

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

June 27, 2023

Present: Debby Rice, Pastor John Sampson, Dre Roebuck, Anne Runyon Hurd, Naj Wikoff, Nancy McArthur, Laurin McArthur, Liz Jaques, Paul Osenbaugh, Fritz Sabbow, Pam Gothner, and Deborah Mitchell.

Debbie opened the meeting at 5:01 PM. This meeting was held at KVCC.

Opening Prayer: Pastor John led the group in a quiet reflective meditation. Debby also opened the meeting with a reading from John Philp Newell.

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

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

Welcoming New People at Worship: Based on feedback from people in the community, John is suggesting as leaders of the church we make a point of scanning the room during coffee hour to make sure everyone feels welcomed. The Council continued a discussion around ways in which we can all make our space more inviting and make connections.

WelcomeCorps Opportunity: Laurin provided an update on this project.

Status of Application

We have received two sets of follow-up questions to our application:

June 13, replied June 15 – We clarified answers in several areas, primarily redistributing our Financial response to have some money in all of their categories and providing additional information about the local housing market.

June 20, replied June 21 – These questions suggested that they are actually looking at us seriously.

Public transportation – there is some, it is cheap, and it is close to housing.

Health screening in Albany, are we aware, and is this in the budget – Our answer to this was yes and no. We are aware and prepared to transport our newcomers as needed. We stated that our policy is that transportation costs will not be reimbursed through the fund for our newcomers.

Post 90-day plans – Lengthy answer

African Cultural connections – this is a challenge, but we found additional resources in Burlington and NYC.

Housing – they are asking the same question in different ways, and we are saying that we have a housing unit.

This was the first time we were able to respond outside their very cumbersome welcome plan package. We took advantage of that to include the story of Irma and Isaac. I sent a follow-up email this morning to make sure that they have our response.

We are waiting for determination of our application.

Furnishings _ Mary Michelfelder's sister Carole, is giving us some bedroom and living room furniture, which we will take to the McArthur's pole barn on June 29. We have an offer for a dresser from Carol Lamb, but we are going slow taking up more offers until everything is more settled.

John Philip Newell Event Update: Susie Allen

JOHN PHILIP NEWELL PLANNING TEAM REPORT

June 2023

We're almost there! John Philip Newell and Cami Twilling will arrive in Keene Valley in the afternoon on July 14 to offer 3 events:

- a book talk and signing on July 14 at 7:00
- a morning retreat on July 15 from 8:30 – 12:00
- screening of his film, "Hebridean Treasure" on July 15 at 7:00 at the KV library

We are delighted to report that we have received a total of \$6950 in grants to support this event. Newell's fee is \$7000, so these grants are allowing us to offer a lunch after the retreat on July 15 and complete this project in the black. Special thanks to Debby Rice for help with the budgeting and to Nancy McArthur for help in managing the finances in a variety of ways.

John Sampson hosted a discussion of Newell's book, *Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul*, that brought participants from beyond our church community. The discussion was thoughtful and energized. The group will meet one more time to reflect on Newell's reimagining of 3 Christian prayers: The Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, and the Magnificat.

We will provide a final report for the July Council meeting. That said, we are deeply grateful for the Council's decision – many months ago – to support our decision to pursue this project. We have learned a lot about many things and are keeping track of things we want to remember for a future event such as this one.

We currently have 59 people registered. If you have not yet registered for this very special event, now is the time and here is the link: https://www.eventleaf.com/e/JPNewell_KeeneValley

Personnel Task Force Update:

Fritz had no notable updates at the time of the meeting as there has been new volunteers to help with the development of a Personnel Committee. It is "ad hoc and as needed" until we can identify volunteers to help out with this endeavor.

Pastor's Report – June 27, 2023

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Hosted sunrise and evening services on June 21 for the summer solstice.
- Working with Bill Serjack, Nancy Emrich, Liz Jaques, Lynn Dewalt and Rob Hastings to schedule our summer music program.
- Invited to preach at All Soul's in St. Huberts on Sunday, August 20.
- Leading weekly worship at the Neighborhood House.

- 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.

New Members

- Five people have indicated they would like to become members. Held one new member welcome session. Another one to be scheduled.

Web Site

- Jimm Collin has agreed to help create the website.
- Met with Jimm to review content requirements.
- Jimm is reaching out to website builders to get a sense of their work and pricing.
- Jimm is taking pictures of church life to use as content on the website.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- Jane Brown Knight graveside memorial and reception in the VSR scheduled for July 8.
- Russell Banks' memorial service will be held on Saturday, July 15. John will not be officiating.
- Memorial for Doris Hamner scheduled for weekend of August 12. Exact date/time TBD.
- Robinson wedding confirmed for Saturday, September 9. John will not be officiating.

Pastoral Support

- Weekly office hours scheduled for Thursdays and Saturdays, 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

- The group is meeting one last time to read John Philip Newell's reimaginings of iconic New Testament passages. Will then take the rest of the summer off.

John Philip Newell Visit

- John Philip Newell will be visiting KVCC on July 14 and 15.
- Attending multiple group meetings each week to plan this event.

Manse Discernment Committee

- Member of group considering future usage of the manse and extended property.

WelcomeCorps Committee

- Part of discernment group considering sponsoring a refugee/refugee family to be settled in our town.

Community Support

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

New York Conference

- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UCC NY Board of Directors.
- Attended the UCC NY Annual Meeting on June 16 – 17 in Niagara Falls with Shawn Lamarche and Anne Hurd.
- The merger of the Essex and BRSL associations was approved.

Training/Education

- Will be attending an online seminar on al-Ghazali's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 12 – 2 PM, July 3 – 7. This seminar is given by St. John's College, NM.

Other Items

- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.
- Attended meetings for summer bazaar.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee Report

Attending: Larry Shipps, Nancy McArthur, Elizabeth Davidson, Debby Rice

Topics discussed:

The group discussed the financial condition of the church. YTD 5/31/23 we noted a \$11,139 operating deficit attributable to survey costs, Fire Security System upgrade, and increased snow removal charges. Giving is even with the prior year.

YTD June statements will be compared to budget and presented to council to ensure that all are aware of their remaining budgets for the year.

Checking accounts for the John Philip Newell event and the Welcome Refugees accounts are being monitored separately to ensure these project cash flows do not commingle with the church's operational funding. The Committee noted that the JPN event will repay the \$3,000 advance made to its account from the general account.

Investment performance is improving with the endowment valued at \$1,400,543 as of June 23, 2023. Ongoing strength in the economy, lower inflation and moderating Fed rate policy mainly account for this improvement.

The church has been notified that the Estate of J. B. Knight will be funding a bequest to the church in the near future; the amount of this gift is unknown.

Members of council are encouraged to consider including the church in wills or giving plans as the long term work of the church will be sustained by these gifts. Pam suggested we re-look at the costs of plowing and shoveling to determine if we could lower those costs.

Worship Committee

No new report at the time of Council meeting.

Mission & Social Action

On behalf of M&SA and CJ, Naj worked with the Keene Central School Green Team which resulted in their create a pollinator garden (people like Pam Gothner provided them valuable insights). The KCS GT member Gemma Cantwell came up the design for the sign, that I then painted on to signs. Next on their agenda (after summer break) is to pitch the Ausable and Country Clubs and the Town on starting a pollinator garden.

Flower Committee

This month of June has had an abundance of flowers to use from our church flower beds. I have personally enjoyed the peonies & irises brought to me. Many thanks to the KVCC grounds group + Pam's many sessions of weeding efforts. Thank you, PAM. Ingrid gets a memory gold star for her original shared expertise in starting this flower garden. It has become a beautiful use of ADK soil.

Grounds Report

Mowing of the church lawn began in early June. Ingrid Carmen has been steadily working on the Memorial Garden with the help of Bernie Webb. The pollinator garden has taken off and we hope that it is being enjoyed by the insects and birds. The deer have recently discovered it. We added some tall Joe Pye Weed behind the bench. We were able to take away the brush pile near the compost bin. Some yarrow has been transplanted into the raised bed in the parking lot. Bulbs will be ordered soon for daffodils and crocus.

Buildings Report

Debby spoke about the need to fill the Building's vacancy position. We talked about making the person charged to take care of the buildings possibly be part time job.

Manse Discernment Group

June 2023

There is no new information to add from this group at today's Council meeting.

Bazaar Committee Report

Items for the white elephant sale started to be collected as of the beginning of June on Thursdays between 9am-3pm. Jewelry is being collected in the red box in the VS room, drop off anytime. We are changing the way we do salads. Limiting the types of salads to 4 selected recipes. The next bazaar meeting will be a series of meetings with each group (Food, Jewelry, Bake Goods and so on.) We have decided to do a church tent

with some activities, t-shirts for sale, and info about who we are as a spiritual community. We still need volunteers to sign up either in VS room or by emailing the team leader for each section. I have a list going of people that are willing to help wherever and wherever needed but I'm not sure what's needed unless folks sign up.

Other Business:

Pastor John reported our support of the LGBTQI community, both at service and a presence at the Pride Fest on Sunday, 6/25 in Saranac Lake. We offered anti-gun violence postcards which people took to mail. Our KVCC brochures were also well-received and taken. We took pictures of participants under a Divine Light Shines on You which were shared on sites such as the Saranac Lake Police Department. We also offered face painting for the event.

John informed the Council that KVCC will be receiving a bequest from Annette Merle-Smith to our church and provided some of the background about the person made the bequest. John suggested we talk about ways in which we would use the bequest and form a sub-committee to have conversations in our wider community to find consensus on a higher level to help us decide where the monies would be dispersed. The Council talked more about this bequest and how to discern how we want to use it. Naj made a motion that we create a discernment group to gather more information and create a series of suggestions to then be considered by the Council. Nancy seconded the motion. We discussed the matter, and the motion was passed. John will generate an email to the congregation to inform them of same. We're hoping to have this group established by the end of July.

The Council will not be in July. It will be Tuesday, **August 22, 2023** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM in person at KVCC with a Zoom option.

Naj made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk