

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes
February 25, 2025

Present: Pastor John Sampson, Fritz Sabbow, Pam Gothner, Annie Scavo, Katharine Preston, Robert Rokos, Elizabeth Davidson Derr, Howard Husslein, Liz Jaques, Naj Wikoff, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Susy Doolittle, Laurin McArthur, Thomas Baillargeon, Linda d'Avignon, Andre d'Avignon, Patience Whitman, and Deborah Mitchell.

Fritz Sabbow opened the meeting at 5:01 PM. This meeting was held at the Van Santvoord room at KVCC.

Opening Prayer: Annie Scavo led us in an opening prayer.

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

Approval of last month's KVCC Council Minutes: Elizabeth Davidson Derr made a motion to approve December's KVCC Council meeting minutes, and Andre d'Avignon seconded the motion. The Council voted, a discussion was held, and the motion passed.

Discussion Items:

Approval of AFRI Council Report and March 18th Vigil Plan (provided): Laurin led a discussion with details and specifics about the upcoming vigil in Elizabethtown on March 18th. Naj Wikoff made a motion that AFRI proceed with the plan for the March 18th Vigil. Thomas Baillargeon seconded the motion. The Council discussed the plan. A vote was cast, and the motion passed.

Mission and Social Action Draft Statement Review (provided): Andre d'Avignon led a discussion and fielded questions about the draft statement which had been circulated to the Council. After a discussion, Andre agreed to provide the Council with a new draft statement and will provide that to the Council in the upcoming weeks.

Childcare Discussion and Action Steps: The Council discussed the importance of the childcare program and ways in which this program can be enhanced to be more inviting and inclusive of families in our community. Council members offered ideas around how to do this, such as renovating the childcare area, purchasing new toys and a rocking chair, and having more volunteers to assist with the program. This focus will help foster KVCC's mission of supporting and fostering relationships with our local community. Linda d'Avignon volunteered to help Henrietta Jordan with this endeavor. Fritz Sabbow will reach out to Henrietta with our ideas and then follow up with the Council.

Pastor John Check In Time: Pastor John wanted to check in with Council members to see how everyone was dealing with his upcoming resignation. Council members expressed their thoughts and feelings about his resignation, discussed details about the transition to a new pastor. Council members were also asked to check in with congregations to see how they are feeling and provide feedback to the Council.

Current Task Groups and Committee Leaders:

AFRI - Laurin McArthur and Bobbi Perez
Buildings - Howard Husslein

Finance - Robert Rokos
Flowers - Charlotte Lichtenberg
Food Mission - Deborah Mitchell
Grounds - Pam Gothner, Paul Osenbaugh and Erica Swift
Mission & Social Action - Andre d'Avignon, Naj Wikoff
Personnel: Moderator, Vice Moderator and Treasurer
Worship - TBD

Future Dates:

March 16th after service - Dr Marjorie Purnine from the UCC NY Conference will be present to explain the process during the transition of a church pastor.

March 18th AFRI Vigil in Elizabethtown 4pm to 5:30pm

Pastor's Report – February 25, 2025

Pastoral Transition

- Announced my resignation, effective May 5, 2025.
- Working with members to transition my responsibilities.

Worship and Spiritual Development

- March 4 – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner.
- March 5 – Ash Wednesday service at the Neighborhood House.
- March 20 – Spring Equinox celebration. Working with Susie Allen, Bob Andrews, Lorraine Duvall and Pam Gothner to develop this offering.
- 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.

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

- Memorial service for Dan Moore scheduled for Saturday, May 10, 2025.
- Wedding for Deborah and Mark scheduled for Saturday, September 6, 2025.
- Wedding for Quentin Nason and Ivy Bonanno scheduled for Saturday, September 13, 2025.
- Met with Fritz and Annie to discuss finding candidates to officiate these services.

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

- The group will next be reading *Messiah: The Gospel According to Handel's Oratorio* by Roger A. Bullard.

Community Support

- Working with members of the congregation on identifying neighbors in need and supporting them through pastoral support and financial grants.
- Resigned from Keene Diversity Advisory Committee. Group has asked for a member of KVCC to replace me. I have spoken with Naj and Andre about possible candidates.

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.
- Next meeting scheduled for March 7.

Scheduled Vacation

- None at this time.

Other Items

- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.

FINANCE COMMITTEE SUMMARY **JANUARY 2025**

WE DID NOT HOLD AN OFFICIAL MEETING BUT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE WORKED ON INFORMALLY:

1. Tax letter directed to donors was compiled and edited and will be available today.
2. The new treasurer made official his contacts with the bank, bookkeeping and financial advisor but has not completed details to credit card company. Documents needed.
3. Treasurer has begun monthly review with bookkeeper to further understand the details.
4. Future issues: Payment of new Zoom equipment (maybe from Bequest?). Should a portion of Bequest be moved to Endowment Fund? Jerry\'92s bill for snow. Contract with Jerry? or copy of his insurance papers\
Solar powered battery/generator?

Thank you, ROBERT ROKOS

Keene Food Mission Report – February 2025

Due to scheduling conflicts, the KFM Steering Committee did not meet as a group in February.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

KFM Steering Committee Development: Cindy and Deborah met on 2/3/25 to tease out the process for sending out thank you cards. Cindy will now be writing and mailing thank you letters to our donors. Deborah will obtain the most recent list of donors from Liz and provide Cindy with updated donor lists. Deborah provided Cindy with thank you cards. Deborah sent an email to Liz with the updated process for noting the donations for the KFM.

Develop mission statement for Keene Food Mission – DRAFT: The KFM provides immediate, short-term monetary support for food insecure families in the town of Keene. The KFM supports families in accessing other means of local support such as food banks, DSS, etc. The steering committee will work together toward following the KFM's principals and being fair and equitable when assessing an individual's food insecurity needs.

Criteria for Beneficiaries: We have been open to support families in need. We will develop criteria and guidelines for the KFM. Some areas of concern include: 1) how long will the family need help, and 2) is the family aware of other resources to offset their food insecurity. We can help to access those resources if needed. At the end of the 3 months, we will re-assess the need, such as a short-term need (surgery) vs. long-term need (chronic medical condition). These guidelines will include both existing and potential KFM families.

KFM Steering Committee: The following individuals have volunteered to be a part of the KFM Steering Committee: Pastor John Sampson, Cindy Ayres, Nancy McArthur, Fritz Sabbow, and Deborah Mitchell.

Next Steps:

Finalize members of the Steering Committee – Potential Members - Melissa LaVallee (Keene Central School) was interested to attend to learn more. She didn't commit to serving but seemed open to explore more. One of the members of the Steering Committee (Pastor John or Deborah) will reach out again to provide her with more information about the KFM.

Once Steering Committee is established, that group will finalize the criteria for beneficiaries of the KFM and the allocation of responsibilities (recordkeeping, fundraising and acknowledgments, client contact and approval, product disbursement/bills, outside interactions, i.e. agencies to support us, DSS Benefits advisory).

Planned Fundraising:

Souper Bowl: February 9, 2025 – We raised around **\$525** from this fundraiser; deposited 2/11/25.

Grant Applications: Adirondack Foundation

Midyear Campaign: Mailing in May/June

Bazaar: August 1st and 2nd

Holiday Appeal: First week in November 2025

Follow Up Questions:

How do we establish a partnership with the Elizabethtown Food Shelf and Lake Placid Food Pantry?

February Update: Katharine Preston is willing to partner with us to ensure our recipients are accessing the Elizabethtown Food Shelf. Deborah spoke with Linda Young, Thrift and Thrive Shop in Lake Placid. Her store is open on Friday mornings from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Our KFM recipients are able to access additional food support on that day. Deborah will alert our KFM recipients of both of these options in the upcoming weeks.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 3 PM at the manse. (Second Tuesday of the month). We hope to have all current members of the Steering Committee present.

Respectfully submitted: Deborah Mitchell, KFM

AFRI COUNCIL REPORT FEBRUARY 2025

ACTION ITEM: Vigil in front of Essex County Office - March 18

Purpose of Vigil - to raise consciousness of the plight of refugees and immigrants and encourage lawmakers to push to reinstate many of the shuttered refugee and immigrant programs and keep in place constitutional protections.)

Bell Ringing with the suspension of programs, loss of rights

Joyful bell ringing for things we can do

Civil Rights Songs - Public Domain

Signs

Petitions

(See Google Docs Preliminary March 18th Demonstration Plan for more details)

Planning showings and programs around release of "A Million Miles Away" - potentially April

Developing and sharing "Benefits of Immigration"

Integration with Council

Some delay bringing Laurin on board (He was away)

Bob changing banner

Website changes - Name has been updated

Facebook - Name was updated to - An Outreach of KVCC, UCC (Facebook would not accept KVCC spelled out.)

Upcoming

Potluck at KVCC March 2, April 27, June 1

Vigil March 18

Finance

Previous Balance	2,148.05
Donations	650.00
Expenditures	(69.40)
Current Balance	2,728.65

Respectfully and gratefully submitted,

Bobbi Perez
Laurin McArthur

March 18th Vigil Plan

Time: 4 - 5:30 pm Location: In front of the Elizabethtown County Offices

Announcer: Bob Purpose of Vigil - to raise consciousness of the plight of refugees and immigrants

Bell Ringing with the suspension of programs, loss of rights

- Shut down of Welcome Corp

- Reversal of Venezuelan Temporary Protected Status extension

- CBP One Asylum Request Application

- Vetted Refugees not being let into the country - such as the Afghan family going to Plattsburgh

- Collateral arrests

Birthright citizenship

USCRI resettlement programs

Disinformation spread about immigration

Joyful bell ringing for things we can do

- USCRI Gift Cards

- Share: Benefits of Immigration

- Know Your Rights cards

- Sign our petition

- Wear our buttons

Civil Rights Songs - Public Domain

- Peace flows like a river

Potential Signs:

Human rights matter - everyone's

Only the rich will be able to Immigrate (Monique's suggestion)

- Hate doesn't make great

"undocumented immigrants are arrested less than... U.S. citizens for violent and drug crimes"

"No" to collateral arrests

"Immigrants have started... 55% of America's startup companies"

- Uphold the 14th amendment (Birthright citizenship)

- Keep our Promises to our Afghan Friends

- "immigrants are... positive for the economy"

- We all come from Immigrants

Undocumented Immigrants Help Social Security Stay Solvent

- Every person has rights

"Undocumented immigrants pay more into public benefit programs than they take out"

- We believe in Constitutional Rights

- We believe in separation of powers

(Various Benefits of Immigration Flier facts)

- Reinstatement of Welcome Corps

- Keep asylum seekers

- Restart CBP One Asylum Request Application

Extend TPS

ICE does not belong in Church, School or Health Centers
U.S. children should not live in fear of parental deportation
Workable asylum policies
No separation of families

Petition:

Send petitions to both state and Federal Representatives:

This is what we stand for:

- No collateral arrests
- Uphold the 14th amendment
- Keep our promises to our Afgan friends
- Reinstatement of Welcome Corps
- Reactivate CBP One Application and resume processing asylum petitions
- Extend TPS for Venezuelans
- Reinstate Protected areas policies for ICE enforcement
- Resume U.S. Refugee Admissions Program
- Stop separation of families

Speakers:

- Billy Jones - Assemblyman?
- John Samson?
- AFRI Members
- Immigrants?
- Personal Ah Ha! moments

Advertising:

- KVCC email
- Other Churches in the Surrounding area
- Diversity Center
- Colleges
- Newspaper articles before event
- Radio
- Partners - Contact now so they can plan with us
- FaceBook

Equipment:

- Speaker
- Microphone
- Yard signs
- Irish Flags
- Flags of those that have TPS
- 200 Benefits of Immigration fliers
- 200 Resource Pages
- Canopy - if bad weather
- Poster Boards

Attracting People to Tables

Goodies - M & M's

3 Buttons

In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country. We're scared now. The people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings, who labor in poultry farms and meatpacking plants, who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shifts in hospitals. They may not be citizens or have the proper documentation, but the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals. They pay taxes and are good neighbors. They are faithful members of our churches and mosques, synagogues, gurdwara, and temples. I ask you to have mercy, Mr. President, on those in our communities whose children fear that their parents will be taken away, and that you help those who are fleeing war zones and persecution in their own lands to find compassion and welcome here.

- Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde

Mission & Social Action

To: KVCC Council

From: Missions and Social Justice Committee (Co chairs: Naj Wikoff and Andre d'Avignon)

Re: Statement on behalf of our church in response to actions of the current administration

The Committee of Missions and Social Justice (M&SJ) feel it is important for the church to make a public statement about our Church core values in response to the multiple abuses that have taken place in the past weeks of the new administration. This statement is attached.

It is our hope that the Council would consider this request as an agenda item at your next meeting. With approval we would submit this statement to the church newsletter, Nextdoor Keene, an insert into the church bulletin, and also a letter to the editor (unsure of destination publication).

We appreciate the Council consideration of this request.

Mission & Social Action KVCC Statement

We are a small church in a hamlet surrounded by mountainous beauty. From this position of grace and blessing, we are obliged by our faith, as we say together each week, "to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God."

Scriptural instructions on following Jesus' teachings are clear: "Love, forgiveness, and service to others, most especially, "to care for the least of these." We interpret his teachings to mean:

- to love and care for people who might walk a different road, with respect to their self-identity.
- to love and care for our relatives in creation who lack human voices, and human relatives with marginalized voices who continue to bear the brunt of economic, environmental, and social degradation.
- to love and care for those who have been driven from their homes by climate change, government mis-management, violence or war.
- to love and care for our neighbors who cannot always buy adequate and healthy food or provide shelter for their families.
- to love and care for people when a family member or friend decides death is a better alternative to life.

Therefore:

- we are open and affirming to everyone.
- we deliberately curb or change our own habits to support creation justice.
- we support immigrants, refugees at home and abroad.
- we support our neighbors through our food mission.
- we accompany family members and friends touched by suicide.

We are blessed to live in a wondrous region in a country we love. We see arrogance, cruelty and injustice being carried out in the name of expediency. In addition to action, we are called to be prophetic to the powerful and to say:

- Stop. Have mercy.

Keene Valley Congregational Church

BUILDINGS REPORT

Not too terribly much going on in the church building. Some front door closer work and the fire extinguisher ongoing inspections are happening.

	Description	Date Rec'd.	Est. Comp. Date	Cost Est.	Assignee	Status
Manse Tenant	Dryer vent cleaning	5/1/2024	June 2024		Howard	Pending
Church/VSR	Ceiling plaster work	pre 08/30/2023	On hold	<\$1000	Contractor	
VSR	Chimney tuckpointing	pre 08/30/2023	On hold		Contractor	
Church Grounds	Wrought Iron Refinishing	pre 08/30/2023	Spring 2025	~ \$200	Volunteers	
Church	Shutter repair/repaint	pre 08/30/2023			Volunteers	Under Consideration
VSR	Flickering lights	pre 08/30/2023			Howard	Under Investigation
VSR	Dryer vent cleaning	10/27/2023	Late 2024		Howard	Will investigate repositioning log set and grate.
Church	Lg. Restroom toilet seal loose	12/21/2024	January '25		Howard	Tightened 1/13/25
Church	Front door bracket bent	12/15/2024	January '25		Howard	Bracket replaced and latches and closers adjusted. Weatherseal pending.

GROUNDS REPORT

No new information.

FLOWER COMMITTEE REPORT

No new information.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No new information.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE:

No new information.

KEENE FOOD MISSION REPORT – February 2025

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Respectfully submitted: Deborah Mitchell, KFM

Other New Business:

Need to begin planning for 2025 Bazaar.

Deborah Mitchell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk