

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

September 24, 2024

Present: Debby Rice, Pastor John Sampson, Susie Allen, Elizabeth Davidson Derr, Fritz Sabbow, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Annie Scavo, Katharine Preston, Howard Husslein, Robert Rokos, Pam Gothner, and Deborah Mitchell. **Guests:** Cynthia Poppino and Bobbi Perez, Adirondack Friends of Refugees and Immigrants.

Debby opened the meeting at 5:01 PM. This meeting was held via Zoom.

Opening Prayer: Debby read a reading from John O'Donahue, and we took a moment to reflect on ways in which we can encourage others.

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

Approval of July-August KVCC Council Minutes: The approval of last month's meeting minutes was postponed.

Meeting Updates/Focus:

Adirondack Friends of Refugees and Immigrants: Cynthia Poppino provided the Council with an update on the covenant being developed between AFRI and KVCC. Great progress is being made, and Cynthia will be providing the Council with a report on their developments and upcoming events.

Vote with Love:

Vote with Love (Katharine): Katharine has been drafting a statement in conjunction with Pastor John to develop a statement that would put meaning behind the flag "Vote with Love." Debby led a discussion with Council around what our thoughts are about this endeavor. A number of Council members weighed in and expressed their concerns on this proposal. After a lengthy discussion, we agreed that Katharine will provide us with an amended statement for consideration.

Statement for consideration: Katharine writes, *1) it is clear challenge to anyone who thinks Christian Nationalism is the only way Christians see the issues facing the country; 2) it rests squarely on our UCC moral traditions; and 3) I hope it gives some of our conservative brethren in the town and region opportunity for a little introspection and thought.*

STATEMENT DRAFT

Keene Valley Congregational Church sees the right to vote as a blessing, not to be neglected, especially in this election year.

As a Christian community of faith, we invite our neighbors to consider the deep moral choices, which inform how we live in a community of mutual care and responsibility, as we decide how we will cast our ballots.

Mutual care and responsibility are motivated by love, modeled in our tradition, by the life and teachings of Jesus, the one we call the Christ.

As such, we urge everyone to vote with love:

Love of ourselves and our neighbors who all come to simply seek who we are, and to love who we chose;

Love of those who are hungry, homeless, without access to healthcare, or to any of the other basic necessities of life;

Love of the magnificence of the entire community of creation, as we seek ways to reduce the effects of floods, fires and other calamities on our human and other-than- human neighbors;

Love of people from elsewhere who are our new neighbors, and who simply seek opportunities to nurture and sustain themselves and their families;

Love of peace, not just as an absence of war, but as an active, non-violent response to hate, discrimination, oppression, and fear.

So, as you consider which candidates you will support, we encourage you to vote with a deep and expansive sense of love.

STATEMENT end

AMS REPORT

Project Log

For Council/AMS Group: An ongoing log of proposals, status and decisions

Project Title	Proposed by: (Name) and (Date)	Status:	Comments:
Landscaping for the new achievable housing project	KVCC Congregants Tom and Alana Both (KVCC Congregants for Adirondack Roots, non profit)	Marcy Neville presented a proposal to Council during the August 2024 session. Council tentatively approved funding up to \$5000 pending follow up presentation of the plan. Project lead, March Neville reports that she has a 5000 match for a total 10,000 for landscaping	Once Council approves ADK Roots final plan.... Following discussion on how and when to involve the Congregation, the Council plans to publish this project in the KVCC newsletter to see if anyone would like further

		<p>(which should be enough). This project delayed until Spring so that the sites can be graded and septic completed. A detailed estimate will be provided to Council in Spring 2025 prior to installation.</p> <p>Project: Initiated, In process</p>	discussion at a church wide meeting.
Park Benches	Susy Doolittle (KVCC Congregant)	<p>Estimated Cost: \$750 Endorsed by Grounds Lead, Pam Gothner Following a meeting with John Sampson, Fritz Sabbow, Nancy McArthur—no AMS funds needed since extra funds from the annual operating budget are available. Fritz communicated this to Susy Doolittle. Follow up with Susy?</p>	Small project, no need for AMS funds for this project.
KVCC Parking improvement next to the ramp (for wheelchairs, people needing extra help entering the Church)	Church Finance Committee	<p>Estimated cost: 12,000 (to replenish the Church Building Reserve Fund for larger expense items) Endorsed by the AMS group at that time. Voted on and approved during the 2024 Congregational meeting</p> <p>Project COMPLETED 2024</p>	Larger project, deemed essential for safe access to the sanctuary.
<p>Generator</p> <p>From Nancy, « After the O'Tuama weekend, I realized that we deny ourselves and the community the certainty of reliable power and heat in winter; we could be a</p>	Nancy McArthur	Estimated cost: \$ 8-10,000	proposed 9/3/2024 for consideration

shelter of last resort for our neighbors. »			
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The Annette Merle Smith Discernment Group identified a number of possible projects in the written report. The following is a list of projects based on votes/support from those participating in the interview process. (See the report for the complete list and detailed description). It is Council’s responsibility now to take these projects and consider each.

Project Title	Proposed by: (Name) and (Date) Lead: Working Group or Individual	Status:	Comments:
Endowment / Brokerage Account	Lead: Finance Committee (Nancy McArthur, Chair), Larry Shippo (Contact) See AMS Final Report	Approved by the Finance Committee and Council. Completed.	Money Market Account set up with the aim to have approximately \$334,000 at the end of four years. (assumes about 20,000 per year withdrawal)
Spiritual Events	Lead-Annual Retreat Leads: John Sampson and Susie Allen See AMS Final Report for all recommendations. Note: \$12,000 recommended to support a spiritual retreat each year.	Like the 2023 retreat with John Phillip Newell, there was no need for AMS Funds for the Padraig O’Tuama 2024 retreat. This is in large part due to the UCC Genesis Grant, ticket sales, and donations.	The UCC Grant is not available for the following years. AMS funds might be needed for future events or if KVCC decides to expand the offerings.

<p>Other projects: (Burse) Youth Outreach</p>	<p>AMS Report</p>	<p>Not initiated</p>	
<p>Other projects: (Burse) Unforeseen/Other Uses.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Food mission Pastor's Discretionary Fund Paid Seminary Interns</p>	<p>AMS</p>	<p>Not used for this yet. No requests yet.</p>	
<p>Memorial to Annette Merle- Smith</p>	<p>AMS</p>	<p>Not initiated</p>	
<p>Replacing the pews with Chairs</p>	<p>AMS</p>	<p>Not initiated</p>	
<p>Pastor Housing/Salary</p>	<p>AMS</p> <p>Lead-Finance Committee?</p>		

Workshops about the intersection of art and spirituality	AMS TBD		
Youth Outreach	AMS TBD		
Supporting youth aging out of foster care	AMS TBD		
Open and Affirming outreach initiatives, and activities	AMS Lead-Pride participants?		
LGBTQ+ Youth Group	AMS Lead-Pride participants?		
Zoom upgrades	AMS Lead-Zoom Group: Fritz Sabbow, Jimm Collin, Jim Bernard, John Sampson	No requests received at this time.	

Pollinator Garden Expansion	AMS Lead-Garden Group: Pam Gothner		
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PÁDRAIG Ó TUAMA PLANNING TEAM FINAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2024

Team members: John Sampson, Susie Allen, Debby Rice, Martha Gallagher, Shawn Lamarche, Elizabeth Davidson, Lorraine Duvall, Naj Wikoff

By many benchmarks, our weekend with Pádraig Ó Tuama was a great success.

- We hosted approximately 100 people, from our region, from around the US, and even from Canada.
- We hosted discussion groups on 2 of Pádraig’s books and people beyond the KVCC community participated and continue to participate in ongoing book discussions. We distributed flyers and made announcements at the Annual Meeting of the NY Conference of the UCC, and several people attended as a result.
- After presenting at 2 events to publicize our event with Pádraig, we made meaningful connections with the Adirondack Center for Writing. People we met there have attended worship at KVCC since then.
- Our Eventleaf registration website worked well, and we finished the weekend with \$4912.82 profit*.
- People continue to reflect on their experience from Pádraig’s presentations, including ongoing reflection in the Faith and Issues book discussion group.
- We sent a survey to all who registered for the event and had a 30% response rate! The planning team will continue to review and reflect on the responses as we consider potential plans for 2025.

At the same time, we encountered several unexpected challenges.

- Six days before the event, the caterer for the celebratory luncheon after worship on 8/11 had to cancel due to health concerns. In short order, we met with the deli/bakery staff at Hannaford and ordered platters of food. As well, we purchased paper goods and drinks in bulk. Bill Tansey, at the KV Fire Department, was incredibly helpful and allowed us to store the food beginning Saturday, 8/10. Members of the KV fire department set up tables and cleaned up and put tables away after the luncheon. Elizabeth Davidson’s daughters served the food.
- Tropical Storm Debby arrived in our area on Friday, 8/9. Lorraine Duvall and John Sampson drove through the storm to pick up Pádraig at the train station in Saratoga Springs.
- After hosting a dinner on 8/9 for Pádraig and members of the planning team, Susie Allen tested positive for Covid.
- In the evening on 8/9, we learned that the power was out in KV and not expected to be restored until 8/11. We contacted the KV Fire Department, the KV library and the Neighborhood House to find out where there would be working bathrooms for our event attendees. (As a side note, event attendees who were staying at Inns in KV did not have access to dinner on 8/9. Old Mountain Coffee has a generator so was open for breakfast on 8/10).
- Since there was no power at KVCC for the morning session on 8/10, registrations were done without technology assistance. There was no sound system available for Pádraig. Dave Craig was able to record the

session using a digital camera on a tripod. Coffee for morning refreshments was purchased at Stewarts and brought to KVCC. Fortunately, it was a sunny, warm day so the Sanctuary had enough light and warmth. The bathrooms, fortunately, worked at the church.

- Thankfully, the power was restored on Saturday late afternoon, in time for the evening presentation, book sale and signing, and reception.
- Late on Saturday afternoon, Pádraig informed John that he would be leaving early Sunday morning and would not be able to co-lead worship. In addition to disappointing all those in attendance, this also meant that John had to prepare a Reflection and lead worship without Pádraig's participation.

Our planning team rose to meet each of the challenges that occurred with resilience and good nature, and our event reviews reflected this tremendous commitment to hospitality and warm welcome.

The planning team is in the process of reflecting on our experience of the weekend and the attendee reviews; and how these inform plans we make for 2025.

*We were able to negotiate a partial refund of Pádraig's fee due to his early departure. This is reflected in the profit figure.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Pastor's Report – September 24, 2024

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Summer sermon series based upon topic submissions from the community began on June 16, and continues.
- September 22 – Fall Equinox Celebration. Working with Susie Allen, Bob Andrews and Lorraine Duvall to organize a meditation gathering for the evening. Guest meditation leader will be Michelle Maron, guest musician Nora Nadire.
- October 4 – Animal Blessing for community.
- October 13 – National Coming Out Day worship service.
- October 19 – Will be away. CJ Dates will be the guest worship leader.
- November 3 – Will be away. Guest worship leader TBD.
- 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.

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.

Open and Affirming

- Had meeting with Rev. Rhina Ramos to discuss opportunities for KVCC to offer Trans Self-Naming ceremonies. Rhina was very helpful, and said we should not offer the ceremony to anyone under 18, without written permission from a parent.
- KVCC will attend North Country Pride on Saturday, September 28 in Plattsburgh. Waiting for ANCGA to send out table registration form.

Web Site

- Meeting with Jimm on a weekly basis to create the website.
- Reviewed content requirements, and updates to site.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- Graveside service for Stewart Crawford at Norton Cemetery on Tuesday, October 1 @ 1 PM.

Worship Attendance

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	24	15
3/31/24	62	17	13
4/7/24	30	17	17
4/14/24	53	11	15
4/21/24	44	14	24
4/28/24	43	13	6
5/5/24	38	10	12
5/12/24	47	13	3
5/19/24	44	13	9
5/26/24	49	11	22
6/2/24	63	11	32
6/9/24	51	14	12
6/16/24	52	12	10
6/23/24	56	12	28
6/30/24	47	14	19
7/7/24	69	11	13
7/14/24	70	12	11
7/21/24	52	16	6
7/28/24	71	11	16
8/4/24	64	14	12
8/11/24	115	13	29
8/18/24	42	12	7
8/25/24	44	17	27
9/1/24	46	13	12
9/8/24	37	18	8

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

- Began discussing the book *This Here Flesh* by Cole Arthur Riley on Tuesday, September 10. Average attendance is 8.

Community Support

- Working with members of the congregation on identifying neighbors in need, and supporting them through pastoral support and financial grants.
- PDF is running low on funds. Put out an ask for donations to the community through the weekly email.
- Member of Keene Diversity Advisory Committee. Meet monthly with the group.

New York Conference

- Member of the Conference Nominating Committee for a three year term beginning on June 1.

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.

Scheduled Vacation

- Will be away weekend of October 19 and November 2.

Other Items

- Welcomed 7 new members on August 4.
- Contributed input into staff reviews.
- Review of AMS report with the congregation scheduled for 10/27.
- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.
- Meeting with AFRI members to create a covenant statement for the merging of AFRI into KVCC.
- High Peaks Hospice will begin offering twice monthly grief support circles at KVCC beginning on Wednesday, October 2.
- Partnering with Keene Valley Library to hold a book swap at the church, October 5 – 26.

KVCC's Mission and Social Action Committee

No new report at the time of Council.

KEENE FOOD MISSION

It's been a year since we have taken over the KFM. We continue to support 8 families through the KFM. Four have accounts at the Valley Gro; four like gift cards at Aldi's, Tops, etc. The Valley Gro has been pleased with how well things are going between KVCC and their business. Some of their concerns have been resolved through good communication between the Valley Gro, the KFM, and KFM recipients.

We did get some income from the farmer's market, but it was not a significant amount. We're appreciative of those volunteers who committed to this endeavor.

Two volunteers from our congregation have agreed to provide transportation for one of our recipients to appointments in Elizabethtown, and he is very grateful as there is a lack of drivers through the Office of the Aging I believe.

It's that time of year when we will solicit our donor base which has grown over the last year. Deborah hopes to have the letter reviewed by the Pastor John and Nancy and mailed out by the end of the month.

NEXT STEP: It would be beneficial to have a meeting with Pastor John, Nancy, Fritz, Deborah and anyone else who might be interested to tease out ways in which to ensure we can sustain what we need financially for the KFM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell

BUILDINGS

Table 1

Task/Project	Description	Date Rec'd.	Est. Comp. Date	Cost Est.	Assignee
VSR Chair repair (8)	Joints loose	9/28/23			Naj & Howard
Church Windows	Dirty	9/28/23			
Manse Tenant	Dryer vent cleaning	5/1/2024	June 2024		Howard
Church Lg. Bath	Light out	4/24	4/24/2024	~\$8.00	Howard
Stairs/Ramp/Railings	Scrape/Brush/Repaint/Repair as needed	5/1/2024	July 2024	~\$500	Volunteers
Church/VSR	Ceiling plaster work	pre 08/30/2023	On hold	<\$1000	Contractor
Church/Manse Siding	Clean	pre 08/30/2023	Spring 2022	<\$1000	Cont. / Volun.
VSR	Chimney tuckpointing	pre 08/30/2023	On hold		Contractor
Church Grounds	Wrought Iron Refinishing	pre 08/30/2023	Spring 2024	~ \$200	Volunteers
Church	Shutter repair/repaint	pre 08/30/2023			Volunteers
Church / Manse Grounds	Walkway repair	pre 08/30/2023	Spring 2025		Contractor
VSR	Flickering lights	pre 08/30/2023			Howard
Church	Inspection compliance	11/15/2023	Fall 2024	~ \$6k	Cont. / Volun.
VSR	Side door latch fussy	09/24/2023	Spring 2024		Howard
VSR	Gas log knob hard to reach with new screen	10/27/2023	Late 2024		Howard
Church Basement	Furnace inspection req. per insurer	11/15/2023			Contractor
Church	Exit signs req. per insurer	11/15/2023	Spring 2024		

Task/Project	Status
VSR Chair repair (8)	Repaired about seven.
Church Windows	Done
Manse Tenant	Pending
Church Lg. Bath	Done
Stairs/Ramp/ Railings	Done
Church/VSR	
Church/Manse Siding	Worst part done by window cleaners
VSR	
Church Grounds	
Church	Under Consideration
Church / Manse Grounds	Imminent order for Mr. Boardwalk
VSR	Under Investigation
Church	Door closers done. One more latch/ handle to be done. Waiting for Hometown quote for Emerg. lights.
VSR	Part of the Panic hardware solution.
VSR	Will investigate repositioning log set and grate.
Church Basement	
Church	Photo-luminescent signs waiting for installation

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

No new report at the time of Council.

GROUNDS REPORT SEPTEMBER

Weeding and trimming were done prior to the Padraig O Tuama event including removal of weeds in the front sidewalk. Thank you, Jenifer Demming. In late July 30 seedlings from the pollinator garden were planted in pots and were sold at the Bazaar. The bench was moved from the center of the pollinator garden to a spot under the tree providing a shady spot that is more easily accessible. Many limbs from pruning projects have been removed from the back entry path but more need to be relocated. Mums were purchased for the front entryway. Teak walkways have been ordered for the church office and the manse apartment. The current concrete blocks will be removed prior to laying the path. A Grounds Workday is planned for Wednesday, October 9th, 9:00 - noon.

Task List:

More weeding - ongoing though September
Hauling away tree limbs from the back entry path - September/October
Extend the stone pathway in the pollinator garden to the sidewalks - ?
Move gravel from edge of the parking lot - October
Replace the walkways into the Manse building - October
Plant more daffodils in the pollinator garden - October

FINANCE REPORT TO COUNCIL

This Committee will not meet again until September.

FLOWER COMMITTEE

Fortunately, we had access to the pollinator garden this summer. Our group will continue to use other available sources for natural plants and other appropriate things for display on the altar/table. We will be using poinsettias in the sanctuary windows, Dec. 8 - Jan. 5/2025, if available! Thank you to each member of this group for your diligent help displaying the summer flowers. Members; Alana Both, Ingrid Carmen, Charlotte Lichtenberg, coordinator, and Susie Doolittle. I would welcome anyone that would like to be a Sun. substitute when the schedule indicates someone will be away. Charlotte

KVCC PERSONNEL GROUP

No new report at the time of Council.

What's Next?:

St. Francis Pet Blessing – October 4th

Pride in Plattsburgh – October 5th – Pastor John will be offering an opportunity for those interested to have a Name Change Ceremonies through KVCC.

AMS report to Congregation – October 27th

Halloween – October 31st

Other Business: None

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 15, 2024

Deborah made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Mitchell, Clerk