

Church Council RETREAT Summary

A retreat was held on November 14, 2021. The 2021 and 2022 Councils met together to discuss where we are as a church community and share ideas about possible future initiatives. The 2022 Council will take and consider carefully possible priorities for the coming year(s) and begin a process to gain Church wide priorities.

Notes (individual input, small group input, not necessarily a consensus view)

1) Church Council: comments from the 2021 Council to the new 2022 Council
A special thank you to Karen and the 2021 Council for leading us and getting us through COVID.

Council Meetings

- Council can sometimes feel like it operates in silos, and perhaps not holistically or strategically
- Council has been “the best meetings I have attended”
- The emphasis on Nuts and Bolts (which is necessary) does not address the spiritual direction of the Church.
- Time is limited in meetings, little or no time to dig into specific issues.
- Reports from groups ahead of the meeting are good....more lead time for reading the reports would be good.
- Suggestion: Nuts and Bolts/Strategic hybrid should be considered.

Concerns

- Funds appear to be somewhat lower than expected
- Maintaining the older buildings continues to be a challenge

2) Where are we now? Small group breakout session. “COVID hangs over this entire set of items as it drags on. We are tired.” We also celebrate what the Church means during these trying times.

- Who we are: Affirmation that we are non dogmatic, responsive, flexible, listening, open to questioning, evolving in our sense of church
 - Music has been amazing. Rob and Lynn have done so much for us.
 - Zoom/on line presence got up and running in a week, and has been a glue for our community bringing together people from all over. Zoom-a gift and a blessing. Can feel passive.
 - Fellowship: concerns over lack of fellowship opportunities due to COVID; missing community, coffee hour, children
 - Social action/justice feels separate from spiritual life of the church; Spiritual life of the Church is occurring in book groups, (not in Church? Maybe book groups are church)
 - Church feels “inert”, need a common purpose
 - Communications: we need to tell the story better about what it means to be a progressive Christian church so that others know who we are
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- Church has been strong in this pandemic: ONA, CJC, Centering Prayer, open Campfires, Book Groups, Worship, Camping trips
 - Concerns over lack of younger families in church, some drop off in attendance

3) Thinking about our future. Smallgroup breakout session. The following is a list of brainstorm ideas. A process will take place to prioritize and discuss with the larger community.

- Communications: trifold brochures, improved website, welcome baskets for new residents
- Fellowship: Spiritually nourishing; continuing to provide options for people to live into their faith
- Contemplative Retreat
- Grieving /bereavement community
- Bookless group, exploring deeper questions
- Greeting Committee
- Fellowship Dinners, coffee hour, other opportunities
- Advocacy
 - Social action committee--monitoring for opportunities
 - Thinking about how we want to live into Barber's fusion vision
 - Showing up in ways that others know we represent our Church (t-shirts?branding)
- Creation Justice...living into our commitment
 - More outreach
Group? Individual? On Council?
 - Lorraine's BIG party idea to celebrate CJI (next summer?)
- Open and affirming...living into our commitment (Be Bold)
 - Support to the Keene/ADK Diversity initiatives
 - Active participation/funding of Eagle Island Camp's director for education
 - Booth at the next Pride parade
 - Larger Rainbow sign at special events, e.g.,Bazaar
- Expand concept of Church to a spiritual learning (destination) center

4) Gathering Guidelines

- The group discussed our current gathering guidelines, and suggested some updates, which will be considered by the Reopening Task Force.

Church Council RETREAT

Date: Sunday, November 14 (yes, this Sunday!)

Place: Conference Room at the Keene Valley LIBRARY (bring your mask)

Time: 11:45 set up, 12:00 START---4:00 pm END

Lunch: Bring your own bag lunch, including drinks. We will provide cookies.

Ahead of our session, think about the following question(s):

- To the 2021 Council, what would you like to tell the new 2022 Council?
- To the 2022 Council, what would you like to ask the previous 2021 Council?

Agenda

11:45	Set up
12:00	Gather, Prayer, Introduction
12:30 (LUNCH discussion)	2021 Council shares, 2022 Council listens/asks question (see assignment above)
12:45-1:45	Breakout Session 1: Where are we now?
	Debrief Session 1
1:45-2:00	BREAK
2:00-3_00	Breakout Session 2: Thinking about our future (include ONA, CJC)
	Debrief Session 2
3:00-3:30	Lightning round----Nuts and Bolts: Things we need to work on (e.g, By Laws?)
3:30-4:00	Next Steps and Handover

Thank you all for attending, and in particular, thank you for spending this time to carefully consider our church in meeting our mission to...."welcome all people wherever they are on life's journey, joining together in worship and spiritual exploration while striving lovingly to serve with justice and compassion."

Elizabeth Derr, Karen Glass, Debby Rice, Dre Roebuck and Rev. John Sampson