

KVCC CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

April 23, 2024

Present: Debby Rice, Linda Bogardus, Nancy McArthur, Susie Allen, Elizabeth Davidson Derr, Liz Jaques, Naj Wikoff, Katharine Preston, Annie Scavo, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Shawn Lamarche, Robert Rokos, Howard Husslein, Pam Gothner, and Deborah Mitchell.

Debby opened the meeting at 5:04 PM. This meeting was held via Zoom.

Opening Prayer: Debby led us in prayer with a reading from Padraig O Tuama

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

Approval of March KVCC Council Minutes: Naj made a motion to accept the March KVCC Council Minutes. Pam seconded the motion. The motion passed.

APRIL COUNCIL MEETING MAIN HIGHLIGHTS

Debby asked each group leader (e.g., Grounds, Buildings, etc). to look at their reports and add dates that let us know WHEN you plan to initiate and complete a task and the status of each task (e.g., is it completed or initiated or ?) She noted that it helps reduce the questions in each area and keeps us all informed of where we are on our lists.

PADRAIG Ó TÚAMA PLANNING TEAM REPORT:

Team members: John Sampson, Susie Allen, Debby Rice, Martha Gallagher, Shawn Lamarche, Elizabeth Davidson, Lorraine Duvall, Naj Wikoff

The planning team has been meeting weekly since the middle of February.

Thanks to the efforts of Martha Gallagher, the registration website went 'live' on March 8 and, as of this writing, we have 50 registrations – halfway to our goal of 100 registrations!

Thanks to the efforts of Debby Rice, we have applied for 3 grants to help fund the cost of the event. We hope to hear in the next 4 – 6 weeks about grant awards.

John will be hosting a book discussion beginning Tuesday, May 7. We will be reading Ó Túama's book, *Being Here*. In addition to posting information on the KVCC newsletter, an invitation to the book discussion was posted on Nextdoor Keene and also sent to event registrants not affiliated with KVCC. The Faith and Issues discussion group hopes to read another of Ó Túama's books – information about this will be shared on the KVCC newsletter.

We are expanding our publicity effort beyond social media – Nextdoor Keene, Jay Community News, Facebook. We will be reaching out to other churches in the area, to the UCCNY Conference for both e-newsletter postings

and publicity opportunities at the Conference Annual Meeting in May; and have reached out to the ADK Center for Writing. We will also be hanging fliers in the region.

The Bookstore Plus in Lake Placid will be running the book sale in the VS Room after the August 10 evening event and will donate 10% of sales to KVCC for this event.

The weekend activities conclude with a luncheon after worship on August 11. Elizabeth is in conversation with the KV Fire Dept about the possibility of hosting the luncheon in their community room as we did last year. Since it will be hard to determine number of people who will attend (everyone is invited after worship), we are also considering other options.

John has asked Howard to paint the front porch and front doors of the church to spruce things up before the event. Please let the planning team know of other projects at the church that might need attention before the event as well.

As the event draws closer, we will be seeking volunteers to help on August 10 and 11 so we can offer a wide and hospitable welcome to all who join us.

FOCUS AREA DISCUSSION:

1) Annette Merle Smith Fund (AMS):

Council members checked in on their thoughts about the AMS report and future steps. There seems to be some concern regarding the structure. For example, some thought the structure that included a representative of the spiritual center idea was equivalent to an endorsement. Debby suggested that each project should be considered carefully, including a project proposal that would come back to Council for consideration. The Council agreed:

- to support the funds as laid out on the Excel sheet provided by the AMS discernment group.
- to support communications of the AMS report and a structure for ongoing work in this area.

(Communications could include an information session, much like the by-laws session conducted a few months ago; there were some voices expressing concern that few would show up for a session, nonetheless...communications were considered important to inform those who are interested in this fund).

At the conclusion of this discussion, Shawn made a motion that the discernment group budgetary recommendations dated 2/20/2024 be accepted. Elizabeth seconded the motion. A discussion was held, and the motion passed.

2) Adirondack Friends of Refugees (AFRI):

Naj recommended that we make a decision soon to let AFRI know of our interests. A number of concerns were voiced; Debby and Katharine will collect questions and comments (via email and or calls) from Council members ahead of the next meeting with AFRI. This meeting will occur after John Sampson returns from vacation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

PASTOR'S REPORT – APRIL 23, 2024

Worship and Spiritual Development

- May 11 and May 20 – KVCC will sponsor a Contemplative Photography class led by Ingrid Cyros.
- May 21 – World Meditation Day; KVCC to offer walking and sitting meditation, and a silent lunch.
- June 2 – Music Sunday.
- June 20 - Will sponsor a sunrise viewing and cold plunge to observe the Summer Solstice. Then will invite members and friends to travel to Old Forge to see Robin Wall Kimmerer offer a talk at 6 PM.
- July 14 – Will be preaching at the Island Church. Guest worship leader TBD.
- August 18 – Will be guest preacher at All Souls Chapel. Martha Gallagher will be filling in for me.
- Working with Bill Serjak, Nancy Freeman, Lynn DeWalt, Rob Hastings and Liz Jaques to schedule our Summer Music Program.
- 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
2/25/24	56	14	16
3/3/24	45	16	13
3/10/24	29	19	16
3/17/24	45	18	24
3/24/24	44	24	15
3/31/24	62	17	13
4/7/24	30	17	17
4/18/24	53	11	13

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.

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. Other members of the planning team include: Elizabeth Davidson Derr, Martha Gallagher, Shawn Lamarche, Debby Rice, and Naj Wikoff.
- Weekly group meeting scheduled for Thursdays at 3PM via Zoom.
- As of 4/18, 50 people have registered to attend, which is 50% of our original goal. We are considering expanding the registration to 120, if needed.
- 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 presented the draft website on Thursday, March 7
- Reviewed content requirements, and updates to site
- Waiting for these updates to be made and a new draft to be shared by Jimm.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- Zielinsky/Szymkowiak wedding scheduled for Saturday, July 6.
- Graveside service for Gordon McAllen Baker at Norton Cemetery on Saturday, August 3, 2024 at 4:00 pm.

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.

Tuesday Book Discussion Group

- Next book to be discussed will be *Being Here: Prayers for Curiosity, Justice and Love* by Padraig O'Tuama. The discussion will begin, via Zoom, on Tuesday, May 7.

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

- 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. Shawn Lamarche and Annie Scavo will also be attending as our church's delegates.

North Country Association

- Member of the new Association's Committee on Ministry. Group meets first Tuesday of each month.

Training/Education

- The new North Country Association has mandated that ministers take 25 hours of Continuing Education per year.
- To date, 80% of CE requirement completed.
- **Completed Meditation Teacher Training – Tuesdays, January 30 – March 5**
- **Completed 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
- Will be away weekend of October 19. Guest worship leader TBD.

Other Items

- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.
- Volunteered to be point person for collecting items for the 2024 White Elephant. Collection has begun as opportunity arises.

BUILDINGS REPORT APRIL 2024

We finally have a list of insurance compliance materials that will go to Liz for purchasing. Depending on lead time for the items, we could be installing things in May. Pastor John has raised the question of repainting the stairs, ramps, decking, and railings for the entries. I'd like to get that done in June if we can handle the cost of the paint, and also muster up a "painting party" group that could handle the scraping and actual painting. We might even find out if there are some young folks who would be willing to help. Naj has been gluing chairs from the VS room when he has the time. It's an ongoing process. Thanks to Naj! I'm still trying to find someone who will stripe the newly paved parking lot. Once I get an estimate, I will see if the budget will handle it. Otherwise, things are relatively quiet...so quiet that the mice in church can actually be heard.

Howard

GROUNDS REPORT APRIL 2024

Grounds Committee will have their first grounds cleanup day in early May, possibly May 8 with May 10 as the rain date. The crocuses that were planted on the bank in front of the church bloomed in early April, however many more will need to be planted to make an impact. Our committee would like to ask for funds to pave the walkway leading from the manse parking area to the large parking lot. We also ask for guidance in finding a contractor.

KVCC's Mission and Social Action Committee Meetings

April 14 & 18 2024

On April 14, M&SA welcomed Bobbi Perez, Bob Harsh, and Monique Weston who spoke on behalf of Adirondack Friends for Refugees and Immigrants (AFRI) and their desire to have a closer relationship with KVCC and previously discussed by John Sampson with their president Cynthia Poppino. About sixteen people attended this meeting.

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Passcode: =4\$tM4LE

They shared the history of AFRI, which began at KVCC around a desire to help Syrian refugees, it being based at St John, and an expansion of their work which has included partnerships and efforts to support refugees in Lake Placid, Plattsburgh, Saranac Lake and Schroon Lake, hosting potlucks in Etown, and assisting us host a benefit for Ukraine. Recently, as a result of leadership change at St John's, they have learned that the church is no longer willing to be their sponsor. Therefore, they are looking for either a new fiscal sponsor (possibly us) or establishing a 501 c 3, and becoming self-sustaining.

Henrietta offered to help them apply for non-profit status at no charge, they would only have to cover the modest fees to apply; an offer they are now seriously considering.

Bobbi shared that just attending today's service, hearing John's reflection, the prayers of the congregation, and talking with people during the coffee provided her with a profound sense of welcome, that KVCC reflected her values. She also felt by her faith to welcome the stranger and care for those in need.

A lively discussion took place, which included addressing questions about advocacy, the value of framing such discussions as education, and questions about their vision and aspirations. Naomi said that AFRI helped her feel welcome, helped her feel loved.

John said that no decision would be made today and explained how KVCC makes decisions, sets policy and decides on programs. They appreciated our support and said they felt heard, and appreciated the time we provided them, and would reflect on what they heard.

On April 18, a subgroup met to discuss what we had heard and learned. This group included Debby, Fritz, John, Katharine, Lauren and Naj. We agreed that AFRI's "advocacy" activities were modest, that if they were to hold potlucks our space might not be sufficient, that it would require using either of the two firehalls, that we appreciated their offering have member serve on the church council, and that taking on new programming would be difficult that our core volunteers already have a lot on their plate.

We also agreed they needed to discuss more deeply their vision for the future, that no question more immigrants would be moving to this region and need of assistance, and that they work did reflect our values of

being open and affirming and environmental justice. We also agreed that their work would be appearing to younger people and that clearly Naomi valued their activities.

A follow-up note received by John

Dear John,

We want to thank you and your congregation for inviting us to present the mission of AFRI and our hopes for the future. We were warmly welcomed and our spirits bolstered by the each person who came after service to ask questions and get to know us better.

Cynthia and I are going to meet with Henrietta Jordan relatively soon as she promised to help us establish our 501C3 status and obtain liability insurance at a rate we may be able to afford. I don't know how long this will take and this is a crucial factor for our steering committee.

I have joined both the National Council for Non-Profits and the New York Council for Non-Profits. Being surrounded by activists in your church definitely was inspiring; this spirit of reaching out in love, of coming together to listen, to decide what is the best road for the whole faith community meant a great deal to Bob, Monique and myself.

My best,

Bobbi

On other news some members of KVCC did join in the cleanup, but not many. We could do better. I did hear from a member of the KCS Green Team that their plan is to expand the school's pollinator garden.

KEENE FOOD MISSION REPORT FOR APRIL 2024

Liz Jaques is now able to make deposits for the Keene Food Mission to assist Deborah in making deposits should checks or cash come directly to the church.

The Keene Food Mission were the recipients 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.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

April. 2024

Balances as of 4/10/24

Main	\$ 117,940.50
PDF	\$ 4,108.13
Petty Cash	\$ 1,083.96

Event \$ 4,325.02

Food Mission \$ 16,750.33

AMS (Vanguard) \$ 88,158.57

Schwab Endowment \$1,523,550.23 as of 3/31/24

Highlights: Performance vs Budget

YTD 3/31/24 \$\$	Actual	Budget	\$ Variance	% Variance
Pledges	20,974	25,000	-4,026	-16%
Total Income	46,042	50,073	-4,031	- 8%
Bldg & Grounds	3,605	5,557	-1,952	-35%
Staff Expense	36,304	40,970	-4,666	-11%
Utilities&Taxes	7,434	6,756	678	10%
Other Expenses	4,134	5,915	-1,781	-30%
Total Expenses	51,477	59,198	- 7,721	-13%
Net Income (Loss)	-5,434	- 9,126	3,692	-40%

Other Developments:

- Will evaluate pledge payments on Little Green Light to evaluate shortfall in receipts.
- New bookkeeper, Cena Abramo of On Point Bookkeeping, begins work as of June 1, 2024.
- Investment manager will be reevaluated in 2Q24 and possibly replaced.
- Closed Newcomer Account.
- Credit cards still not arrived.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Worship Committee Council Report: April 23, 2024

John called a meeting to recap Lent and Easter services, about summer music and the summer sermon cycle.

The meeting began with a discussion on the QR code in the bulletin. Commenting on some feedback using the phone to donate during the service, John did not feel it would be a distraction—no more than the people reaching for their checkbooks and writing a check. Once the code is set up on the phone it should take 20 seconds. If it proves to be otherwise it can be dropped. John is always open to comments from the congregation who would like to discuss any aspect of worship. And hopes they come to him to discuss.

Moving to the worship and extra services during Lent and Easter, the comments were mostly very positive. Words like richer experience, appreciated stories not usually told during Easter, educational, magnificent, enjoyed artwork in the bulletins, emotional, the sermon on trauma and Maundy Thursday were particularly mentioned. There was some feeling that there was not enough joy and music. All agreed they very much liked John’s messages. Some felt unfamiliar with the hymns. John said the hymns are pulled from many traditions and hymnals. Congregants are always encouraged to suggest hymns that are personally meaningful to them.

Maundy Thursday and the lighting of the Paschal candle did not have a high attendance. John asked if we thought those support the spiritual need of the community. The Spring Equinox was well attended. People were very positive about the meditation led by Robin. Possibly this could be incorporated in the Fall Equinox.

Since Covid John has been keeping track of attendance, including those on Zoom and watching later. The numbers continue to be high which confirms we should never give up on Zoom. Thanks to David Craig who is very dedicated resulting in an excellent production.

Traditionally in the summer there is no choir except for two Sundays. The weeks are filled with musicians from a range of places and genres, not all from a religious background. Bill Serjak and Nancy Emerich find them. Discussion ensued. The congregation does not like when the musicians are on Zoom but are generally satisfied with the kind and variety of music.

The musicians are paid a stipend of two hundred dollars whether there was one person or 15. There was some discussion that this was not enough. The committee talked of raising the stipend to three hundred dollars, but no action was taken. Fritz said he would discuss this with the finance committee. Jo offered that she could fill in for free if there was need.

In the past John has asked the congregation for suggestions for summer sermons. He asked for our thoughts and ideas. There were several comments: gives the opportunity to have sermons on subjects people want to explore, meeting them where they are, dealing with world or local concerns and how we might support the community. It allows the opportunity to step away from the normal lectionary. Variety could be very valuable.

The next meeting is TBA.

FLOWER COMMITTEE

This past season of Lent, we did not use any flowers on the altar/table. But Easter flowers were displayed in the windows and offered out that Sunday after the service to take home and enjoy. Voluntary contributions were welcomed and placed in the KVCC Flower Fund. The members of this group work together to cover the schedule. However, we do encourage new volunteers to assist us. Alana Both, Ingrid Carman, Susie Doolittle, and Charlotte Lichtenberg are each willing to answer any question you might have about what this task involves. Arranging flowers can be most enjoyable!

KVCC PERSONNEL GROUP:

April Council Report

Members: Nancy McArthur, Fritz Sabbow, Debby Rice

A meeting was held on April 16 to outline the process that will be used for performance evaluations for each of the KVCC staff members, including the Pastor, Secretary, Music Director, Music Accompanist, and the Zoom Administrator.

The emphasis is on employee input throughout the process. A draft framework for a job description has been created for development with each part time employee. Also, a performance evaluation process has been developed for implementation.

Performance reviews will begin with one to one meetings with each staff member late April-early May.

Other Business: None

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 28, 2024

Deborah made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk