

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

December 7, 2021

Present: Karen Glass, Elizabeth Davidson Derr, Linda Bogardus, Nancy McArthur, Debby Rice, Annie Scavo, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Barbara Merle-Smith, Shawn LaMarche, Erica Swift, Linda LaBarge, Liz Jaques, Lorraine Duvall, Dre Roebuck, Jimm Collin, Pam Gothner, Henrietta Jordan, and Deborah Mitchell.

Absent: Pastor John Sampson, Naj Wikoff, Tom Both, and Chris Blaicher

Karen opened the meeting at 5:00 PM.

Opening Prayer: Karen led the group in prayer, bringing us together in the spirit of each other and our church.

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

Pastor's Report – December 7, 2021

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Rev. Joe Paparone, representing the Labor-Religion Coalition, and the NY chapter of the Moral Mondays organization, was the guest preacher on November 14.
- Susie Allen will be leading worship on December 12.
- Winter solstice vespers service to be offered on December 21.
- Extensive discussions regarding Christmas Eve services held with various church groups. The plan will be to have an outdoor carol sing (weather permitting) and later hybrid worship service on December 24. Specifics forth-coming.
- Naj Wikoff will be leading worship on December 26.
- 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 meets mornings @ 7 AM. The weekly book discussion group on The Cloud of Unknowing is ongoing.
- Friday morning prayer group meets in the VSR, sharing prayers, concerns and joys of the community.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- Held funeral service for Jim Reed on November 5, 2021.

Pastoral Support

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

Book Discussion Group – Tuesday Nights

- Completed reading The Third Reconstruction by The Rev. Dr. William Barber.

- Will begin reading Christianity and the Social Crisis by Walter Rauschenbusch on Tuesday, January 11, 2022.

Community Support

- Working with members of the congregation on identifying neighbors in need, and supporting them through financial grants.
- As part of our Advent giving program members of the following groups have been invited to speak to the congregation during worship, and have received a financial gift from our congregation: Pat Hickey's local gift drive, Little Peaks, The Wild Center, and the Adirondack Diversity Initiative.

Essex Association

- Black River – St. Lawrence Association (BRSL)
 - Members of the Essex Association have had preliminary discussions with the BRSL Association about merging. The discussions have been positive, and are moving forward.

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

Out of Office

- Starting the week of October 24 I will move to my non-summer days off - Mondays and Saturdays
- I also will be taking the following days off:
 - December 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

Other Items

- Church officially designated a Creation Justice Church by the UCC on November 6, 2021. This news has been shared in our wider community through local media sources.
- Members from the 2021 and 2022 Councils met on Sunday, November 2014 to get to know each other better, facilitate knowledge transfer, discuss where the church is now, and where we would like to go. Many great ideas and insights were shared and recorded for further follow-up. Thanks to all who organized the retreat, and who attended!
- Liz had returned to her regular hours in the Church Office.
- Attend Spiritual Direction sessions for the development of my own spirit.
- Agreed to serve another 3-year term on the UC NY Board of Directors

Treasurer's Report: Prior to the meeting, Jimm provided the Council with the following documents: Income Statement Budget, KVCC Weekly Giving Summary, TD Ameritrade Statement, and KVCC Balance Sheet. Henrietta made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report. Elizabeth seconded the motion. A discussion followed. Pam Gothner sought clarification around a line item in the budget for the Grounds Interest Group. Some of the expenses for buildings has been allocated to this line item in error. Pam is hoping for clarification with Nancy to resolve this issue. A discussion was made, and the motion was carried. Nancy McArthur will be taking over as the Council's treasurer for the fiscal year 2022.

Committee Reports:

Buildings & Grounds Report: There was no new information from the Buildings Committee.

Grounds Report December 2021

The Ground Committee had a final, raking work session on Friday, November 19. Eight hardy volunteers braved the snow and hail to rake the leaves that fell late this year

We have paid for a rustic bench that Steve Bowers will deliver next spring. In the next 6-8 weeks we will be selecting the native plants and shrubs to be planted in the pollinator garden in the spring of 2021.

Worship Committee Council Report December 7, 2021:

The Worship Committee met on November 5, 2021. The hour-long meeting was entirely devoted to planning for Christmas—in particular, Christmas Eve.

We reviewed the Eve Service history before Covid, where we had two in-person services, and last year's one service on Zoom at 5 PM. This year we are a hybrid church with in-person and online attendees. The big question was if we have the service with Covid and fire restrictions in place, how would we deal with the numbers of people who might attend. What was our comfort level?

The idea of having a carol sing outside by the fire pit where the community would be invited with no limit to numbers was suggested. There would also be a Zoom-only worship service that would be open to all. There would be no in person gathering inside the church.

John asked the committee to think about this for a few days and share our thoughts via email. He also will be asking the re-opening committee for its thoughts and advice.

Mission and Social Action Committee: Henrietta Jordan said the Mission and Social Action Committee is working as a subset of the Creation Justice Committee, and the allocation checks have been sent out for the advent giving.

Flower Committee: Flower Group Report from Charlotte Lichtenberg

Altar arrangements have continued to be creative, using pieces from nature. Thus, fewer flowers are being used. Poinsettias in place 12/12/21 - 1/9/22 church window sills. The source of poinsettias is Plattsburgh Cook and Gardener. Flowers are all in foil-wrapped pots, mostly red in color. Pleased that David Craig has focused camera in close-up shots of the altar arrangements and now on the Creche. From January through March 2022, Ingrid Carmen will be away. Charlotte will be accepting volunteers to fill in on her scheduled absence(s). Flower group schedule posted on bulletin board next to the kitchen. Questions & information, call me @ 576-4567.

Creation Justice Report for the December 7, 2021 Council Meeting:

November 6, 2021 we received this email from Brooks Brendt:

Dear John and Lorraine, I am happy to share that you are now officially a Creation Justice Church of the UCC! I greatly appreciated the very thoughtful, engaged approach your congregation took for this process. In recognition of your church's designation, I would be happy to send your church a large vinyl Creation Justice banner. All I ask is that I receive a photo of members of your congregation with the banner. Let me know if receiving a banner interests you.

On a regular basis, I invite churches to write an article of 300 to 500 words to share about a program or activity that they have conducted that is innovative and could serve as a model for other churches. I think a written piece describing the Four solstice/equinox online Vespers Services would be a great contribution. I don't believe I have heard of other churches doing something like this. Let me know if someone in your church might be interested in writing such a piece. Thanks so much for all your work!

With lots of gratitude for you and your congregation,

Rev. Brooks Berndt

Minister for Environmental Justice

United Church of Christ

To follow up on Brooks' request, Martha Gallagher is writing-up a piece on the Vesper Services.

Last week we received the banner, which will be unveiled after the holidays.

Naj Wykoff published an article in the Lake Placid news.

<https://www.lakeplacidnews.com/opinion/columns/2021/11/18/on-the-scene-kvcc-designated-a-creation-justice-church/>

This piece was published in the Sun Community News in response to a press release by Naj.

<https://suncommunitynews.com/news/93472/church-given-creation-justice-designation/>

Katharine Preston continues to contribute CJC notes to the KVCC emails, including the coverage of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) and the activities of those attending from The Wild Center's Youth Climate program.

Re-Opening Task Force Report

- Group continues to monitor updates to health guidance, and the state of the pandemic.
- Full hybrid worship offered beginning July 4.
- Group will be moving to a meeting schedule of every other week.

Sabbatical Committee Report December 1, 2021:

This Committee has met three times in November and things are coming together.

Laurin McArthur and Susie Allen have agreed to lead the church services for Advent through Epiphany. John will return the following Sunday.

We are in the process of asking someone to take on the job of being Pastoral Counselor during the 19-week Sabbatical. This person would hold office hours, make emergency visits and do weddings and funerals as necessary.

Larry Shipps has agreed to manage the Pastoral Discretionary Fund during this time.

Info on # of Sundays of the 19-week Sabbatical by month ([ordained minister](#), [Laurin & Susie](#))

Sep - Three Non-Communion Sundays

Oct – Four Non-Communion Sundays [1 Communion Sunday](#)

Nov – Two Non-Communion Sundays [1 Communion Sunday](#) [1 Advent Sunday](#)

Dec - [Three Advent/Christmas Sundays](#) [1 Communion Sunday](#)

Jan – [One Carol Sing Sunday](#) [1 Communion/Epiphany Sunday](#)

We will need 9 non-ordained pulpit speakers. We have a short list and will be approaching these people in the New Year. We would like to have them and their themes all lined up by May first.

Church Council RETREAT Summary: A retreat was held on November 14, 2021. The 2021 and 2022 Councils met together to discuss where we are as a church community and share ideas about possible future initiatives. The 2022 Council will take and consider carefully possible priorities for the coming year(s) and begin a process to gain Church wide priorities.

Notes (individual input, small group input, not necessarily a consensus view)

1) Church Council: comments from the 2021 Council to the new 2022 Council

A special thank you to Karen and the 2021 Council for leading us and getting us through COVID.

Council Meetings

- Council can sometimes feel like it operates in silos, and perhaps not holistically or strategically
- Council has been “the best meetings I have attended”
- The emphasis on Nuts and Bolts (which is necessary) does not address the spiritual direction of the Church.
- Time is limited in meetings, little or no time to dig into specific issues.
- Reports from groups ahead of the meeting are good....more lead time for reading the reports would be good.
- Suggestion: Nuts and Bolts/Strategic hybrid should be considered.

Concerns

- Funds appear to be somewhat lower than expected
- Maintaining the older buildings continues to be a challenge

2) Where are we now? Small group breakout session. “COVID hangs over this entire set of items as it drags on. We are tired.” We also celebrate what the Church means during these trying times.

- Who we are: Affirmation that we are non-dogmatic, responsive, flexible, listening, open to questioning, evolving in our sense of church
- Music has been amazing. Rob and Lynn have done so much for us.
- Zoom/on line presence got up and running in a week, and has been a glue for our community bringing together people from all over. Zoom-a gift and a blessing. Can feel passive.

- Fellowship: concerns over lack of fellowship opportunities due to COVID; missing community, coffee hour, children
- Social action/justice feels separate from spiritual life of the church; Spiritual life of the Church is occurring in book groups, (not in Church? Maybe book groups are church)
- Church feels “inert”, need a common purpose
- Communications: we need to tell the story better about what it means to be a progressive Christian church so that others know who we are

Church has been strong in this pandemic: ONA, CJC, Centering Prayer, open Campfires, Book Groups, Worship, Camping trips

- Concerns over lack of younger families in church, some drop off in attendance

3) Thinking about our future. Small group breakout session. The following is a list of brainstorm ideas. A process will take place to prioritize and discuss with the larger community.

- Communications: trifold brochures, improved website, welcome baskets for new residents
- Fellowship: Spiritually nourishing; continuing to provide options for people to live into their faith
- Contemplative Retreat
- Grieving /bereavement community
- Bookless group, exploring deeper questions
- Greeting Committee
- Fellowship Dinners, coffee hour, other opportunities
- Advocacy
 - Social action committee--monitoring for opportunities
 - Thinking about how we want to live into Barber’s fusion vision
 - Showing up in ways that others know we represent our Church (t shirts? branding)
- Creation Justice...living into our commitment
 - More outreach
Group? Individual? On Council?
 - Lorraine’s BIG party idea to celebrate CJI (next summer?)
- Open and affirming...living into our commitment (Be Bold)
 - Support to the Keene/ADK Diversity initiatives
 - Active participation/funding of Eagle Island Camp’s director for education
 - Booth at the next Pride parade
 - Larger Rainbow sign at special events, e.g. Bazaar
- Expand concept of Church to a spiritual learning (destination) center

4) Gathering Guidelines

- The group discussed our current gathering guidelines, and suggested some updates, which will be considered by the Reopening Task Force.

Post Council Retreat Check In: Overall, the Council provided a good deal of positive feedback about the retreat. The Council agreed to establish a mental health protocol for times when there is mental health situation that may involve the church.

Finding a Buildings Committee Person to Replace Tom Both: The Council recognized the significant work and dedication of Tom Both. Tom is retiring at 90 years old! We agree to identify a way to thank Tom for his dedication and service. We also discussed how to begin the process of finding someone or more than one person to replace Tom. We

discussed the number of hours his replacement would commit, the scope of his responsibilities, and the dedication to the church and its buildings.

Other Business: Deborah informed the Council that the final minutes from the Annual Meeting have been submitted. There was a delay until we could locate the in-person attendance sheet. Debby Rice expressed an idea around “airing” some of John’s sermons on YouTube, specifically around this week’s sermon. There was a general consensus that some of John’s sermons could be disseminated to the community as his message is powerful and resonates with many. Those in attendance of today’s meeting will get back to Debby with their feedback, and Debby will follow up with John.

Elizabeth made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:47 PM.

Next council meeting is Tuesday, **January 25, 2022** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM in person at the Keene Valley library with a Zoom component.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk