

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

January 24, 2023

Present: Pastor John Sampson, Debby Rice, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Liz Jaques, Dre Roebuck, Anne Runyon Hurd, Linda Bogardus, Susie Allen, Naj Wikoff, Nancy McArthur, Elizabeth Davidson Derr, Erica Swift, Fritz Sabbow, Pam Gothner, Shawn LaMarche, and Deborah Mitchell.

Debby Rice opened the meeting via Zoom at 5:05 PM.

Opening Prayer: Erica opened the meeting by reading a poem The Logos by Mary Oliver. After requesting we join hands, Pastor John led the group in prayer that we continue to do our work with positive energy, connectiveness, and in spirit.

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

Approval of Last Month's Meeting: Naj made a motion to approve the November 2022 meeting minutes, and Nancy seconded the motion. A discussion followed, and the motion was passed.

PASTOR'S REPORT – JANUARY 24, 2023

Sabbatical

- Returned from Sabbatical on Tuesday, January 10
- Led worship for the first time on Sunday, January 15, followed by an overview of my Sabbatical after worship
- I have been meeting with various groups/committees/individuals since I have returned to check in and come up to speed on what happened while I was away. More meetings scheduled for the near future.

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner being considered for Tuesday, February 21.
- Ash Wednesday service planned for Wednesday, February 22.
- The Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams, Transitional Conference Minister, is scheduled to preach on Sunday, May 21.
- Leading weekly worship at the Neighborhood House.
- Friday morning prayer group meets weekly in the VSR, sharing prayers, concerns, and joys of the community.
- Met with Debby Rice and Dave Craig to discuss ways to reduce costs related to weekly Zoom support. Plan developed and implemented for a test on 1/22. Will follow up with the "Zoom Pew" to discuss their responses to the test,
- The Centering Prayer Group (CPG) meets mornings @ 7 AM.
- Invited to preach at All Soul's in St. Hubert this summer. Date to be confirmed.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- Working with Henri Jordan, and Emily Dwight to schedule dates for placing their memorial stones in the Memorial Garden.

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.

Book Discussion Group – Tuesday Nights

- Will be reading *The Long Loneliness* by Dorothy Day beginning on January 31.
- Forwarded invitation to Fr. John Yonkovic to share with his congregations.
- Will also post on NDK.

Community Support

- Working with members of the congregation on identifying neighbors in need and supporting them through financial grants.

Essex Association

- Requested update on Association issues from Terri Morse, Essex Association Moderator, on January 17.
- Reached out to Rev. Bryan Bond to introduce myself.

New York Conference

- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UCC NY Board of Directors.
- Next meeting of the Board scheduled for Saturday, January 28
- The UCC NY Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 16 - 17

Training/Education

- Registered for the Virtual National Gathering of UCC Rural/Small Town Churches and Ministries, February 9 – 11.
- No training currently scheduled.

Out of Office

- Will be out of the office February 14 – 17. Will be in the office on Monday, February 13 and Saturday, February 18.

Other Items

- Performance review scheduled for Sunday, January 22.
- Liz will be out from Wednesday, February 8 – Wednesday, February 22.
- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.
- Invited those interested in joining the church to reach out. Three people have indicated they would like to become members. New member welcome to be scheduled.
- Attend Spiritual Direction sessions for the development of my own spirit.

Finance Committee Report

January 7, 2023

Attending:

Nancy McArthur

Larry Shipps

Debby Rice

Elizabeth Davidson Derr

Shawn LaMarche

Fritz Sabbow

STEWARDSHIP REPORT - Elizabeth Davidson Derr and Debby Rice

Yearend numbers are better than a year ago thanks to the Stewardship emphasis during the Fall. See Table below.

- **Total and per capita pledges increased significantly. The number of pledgers increased from last year, and the average pledge increased significantly.**
 - The total increase in pledges in \$14,125;
 - The average pledge rose from \$881 per family to \$1,100 per family.
 - A celebratory sit down dinner will be held by the Sabbatical Committee to express gratitude for these results. Thank you calls are also planned.

	2021 Pledge Drive	2022 Pledge Drive
SUM	\$44,910	\$59,035
# Pledgers	51	54
Average Pledge/person	\$881	\$1,093
TOTAL Givers	104	104
% Pledgers	49	52

The Committee expressed thanks for the pledge drive which helped all of the congregation examine the meaning of the congregation and its work to them.

2022 RESULTS AND 2023 BUDGET (see attached budget vs actual form)

The church operated at a small surplus in 2022 thanks to robust giving. The committee reviewed these results and recommended a 2023 budget based upon the actual performance in 2022 and recommending key changes in several expense categories. The attached actual and budget spreadsheet shows all major line items and plans for each.

The endowment draw is based upon the three year average value of the Rev. Frederica Mitchell endowment fund. Five percent (5%) of this amount is being withdrawn annually from the investment account in monthly instalments.

Rent from the tenants is \$1,200 monthly and the utilities are charged as 75% of electric and 50% of oil charges. The net effect of the revitalized manse and new lease is \$6,012 annually.

Key actions reflected in the budget are as follows and are considered essential to the ongoing financial health of the church:

1. Reduce cost of substitute pastors and musicians including summer music.
 - a. Pay \$125 per service to substitute pastors vs previous \$200. At this rate, 10 pastor substitutes have been budgeted. This is UCC minimum and is the rate paid by other local churches.
 - b. Reduce cost of summer music, substitute music directors and substitute musicians to \$3,500 annually in total. In 2022, \$4,950 was spent across these categories.
2. Review Zoom program for opportunities for cost reductions. While the committee is committed to this powerful extension of our worship experience, the cost of the program is no longer being underwritten and needs to be reduced as possible. John Sampson, Fritz Sabbow and Debby Rice plan to schedule a conversation with David Craig about reducing rehearsal times, standardizing the broadcast to be less labor intensive and other employment matters.
3. Reduce cost of copying. Through renegotiation, we have reduced this cost by roughly \$1,200; however judicious use of color copying will be needed to preserve these savings.
4. Reduce Custodial Charges by restating requirements of the cleaning provider. Reevaluate this relationship to determine whether a less costly solution exists.

Committee chairs need to review the budget to understand their line item accountability. Of special note is Mission and Social Action which has \$3,000 to spend on its 2023 projects while unfunded 2022 commitments of \$2,400 are included in the total of \$5,400. The Committee applauded the leveraged altruism undertaken by M&SA this year which used a small budget to yield \$10,000 for World Central Kitchen, more than 100 Thanksgiving meals for Families First, a Gingerbread event for residents of Keene Valley Neighborhood House and the stunning success of the Sleeping Bag drive for Ukraine. Along with the Hygiene Kit project earlier in 2022, the committee has attracted substantial outside resources to support these church led campaigns and engaged many nonmembers in the community.

OTHER MATTERS decisioned or reviewed by the committee included:

1. Liquidity: The committee plans to reduce cash on hand in Champlain Bank provided the liquidity of the newly invested cash is not significantly impaired. Current balances exceed those foreseen to be needed in the coming year. We will discuss in March with our investment manager.
2. \$4,320. received for Ukraine will be assessed for disbursement once the transportation and \$2,250 of shipping costs have been paid. These funds have been mainly designated for generators and need to be directed to an NGO for disbursement.
3. Costs of the Sabbatical will be calculated for future planning use as the line item was not used during the sabbatical term.
4. The Committee recognized that the ushers no longer count the offering as in prior years and have reinstated that procedure.
5. Tax Letters will ne provided if requested by January 16, 2023.

INTERIM TREASURER:

From January 25 to February 20, Elizabeth Derr will act as Interim Treasurer, approving expenses and managing other financial concerns of the church. Elizabeth will join the Council Meeting on January 24.

Thank you, Elizabeth!

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the committee will be held March 10, 2023, at 4:00 and will feature a portfolio performance review by Michael Onorato of SVB, our portfolio manager.

Any questions or revisions should be directed to Nancy McArthur.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

GROUNDS REPORT JANUARY 2023

In November Paul completed the raking and trimmed the broken arborvitae along the parking lot. He also put away the hoses and garden tools. Pam finished weeding the bed near Spen Nye's workshop and laid down cardboard and mulch. Tree limbs that fell during the heavy snow in December have been cut up and will be removed ASAP.

BUILDINGS REPORT

Dan has gotten a bid for glass & screen doors for the fireplace Van Santvoord room, which will be funded by the Energy Reserve Fund (cost \$4k) to reduce passive heat lost through the chimney. Simple and functional design. Barring any concerns, we can move forward with the build/installation in February 2023. A picture follows:

FLOWER COMMITTEE

We enjoyed the poinsettias for a few weeks in our church sanctuary. Now we look forward to our regular creative arrangements on the altar. Our team of volunteers has completed the year successfully.

The new flower schedule for February - May is posted on the church bulletin board near the coffee hour sign-up sheets. Ingrid is away leaving a vacancy for the first Sunday in February and March. Our group would appreciate someone to take over this responsibility for either Sunday. This group is capable of covering for each other caused by sickness or absence, but we would truly welcome and appreciate one or two people to help us. Contact: Charlotte with comments/questions at 576-4567 or in person. Thank you in advance for this help.

Re-Opening Task Force Report

- Group continues to monitor updates to health guidance, and the state of the pandemic.
- Meeting on an as needed basis.

Council Feedback on Sabbatical: Debby has completed a draft report and will finalize it on 1/27/23. This will be provided to the Council.

Council Retreat: The Council is expected to have their retreat in February 2023 and the purpose of the retreat is to look back at what we have accomplished in 2022 and what our vision/mission will be for 2023.

Personnel Task Force Update: Fritz updated that Council on status of Pastor John's evaluation. Several congregants participated in this process and Pastor John was also able to respond to the same interview questions. John thanked the Task Force for their efforts, noting the magnitude of their work. We were all pleased with how well this process went. We will be furthering our efforts to provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the KVCC Personnel.

Neighborhood House Engagement Plan: Debby reported on the collaborative efforts between Kristen Klingenberg, Liz Coccia from the Neighborhood House and Debby Rice and Nancy McArthur, KVCC. We have a few events with the residents and will pursue more ways in which to support those residents. Some ideas include: Opportunity 1: Books on CD/Audiobooks are a great treat for residents; however the equipment is not readily available. *NEEDED: 4 CD players and CDs from the library.* Opportunity 2: Support library being created by Kristen at KVNH. *NEEDED: Lighted magnifiers for reading and large print books.* Opportunity 3: One on one letter writing or reading with volunteers. *NEEDED: Volunteers with training, ideally* Opportunity 4: Book Groups *NEEDED: Establish core group of readers with 1 and 2 above.* Opportunity 5: KVNH residents come to church and library escorted by volunteers or staff. *NEEDED: Volunteers* Opportunity 6: Gingerbread House Event set December 5 at 2:00 PM - see separate email with details *NEEDED: Response from Kristen re: refreshments. Will begin to seek volunteers.* Opportunity 7: Ongoing music performances *NEEDED: Economical arrangements or funding for performers.*

Website: Debby led a discussion around the importance of upgrading/revamping our KVCC website. The Council agreed that it is important to work on this to enhance our presence in the community and to help fulfill our mission. There would need to be financial support and technical assistance to fulfill this endeavor.

Budget Timing: The Council talked about when the 2023 Annual Budget would be released to the congregation, and we agreed to do so in March 2023.

Other Business:

Anne informed the Council that the Annual UCC Meeting will be held in Niagara Falls from June 16th and June 17th.

Suzie Allen is a participant in the Faith and Issues Group, and this group has read several books by John Phillip Newell, a Celtic teacher and author. He will be on tour in the United States, and Suzie is proposing that KVCC collaborate with other entities to have this author provide a weekend seminar at our Church. A number of factors will go into this event, and Suzie is willing to take the lead and tend to the details. The following people volunteered to be on a task force for this event: Pastor John, Suzie Allen, and Pam Gothner. More details on this endeavor to follow.

Next council meeting is Tuesday, **February 28, 2023** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM in person at the Keene Valley Library.

Debby made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk