

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

June 28, 2022

Present: Pastor John Sampson, Debby Rice, Anne Runyon Hurd, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Susie Allen, Barbara Merle-Smith, Liz Jaques, Derek Prill, Dre Roebuck, Jimm Collin, Nancy McArthur, Fritz Sabbow, Pam Gothner, Paul Osenbaugh, and Deborah Mitchell.

Absent: Linda Bogardus, Naj Wikoff, Henrietta Jordan, Lorraine Duvall and Erica Swift

Debby Rice opened the meeting at 5:07 PM and began the meeting by reading our Church's Open and Affirming Statement.

Opening Prayer: Pastor John led the group in prayer, inviting God's spirit to join us and give us inspiration.

Reading of the Creation Justice Church Statement: Debby read the CJC Statement to help keep us focused on our mission and the Church's commitments.

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

Approval of Last Month's Meeting: Pam made a motion to approve the last month's meeting minutes, and Suzie seconded the motion. A discussion followed, and the motion was passed.

PASTOR'S REPORT – JUNE 28, 2022

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Upcoming special worship:
 - July 17 – Preach at All Souls; David Figliuzzi, an M.Div. student from Yale will be guest preaching.
 - July 31 - Celtic inspired worship
 - September 4 – Last Sunday worship before starting sabbatical
- Reinitiated weekly worship at the Neighborhood House on Thursday, June 2.
- The Summer Music program. Is finalized
- The CPG weekly book discussion group is taking a break.
- Friday morning prayer group has switched its meeting day to Wednesday. The group meets in the VSR, sharing prayers, concerns, and joys of the community.
- Weekly meetings with Dave Craig regarding worship on the Zoom platform. Chris Blaicher is training to be Dave's back-up.
- The Centering Prayer Group (CPG) meets mornings @ 7 AM.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- October – Michael Caldwell and Patience Whitman. The Rev. Susie Allen is officiating.
- Working with Gretchen Willcox, Henri Jordan, and Emily Dwight to schedule dates for placing their memorial stones in the Memorial Garden.

Pastoral Support

- Provide ongoing pastoral support to the church community via Zoom, telephone, in-person meetings, and email.

Book Discussion Group – Tuesday Nights

- The group is finishing reading *Living Buddha, Living Christ* by Thich Nhat Hanh on June 28. The group will be taking the rest of the summer off

Community Support

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

Essex Association

- Annual meeting held on May 22.
- Black River – St. Lawrence Association (BRSL)
 - Members of the Essex and BRSL Associations have agreed to move forward with merging the Associations. The next step is for each Association to identify representatives to join a working group to come up with new bylaws.

Training

- Sexual Harassment Prevention Training - Lynn to provide documentation that he received the training through KCS in September.

Sabbatical

- Will be on sabbatical September 2022 – mid-January 2023
- Attending Michaelmas Term at Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK
- Sabbatical information session offered after worship on 5/13
- Requested that Council and Sabbatical Planning Committee identify all needs by March 31. Met with Larry S. to review the PDF process. Also requested to kick-off the 2023 Nomination process. No other request made at this time.

Out of Office

- No time out of office planned at this time.

Other Items

- Invited those interested in joining the church to reach out. Three people have indicated they would like to become members. New member welcome date TBD at this time.
- Hosted table at Tri-Lakes PRIDE held in Saranac Lake on Sunday, June 26, 12 – 4 PM.

- Participating in monthly meetings of the Plattsburgh Climate Squad, a group comprised of members of houses of worship in Plattsburgh looking to become climate advocates in the North Country.
- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UCC NY Board of Directors.
- The Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ was held at the Silver Bay Retreat Center, Silver Bay, NY. Some highlights from the meeting:
 - I attended with Anne Hurd and Martha Gallagher.
 - The Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams was voted in as the Transitional Conference Minister, replacing Rev. David Gaewski, who retired.
 - I invited Marsha to come visit us. She said maybe next spring, as she's not a fan of winter.
 - An increase in the per capita charge from \$2 to \$2.50 was approved for 2023. This should be budgeted in KVCC's upcoming budget.
 - There was much interest in the CJC process overall, and in the NY Conference becoming a CJ Conference.
- Attend Spiritual Direction sessions for the development of my own spirit
- Member of the Steering Committee of the Keene Diversity Advisory Committee (KDAC)

TREASURER'S REPORT

MAY, 2022

Key Financial Measures: (\$)

Item	YTD May 2022	YTD May 2021	Change
Pledges	48,158	34,823	13,335
Pledges Net of Special Gift for Svc Tech	33,158	34,823	-1,665
Open+Plate Offering	2,126	100	2,026
Net Operating Income	1,146	-22,347	21,201

Rev. Frederica Mitchell Legacy Fund (\$)

	May 31, 2022	December 31,2021	Change
Market Value	1,468,752	1,718,271	-249,518
Market Depreciation	-217,037		n/a

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Finance Committee did not meet in June and will assess the six-month performance of the church in July against budget and against prior year performance.

Key indicators above show that the overall giving net of a special gift for our broadcast technology costs are slightly higher than in 2021 thanks to the reinstatement of the plate offerings weekly. Withdrawals from the endowment are

also higher; however, given the downturn in market values, 2023 withdrawals will be lower and result in lower expense budgets in 2023.

The value of the Frederica Mitchell Fund is \$1,365M as of June 23, 2022, and along with a review of our current withdrawal level, in July, the committee will review:

1. Semiannual budget against actual performance;
2. Collaboration with Manse Discernment Group regarding rental rate after tenant vacates;
3. Solar Panel funds allocated to Reserve for Energy Improvements.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

GROUNDS REPORT

Eleven hardworking volunteers came to help on the grounds work day held on Wednesday, May 25, 2022. Lots of weeding and trimming was done.

Planting in the pollinator garden began on June 10 and continued on June 18. More varieties will be planted as they are available from the wholesaler - some not until this fall. Paving stones were purchased and installed to create walkways for weeding and a stable place for the bench.

The crucifix renovations were completed and it was reinstalled on June 8. The renovations were paid for by Elizabeth and Andy Derr. The bench for the memorial garden was sanded and received several coats of teak oil. The water feature in the memorial garden was hooked up.

East Branch Organics continues to mow the lawns. The price per mow increased from \$65 to \$70.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

COUNCIL REPORT OF WORSHIP COMMITTEE JUNE 3

First John asked the committee how Easter resonated with them. Many expressed gratitude for all the meaningful services and felt that the choir's returning was particularly spectacular. John agreed, saying that the choir's returning felt like the final piece of the puzzle after two years' absence due to Covid. He was grateful that the choir had stayed connected and praised their commitment.

The hybrid service is going well. The summer music season begins. Martha's musical moment after the reflection was noted as a welcome space before words begin again in the service. Her offerings during Lent elevated the experience.

The discussion turned to the time of prayer. Members like our responding, "God in your mercy, hear our prayer", after each offering. The possibility of singing rather than reciting the Lord's Prayer was discussed.

Members expressed their concern that prayer time has expanded too much. Some prayer offerings were felt to take away from the sacred conversation with God; a few prayers were felt to have been even disturbing.

John responded by noting that the prayer time is, by design, "open mic". He wants people to have the freedom to share their spiritual journey or their tradition and to express their prayer in their own voice. He believes that all people should be able to come to church to express their deepest longing of life and God. He has less tolerance for people's using the

time of prayer to advertise a business or event or when the long setup becomes like a mini-sermon. Also, people really expect church to last one hour, and the long time of prayer has been disrupting that.

So for Sunday, June 5th, John will try a new kind of prayer. He will ask anyone offering a prayer to say just one word, a word that encapsulates or sums up their prayer. The congregation will then hold that word for few moments in their hearts, then end that particular prayer with “God in your mercy, hear our prayer”.

The discussion moved to the role of emotion in church. Many times, people weep, and that can make others uncomfortable. But it was argued that prayer time in our church community is, and should be, a safe space. People might experience joy or sorrow, and sometimes they may lose control of their outward emotions, but everyone should feel that our church is a special supportive comfortable place, and that their emotion is okay.

Jesus wept, Peter wept, Mary wept. Emotion is part of the ground-ness of Christianity and religion. We should be seeking to feel compassion rather than discomfort, and acknowledging the emotion inherent in spirituality.

At an earlier meeting, the Worship Committee strongly supported the continued hanging of the Saint Bridgid Cross. Made by Barbara Merle-Smith and used during the Celtic service, the cross was praised for its lightness and simplicity. But as time went on, members of the congregation began to express that they missed the old cross, that it had deep meaning to them and associated memories. John had promised that the original cross would return, and he has fulfilled that promise.

Members enjoyed both crosses. They represent different ways of imagining the cross. It was suggested that we could alternate them at different times, possibly seasonally, and that we might even introduce a third one, such as the traditional Celtic cross, which has an orb in the center.

A thoughtful discussion ensued on the meaning of the cross as a symbol theologically and to us as individuals. Other examples of symbols were brought up. People have a sense of history and belonging and want things to remain the same. Symbols are a comfort, and the ways we swap out different versions of items—the vestibule picture, for example—may not translate with all members of the church. We need to balance using symbols to comfort and using them to introduce new ways of seeing things.

Next meeting TBD

Submitted by Linda Bogardus

MISSION AND SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

No new information was provided to the Council at this time.

CREATION JUSTICE REPORT

No new information was provided at today’s meeting.

FLOWER COMMITTEE

Summer flowers are now available. June lupines and peonies were used from our church flower garden, a local KV garden and along roadsides.

We continue to help each other when a member of our group is out of town. We usually have members traveling in the summer so we work closely together to fill in the gaps. But we definitely could use more volunteers. Persons who enjoy the craft of arranging real flowers, beginner or experienced, are welcome to join our group.

Community members are encouraged to let us know about a memorial or any special remembrance they would like to initiate. There is a flower chart to fill in near the other flower schedules. Any group member can answer your questions concerning these special requests.

Thank you to all group members for their help and support making the altar a centerpiece for our KVCC service.

Charlotte Lichtenberg

RE-OPENING TASK FORCE REPORT

- Group continues to monitor updates to health guidance, and the state of the pandemic.
- Meeting monthly.

REPORT FROM THE SABBATICAL COMMITTEE

We have not met since the last council meeting so there is nothing to report. (we are meeting the Friday before Council so will briefly speak up if there is something to report). We still plan (hope?) to have a list of Worship leaders and short bios out into the community by the end of June.

The Manse Discernment Group

No new information was provided at today's meeting.

Other Business:

Next council meeting is Tuesday, **July 26, 2022** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM at the home of Debby Rice.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk