

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes
February 22, 2022

Present: Pastor John Sampson, Debby Rice, Paul Osenbaugh, Erica Swift, Anne Hurd, Linda Bogardus, Nancy McArthur, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Susie Allen, Barbara Merle-Smith, Anne Runyon, Liz Jaques, Fritz Sabbow, Linda Bogardus, Derek Prill, Susie Allen, Dre Roebuck, Pam Gothner, Naj Wikoff, and Deborah Mitchell.

Absent: Jimm Collin and Henrietta Jordan

Debby Rice opened the meeting at 5:02 PM (Zoom Meeting).

Opening Prayer: Pastor John led the group in prayer.

Debby began the meeting with reading the Mission Statement of KVCC UCC.

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

PASTOR'S REPORT – FEBRUARY 22, 2022

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Weekly meetings with Dave Craig regarding worship on the Zoom platform. Chris Blaicher is training to be Dave's back-up.
- The Centering Prayer Group meets mornings @ 7 AM. The weekly book discussion group on *The Cloud of Unknowing* is ongoing.
- Friday morning prayer group meets in the VSR, sharing prayers, concerns, and joys of the community.
- Upcoming special worship:
 - February 27 – Mardi Gras inspired worship
 - March 2 – Ash Wednesday evening service
 - March 20 – Rerelease of Vernal Equinox vespers video via Zoom gathering
 - April 13 – Indoor labyrinth in VSR with electric candles
 - April 15 – Good Friday service
 - April 17 – Easter – Lighting Paschal candle, sunrise service, 10 AM church service
 - April 22 - Earth Day service
 - May 1 - Celtic inspired worship informed by the Faith and Issues readings
 - May 20/21 – World Meditation Day
 - June 5 – Pentecost
 - June 21 – Summer Equinox Vespers Celebration
 - July 31 - Celtic inspired worship informed by the Faith and Issues readings
- Working with Nancy Emrich, Bill Serjak, and Liz Jaques to create the Summer Music program. Seagle and Meadowmount have already confirmed two dates each.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- June 18 – Robinson wedding. John will not be officiating.

Pastoral Support

- Provide ongoing pastoral support to the church community via Zoom, telephone, in-person meetings, and email.
- Offering two pancake luncheons on 2/23 and 27 as a way to create fellowship. Both gatherings are filled.

Book Discussion Group – Tuesday Nights

- Will complete reading *Christianity and the Social Crisis* by Walter Rauschenbusch on Tuesday, February 22, 2022.
- The group will begin reading *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Nikos Kazantzakis on March 1, 2022.

Community Support

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

Essex Association

- Black River – St. Lawrence Association (BRSL)
 - Members of the Essex Association continue to have discussions with the BRSL Association about merging. The discussions have been positive, and are moving forward.

Training

- Sexual Harassment Prevention Training - Lynn to provide documentation that he received the training through KCS in September.

Sabbatical

- Will be on sabbatical September 2022 – mid-January 2023
- Attending Michaelmas Term at Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK
- Requested that Council and Sabbatical Planning Committee identify all needs by March 31.

Out of Office

- No time out of office planned at this time.

Other Items

- Attend Spiritual Direction sessions for the development of my own spirit
- Became member of the Steering Committee of the Keene Diversity Advisory Committee (KDAC)
- KDAC will be sponsoring Keene Pride again this summer. Looking forward to ways KVCC can participate.
- Attended the Plattsburgh Interfaith Council meeting on February 8 to share the CJC process, successes and challenges with representatives from some of the houses of faith in Plattsburgh. The presentation was well received.
- Participating in monthly meetings of the Plattsburgh Climate Squad, a group comprised of members of houses of worship in Plattsburgh looking to become climate advocates in the North Country.

- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UC NY Board of Directors.
- The Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ will convene at the Silver Bay Retreat Center, Silver Bay, NY, beginning at 2:00 PM on Friday, June 10, 2020, and will be in session until after the Closing Service of Worship on Sunday, June 12, 2022. Churches in the Essex Association will be called on to support the meeting.
- Member of the group planning the Annual Meeting.
- Received the following guidance from the UCC about a recent law enacted in NY state about hybrid meetings:
 - Several of our churches have inquired about the recent New York State law, passed on November 8, 2021, that governs in-person and remote meetings for religious corporations. We have consulted with the national UCC legal counsel and offer the following guidance for UCCNY congregations:
 - The law in NY on member meetings, which includes congregational and annual meetings, for religious corporations is this: *“Notwithstanding any provision of law, certificate of incorporation or by-laws to the contrary, if the board of trustees of a religious corporation is authorized to determine the place of trustee meetings, corporate meetings, congregant or membership meetings, the board of trustees may, in its sole discretion, determine that the meeting shall be held solely by means of electronic communication, the electronic service and/or platform through which the meeting is held shall be the place of the meeting for purposes of this chapter.”*
 - This means that if the church’s bylaws state that the church council/trustees/governing body is authorized to determine the place of such a meeting, then the meeting can be held entirely remotely **IF** the church council decides to do that.
 - There is no law in NY specifically allowing religious corporations to have hybrid (partial in-person and remote) member meetings. And it is not clear in this law, whether adding a provision in the church’s bylaws that allows for hybrid meetings would be in compliance with NY law.
 - Our best recommendation for churches that are interested in electronic meetings is to: 1) check your bylaws and ensure that the council has the authority to determine the place of the meeting; and 2) if so, hold the meeting entirely remotely or entirely in-person.
 - Church by-laws that do not give the council the authority to determine the place of the meeting cannot hold an electronic meeting.

Treasurer’s Report: Prior to the meeting, Nancy provided the Council with the following documents: Balance Sheet, Comparative Income Statement and Finance Committee Report. Nancy opened a discussion around who manages the people who work on the grounds and clean the church. She suggested that there be a meeting to clarify their roles and responsibilities. Derek, Pam, and Derek will meet within the month to address concerns. Nancy also elaborated on the Finance Committee’s Report and would like to focus on how we can bring in people from the community to our mission. Nancy will be speaking with our investment advisors on 3/11/22 to review/re-look at our investments and make any recommended changes. Deborah made a motion to accept the treasurer’s report and Erica seconded the motion. There was a discussion, and the motion was carried.

Committee Reports:

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Derek did not have any additions to the last report at this time.

Derek brought up a discussion with the Council about the sequence of projects related to building maintenance and improvements. Particularly, if projects should be prioritized for beautification/visual appeal this spring or for structural maintenance and energy efficiency. All will get done eventually, but limited budget requires that we choose priorities.

Derek also asked the Council as to whether or not they believe church members would be interested in volunteering for smaller maintenance projects (as potential community-building events and as a way to decrease costs). We have had success with having volunteers assist with Church projects and a request will be made through the Church's newsletter and during service. Derek Prill

Grounds Report: There is no new information to report on this month.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE COUNCIL REPORT, FEBRUARY 22, 2022

During the Celtic service the KVCC's traditional cross was switched out for the Brigid cross. The new cross was very well-received, and many thanks go to Barbara Merle-Smith for making it.

Someone asked about the Creation Justice scroll and whether it could be displayed somewhere. Various options were discussed; ultimately, the entrance coat-room seemed the best choice. The scroll could replace the painting there, which some feel is dated and not representative of who we are now. No decision was made.

During the Celtic service, the time for prayer was changed. Instead of John gathering all the prayers and offering them up at the end, the Congregation repeated a phrase after each person had spoken. A couple of the committee members found this to be more meaningful and in the moment. Others felt that John's offering is important, as though the prayers are going to a higher level. Also, John's offering makes it possible for everyone to hear any prayers that were not enunciated well into the microphone. John said that he would give a lesson on using the microphone.

John said that during Lent, he would use the spoken phrase after each prayer, as during the Celtic service. The change need not be permanent. One member felt that the Brigid woven cross represents our interconnectedness and that saying the phrase after each prayer is a way for the congregation to affirm that we are responsible for each other.

John wants to bring back the offertory, the literal passing of the plate. One reason is financial. But John is conflicted and unsure how he feels about this, because he feels that the offertory takes him out of what is happening during worship. But the offertory is a practical matter.

John reminded us that he is going on Sabbatical from September to mid-January 2023. A committee has been formed, and John asked for a representative from the Worship Committee to be the liaison. Bernie Webb agreed to serve.

Two dates in May have been set for World Meditation Day, which will come out of the KVCC Centering Prayer group.

The Worship Committee's next meeting will be March 4, from 10 a.m. to noon, to discuss Easter.

MISSION AND SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE REPORT

The MSA Committee met on February 6 and began a discussion of priorities for the coming year and the continuation of Creation Justice activities.

Committee members endorsed the project proposed by Barbara Merle-Smith and Henri Jordan for the assembly of hygiene kits to be distributed by the UCC for disaster relief. For this project, efforts will be made to involve students from Keene Central as well as members of the larger community.

(Late breaking development: Superintendent Dan Mayberry has approved the involvement of KCS students and is recruiting a teacher or club adviser to coordinate.) --- Henri Jordan

FLOWER COMMITTEE REPORT

Our group of volunteers are back at work again creating arrangements on the altar at KVCC. These arrangements usually use fewer flowers. However, during the season of Lent starting on March 1, candles will be on the altar. We will again be using Palms on Palm Sunday, and lilies and other flowers on Easter Sunday. Anyone may take these flowers home after the Easter service. A donation to the church (memo line - Easter Flowers) would be greatly appreciated to help defray the cost of the flowers.

Our hardworking team of four volunteers include: Alana Both, Ingrid Carman, Susy Doolittle and Charlotte Lichtenberg, and other community members. They continue to put forth memorable arrangements for all to enjoy. Thank You! Our sanctuary is definitely enhanced by the altar arrangements.

We still could use additional volunteers to help us. The warmer months might be more to your liking to do the flowers. So add your name to our sign-up chart near the kitchen. Family members could even do an arrangement. We welcome arrangements for birthdays and other special days for family and friends, too!

Contact any member of our flower group for details. Or check the bulletin board for the list of responsibilities near the sign-up chart. **Thank you** for your interest in this rewarding activity.

RE-OPENING TASK FORCE REPORT

- Group continues to monitor updates to health guidance, and the state of the pandemic.
- Full hybrid worship offered beginning July 4.
- Group meeting every week.
- Group has agreed to keep the mask mandate in place for now, even though NY State relaxed the statewide mandate.
- Outdoor coffee hour will be hosted by the Task Force on Sunday, May 1.
- Inviting members of the Council to host outdoor coffee hour on Sunday, May 8.

SABBATICAL TASK FORCE COMMITTEE REPORT

This committee has met twice since the last Council meeting.

Chris Blaicher has resigned from this committee, and we are still seeking a member of the Worship Committee to join us.

Janifer Deming has agreed to be our Pastoral Care person for the 18 weeks of John's absence. She will also do the two Communion Sundays in October and November.

We are planning for at least one Sunday to be “Congregation Sunday.” On this day Worship might look a little different. We would like for some members of the Congregation to give a 5-minute explanation of what Worship means to them; where they find their strength and inspiration; how they Live their Faith. The shape of the service is not yet determined, but we want to hear from the people in the pews.

Sometime in March we would like to host an Informational/Q&A meeting with the congregation after church. We need to keep John’s Sabbatical in front of people so there are no surprises. Some of us are hearing questions about this time so there surely are more folks with questions.

A reminder: If any employees, members of your Committees or Task Forces need any help from John or has any questions on how to proceed during his absence, he needs to know by March. That’s soon!

Respectfully submitted: Karen Glass, Elizabeth Davidson, Debby Rice, Naj Wikoff.

Other Business:

- Manse Discernment Group: The current tenant has been given a six-month notice, and the group will look at the apartment to make sure they know if there are any needed improvements to make.
- New Creation Justice Group: The new Creation Justice Committee is in the process of forming under the Mission & Social Action Committee for this calendar year. M&SA has offered CJI \$1200 of their budget. We currently plan those funds for 1.) a celebration of becoming a CJC in conjunction with the church bazaar in August, 2022 2.) instituting a better recycling program at the church by using Casella 3.) working with students at KCS including the Green Team.
- 2022 Bazaar: Dre continues to look for staffing/volunteers for the 2022 Church Bazaar. Requests will be made through the Church’s newsletter and announced in Church. There will also be sign up sheets posted at Church. Dre sought clarity around how the money taken in at the bazaar will be allocated.
- Fellowship Committee: Debby read the bylaws prior to the Council meeting, and noted we have room for a Fellowship Committee. It is hoped that this Committee can focus on increasing the Church’s mission and focus outside of the building to include things such as outreach and the return of coffee hour. Debby, Dre and Deborah offered to coordinate the coffee hour on May 8th.

Deborah made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:07 PM.

Next council meeting is Tuesday, **March 22, 2022** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM in person at the Keene Valley Library with a Zoom component.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk