

## KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

October 24, 2023

**Present:** Pastor John Sampson, Linda Bogardus, Anne Runyon Hurd, Nancy McArthur, Shawn Lamarche, Susie Allen, Liz Jaques, Naj Wikoff, Charlotte Lichtenburg, Howard Husslein, Pam Gothner, and Deborah Mitchell.

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

**Opening Prayer:** After a moment of silence, Pastor John led the community be hope and light to others.

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

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

**By-Laws Review:** Pam, John, Sue and Nancy are working on amending the current by-laws. The Council will be receiving a draft of the new by-laws soon for our review and approval.

**Keene Valley Welcome Corps:** Laurin McArthur, Debbie Rice, Elizabeth Davidson, Patience Whitman, Nancy McArthur, Dan Mason with Shawn LaMarche, John Sampson, Robert Rokosz, Noel Cartwright, Deb Gale

Big picture: The sisters are here and employed full time at the Nort Country School and part-time at the library. They seem very happy most of the time. Outreach: The Vestry at Saint Johns in Essex has agreed to sponsor a Welcome Corps team. Laurin is helping them to understand the process. Monique introduced them at a recent AFRI meeting. One month anniversary: We had a party. One of their friends is an African drummer, and there was dancing and drumming. The hills were alive. Housing and provisioning: They have a laptop, which they use primarily for driving instruction. Phones have been difficult. Naomi has a working I-phone, Racheal's was returned. Language: Deb Gale is helping them. Their levels are different, so they have split classes. They are learning the driver's manual. Health: They have a dental check-up tomorrow with Dr. Balestrini. Benefits: They have Medicaid. SNAP is still in process. Social: They are making connections and friends. They usually have 1-2 social events every weekend. Money: They are fully employed and should be self-sustainable on schedule. Documentation: Difficult. They are waiting for a document, applied for in Uganda, that will allow them to get ID cards and bank accounts. Driving: Thank you all, especially Fritz in the morning, for helping with transportation. We are teaching them to drive as we can. Thank you.  
Laurin McArthur 973.901.4114

**Keene Food Mission:** Deborah has met with Vinny and generated a list of donors to the Keene Food Mission. Vinny mailed letters to our donors, and we are beginning to receive donations. Deborah has met with Carol and Summer Reed at the Valley Grocery, and based on those meetings, has created a letter to send to the Keene Food Mission recipients, clarifying our guidelines for participation. We also have a gmail account for communication between the Keene Food Mission and recipients. Since we have taken over, we have added three new accounts to the Keene Food Mission, for a total of 7 families served. We now have our own checking account with Champlain National and our own P. O, Box in Keene.

## PASTOR'S REPORT

Pastor John has been on vacation.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

#### Finance Committee Report

Keene Valley Congregational Church  
Minutes of the Finance Committee  
October 13, 2023

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

The Committee met on Zoom to discuss the following matters:

The Balance sheet needs several clean up entries which Nancy has addressed to RBeam, Accountant. The group reviewed the structure of cash accounts of the church which are structured as follows:

	Balance a/o 10/16/23	Signers/Access
Main Account	\$102,972	N. McArthur, E. Davidson
Pastors Disc. Fund	10,685	J. Sampson
Petty Cash	2,090	N. McArthur, Debit Cards of J. Sampson, E. Jaques
JPN Event Account	1,176	N. McArthur
Welcome Newcomers	4,350	N. McArthur, E. Davidson, J. Sampson
Keene Food Mission	700	N. McArthur, D. Mitchell

The search for a new accountant/bookkeeper includes Colleen Burnham of Saranac Lake and Cena Abrams of OnPoint Bookkeeping. Fritz suggested that Darsie Townsend may also be a candidate.

The group discussed the donations to Not For Profit Groups which the church is making. Concerns included:

- duplication due to multiple donations (PDF, M&SA)
- a need for the church to be recognized publicly for its giving to other organizations. The group cited annual reports and other publications as ways for these organizations to recognize the church. Checks should be accompanied by a letter citing the need for recognition of KVCC.

Giving from the PDF was discussed with a request for periodic information on the numbers of recipients and reasons for donations. The Committee felt that this would stimulate more donations to the PDF.

The Committee reviewed the Stewardship Plan and thanked Debby and Elizabeth for taking on the responsibility for the campaign.

Key dates include:

- November 2: Stewardship Letter sent
- November 12: John Sampson shows slideshow and narrative of ministry in worshio

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on November 16 at 3:00 and will be an in person session focusing on the 2024 Budget.

### **Worship Committee**

No new report was submitted at the time of the Council meeting.

### **Mission & Social Action**

At M&SA meeting, the attendees voted to support the Christmas Fund (with support by the Pastor's Fund which was agreed to by Pastor John), the Neighborhood House, the K Youth Commission, and Essex County Mental Health. At the same time, as a means of engaging the Congregation more directly, they voted to request that the Council give permission that the proceeds from passing the plate on those four Sundays, go to support the program being supported that day. On behalf of the attendees, I sent that request to the Council and received responses in favor, and one from the treasurer saying that the church needed those funds as Finance had budgeted to receive 100% of the money raised by the Bazaar, not the 50 percent voted by the Congregation, with the balance divided between M&SA and the Pastors Fund. The issue is that expenses are projected to be greater than income for 2023. In that light, M&SA is willing to donate its Bazaar proceeds back to the general fund. M&SA seeks clarity at the Council meeting.

M&SA is willing to lead a drive for requesting contributions of turkeys or donations to purchase turkeys for Families First Thanksgiving drive. M&SA would need help of people willing to purchase and store turkeys, etc. We suggest that donations of turkeys be brought to the church on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of November so they can be collected. The UCC Churches for Etown & Lewis have agreed to assist in this effort. Last year we collectively fed over 100 families. We need volunteers to assist with this effort.

M&SA has received a request to financially support a potential need of our Refugee team, possibly at cost of \$1,000, we are willing, and waiting to learn if and what the exact amount will be.

We have reached out to the President of the LP and Rabbi of the Lake Placid and Plattsburgh Temples and Tom Glasser, son of Holocaust survivors and member of the South Burlington Temple, sharing that our thoughts and prayers are with them; we learned that we were only the second church to do so.

Along those lines, led by Martha Swan, M&SA co-chair, the church is co-hosting a screening of the award-winning film Return to Auschwitz: The Survival of Vladimir Munk at the Keene Valley Library at 7:00 PM on Oct 24. Julie Cenapa, author of The Missing Star (upon which the doc is based) and Pastor John will intro the film and offer post screening remarks/Q&A. So and hour after the Council Meeting.

I have been in conversations with Ukrainian artists who are trying to support families, military, and others traumatized by war. The next examples of arts activities that can help reduce pain, provide people safe ways of lifting their spirits, building resiliency, etc. I have reached out to the National Coalition of Arts Preparedness & Emergency Response and the members of the National Organization for Arts in Health for how-to examples, and to Dmitry Feld at USA Luge to put together Ukrainians in our region who would be willing to translate these texts into Ukrainian. This far, all have expressed their willingness to help. No question that these same materials, translated into Arabic and Hebrew.

I will be working again with Keene Central School Green Team. They are currently selecting new student leaders for this school year and getting ready for the Wild Center presentation. Their pollinator garden was a

great success, and they appreciate the advice given by Pam Gothner. They hope to expand their garden and get other organizations to create pollinator gardens in 2023-2024.

During the meeting, Nancy made a motion that Advent plate cash offering go to the four organization to which the Mission and Social Action is making grants (i.e. Neighborhood House, Pat Hickey's Christmas Program, Keene Youth Commission and Essex County Mental Health). Pam seconded the motion. The Council discussed this motion. This is a way for people to feel more connected to the organizations Mission and Social Action supports. We discussed how we can announce this to the congregation so people can plan for their donation. The Council voted and the motion was passed (1 abstention). Naj

### Flower Committee

Charlotte has been coordinating beautiful fall flower arrangements on the altar.

### Annette Merle-Smith Bequest Update

Pastor John provided an update after speaking with Annette's daughter around the first installment of the bequest. Pastor John also reminded Council members to make sure everyone has taken the initiative to meet with one of the members of the Committee for their input.

### Grounds Report

On October 6th volunteers gathered to plant daffodils at the church. After deliberation, it was decided to plant 90 in the pollinator garden. Susy Doolittle planted 10 in the garden in front of the manse. Weeding the walkway and cleanup of the memorial garden also took place that day.

On October 19th ten volunteers helped rake leaves and cut down some of the flower beds around the church and manse. Dre brought her truck and hauled most of the leaves away. A member of the community had helped the previous day by blowing the leaves away from the back entrance. We also planted 50 crocus bulbs that day. More raking will be needed in the coming weeks.

Mums were purchased for the front entrance. Note for the future - they need to be sprayed to keep the deer from enjoying them!

### Buildings Report

Howard provided this update on needed projects:

Task/Project	Description	Date Rec'd.	Est. Comp.	Date	Cost Est.	Assignee	Deck boards loose	Need refastening
8/24/23	9/8/23	Howard	<b>Small Lav. toilet seat</b>	Needs Replacement	8/24/2023	10/5/23	\$25.00	Howard
<b>Rear porch ceiling light</b>	Needs retrofit	10/1/2023	10/16/23	\$50.00	Howard	<b>VSR Chair repair (8)</b>	Joins loose	9/28/23
Furniture Restorer	<b>Church Window Wash</b>	Dirty	9/28/23	<b>Garage Light Fixture</b>	Needs Replacement	8/24/23	10/5/23	Howard's spare
Howard	<b>Manse Porch Lighting</b>	Independent switches	9/14/23	10/27/23	\$50.00	Howard	<b>Manse apartment door</b>	Rehang
9/14/23	10/27/23	\$0.00	Howard	<b>Church Entry</b>	Coat rack paint	Spring 2022	+/- \$45	Volunteer
<b>Church/VSR Ceilings</b>	Plaster work	<\$1000	Contractor	<b>Church/Manse Siding</b>	Clean	Spring 2022	<\$1000	Cont. / Volun.
<b>VSR Chimney</b>	Tuckpointing	Contractor	<b>Church Basement</b>	Perimeter foam	Spring 2024	~ \$5000	Placid Foam?	<b>Church Basement</b>
<b>Dehumidifier</b>	2022	~ \$2000	<b>Church Grounds</b>	Wrought Iron Refinishing	Spring 2024	~ \$200	Volunteers	<b>Church</b>
<b>Church</b>	Shutter repair/repaint	Volunteers	<b>Church / Manse Grounds</b>	Walkway repair	Spring 2025	Contractor	<b>VSR Lighting</b>	Flickering
<b>VSR Chimney</b>	Fireplace Door							

Contractor **Church Entry** Ramp boards loose 10/13/23 Fall '23 Howard **Church Grounds** Trim branches along ramp 10/13/23 Fall '23 Volunteer 1

**Manse Discernment Group**  
**KVCC council report**  
**October 2023**

**Group Members:** Elizabeth Davidson, Howard Husslein, Dan Mason, Fritz Sabbow, Larry Shipps, Liz Jaques, Paul Osenbaugh, John Sampson. Nancy McArthur asked to step away from this group (she does so much!)

The discernment group met October 13, 2023. The following is excerpted from the minutes.

MANSE BUILDING—Apartment

- Team of volunteers completed the short term goal (2022), where volunteers rehabbed the apartment. It is now rented (achievable housing)
- Group agrees to rent the apartment another year to the current tenants.
- **There is no interest in selling the building at this time.**

MANSE BUILDING—Office

- Liz Jaques worked with others on Spring Cleaning the major spaces (Flower committee, music director, children's area and others to clear the existing spaces as much as possible. Housekeeping task was very successful.
- The group agreed that the current church building spaces cannot house the Manse offices easily.
- **Group recommendation: Do not move the manse office space into the main church building.**

PROPERTY (land, beyond the building/manse)

The focus of this meeting was on the property.

- A **new draft survey** was completed of the approximately 1.38 acres to determine current borders, right of ways, utilities, etc. (Thankfully, Nancy McArthur led this effort)
- The group carefully considered possible options for land use.
- **Group recommendation: The group reviewed possible options and decided to DO NOTHING...no need to sell land, develop land either in pieces or as a whole.**
- **Rationale for the decision to DO NOTHING with the land right now.**
  - We do not seem to be in the same financial situation as one year ago.
  - There is agreement from each attendee to NOT change the current land use
  - The parking lot is needed as we continue to expand our outreach, John Phillip Newell retreat, fundraising dinners, fellowship gatherings and more.
  - On achievable housing, HAPEC and the Town of Keene seems to be much closer to developing the Little Peaks property (Both Way). This project is going to "break ground" and start the development of the houses in the Spring of 2024.
  - There are other achievable housing projects in discussion and in at least one case that involves a tangible offer to purchase the property for achievable housing.
  - Some in our group feel that achievable housing may not be a core responsibility of the church, but that individuals might participate/contribute as it develops.
  - The current Manse apartment provides one rental property.

Next Steps:

Send to church council, discuss at November council meeting

**Dates:**

Halloween: John is seeking donations of time and materials for Halloween. So far, Amanda, Linda, Coco, and Erica have offered to help out with this fun, festive evening. This is a great opportunity to volunteer and for KVCC to connect with kids in this community and the larger area.

Turkeys: The Council discussed supporting Families First in Essex County for their Thanksgiving Drive. Last year, KVCC were major contributors to their drive which provided turkeys to approximately 100 families in Essex County. M/SA will be marketing the need for turkeys, and Charlotte will be the contact person for how to then distribute when and where the turkeys will be delivered. There are two dates when turkeys can be delivered to KVCC (11/12 and 11/19). Deborah Mitchell will transport turkeys to Families First.

Winter Solstice: John reported that a group of individuals are planning a Winter Solstice Service on December 21<sup>st</sup> with a labyrinth walk, in-door service, and possible outdoor refreshments by a fire.

**Other Business:** None

The Council will meet again on Tuesday, **November 28, 2023** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM in person at KVCC with a Zoom option.

Nancy made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk