

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

February 26, 2024

Present: Pastor John Sampson, Debby Rice, Linda Bogardus, Annie Scavo, Nancy McArthur, Susie Allen, Shawn Lamarche, Dre Roebuck, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Larry Shipps, Bill and Betsy Serjak, Katharine Preston, Susie Doolittle, Sam Fisk, Elizabeth Davidson Derr, Karen Glass, Naj Wikoff, Katherine Robinson, Fritz Sabbow, Pam Gothner, and Deborah Mitchell.

Debby opened the meeting at 5:03 PM. This meeting was held via Zoom

Opening Prayer: Annie Scavo opened the meeting with a reading from Being Here.

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

Approval of January Meeting Minutes: Susie Allen made a motion to approve the January meeting minutes; Nancy seconded the motion. A vote was cast, and the motion passed.

Approval of Special Meeting Minutes (Padraig O'Tuama Retreat): Elizabeth Davidson Derr made a motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes; Nancy seconded the motion. A vote was cast, and the motion passed.

Meeting Focus: Annette Merle Smith Fund Report (John Sampson and Kate Robinson): Pastor John led a discussion around reviewing and walking through the results of the AMS Discernment Group. He led a discussion and responded to clarifying questions from those of us in attendance. Katherine Robinson continued the discussion and summary of the recommendations (see below). Annie made a motion to accept the AMS Discernment report with gratefulness; Dre and Shawn seconded the motion. A vote was cast, and the motion passed unanimously. The Council agreed to release the AMS Discernment Group from their responsibilities at this point in this process.

ANNETTE MERLE-SMITH DISCERNMENT REPORT - FEBRUARY 20, 2024

Discernment committee members: Elizabeth Derr, Susy Doolittle, Sam Fisk, Dan Mason, Frissie Reed, Kate Robinson, Pastor John Sampson, Bill Serjak, and Larry Shipps

INTRODUCTION

At the suggestion of Pastor John Sampson, following notification of the receipt of a \$400,000 bequest from the estate of Annette Merle-Smith, a group of volunteers was formed. Their mission was to "discern" the wishes of church members and friends for the use of this extraordinary gift. The money will be received in four annual equal installments. The first \$100,000 has been received.

The discernment effort was widely advertised through church notices, in-church announcements, and personal conversations. Personal e-mails were sent out seeking feedback from the Church membership.

Approximately forty-six people were interviewed or provided their opinions via email. The responses were discussed during weekly meetings throughout the fall and then collated.

In January, after a review of the suggestions, the proposals were ranked according to their support i.e. the number of people who had mentioned the concern as important.

First and foremost was the placement of the funds: Should it become part of the existing endowment; Should it be placed in a separate fund, either without restriction or with some restriction? There was general agreement that the money should be available in any amount in case of emergency.

The following report describes our recommendations based on the interviews we conducted.

Each section includes an explanation of how we came to the recommendations we are proposing and also includes a description of how we propose funding those recommendations.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We suggest placing the bequest instalments into a money market account as they arrive. Each year we suggest spending some funds on events akin to the John Phillip Newell event and on other church projects and missions. We also suggest holding a significant amount of money in reserve in that money market account with the aim of investing it into a long-term brokerage account at the end of the year. By the end of four years, we recommend aiming to have invested approximately \$334,000 into that brokerage account. (See spreadsheet.) The ongoing sustainable withdrawal, assuming 6%, from this investment would be about \$20,000 a year. This would allow the priorities articulated in interviews to be addressed not only in the short-term but also for many decades to come.

This AMS investment account could be invested in very much the same way as our endowment and could continue producing supportive income well into the future. It will not be encumbered by endowment regulations and could, of course, be recovered by the council to be used in any way they felt necessary.

REPORT

1. Endowment/ Brokerage Account: (20 votes)

A large proportion of the people who spoke to this issue thought the money should go into the endowment, thus increasing the value of the draw from the endowment.

Some people interviewed supported having the money go into a separate long-term brokerage account and using the income from that investment fund to support church projects and needs in years to come. They liked the idea of a distinct flow of income. Once funds go into the endowment, the church can't withdraw any amount over 7% without breaking their fiduciary responsibility to people who have made gifts to it. This option would provide flexibility to access the funds in the event they were needed.

Those who supported putting money into the endowment or into a brokerage account wished to convey that they would like to see this bequest enriching and sustaining the life of the church for decades to come. Some people also expressed concern that donations would fall as demographics change and concern that rising costs would exceed the amount currently available to bridge the gap between costs and needs. Many who spoke to this issue expressed that they would like for the money to be there in the event of unforeseen circumstances or an emergency.

In total, 20 people supported having the money either go into the endowment or having the money go into a separate long-term brokerage account.

Many expressed that these stated priorities were important to them, but most stopped short of specifying what percentage of the bequest should go into the endowment or investment fund. One person suggested 50%. A few people specified that all of the bequest should be invested. Most people indicated that they wished for a significant percentage to go into the endowment/ investment fund.

Finally, even people who mentioned neither the endowment nor a brokerage account in their interviews shared that they hoped the events and missions they proposed could be supported in the coming years. Many people shared their deeply held desire that we still be a church and center for spiritual engagement in 20 or 30 years.

Recommendation:

We suggest that the funds held in reserve in the money market account each year be contributed to a long-term brokerage account at the end of the year. We recommend aiming to have put approximately \$334,000 into the brokerage account at the end of four years. The ongoing sustainable withdrawal, assuming 6%, would be approximately \$20,000 a year for the foreseeable future. (see attached spread sheet.)

We believe that investing the funds into a long-term brokerage account would honor the wishes and concerns expressed to us during interviews.

Doing so would honor people's desire that the funds be available in unforeseen circumstances or in the case of an emergency, but it would also honor people's desire that this gift continue to support the life of the church in decades to come. The income from this account would always be there to support what the endowment could not.

2. Spiritual Events: (18 votes)

Many of the people interviewed were inspired by the spiritual retreat with John Philip Newell held last summer. 18 people interviewed supported using bequest funds to help bring other spiritual events to the community. Those interviewed spoke about wanting to attend more events like this in the near future. Many people, however, also spoke about wanting these events to continue long-term: they hoped the church could become a hub for such spiritual seminars, retreats, and gatherings.

The John Philip Newell event was initially funded by grants, individual donations, and a loan from the church which was repaid. The event was an extraordinary success on every level. It generated enough revenue to fully cover expenses and to allow some money to be set aside to be used for the next event. We discussed that, going forward, a balance should be sought between making sure money was never a barrier for people attending these events and also ensuring that these events can go on for a significant span of time. In discussion, it was also mentioned that there are people in our area who could lead such workshops, for which costs might be lower.

Recommendation:

Based on our discussions, we would like to suggest that \$12,000 from the money market account be used for a spiritual retreat or event each year for the next four years as seed money. \$12,000 approximates the upfront cost of the John Philip Newell retreat. This yearly funding would allow us to do a similar event every year for the next four years.

However, we would also like to think about how to ensure the long-term future of such events.

We would like to recommend that every year we sell tickets to these events on a "Pay-What-You-Can" basis. East Branch Friends of the Arts does this for some of their events. We want everyone to be welcome regardless of ability to pay. However, we know that many members of our church community would be happy to continue paying an admission fee if they knew it would go towards securing the long-term future of these events. The John Philip Newell event generated approximately \$13,000 in revenue, so we would anticipate that this model might generate at least \$5,000 in revenue a year.

After those initial four years, we propose the following as a template for continuing to fund these events long-term: \$7,000 could be taken from the income of the bequest and put towards the event each year. This would closely approximate the grants received for the John Philip Newell event. We would then suggest that ticket sales from the previous event(s) be used to fund the remainder of the cost of the event. If each event was making \$5,000 in ticket sales, this model of funding would allow the events to continue indefinitely.

We are aware that the congregation sometimes might wish to host more expensive speakers. We hope that, overall, this model will provide some flexibility. In this report, we have recommended allocating some funding each year for "Other/Unforeseen" uses (see section 5) and some of this money could be used to increase the funding for a spiritual event in any given year if the congregation agreed. In the long-term, alternating a more expensive event with a less expensive event would also be a possibility if that "Other/ Unforeseen" funding were required for other purposes.

3. Building Needs: (10 votes)

Making sure that the building is structurally sound, safe and accessible through all the years to come was very important to many people. The building itself has a strong visual aspect that many receive as a spiritual message.

Recommendation:

\$12,000 from the money market account should replenish the building reserve which was used to pay for paving the parking lot.

These bequest funds provide the church with a significant safety net going forward should emergencies arise.

4. Proposed Burse: Youth Events, Expansion of Open and Affirming Mission, Etc.:

Youth outreach has concerned the church community for many years, and many people interviewed addressed this. There was a deeply held desire to welcome young people into the church and into its orbit.

Many people interviewed (9) also expressed support for expanding the church's Open and Affirming mission. This part of the church's work was very important to them, and they would like to see it expanded in the present and continued in the years to come. Some expressed that it was particularly important to them to expand our Open and Affirming mission in our capacity as a church: they felt doing so gave that work a uniquely supportive and reparative dimension.

There were also suggestions from interviewees that social media could be used to bring more attention to programs and projects undertaken by the church.

Many of our interviews also shared broader common themes – people want to share what our church is all about, and they want to make sure we are a thriving community in 20 years. The ongoing life of the church is deeply important to them.

Recommendation:

We would like to suggest that the church create a yearly burse of \$5,000 that people could apply to in order to fund small-scale church projects.

Our discernment process has shown that many in our community view this bequest as something that can and should support the ongoing life of the church. Thus, we feel these projects should be related to the church as opposed to related to more general community outreach. We would also be enthusiastic about proposed projects for funding that dovetail with worship in one way or another.

At present, people can already apply to the church Council/ committees for funding for projects, and the church has already enabled many meaningful projects in this way. However, if we established this burse, its role could be made more explicit, and it would also ensure flow of income for such church projects in decades to come.

At the beginning, the emphasis would be on enabling on-the-ground projects that rely primarily on community organizing, and the goal would be to allow people to experiment to see what works. Funding for honoraria and expenses would help facilitate that exploration.

Many people we interviewed came to us with thoughtful, creative ideas about various church initiatives they would like to propose. While we received a diverse array of proposals, many of these projects arose out of shared desires and concerns: how can we make sure we are a robust congregation in the future? How can we expand our Open and Affirming mission? How can we diversify the age demographics of our congregation? How can we welcome more youth into the sphere of the church? How can we share what our worship services are all about with a wider community? Many expressed great happiness that the congregation is growing and expressed gratitude for all Pastor John Sampson and others have done to make that happen. They want to see that work continue and expand.

In the absence of concrete proposals, it is difficult – at this stage – to vote on funding some of the projects proposed to us during interviews. Many of these projects rely on honing the conceptualization of the project and mobilizing volunteer support. Offering the opportunity to apply to this burse with proposed projects and plans would circumvent this difficulty. We were excited about many of the projects proposed and would love to see them taken to the next stage of development.

We have included some of the proposed projects as an appendix, and we hope this appendix will give a rough idea of some of the church projects this burse might facilitate.

Initially, we recommend setting aside this funding in the money market account each year for four years. Afterwards, this burse could be funded indefinitely by income from the bequest if it worked well and if the congregation decided they wished to continue offering it long-term. (On the enclosed spreadsheet, we recommend setting aside \$3,000 in the money market account the first year, because six months have already elapsed since the arrival of the first installment.)

5. Unforeseen / Other Uses: (Food Mission, Pastor’s Discretionary Fund etc.)

During the interview process, many people expressed that the Food Mission and Pastor’s Discretionary Fund were very important to them. These are both currently self-sustaining, but bequest funding could be used to bridge unexpected gaps between available funding and expressed need in unforeseen circumstances.

-Fourteen people voted for supporting the Food Mission

Those interviewed are concerned that the Church continue to address community hunger. The Food Mission currently is supported by donations. Accounts are set up for recipients at the Valley Grocery. Debra Mitchell is leading the Food Mission. There is a donor list that is active in supporting it, and currently, the mechanisms are in place to address this concern adequately. However, bequest funding could be used to bridge potential gaps between funds and need in any given year.

-Seven people voted for supporting the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund

Currently the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund is supported by donations. Those speaking to this issue in our interviews felt strongly that it is important and should be well and adequately funded. The discernment group noted in discussion that the PDF is doing well and that the donations are an important part of faith and community action for some members of the congregation. However, bequest funds could be used to bridge gaps between donations and need in unforeseen situations.

Paid Seminary Intern:

Someone interviewed suggested that some of the bequest funds could be used to support a paid seminary intern over the summer. This would be an opportunity to show someone who is considering the ministry what a progressive church in a rural area can look like in practice. It would be a way to pass forward some of our experiences and to share what has worked for us.

Recommendation:

We propose setting aside \$15,000 in the money market account the first year and \$13,000 the second year for other projects or uses that arise. Thereafter, we recommend setting aside \$5,000 a year for the next two years. Any money not used would roll over to the next year. At the end of four years, unused funds could be added to the long-term brokerage account.

This money could provide “bridge funding” in months when there was a gap between donations and need for either the Food Mission or the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund.

If the congregation wanted to pursue this proposal, this funding could also be used to bring a seminary intern to KVCC for a summer, and we could determine if that’s something we want to do in the longer term. We could explore avenues of funding going forward if the congregation decided they wanted to make this an annual tradition.

Going forward, we have noted that \$8,000 a year from the bequest income does not currently have a proposed use (see spreadsheet). In years when there was need, some of this could be used as bridge funding for the Food Mission or PDF.

And it could be used to address other church needs as they arose.

We are aware that both the Food Mission and the Pastor's Discretionary Fund require large amounts of funding each year, and that these templates offer only a bridge for unforeseen circumstances. We are so thankful for all the work our congregation currently does to sustain these missions. If it becomes apparent that more "bridge funding" is necessary on a regular basis we would like to note that one person interviewed suggested a capital campaign for such a situation.

6. Single-Issue Use of Bequest :

It was determined that joining with other institutions or organizations to address a single issue such as affordable/achievable housing would not be wise at this time. There was general recognition that housing is a serious issue for our community and there may come a time when the Church can play a role in supporting such an initiative but not at this time or with this bequest.

Addenda:

Of special note was the suggestion for a Memorial to Annette Merle-Smith.

The Discernment Group all agreed that there should be a Memorial but that it should not be funded out of the bequest. Also that the form or nature of the memorial was a matter for the Congregation to discuss. A tree or something having to do with nature was proposed by people interviewed.

Replacing the pews with Chairs

This suggestion was made by three interviewees and was met with a mixed response in the discernment group. However, outside of that interview process, this proposal has gained a lot of energy. It was agreed by the group that this would be a complex undertaking and that it was beyond the scope of our group. One option would be to fund it by a special fund drive, which is how the new windows were funded. In any event, it would require broad congregational support, and the discussion should continue.

Pastor Housing / Salary:

Many people interviewed expressed concerns about rising costs of living and steeply rising costs of housing. They expressed that they want to make sure the pastor's salary reflects these changes. It was important to them to make sure that housing is available and affordable. It was agreed that this issue was important and should be passed to another committee for further discussion.

APPENDIX 1:

Proposed Projects that could be funded by the Burse:

1. Workshops about the intersection of art and spirituality

Someone interviewed suggested that artists in various genres could run workshops about the intersection of spirituality and art. It would be great to draw on locally based artists for this, and doing so would be a way to continue to welcome new people into the church community. It was suggested that this template could perhaps dovetail with worship in some way – either existing worship structures or possibly alternate worship services such as vespers, compline etc. (It would be important also to compensate worship leaders appropriately if we added in more services.) For example, if someone led a poetry workshop, poems could be read as part of a vespers service or even incorporated into worship as a version of artistic offering. This idea is also a template that could be

adapted for various purposes. For example, a workshop could be run with teenagers as a form of youth outreach. Burse funding could be used to pay artists an honorarium.

2. Youth outreach

Many people interviewed expressed a deeply held desire to welcome more youth into the church. One person proposed a spiritual questions group for youth. Overall, we felt these proposals – in their current form – reflected a shared and profoundly important desire on the part of the congregation, but we felt we didn't yet have a full array of actionable, concrete plans. We hope making this burse available might inspire people to continue the brainstorming process that these discernment interviews initiated.

3. Supporting youth aging out of foster care:

One person we interviewed works with youth aging out of foster care. Could the church provide a community for these young people, offer them places to go at holidays etc.? Could the church also provide a network of supportive adults who could do things like tutoring for college classes? As it was proposed to us, this idea was tied to the church community and to offering community to young people who lack it. Monetary assistance could be offered for modest expenses that come up that can make / break a young person's ability to stay in college such as administrative fees.

4. Open and Affirming outreach, initiatives, and activities

Multiple people we interviewed expressed in general terms that the church's Open and Affirming mission is important to them and that they would like to see some funds from the bequest used to provide additional support for/ outreach to LGBTQ+ people. Funds from this burse could support any specific projects proposed. How can we live more deeply into our O&A mission as a church? How can we make this part of our church community?

Multiple congregants we interviewed expressed support for an LGBTQ+ youth group specifically. When this was initially proposed it was proposed as an extension of our Open and Affirming outreach as a church.

5. LGBTQ+ Youth Group

The proposal of an LGBTQ+ youth group is both important and complex. One person we interviewed initially proposed the idea of a youth group for LGBTQ+ youth as a way to extend our work at Pride festivals. She spoke about the fact that Families First serves many LGBTQ+ youth who lack support and are at increased risk of bullying and violence. We appreciate that this idea was specific, addressed a specific population, and sought to address a demonstrated need. We appreciate that one person interviewed has the connections in place to help organize something like this.

As we discussed this proposal in our discernment group, we did have some questions and concerns about how we would handle the logistics of this proposed project in our capacity as a church.

We think this issue is complex enough that we would like to recommend the formation of a task force to discuss it. Questions we would like to pass on to a potential task force include: who would run the youth group, and how do we handle background checks and liability insurance etc.? How would we handle discerning whether adults in a young person's life are supportive – and if we are offering a remote option (perhaps necessary due to transportation issues), how do we make sure we do not inadvertently create a situation that makes a child unsafe?

Given our concerns about some of these logistical factors, and given their importance, we would like to raise the question of whether Families First or another organization, with appropriate infrastructure in place, could run something like this. If that were possible, we could provide volunteers. People interviewed expressed that reaching out to LGBTQ+ young people as a church is especially powerful because so many churches have been at the forefront of condemning those youth.

6. Increased internet presence for the church / zoom upgrades

Many people expressed that they would like to find ways of sharing our church mission more broadly. In the discernment group, we felt that broadening the church's internet presence and sharing our mission broadly was more reliant on community work and organizational brainstorming than on funding. However, funds from this burse could help support some of these initiatives as and when expenses arose.

7. Expanding the pollinator garden

One person interviewed suggested expanding the pollinator garden, while also acknowledging that doing so is more reliant on labor than on funds. However, funding from the burse could enable an expansion if people in the congregation wanted to take this on. There would also be the possibility of combining this with readings or gatherings about plants and spirituality either separately from worship or in a way that dovetailed with worship. (Robin Wall Kimmerer etc.)

APPENDIX 2:

List of All Ideas Proposed via Interviews and Emails:

1. Endowment / Separate Brokerage Account (20 votes)
2. Invite Spiritual Speakers for events akin to John Phillip Newell event (18 votes)
3. Funding for Food Mission /Addressing Community Hunger (14 votes)
4. Affordable Housing Projects (13 votes)
5. Building Needs (making sure building is in good shape, now and in the future) (10 votes)
6. LGBT+ youth group (5 votes specifically, 9 incl. votes for general O&A support)
7. Pastor's Discretionary Fund (7 votes)
8. Accessible Parking (7 votes)
9. Housing for Pastor / Making sure Pastor's salary stays in line with rising housing costs in Keene/ Keene Valley (7 votes)
10. LGBT+ Education /Outreach (general as opposed to youth specifically) (5)
11. Youth Outreach (5)
12. Supporting young people aging out of foster care (3 votes)

13. Creating more of an Internet Presence for the Church (3)
14. Research possibility of replacing pews with Chairs (3)
15. Organ Repair – split opinions (2 votes in favor of repair, 1 person specified funds should not be used for organ repair, 1 person suggested removing pipes)
16. Air Conditioning for the church (2 votes)
17. Equipping Church to act as an Emergency Centre (2 votes)
18. Construct a Separate Building on Church Property to serve as a secular meeting space (2 votes)
19. Improve Internet Services for Keene and Keene Valley (2 votes)
20. Give funding to Little Peaks or to support an after-school program (2 votes)
21. Social Action (General) (2 votes)
22. Zoom upgrades (1 vote)
23. Families First Xmas Drive (1 vote)
24. Expanding Outreach of Church/ Making presence known to broader community (1 vote). This was a theme, however, in other interviews although it was often expressed via more specific lenses.
25. Expanding the Pollinator Garden (1 vote)
26. Community/ Neighbor Outreach—could the church create a buddy system for people living alone? (1 vote)
27. Nation-wide educational campaign about the model of the Adirondack Park creation (1 vote)
28. Paid apprenticeships for young people (1 vote)
29. Hire a paid seminarian for the summer (1 vote)
30. Art/ Spirituality residencies and /or workshops (1 vote)
31. Small business loan program (1 vote)

32. Broader approach to publicizing PDF (1 vote)

33. Capital Campaign (1 vote)

34. Paid intern for Adirondack Community / Our Story Bridge (1 vote)

35. Donation to Our Story Bridge to support collecting stories from KCS (1 vote)

36. Grants to school graduates heading to higher education or a trade school (1 vote)

37. A Memorial in Annette Merle-Smith's honor: [multiple votes, everyone in group supports]
[We discussed this proposal in our meeting, and we decided we will not recommend using bequest funds for it, but we should do this as a congregation. Ideas expressed in interviews included tree, grove – something to do with nature.]

List of People Who Expressed Input for Report : (Total: 46)

Input was expressed via interviews and emails.

Report: Worship Attendance (John): Pastor John led a discussion of how we count those in worship service, i.e. in person, Zoom, or accessing our worship services through our recordings, described as engagements. We are now seeing engagements closer to summer figures in the time of the year when attendance is lower. We are connecting to a larger group of people we know. People are engaging year long and through different options. Pastor John addressed how we get our message out and acknowledged the importance of technology is keeping people connected to KVCC.

Council Reports:

PASTOR'S REPORT – FEBRUARY 27, 2023

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Christmas Eve attendance: 135
- Lent, Holy Week and Easter:
 - "Shrove Sunday" Potluck Pancake Breakfast held on February 11
 - Held two Ash Wednesday services on February 14
 - 10:30 AM – Neighborhood House
 - 6 PM – Church Service
 - Group observing Lenten fast 2/14 – 3/31; weekly support meetings
 - Maudy Thursday, March 28 @ 5 PM
 - Will co-lead with Alana Both and Martha Gallagher
 - Good Friday, March 29 – Time TBD
 - Easter, March 31

- 5 AM – Lighting of the Paschal Candle
- 7 AM – Sunrise Service at the Transfer Station
- 10 AM – Church Service
- 1 PM – Service at the Neighborhood House
- Planning group currently meeting to organize a celebration of the Spring Equinox on Tuesday, March 19.
- May 21 – World Meditation Day; KVCC to offer walking and sitting meditation, and a silent lunch
- August 18 – Will be guest preacher at All Souls Chapel
- 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

Worship Attendance

Sunday Morning Worship			
Date	Total In-Person	Online Sessions	Recording Views
1/7/24	23	24	11
1/14/24	33	24	9
1/21/24	35	24	9
1/28/24	39	19	12
2/4/24	41	22	13
2/11/24	43	16	11
2/18/24	50	21	7

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.
- Upcoming special services:
 - Ash Wednesday service, February 14, 10:30 AM
 - Easter service, March 31, 1 PM

Summer Speaker Series

- Padraig O’Tuama has been selected as our speaker.
- Padraig is a distinguished Irish poet, theologian and mediator.
- He will join us on Saturday, August 10 and Sunday, August 11.
- John Sampson and Susie Allen are co-leading the preparation and management of the event.
- Weekly group meeting scheduled for Thursdays at 3PM via Zoom.
- Currently finalizing the terms of the contract with Anya Backlund, Padraig’s representative.
- Shawn Lamarche is representing the Finance Committee on the team. She is doing a financial comparison of ticketing platforms.
- Identifying other volunteers to help with different aspects of the event.

Open and Affirming

- Tri Lakes Pride is scheduled for Sunday, June 30 in Saranac Lake.
- North Country Pride is scheduled for Saturday, September 28 in Plattsburgh

Web Site

- Jimm Collin has agreed to create the website.
- Met with Jimm to review content requirements.
- Jimm has said a version of the website will be ready to share by the end of the week of February 18.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- Conrad Knapp memorial held on Saturday, February 3.

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.

Celtic Saints Book Discussion Group

- Book discussion group reading about saints' lives including: Brigid, Brendan, Beuno, Melangeth, David, Dwynwen, and Patrick.
- Meeting weekly on Tuesdays January 30 – March 5 @ 9 AM.
- Average weekly attendance: 14 people. This includes people from within and without the congregation.
- Discussions will be led by Susie Allen, Kate Robinson and John Sampson.
- Group has agreed to extend the discussion to include a multi-week reading of The Life of St. Columba beginning on Tuesday, March 12 @ 9 AM.

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.

New York Conference

- On February 3, the NY Conference voted in favor of Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams becoming the Conference Minister.
- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UCC NY Board of Directors; term will end May 31, 2024.
- Board is scheduled to meet: 4/20 and 5/30.
- Planning to attend the Conference Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for May 30 – June 1 in Binghamton, NY.

North Country Association

- Member of the new Association's Committee on Ministry.

Training/Education

- The new North Country Association has mandated that ministers take 25 hours of Continuing Education per year.
- To date, 24% of CE requirement completed.
- **Attended Sacred Earth Sacred Soul - Celtic Wisdom 2 on 1/20 and 21 for a total of 6 CE credits.**
- **Attending Meditation Teacher Training – Tuesdays, January 30 – March 5**
- **Registered to attend Culturally Response Ministry Training on March 9.**

Scheduled Vacation

- Will be out of the office for vacation April 22 through May 6, returning to the office on May 7.
 - Rev. Dawn Karlson will be filling in for me on April 28
 - Rev. Sam Kinsman will be filling in for me on May 5

Other Items

- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.
- Annette Merle-Smith Bequest Group to share their report and suggestions to the Council on Tuesday, February 27.
- Volunteered to be point person for collecting items for the 2024 White Elephant. Collection has begun as opportunity arises.

Grounds (Pam Gothner): There is no report this month.

Mission and Social Action (Katharine and Naj Wikoff): There is no report this month.

KEENE FOOD MISSION REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2024

The Keene Food Mission “Souper Bowl” was the recipient of \$1,200 from numerous donors (Valley Gro, St. Brendan’s Catholic Church, KVCC, Keene Valley Library, Valley Home and Hardware, and the Keene Library). We’re grateful for their contributions to our mission.

We currently have 52 donors who help support the eight families we serve. We’ve been working closely with the Valley Gro and were able to add the Veges account to one family of four in Keene Valley who prefer gift cards for their family of four.

There is a need for help with outreach for the KFM and Deborah will reach out to congregants to determine who might want to help us with informing the local communities to our work. We deposited \$550 this week and our balance looks good at meeting our monthly expenditures.

REPORT TO COUNCIL: FINANCE COMMITTEE

Key Financial Indicators:

As of January 31, 2024

Market Value Rev. Frederica Mitchell Legacy Fund	\$1,462,264
AMS Bequest: Vanguard Money Market	87,500

Food Mission Account	20,838
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	5,063
All Other Cash Accounts	\$ 108,330

For the month ended January 31, 2024

Total Income & Transferred Funds	\$ 17,614
Total Expenses	<u>21,871</u>
Net Operating Loss	<u>\$ 4,257</u>

Functionalization of Committee

To improve our support of the church's financial operations and to create stronger financial controls, the Finance Committee's members have agreed to the following special areas of responsibility:

Larry Shipps: Investment Performance

Elizabeth Davidson: Interim Treasurer and Stewardship

Debby Rice: Stewardship

Shawn LaMarche: Summer Spiritual Retreat

Robert Rokos: Bazaar

Fritz Sabbow: Accounting Oversight

Other matters:

- In March, the committee will interview two candidates to replace the current bookkeeper.
- Credit cards for staff have been approved but not yet received.

BUILDINGS REPORT FEBRUARY 2024

The main item here is the Insurance Compliance project consisting of Exit Signs, Emergency Lighting, Panic Hardware on Exit doors, and Fire Extinguishers. The quote from the contractor left us in shock, so after Deb Rice spoke with the Insurance people for a bit more clarification, I have put together a list of items required to satisfy the Panic Hardware issue. The timing of this would be best in Spring with warmer weather. Fire Extinguishers are purchased, hung, and have had two monthly inspections by me. I have been unsuccessful in getting a response from an Electrical Contractor for Emergency Lights and the Kitchen receptacle that requires a GFCI device. Exit signs that are photo-luminescent would meet code requirements and will be ordered soon. The Church sign lighting is temporarily repaired, and parts are on order to put it back in its original state. I've heard no mention lately of "gremlins" in the church toying with timers, cameras and the like, but will keep a weather eye out for issues.

Worship (Linda Bogardus): There was no report submitted this month.

Flower (Charlotte Lichtenberg): There was no report submitted this month.

Next KVCC Council Meeting: March 26, 2024

Deborah made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk