

KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

May 23, 2023

Present: Debby Rice, Pastor John Sampson, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Dre Roebuck, Anne Runyon Hurd, Susie Allen, Naj Wikoff, Laurin McArthur, Paul Osenbaugh, Fritz Sabbow, Pam Gothner, Linda Bogardus, Shawn LaMarche, and Deborah Mitchell.

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

Opening Prayer: Pastor John led the group in a quiet reflective meditation.

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

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

WelcomeCorps Opportunity: Laurin provided an update on this project. Progress includes housing and educational supports. There have been a couple of informational sessions in support of this project. The application for WelcomeCorps is being submitted in the next couple of weeks. Naj made a motion that WelcomeCorps be a program sponsored by KVCC. Fritz seconded the motion. There was unanimous vote to support this motion. Later, Fritz made a motion that we have a congregational meeting to vote on this project. Paul seconded the motion. A lengthy discussion was made around this motion. Because we have had a lot of strong support of this project, we used this to help us make our decision. A vote was cast, and the Council voted not to have congregational meeting on this issue.

Pastor's Report – May 23, 2023

Worship and Spiritual Development

- Maundy Thursday dinner service held on Thursday, April 6. Co-led with Martha Gallagher.
- Good Friday service of the Seven Last Sayings of Jesus held on Friday, April 7. The group preaching this year included: Susie Allen, Michael Caldwell, Jenifer Deming, Paul Osenbaugh, Dre Roebuck, John Sampson, Naj Wikoff.
- Easter services held on Sunday, April 9: lighting of the Paschal Fire @ 5 AM, the Sunrise Service at the Transfer Station @ 7 AM, KVCC @ 10 AM. The service at the Neighborhood House was not held due to a high number of COVID cases at the facility.
- Offered labyrinth walk in VSR on Thursday, April 13

- The Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams, Transitional Conference Minister, is scheduled to preach on Sunday, May 21.
- Choir's final day before summer vacation will be Sunday, June 11, which will be a Music Sunday.
- Working with Bill Serjack, Nancy Emrich, Liz Jaques, Lynn Dewalt and Rob Hastings to schedule our summer music program.
- Working with a team to plan a sunrise gathering and evening service to mark the summer solstice on Wednesday, June 21.
- Invited to preach at All Soul's in St. Huberts on Sunday, August 20.
- Leading weekly worship at the Neighborhood House.
- 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.

New Members

- Invited those interested in joining the church to reach out. Four people have indicated they would like to become members. New member welcome to be scheduled.

Council Retreat

- Retreat held on Sunday, April 23 at Debby and Dan's house.

Web Site

- Jimm Collin has agreed to help create the website.
- Met with Jimm to review content requirements
- Jimm is reaching out to website builders to get a sense of their work and pricing.

Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- Working with Henri Jordan, and Emily Dwight to schedule dates for placing their memorial stones in the Memorial Garden.
- Held Annette Merle-Smith's memorial on Friday, May 12.
- Russell Banks' memorial service will be held on Saturday, July 15. John will not be officiating.
- Robinson wedding confirmed for Saturday, September 9. John will not be officiating.

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.

Book Discussion Group – Tuesday Nights

- The group is reading John Philip Newell's book, *Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul*.

John Philip Newell Visit

- John Philip Newell will be visiting KVCC on July 14 and 15.
- Attending multiple group meetings each week to plan this event.
- Working with Susie Allen, Lorraine Duvall and Ethel Webb to develop an educational program in support of welcoming JPN.

Manse Discernment Committee

- Member of group considering future usage of the manse and extended property.

WelcomeCorps Committee

- Part of discernment group considering sponsoring a refugee/refugee family to be settled in our town.

Community Support

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

Essex Association

- The Essex Association Annual Meeting held on Sunday, May 21 at the Schroon Lake Community Church.

New York Conference

- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UCC NY Board of Directors.

- The UCC NY Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 16 – 17 in Niagara Falls. Will be attending with Shawn Lamarche and Anne Hurd.

Training/Education

- Will be attending an online seminar on al-Ghazali's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 12 – 2 PM, July 3 – 7. This seminar is given by St. John's College, NM.

Other Items

- Prepare content for weekly emails to church community.
- Attended kick-off meeting for summer bazaar.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee met on April 21 with the following topics covered:

- Mike Onorato of Silicon Valley Investment Management discussed our portfolio performance.
- The committee determined that up to investing in a 6 month CD would enable a better return on church liquidity. McArthur to explore alternatives and invest provided rate is 5% or more and CD is FDIC insured. Documentation required by the bank is currently being gathered.
- The church has applied for VISA business credit cards from TCM, a vendor to Champlain National Bank.
- The Committee discussed the church's \$3,000 loan to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund which was necessitated by the high level of needs in the community at present. The group recommends that the congregation needs strong encouragement to ensure we are able to meet our community obligations. Repayment terms are 50% of monthly donations to the PDF as possible.
- The John Philip Newell event is being managed through a website on Eventleaf, and registration fees are being cleared and deposited in a separate account at Champlain National Bank. The account was initially funded with \$3,000 from church funds. To date, 13 individuals have registered for the event.
- The church has been notified of a bequest from the Estate of Jane B. Knight; amount to be forthcoming.

The Key Financial Measures of the church are as follows:

Rev. Frederica Mitchell Legacy Fund (a/o 5/17/2023) \$1,382,013

Champlain National Bank

Main Account	\$113,323
PDF	\$ 2,784
Petty Cash	\$ 3,680
JPN Account	\$ 2,570
Total	\$122,357

Income & Expense Highlights: YTD 3/31/23

Pledges	\$ 40,688	+1.3%
Rental Income	3,795	+63.2%
Total Income	\$ 68,104	+8.1%
Total Expenses	\$ 71,407	+17.2%

Due to: Fire System Upgrade \$4,209, Survey \$2,000, Timing of Cleaning/Plowing Bills

Worship Committee, March 24, 2023

Present: John Sampson, Linda Bogardus, Naj Wikoff, Bernie Webb, Annie Scavo, Martha Gallagher, Ellen DuBois.

Since returning from his sabbatical, John has shared with the congregation many of the things he learned and has changed or added to the worship service as a result.

One of the additions, the lighting of a peace candle, was suggested by a congregant. The consensus was that the lighting was fine as it was and should remain simple to serve as a moment of reflection reminding us of a bigger picture. John suggested that as time goes along, he will find new ways to incorporate the candle throughout the service, preventing it from becoming just part of the background.

The time of prayer has become contentious. Concerns were expressed about the length of the prayers, and that at times they take the form more of an announcement than of a prayer. Various changes were considered. But in the end John stated that he is fully committed to having prayers said by people in their own words, in their own ways. God is working through us, and we must give Him our hearts. John is willing to give up some of the top-down control so that we can fully share, be seen and heard as we are, and thus be supported by each other and allow the Spirit to work.

The mood of the service was visited: in particular, whether people prefer a quiet, meditative setting or something more vibrant. John does not want to police what people do, nor to

change the dynamic of what is happening on a given Sunday. The church offers opportunities during the week or even on a given Sunday for quiet contemplation.

For several months John changed entirely how we do communion, by leading the congregation into the Van Santvoord room for a hands-on ceremony with a different script, to the Gospel of John. Most present did not like the new format: some were uncomfortable with the close contact and touching of food, others noted that the format does not transfer well to the Zoom pew.

John explained that he was concerned with the liturgical aspect of communion: what is the meaning of the moment? If the cross is a symbol, what does communion mean for us? John's use of the Gospel of John helps us understand communion in a new way. His thinking shifted when he went to Kings College Chapel at Cambridge and saw that rather than a hanging cross, the altar had a painting of Mary holding the infant Jesus.

Next meeting TBD

Submitted by Linda Bogardus

M&SA 5.14.23

Following a long and emotional service that featured several heartfelt prayers on difficult issues and John's powerful address on gun violence, M&SA addressed a variety of topics. The big issue is whether or not the Congregation will endorse our applying to welcome a refugee family in our community, their nationality unknown as that decision is made by a federal agency.

Lauren has twice presented to the Congregation receiving positive feedback. The feeling is as next step to float what we are thinking to the Town Board and some other agencies to benefit from their insight, and then bring a report back to the Church Council and Congregation for a vote. What's also unknown is once applied for, how long before we will get a response to the application, and if approved, when to expect a family, the ages of their children (if any) and so forth.

The collaboration between us and the KCS Green team re-establishing pollinators gardens is moving forward. John heard from one student seeking to know what we have learned, and Paul responded to their query (the students found his response to be very helpful). Another student is crafting a message for Jay News seeking input from area residents who have pollinator gardens as to what works, etc. John Schuler, manager of the Ausable Club will meet with the students next week to learn why pollinator gardens are a priority for the students, where they are thus far, and will consider starting such an initiative at the Club.

John said he attended a recent Keene Diversity Advisory Committee meeting and learned that they too are considering organizing a trip to the Akwesasne Cultural Center and was also

curious as to the relationship with the town board and also note several people who had been active no longer are. John said he suggested to them they have a table at the Pride Day in SL letting them know we will have a table there. That prompted a discussion. Naj reached out to Jane Hough, co-chair to discuss collaborating on the trip. She said that JBL is planning a tour, not KDAC, so Naj and Martha agreed that there should be one trip hosted by all three agencies, and Naj is drafting a flier.

Naj said that Curt Stager, who recently led the effort to rename Negro Brook after a 19th century free-Black Farmer in Vermontville wanted to know if we'd be willing to take on getting the name of a nearby mountain (Negro Mt) changed. The group suggested that the Adk Diversity Initiative working with a Saranac Lake Church would make more sense, but we agreed to endorse such an effort. Naj will get back to Curt and also ask about the process of renaming mountains.

The ADA-compliant - and stroller-friendly table that M&SA funded will be stained Saturday morning at 10:00 AM at the Keene Community Center Pavilion on Church Street in Keene. People wishing to help stain are invited to attend. There will be six table in total to stain.

Patience brought up antisemitism and said that Tom Glaser, whose grandparents died in concentration camps, and his parents barely survived. He is willing to make a presentation on his family's experiences, and it was agreed that mid-August made the most sense. Naj said that the president of the LP Temple would be willing to participate on a panel, and he and Patience agreed that the Plattsburg Rabbi would likely say yes as well. John felt key is finding a non-Jew to participate, and it was agreed that person should best be from our congregation. John and Patience will follow up leads. Info re Tom Glaser: <https://www.holocaustmemorial-vt.org/glaser>.

We reminded that we had the November Turkey Drive for Families first, and it was suggested that we participate in the County Prevention Team's Out of Darkness Suicide Walk (normally held in October, date not yet known).

JOHN PHILIP NEWELL PLANNING TEAM REPORT

May 2023

The first and most important thing is to say a big THANK YOU. Our team has put in countless hours in the last 2 months to:

- prepare the registration website (Martha Gallagher did intensive work on this) (https://www.eventleaf.com/e/JPNewell_KeeneValley)
- apply for 2 grants (Karen Glass did the work on these)
 - we have been awarded \$550 by the ECAC CAP grant;

- we are waiting to hear from the Genesis Fund (UCC grant)
- we have received 3 other grants through our partnership with Naomi Kelly in Old Forge, totaling \$2250
- develop a publicity flier and press release
- host a weekly book discussion of Newell's *Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul* (John is doing this)
- include periodic quotes from Newell's books during worship and in the church newsletter
- begin conversations with regional churches and organizations to develop interest and possible support
- begin receiving registrations for the event (14 registrations as of 5/16/23)

Over the next 2 months, the planning team will be:

- continuing to publicize the events
- continuing to reach out to regional churches and organizations
- preparing hospitality for the 3 events (food, hosts, people to work at the door, problem solvers)
- setting up technology to show the Saturday night film at KV Library
- corresponding with registrants as needed

On May 26, John Sampson, Susie Allen, and Naomi Kelly will be visiting 2 sites to determine if they might be potential locations for a future School of Earth and Soul in our region. (John Philip Newell's 3-year program) This would be a significant opportunity to bring the Celtic spiritual teachings to an expanding community of people.

Special thanks to Nancy McArthur, who worked with Martha Gallagher to coordinate the payment process with the registration website.

Special thanks to Liz Jaques who is receiving and tracking check payments (for those who prefer to pay by check or who want to make a donation to support the event); and is providing support in a variety of ways.

Personnel Task Force Update: Fritz had no responses to his request to have volunteers help out on the Personnel Task Force. Given he received no responses, he is recommending the four primary officers on the Council to be a part of this Task Force. The Council agreed.

Website: John provided us with an update on the website development.

Budget Timing: John updated us on the timing of the budget. Shawn made a motion to hold the congregational meeting from the 4th quarter to the 1st quarter of the year. John reminded us we need a quorum for the congregational meeting.

Church By-Laws: John mentioned that our by-laws need to be updated. If we make any changes to the by-laws, it needs a congregational vote. Liz has volunteered. We will be looking for volunteers for this project.

Disbanding the Re-Opening Task Force: John is recommending disbanding this group and has their consensus. Shawn made a motion to disband this group. Naj seconded the motion. We voted and decided to disband the Re-opening Task Force.

Flower Committee

Our KVCC flower group is now complete with the return of Ingrid Carmen.

We all welcome the arrival of the Spring/Summer season of beautiful flowers. The flowers we use come from personal and community gardens as well as neighborhood meadows. They are then placed at the front of the sanctuary for all to enjoy.

This is a creative and enjoyable experience for each of our members. There is a sign-up chart near the kitchen for those wishing to sponsor a special day.

An information sheet is also posted making it easier to volunteer as a substitute.

Charlotte Lichtenberg

Grounds Report May 2023

On Saturday May 6 we had a grounds work day at the church. Although we were competing with the Coronation and the Grand Hike, volunteers arrived and we were able to prune the bushes around the front of the church, repair damage to the lawn from aggressive snow plowing and weed the entryway beds. Many cedar limbs along the parking lot were taken down. We are experimenting with No Mow May. The bat house that was donated by Paul and Erica was installed on the back side of the garage this month. The edging around the pollinator garden has been completed and we will be planting the vacant area soon.

In addition to the work on the grounds, we have been in touch with the Green Team at KCS via email to offer advice about pollinator gardens.

Manse Discernment Group

May 2023

Group Members:

Elizabeth Davidson, Liz Jaques, Henri Jordan, Dan Mason, Nancy McArthur, Paul Osenbaugh, Derek Prill, Debby Rice, John Sampson.

Where are we now?

NEW: Who and what is going on in our community to think about achievable housing?

Susy Doolittle suggested we consider having an informal discussion with others in the community who are working on Achievable Housing. The Manse Discernment group was contacted by email and agreed to proceed on this idea. A tea and cookies meeting is being organized by **Dan Mason** to include those who are concerned about this issue. This possibly relates to future discussions about out property.

BUILDING—Office

- **SPACE PLAN:** After Dan Mason developed a report on the existing use of the spaces, the group is asking **for** Spring Cleaning By June 1 (?). **Liz Jaques** is taking the lead. Following the model used in the 3rd bay of the garage, ownership groups being Flower, Communion, Children, Pastor, secretary, Music, Quilting (some items may be long to them) and others will tackle their spaces. Surplus items will be sold at the bazaar or giving to local charity groups
- a. The Manse Group will provide hands-on assistance.
 - b. Others in the Church will be invited to join in to help the owners of each area in the physical work.
- Once housekeeping is done, a discussion and reassessment of possible redistribution of spaces will occur. No changes or relocations will occur without Council and Church involvement and support.

PROPERTY (land, beyond the building/manse)

- A surveyor has been contracted to complete a **new survey** of the approximately 1.38 acres to determine current borders, right of ways, utilities, etc. (**Nancy is the Lead**)
- Need a KVCC Church Property development plan
- No changes will be made without Council and Church involvement and support.

Other Business:

Topics addressed included: addressing area damaged by plowing near handicap parking, organizing and cleaning the church, the new name of the UCC association (UCC North Country Association).

The next Council meeting is Tuesday, **June 27, 2022** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM in person at KVCC.

Dre closed the meeting with asking members how are you connecting in with your spirit, and everyone responded.

Dre made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk