

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

March 26, 2024

Present: Debby Rice, Linda Bogardus, Nancy McArthur, Susie Allen, Elizabeth Davidson Derr, Liz Jaques, Naj Wikoff, Annie Scavo, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Shawn Lamarche, Robert Rokos, Howard Husslein, Fritz Sabbow, Pam Gothner, and Deborah Mitchell.

Debby opened the meeting at 5:00 PM. This meeting was held via Zoom.

Opening Prayer: Debby led us in prayer.

Determination of Quorum: We had a quorum at today's meeting.

Approval of February KVCC Council Minutes: Robert made a motion to accept the February KVCC Council Minutes. Howard seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Padriag O'Tuama Retreat: Susie provided the Council with an update on the POT Retreat. Susie informed the Council there have been 41 tickets sold already so far. She is encouraging everyone to register if they haven't done so already. She has applied for 2 grants and is in collaboration with a number of agencies/businesses in the North Country. A website has been launched and publicity is expanding.

Bazaar: Dre was unable to attend tonight's Council meeting so there are no new updates.

Buildings: Howard updated the Council on important building updates. After a review by our insurance company, Howard is recommending we follow their recommendations and improve the emergency lighting in the building. He estimates adding battery-backed emergency lighting, exit signs, panic bar, etc., would cost between \$2,500 and \$3,000. The Council concurred with Howard's recommendations, and he will pursue purchasing needed items to improve the safety of the church and congregants.

Annette Merle Smith Endowment: Debby led a discussion on the best way to structure how the Council manages ideas and recommendations based on the report from the AMS Task Force. She recommended we look at the report as certain themes evolved, such as: thinking about ways in which to help the church stay solvent financially, to attract new/younger churchgoers, to identify programs/services that would attract new people, and how to prioritize the recommendations. Debby hopes to begin laying out the structure of how to move forward with the AMS Task Force recommendations at next month's meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

PASTOR'S REPORT – MARCH 26, 2024

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Performed House Blessing for Naomi on Sunday, March 17.
- Sponsored meditation and kirtan observance of the Spring Equinox on Tuesday, March 19, led by Robin Gluck and Nora Nadire. 35 people attended.
- Lent, Holy Week and Easter:

- Welcomed Kiana French from The Ausable River Association to provide a Mission Moment on Sunday, March 24.
- Group observing Lenten fast 2/14 – 3/31; weekly support meetings.
- Maundy Thursday, March 28 @ 5 PM
 - Will co-lead with Alana Both and Martha Gallagher
- Good Friday, March 29 – 7 PM
- Easter, March 31
 - 5 AM – Lighting of the Paschal Candle
 - 7 AM – Sunrise Service at the Transfer Station
 - 10 AM – Church Service w/communion
 - 1 PM – Service at the Neighborhood House
- Congregation was very generous with donating used candles to create the Christ candle for Christmas.
- Will be working remotely 4/2 – 4/12, leading worship on 4/7 by Zoom. Will not offer communion this Sunday.
- May 11 and May 20 – KVCC will sponsor a Contemplative Photography class led by Ingrid Cyros.
- May 21 – World Meditation Day; KVCC to offer walking and sitting meditation, and a silent lunch.
- June 2 – Music Sunday.
- June 20 - Will sponsor a sunrise viewing and cold plunge to observe the Summer Solstice. Then will invite members and friends to travel to Old Forge to see Robin Wall Kimmerer offer a talk at 6 PM.
- August 18 – Will be guest preacher at All Souls Chapel. Martha Gallagher will be filling in for me.
- Friday morning prayer group meets weekly in the VSR, sharing prayers, concerns, and joys of the community.
- The Centering Prayer Group (CPG) meets mornings @ 7 AM via Zoom.

Worship Attendance

Sunday Morning Worship			
Date	Total In-Person	Online Sessions	Recording Views
1/7/24	23	24	11
1/14/24	33	24	9
1/21/24	35	24	9
1/28/24	39	19	12
2/4/24	41	22	13
2/11/24	43	16	11
2/18/24	50	21	7
2/25/24	56	14	16
3/3/24	45	16	13
3/10/24	29	19	16
3/17/24	45	18	24
3/24/24	44	23	11

Neighborhood House

- Leading weekly worship at the Neighborhood House. Worship includes: introductions, hymn singing, group reflection on sacred scripture, and prayer.
- Weekly attendance average: 7 people
- Members of the Neighborhood House have been attending Sunday morning worship at KVCC.

- Upcoming special services:
 - Easter service, March 31, 1 PM

Summer Speaker Series

- Padraig O'Tuama has been selected as our speaker.
- Padraig is a distinguished Irish poet, theologian and mediator.
- He will join us on Saturday, August 10 and Sunday, August 11.
- John Sampson and Susie Allen are co-leading the preparation and management of the event. Other members of the planning team include: Martha Gallagher, Shawn Lamarche, Debby Rice, and Naj Wikoff.
- Weekly group meeting scheduled for Thursdays at 3PM via Zoom.
- Chief accomplishments since last Council Meeting: contract signed, ticketing platform configured and released, advertising begun, 2 grant applications submitted with another in the works.
- As of 3/22, 40 people have registered to attend, which is 40% of our goal.
- Identifying other volunteers to help with different aspects of the event.

Open and Affirming

- Tri Lakes Pride is scheduled for Sunday, June 30 in Saranac Lake.
- North Country Pride is scheduled for Saturday, September 28 in Plattsburgh

Web Site

- Jimm Collin presented the draft website on Thursday, March 7
- Reviewed content requirements, and updates to site
- Waiting for these updates to be made and a new draft to be shared

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- Pat Bigelow memorial to be held on Wednesday, March 27.
- Zielinsky/Szymkowiak wedding scheduled for Saturday, July 6.

Pastoral Support

- Weekly office hours scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 – 3 PM. Other times by request.
- Provide ongoing pastoral support to the church community via Zoom, telephone, in-person meetings, and email.

Tuesday Book Discussion Group

- Book discussion group completed the reading of saints' lives on Tuesday, March 26.
- Average weekly attendance: 14 people. This includes people from within and without the congregation.
- Next book to be discussed will be *Being Here: Prayers for Curiosity, Justice and Love* by Padraig O'Tuama. The discussion will begin, via Zoom, on Tuesday, May 7.

Community Support

- Working with members of the congregation on identifying neighbors in need and supporting them through pastoral support and financial grants.
- Member of Keene Diversity Advisory Committee. Meet monthly with the group.

New York Conference

- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UCC NY Board of Directors; term will end May 31, 2024.
- Board is scheduled to meet: 4/20 and 5/30.
- Planning to attend the Conference Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for May 30 – June 1 in Binghamton, NY.

North Country Association

- Member of the new Association's Committee on Ministry. Group meets first Tuesday of each month.

Training/Education

- The new North Country Association has mandated that ministers take 25 hours of Continuing Education per year.
- To date, 80% of CE requirement completed.
- **Completed Meditation Teacher Training – Tuesdays, January 30 – March 5**
- **Completed Culturally Response Ministry Training on March 9.**

Scheduled Vacation

- Will be out of the office for vacation April 22 through May 6, returning to the office on May 7.
 - Rev. Dawn Karlson will be filling in for me on April 28
 - Rev. Sam Kinsman will be filling in for me on May 5
- Will be away weekend of October 19. Guest worship leader TBD.

Other Items

- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.
- Annette Merle-Smith Bequest Group shared their report and suggestions to the Council on Tuesday, February 27.
- Volunteered to be point person for collecting items for the 2024 White Elephant. Collection has begun as opportunity arises.

GROUNDS REPORT MARCH 2024

No work has taken place since last year. There are two questions for the Council. Should we move forward with No Mow May again this year? Do you have any thoughts about improving the walkway between the Manse parking area and the large parking lot? It is most likely outside of the funds that we have in our budget and is challenging because Jerry uses a plow to remove the snow on the walkway. Pam, Paul and Erica

MISSION AND SOCIAL ACTION

The Lake Placid News article on the departure of Rachael to Cleveland has stimulated questions by members of other churches in Lake Placid as to how we applied for and hosted two refugees from Africa. To that end, we have reached out to the pastors of St Agnes and St Eustice if they would be willing to host a presentation on KVCC refugee initiative. We have provided them with dates in May when Lauren would be available. Upon confirmation of a location/date we will invite Naomi and other members of the team to participate. Our message is if we can, you can, and hosting refugees is a mutually beneficial and learning experience. Our goal is to encourage other churches to do the same as the need is great.

M&SA would also like to know if members of our congregation would be willing to organize a benefit that would raise funds for the World Kitchen's food deliveries in Gaza and kitchens in Ukraine. The people of Gaza are facing mass starvation, and the situation in Ukraine remains desperate as Congress sits on its hands. As the World Food Kitchen has successfully delivered supplies to Gaza by sea, and been given permission to continue doing so, now is the time to act.

Essex County Mental Health is seeking volunteers who are willing to be trained on how to help family members and others who have lost a loved one to suicide. The training will take place at Paul Smith's College on May 17 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Naj has agreed to take this training. Is anyone else interested? He needs to know by March 28. Sadly, suicide rates are up, and the need for this kind of support is great. It can help reduce the potential of someone connected to the person who died, also attempting to die by suicide.

KEENE FOOD MISSION REPORT FOR MARCH 2024

Liz Jaques is now also able to make deposits for the Keene Food Mission to assist Deborah in making deposits should checks or cash come directly to the church.

The Keene Food Mission was the recipient of \$1,200 from numerous donors (Valley Gro, St. Brendan's Catholic Church, KVCC, Keene Valley Library, Valley Home and Hardware, and the Keene Library). We're grateful for their contributions to our mission. We currently have 52 donors who help support the eight families we serve. We've been working closely with the Valley Gro and were able to add the Veges account to one family of four in Keene Valley who prefer gift cards for their family of four. There is a need for help with outreach for the KFM, and Deborah will reach out to congregants to determine who might want to help us with informing the local communities of our work.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

March 2024

The Finance Committee met on March 22, 2024, with the following in attendance:

Elizabeth Davidson	Debby Rice
Fritz Sabbow	Nancy McArthur, Treasurer
John Sampson	Robert Rokos
Larry Shipps	Shawn LaMarche

Cena Abramo of On Point Bookkeeping joined the group to interview for the position of Bookkeeper. After discussing her background and credentials, Cena offered that she will contact Rick Beam, KVCC's current bookkeeper, to identify the condition of the General Ledger and to finalize her quote for the business.

The group also reviewed the following:

- Credit cards have been issued for key church staff by TCM, a subcontractor of Champlain National Bank. Once cards arrive and prove viable for John Sampson and Liz Jaques, the debit cards and petty cash account will be eliminated. Monthly reconciliation of the card statements will result in improved expense accounting.
- Larry Shipps noted that over the next two months he will be analyzing the performance of SVB Private which manages our endowment as well as contacting other investment managers, as he feels our performance is below market standards.
- February performance YTD is notable for the deficit in pledge donations which are 40% lower than in 2023 for the same period. While too early for great concern, the group discussed several ways to address this condition if ongoing.
- Shawn reported outstanding response to the Summer Speaker Retreat with 40% of the ticket capacity purchased to date.
- Food Mission donations are also strong with \$20,837 available to meet food insecurity in our community. Currently, monthly disbursements average \$2,500 per month. The committee noted the resourcefulness of Deborah Mitchell who also has connected recipients with funding for fuel bills from other sources.
- Fritz and Nancy will collaborate in the accounting transition once the agreement with the new bookkeeper is finalized,

Endowment as of 2/28/24: \$1,491.835

AMS Fund: \$87,765

Keene Valley Congregational Church

Profit and Loss

February 2024

	Total	
	Feb 2024	Feb 2023 (PY)
Income		
Income & Transferred Funds		
Endowment Draw	6,230.00	5,600.00
Open	560.00	
Pledges	6,265.79	7,808.52
Rental Income	1,311.60	1,265.00
Use of Facilities	800.00	
	\$	\$
Total Income & Transferred Funds	15,167.39	14,673.52
	\$	\$
Total Income	15,167.39	14,673.52
	\$	\$
Gross Profit	15,167.39	14,673.52
Expenses		
Building & Grounds		
Building Expenses	16.49	
Custodian	1,410.00	
Manse		1,046.00
Piano Tuning		155.00

Trash Removal	150.00	
	\$	\$
Total Building Expenses	1,576.49	1,201.00
	\$	\$
Total Building & Grounds	1,576.49	1,201.00
General Expenses		
Supplies		
Office Copier Overages other	208.40	
Office Supplies		103.87
Subscriptions	289.28	248.67
	\$	\$
Total Supplies	497.68	352.54
	\$	\$
Total General Expenses	497.68	352.54
Ministry		
Fellowship	115.50	45.00
Mission & Soc. Action Int. Grp.	300.00	
Music Dept. Expenses	290.00	219.67
Pastoral supplies	80.82	50.88
	\$	\$
Total Ministry	786.32	315.55
Pastoral Expenses		
Pastor - Life Insurance	84.11	84.11
Pastor Salary	4,363.08	4,253.01
Pastor-Dental	44.25	44.25
Pastor-Health Ins.	1,002.13	878.00
Pastor-Housing	1,799.20	1,730.00
Pastor-Pension/FPP	784.97	855.72
Pastor-Social Security	575.50	495.61
	\$	\$
Total Pastoral Expenses	8,653.24	8,340.70
Staff Payroll		
Music Director	755.18	733.18
Organist	755.18	733.18
Organist /Music Dir. Sub	75.00	150.00
Payroll Taxes	304.66	239.38
Secretary	918.65	635.91
Video and Zoom Management	703.00	547.50
	\$	\$
Total Staff Payroll	3,511.67	3,039.15
Utilities		
Electric - Manse	174.78	156.09
Electric - Church	114.01	
Heat - Church	1,388.05	710.09
Heat - Manse	833.78	
Insurances Liability and fire	744.75	
Internet Service	60.39	
Telephone - Church	86.92	
	\$	\$
Total Utilities	3,402.68	866.18
	\$	\$
Total Expenses	18,428.08	14,115.12
	-\$	\$
Net Operating Income	3,260.69	558.40
	-\$	\$
Net Income	3,260.69	558.40

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

No report

FLOWER COMMITTEE

Charlotte will be traveling to pick up the Easter flowers at Garden Time Nursery in Queensbury, Northway Exit 19 on March 30, Saturday morning. She would welcome some company. Please let her know if you would be available to accompany her.

Other Business: None

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 23, 2024

Deborah made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk