person ballots.

6. Endowment Fund Charter

David Massey, Chair of the Endowment Fund Committee, reviewed the changes in the Endowment Fund Charter from 1992. The changes bring the proposed charter into compliance with state law, add protections to donors who have contributed to this fund, strengthen internal checks and balances and the professional organization of the committee, and lay the foundation for future growth. He introduced the attorney the Endowment Fund had engaged to assure compliance and adequate flexibility, J. Scott Griswold, of Long, Ragsdale and Waters. Attorney Griswold has worked with Amy Hess and Viren Lalka in crafting the proposed charter. [34:48]

President Ryan McBee moved, Grier Novinger seconded the motion to be voted on by ballot:
Shall the Congregation of the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church replace the 1992 Endowment Fund Charter with an amended and restated Endowment Fund Charter as presented to the Congregation in materials that accompanied formal notice of the 2022 Annual Meeting?

Ryan reminded the congregation that this motion must be approved by 2/3 of the congregation to be adopted.

The in-person ballots were collected and instructions for virtual voting were issued.

Before votes were collected, Gordon Gibson reminded the congregation of the critical value of our employees and staff, who had worked valiantly to preserve the operation of our church during the pandemic, had developed an impressive array of additional skills under these conditions, whose replacement value considerably exceeds their compensation, *for which no raise in pay is offered in this budget*. His sentiments were met with strong acclamation of those present.

7. Strategic Planning Committee Update [42:44]

AB Coleman lauded the excellent planning that the church has traditionally had, but noted how changes in technology, society and funding had hampered assuring execution of these plans. The committee had examined how technology could be better used to strengthen communication among all stakeholders in the church community and facilitate execution of our plans.

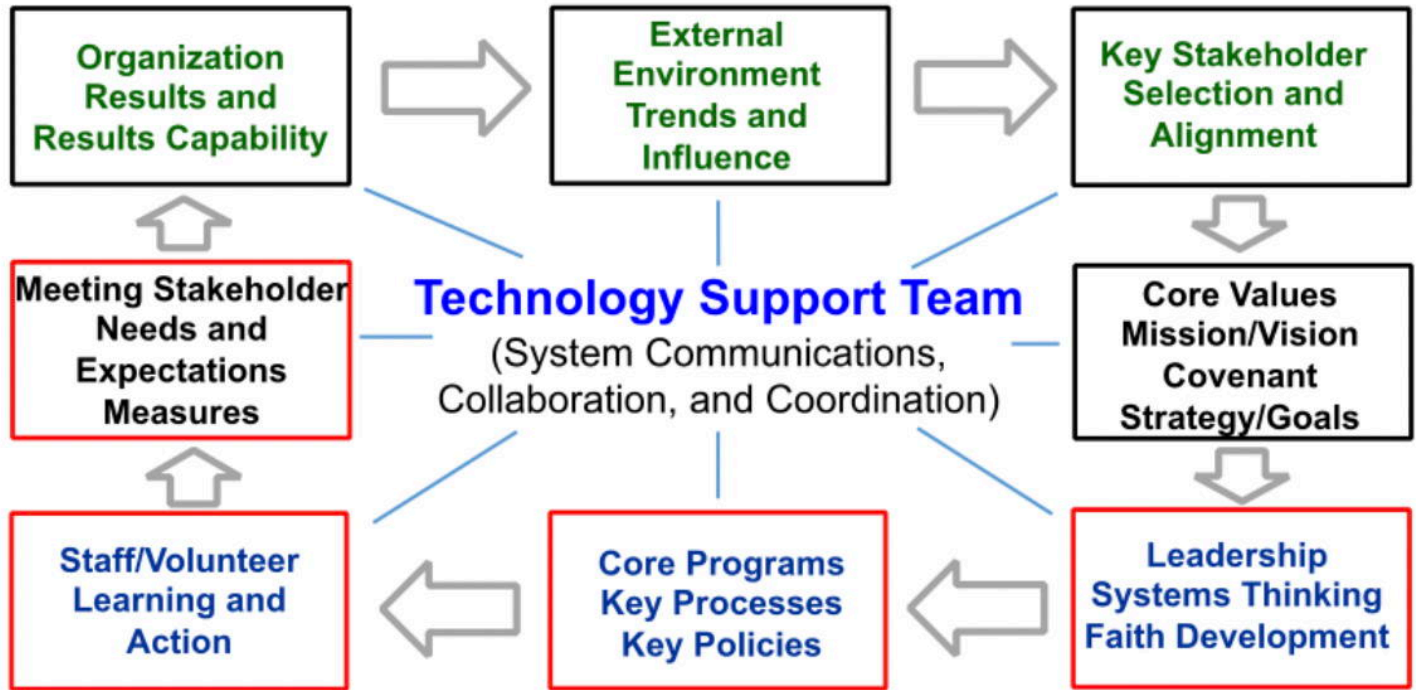
Stakeholders is broadly defined as anybody who can contribute to the success and reap the benefits of our enterprise, not just members or Board members, but everybody who can help or can profit from our activity including staff, friends in the community, organization partners, funders and grant sources.

He illustrated the interplay of these components as shown:

TVUUC Alignment Teams

Strategic Planning Committee

(System Goals and Strategy)



Sustainable Strategy Team

(System Resource Development and Deployment)

Two critical components going forward are communications and information systems for the church. We have access to Microsoft 365 for Non-Profits and Google Workspace and other Google Non-Profit offerings, platforms that provide the technology for this, but revenues limit what we can achieve. We need additional volunteers with IT skills and the committee will strengthen outreach to church members and funding sources, such as the Endowment Fund. Communication with stakeholders needs development and strengthening.

Our current website currently addresses two audiences: internal communication and public outreach. Most organizations separate these two functions in separate websites. More clearly distinguishing these functions will improve communication with stakeholders. Two teams have emerged, the technology support team and the sustainable strategy team, to enable us to achieve better execution of our plans.

He encouraged members to join in these efforts and work on the team best suited to their capabilities and interests. He highlighted the fact that young people, with their heightened skills in technology, should be encouraged to work on tech support. But as just one example, security of our electronic systems, which is not currently strong, needs to be enhanced. A local firm that can do that charges \$1200/ month. To save money, the committee is attempting to work with Pellissippi State engaging students there to meet some of our needs as class projects.

The committee will be issuing a survey to help establish priorities. AB noted that half a million dollars would be needed to address every need he could identify, so establishing priorities is essential to forming realistic plans and goals.

8. Thanks to Staff, Volunteers, Departing Board Members [62:27]

Ryan McBee summarized the recent year as one of transition, learning new ways and adapting to the pressures

COVID has put on us. He highlighted some of the largest undertakings we had been able to **resume**, such as the rummage sale and art receptions. He lauded the efforts of those who had sustained programs that had **continued** during the pandemic, such as the Children's Justice and Diversity Library and Community Garden. Of special importance were the programs that church stakeholders had **initiated**, such as the Food Pantry, and the expansion and refinement of audio-visual technology to make our services and other programs available to people not physically present in the church. Finally, he noted the fund of innovative ideas awaiting fulfillment in the future.

Noting that many more people than could be mentioned had provided valuable service to TVUUC in a year of partial closure and tentative reopening in a hybrid format, Ryan McBee 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
- Cyndi Buchanan
- David Asbury
- Mark Mohundro
- Dr. Reginald Houze

Board Members completing their terms at the end of June 2022:

- Matthew Blondell – Past President
- Viren Lalka - Treasurer
- Alice Woody – Board Member at Large (vacating her seat to succeed as Clerk-Secretary)
- Jamie Watts – Board Member at Large
- Jeff Mellor – Secretary-Clerk

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

- Doris Gove
- Bob Grimac
- Jeff Mellor and Greg's Group
- Emily Taylor
- Barbara Lamm

Endowment Fund Committee:

- David Massey
- Grier Novinger
- Gail Anderson
- Betty Coleman
- Joy Fels
- Robby McMurry
- Stephanie Seay

Covid Task Force:

- Nick Potter
- Angela Hoffman
- Keith Hulse

Technology:

- Bill Pierce

Gift Cards:

- Eunice Turner
- Dee Stephenson

Stewardship:

- Heather Kistner
- Ted Jones
- Denise Coleman

Food Pantry:

- Barbara Lamm
- Linda Nichols
- Jocelin Hunter
- Doris Gove
- John Orme
- Jametta Alston
- Heather Kistner
- Betty Kidd

Rummage Sale:

- Lilian Mashburn

Auction:

- Diane Fox

Flower Committee:

- Matthew Blondell
- Meris Porter
- Emily Taylor
- Wimberly Thompson
- Margaret Neate
- Sylvia Smith
- Judy Ann Langston

[66:20]

At this point, Chris Buice added that his assessment that every member of the staff had, by virtue of their having learned and refined new skills, become very much more marketable.

He offered special recognition to the legacy of the Rev. Jametta Alston whose tenure with us will end in June.

One of the most difficult tasks of a minister is pastoral care for shut-ins and Jametta had overseen this duty in a period when *everyone was a shut-in*. She had developed a cornucopia of ways to facilitate this ministry utilizing check-in groups and other creative initiatives. This was a huge part of her legacy for our church. Her commitment to antiracism training had helped us come through with a renewed sense of how to combat racism in ourselves and our institutions. One particular accomplishment was aiding those in our congregation who had acknowledged that they did not know how to talk to African-Americans about issues of race. Chris admired especially in Jametta that she said honesty is a great place to start and a great place to grow. He recalled how she said that Maya Angelou was the kind of black woman white women like. This can help us identify whether our denomination is as inclusive and universalist as it needs to be for our future growth. Finding the language to do that is critical. Another part of her legacy is advancing the cause of LGBT+ folks and their needs and aspirations in the most everyday and simple ways. The Food Pantry, which has become a signal community outreach, began with her putting out a carton of food items and noting how our water fountain meets the needs of many in our community. The most important person in the history of our church is Jim Person, an African American man, who walked up to the doors of our church emblazoned with the sign EVERYONE WELCOME long before Brown v Board of Education in a segregated city and segregated time and asked “Does that sign mean me?” That action changed our church, changed it permanently and made our church one that takes a stand on racial justice, even in a denomination where not every congregation can make that commitment. He looks forward to the day when the portraits of UU ministers on our wall adds her image with the hope that another person might enter our church and, seeing that image, can say, “I am welcome, too.” He concluded, “Thank you, Jametta Alston” to resounding applause from those present. [72:20]

9. Election and Results

Ryan McBee reported the results of the balloting:

- Budget passed 83 yes votes in favor
- Endowment Fund Charter 86 votes in favor
- By-Law Revision 79 votes in favor
- All candidates for the various positions passed with 76 votes in favor.

10. Introduction of New President and Inaugural Remarks

Ryan McBee introduced the newly elected President Ken Stephenson who addressed the congregation briefly as follows:

“Thank you for the opportunity to serve as President. Let us all thank Ryan McBee and his predecessor Matthew Blondell who have guided us through these tough times. I offer my personal thanks for their help in taking on this leadership role.

Great challenges confront us. Great challenges also bring great opportunities --- I would add that a pandemic provides a great occasion for introspection. It is time now that we must reset so we can enrich our TVUUC community within and engage fully in our mission of social justice in our larger community. TVUUC has been there in the past and we need to step up now more than ever.

One requirement for meeting our challenge is money. We have passed a tight but solid budget, but at the cost of certain critical needs. With your help we can aspire to additional funds, and I will list some priorities:

- o Bringing our staff salaries closer to the UUA recommendations
- o Providing leadership training for those newly assuming leadership roles
- o Consistently adding to our Building Maintenance Fund
- o Outreach, such as on campus and advertising on WUOT.
- o Funds for guest musicians.

Remember: **It is never too late to pledge.**

More than money, we need volunteers. I will mention the auction, rummage sale, RE teachers, community garden, coffee, etc. (Personally, I found working with the gang on the rummage sale and the Welcome Garden to be surprisingly rewarding.)

Remember also: **It is never too late to volunteer.”**

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Jeff Mellor
Secretary-Clerk
June 20, 2022