

KVCC CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

August 22, 2023

Present: Debby Rice, Pastor John Sampson, Dre Roebuck, Anne Runyon Hurd, Nancy McArthur, Shawn LaMarche, Paul Osenbaugh, Susie Allen, Fritz Sabbow, Charlotte Lichtenburg, Howard Husslein, and Deborah Mitchell.

Debby opened the meeting at 5:00 PM. This meeting was held at KVCC.

Opening Prayer: After a moment of silence, Pastor John led the group in reading our shared intention.

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

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

Welcoming New People at Worship: John invited the Council once again to take the initiative to welcome new people we see in church or during coffee hour.

Gift on behalf of Annette Merle-Smith: John updated the Council on the progress the group has made in discerning how best to utilize the generous gift on behalf of Annette Merle-Smith.

WelcomeCorps Opportunity:

KEENE VALLEY WELCOME CORPS:

Laurin McArthur, Debbie Rice, Elizabeth Davidson, Patience Whitman, Nancy McArthur,
Dan Mason, Shawn LaMarche, John Sampson

August 2023

Big picture: The Welcome Corps has assigned a support agency to us, IRIS Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services. IRIS has weekly zoom training and support meetings. Since IRIS came on board, progress has accelerated. The refugees are coming!

Who are they: We have been matched with two sisters travelling to us from Uganda. Until their arrival, we are limited in what we can say and what we can know. Their primary language is Swahili, and they speak a little French and a little English.

Arrival: The international portion of their flight here is booked, so we may have a date before the August Council meeting. We would like to use the Van Santvoord room for a hot meal when they arrive.

Housing: They will be housed at 15 Ivan Brown Way in the same block as the church. The home is furnished and supplied. It will be stocked for their arrival. The power is on. We are ready.

Language: Debby Rice is leading a wonderful team of volunteers.

Health: They will need physicals in Albany in the first or second week. Deb Mitchell picked up the Medicaid applications and got info on local options. Seems good. Patience Whitman has a lot of info on what we will need to be doing.

Getting the word out: I talked to Joe Pete Wilson. We had an info session for volunteers and are immigrant organizations.

Money: We have received donations from several in the community and thank you! Until we know what we do not know, we are accepting and encouraging donations, but we are not planning a fundraiser.

So, we are ready and excited.

Laurin McArthur

Keene Food Pantry: John informed the Council that there has been a change in the model of the local food pantry. There is no longer a physical pantry for local families, and through donations, accounts are set up for families at the Valley Go where they can make purchases. Vinnie McClelland has approached John to see if the church might be interested in taking over the oversight of the food pantry. Fritz made a motion that KVCC take over the responsibilities of managing the Keene Food Pantry; Paul seconded the motion. The Council talked more about this and agreed that this responsibility would fit nicely into our mission and ministry of the church and discussed strategies to execute this endeavor. John will send out information about this in the newsletter and follow up with the Council.

Nominating Committee: John provided the following information to the Council. The Nominating Committee meets to create the slate of candidates for roles in the church leadership team, as outlined in the church by-laws. These roles include Moderator, Vice Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, Members at Large (4), and UCC Delegates - Primary and Back-up. Once the slate is created, it is shared with the congregation at the annual meeting for vote. John asked the members of the Church Council, who are chosen by the congregation, to let him know if they would like to continue in their roles, have a new role on the Council, or roll off at the end of their current terms.

Advent and Christmas: John informed the Council that the fourth Sunday in December which is Advent also falls on Christmas Eve. John led a discussion about what services and programs we would be planning over the Christmas holiday, being mindful of the spiritual needs of our community.

John Philip Newell Proceeds: Debby reported on the proceeds from the John Philip Newell event. Debby reported on the hours of outreach, grant writing, and funds gained the event from the \$4,200. Debby will divide half with Weaving Home Church in Old Forge who we partnered with for this event. Our proceeds of \$2,100 will be set aside for future endeavors. John reported that over 80 people registered for the event and 116 viewed the recording.

JOHN PHILIP NEWELL PLANNING TEAM FINAL REPORT

August 2023

Planning team members:

Susie Allen, Elizabeth Davidson, Lorraine Duvall, Martha Gallagher, Karen Glass, Naomi Kelly (Old Forge), Debby Rice, John Sampson, Bernie and Ethel Webb, Naj Wikoff; Nancy McArthur and Liz Jaques provided ongoing support

Event Volunteers

Linda Bogardus, Mary Brophy-Moore (Old Forge), Pam Gothner, Betsey Serjak, Jewels Taylor-Wilde, Adam Wilson (friend of Lorraine's)

Quick Recap

On behalf of the Faith and Issues book group, I made a proposal to Council in late January 2023. The proposal identified Celtic teacher, John Philip Newell, outlined the history of the desire of Faith and Issues group to bring him to Keene Valley, and asked Council for their endorsement of our plan to bring Newell to KVCC in July 2023.

In the following months, a planning team came together and met every-other-week from the beginning of February through the second week of July. The team reviewed and selected a registration website, which was prepared by Martha Gallagher. Karen Glass wrote 2 grant proposals – ECAC and The Genesis Fund (UCC) - and we received both grants! Naomi Kelly, our collaborative partner from Old Forge, arranged for 3 more grants – from her organization, Weaving Home; from the church she serves – Niccolls Memorial Presbyterian Church; and from the Presbytery of Utica. The total from grants was \$6950, just \$50 less than Newell's fee of \$7000! Naj and Lorraine wrote articles for local publications highlighting Newell's message and our event. We publicized on social media and with posters around the region.

We offered registration fees at 3 levels:

1. \$45 for those who need financial assistance (12% paid at this rate)
2. \$75 full registration fee (73% paid at this rate)
3. \$100 scholarship fee for those able to provide financial assistance (15% paid at this rate)

Debby Rice and Dan Mason provided housing for John Philip Newell and Cami Twilling (Director of Earth and Soul).

John Philip Newell and Cami Twilling led 3 events while here:

1. A talk and book signing on Friday, July 14
2. A morning retreat on Saturday, July 15
3. An evening presentation on Saturday, July 15, of the film, "Hebridean Treasure"

Thanks to a robust registration and the grant income, we were able to provide a catered lunch for all who attended the Saturday morning retreat. Elie Wadsworth, of Ausable Inn, prepared and set-up the buffet lunch at the Keene Valley Fire Hall. The Keene Valley Fire Department set-up and put away the tables. The Fire Hall was full to capacity with a buzz of people in conversation.

The Planning Team met 2 weeks after the event to review and reflect on the experience. By all accounts, this event was a strong and fulfilling success. Over 80 people attended the events. We ended up in the black and will split the remaining proceeds 50/50 with our partner, Naomi Kelly. John Philip Newell's clear, warm, engaging, sometimes humorous presence, and his expansive message generated deep questions, lasting conversation and inspiration, and expanded our reach into the wider community. We had registrants from as far away as Ohio and Georgia. The Planning Team has begun to think about who we might bring next to Keene Valley. Who else will help us expand our vision and understanding of sacred presence, inspire our action in the world, widen our spiritual community?

To close this report, I'm including a portion of an email Bernie and Ethel received from a friend (someone familiar with KVCC) who is in Michigan and was unable to attend the event. She watched the recording of John Philip Newell's talk on Friday, July 14 (there were over 115 views of the event recording):

I've also been wanting to write to thank you, and please pass on to others responsible, for sharing the opening night of the retreat with us far-away-ones. I was very moved by it. What a beautiful man. It's one thing to know and to have wisdom. It's a whole other level to be an embodiment of that knowledge as he is. I can imagine how transformative the whole weekend must have been and how your already wonderful place could become a true utopia as enough of you continue to live in and grow that light and love. I'm serious, I really do envision it and I'm definitely going to have to retire there one day.

Personnel Task Force Update: Fritz reiterated that there has been no new interest in individuals becoming volunteers for the Personnel Task Force. The Council discussed how to proceed with this and offered strategies to find a way forward and what our next step may be. We explored having an employee recognition dinner for our KVCC staff.

PASTOR'S REPORT – AUGUST 22, 2023

Worship and Spiritual Development

- 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. Jenifer Deming led worship in my absence.
- Leading weekly worship at the Neighborhood House. Members of the Neighborhood House have been attending Sunday morning worship at KVCC.
- 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.
- Successfully tried out paperless Sunday morning worship on 8/13. Will test it again on 8/27 and 9/3.
- Planning group currently meeting to organize a celebration of the Fall Equinox on Friday, September 22 @ 5:15 PM.
- Invited Kelly Metzger of Adirondack North Country Gender Alliance to give a mission moment on Sunday, October 29.

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

- 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 on its summer vacation.

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.
- Member of Keene Diversity Advisory Committee. Meet monthly with the group.
- Attended dinner at Families First for donors and board members. Reiterated our full support for the mission of the organization, and our desire to find new ways to partner.

New York Conference

- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UCC NY Board of Directors.
- Will attend board meeting on September 23.
- Will be attending a board retreat November 9 – 11.

North Country Association

- Essex Association will be disbanded on 9/30 as we merge with the Black River/St. Lawrence Association to form the new North Country Association (NCA).
- New leadership will need to be chosen for NCA.

Training/Education

- No training currently scheduled.

Scheduled Vacation

- October 17 – 23, returning on October 24
- November 21 – 27, returning on November 28
- December 26 – January 2, returning on January 3
- 3 additional weeks of vacation to be scheduled

Other Items

- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.
- Kicking off the group to discern how to apply the Annette Merle-Smith bequest.
- Worked with others to schedule an off cycle congregational meeting for Sunday, August 27. Issues to be voted on include timing of regular annual congregational meeting, disposition of bazaar funds, schedule of next year's bazaar.
- Will need to kick-off the Nominating Committee for the 2024 Council in Q4.
- KVCC scheduled to attend Plattsburgh Pride on Saturday, September 30.
- Planning to host Halloween trick-or-treat at the church on Tuesday, October 31.
- Volunteered to be point person for collecting items for the 2024 White Elephant. Collection will begin in January.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

TREASURER'S REPORT

August 2023

The Finance Committee met on July 20 to review the YTD June 30 financial condition of the church.

Attending: Nancy McArthur, Larry Shipps, Elizabeth Davidson, Fritz Sabbow, Shawn LaMarche, Debby Rice

The group reviewed our YTD financial condition and operating statements as of June 30, 2023, including a comparison to the budget for the same period. Budgets are reviewed quarterly by the committee.

Key Financial Indicators:

Account	YTD June 2023	Vs Budget	Vs 2022
Endowment Draw	37,600	37,500	-2076
Pledges & Plate	54,931	10,892	1,765
Total Income	112,671	17,071	10,589
Bldgs & Grounds	14,928	7,362	2,921
M&SA	1,943	-1,457	1,943
Employee Expense	78,386	-3,503	-619
Total Expenses	120,744	+10,770	+9,497
Net Income	-8,073	+6,301	+1,092

Endowment: Reverend Frederica Mitchell Legacy Fund as of 8/15/2023

Item	8/15//2023	YTD Change
Total Value	\$1,396,890	+\$59,298
% invested ESG	60%	

Accounts at Champlain National Bank a/o 8/17/2023

Account	Balance	Notes
Main Account	\$122,274	
Pastors Discretionary Fund	844	
Petty Cash	2,643	

JPN Event Account	4,232	Surplus to be divided
Newcomers Account	6,100	Donated by Committee

The Committee noted:

- Credit card applications will be processed upon receipt of IRS letter (now in hand)
- Overall financial performance is acceptable with continued focus on expense management.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

No new information was provided at the time the Council met.

MISSION & SOCIAL ACTION

M&SA held a session on Antisemitism Sunday, organized by Patience, that featured Tom Glaser, who shared his family's horrific experience with the Holocaust, Susan Semegram, president of the Lake Placid Temple, Rabbi David Joslin of the Plattsburgh Temple Beth Israel, who provided an overview of the history of Antisemitism (past to present), and Karen Glass. The session was shared by ZOOM, recorded, and well attended, with Rabbi Joslin, and many present, moved by this session being held in a church on Sunday. We had an excellent Q&A.

FLOWER COMMITTEE

This month our flower group has used the flowers available in the KVCC pollinator garden. This beautiful array of flowers has proven to be a great and convenient resource for the arrangements placed inside our church building. This garden has also been admired by many community members.

GROUNDS REPORT - AUGUST 2023

The gardens around the church and the pollinator garden have been lush thanks to all the rain this summer. The bed to the right of the front steps needs to be upgraded as the deer have ravaged one of the evergreens. Susie Doolittle has been dedicated to the bed in front of the manse. Barbara Merle Smith was a garden angel in July and helped with weeding. The outdoor faucet on the manse was raised and repaired to make watering easier and to conserve water.

In September 150 spring blooming bulbs will be planted. The Council should think about whether to move forward with No Mow May next year.

BUILDINGS REPORT

The Council is pleased that Howard Husslein has volunteered to be the chair of the building committee. We look forward to his contributions.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Debby provided information on the items to vote on at the Congregational Meeting. Debby will facilitate; Deborah Mitchell will take notes; John will set the agenda.

Congregational Meeting:

Change to timing of Annual Meeting in bylaws

Bazaar Proceeds

2024 Bazaar

Keene Town Food Pantry

Budget Update

Other Business:

John encouraged Council to set their own boundaries on Sundays around talking about the activities of the church.

The Council will meet again on Tuesday, **September 26, 2023** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM in person at KVCC with a Zoom option.

Charlotte made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk