

**CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
AUGUST 23RD, 2022**

A virtual meeting of the discernment committee of the Church of the Good Shepherd was held on Tuesday, August 23RD, 2022. Discernment committee members present: Cindy Cobb, Amy Eschelbach, Felicia Martineau, Philip Moros, Marjorie Strong and Linda Webster. Also, present Earl Kooperkamp, Rector and Cindy Willis, Minute Taker.

The meeting was opened at 5:41 PM with Phil Moros reading the opening prayer.

Approve Minutes: There were no minutes to approve.

Phil Moros shared that every agenda has had “What we are looking to accomplish?” so we don’t lose site of why we are here. There is a big goal - will the church stick around and our we sustainable? In looking at weaknesses and barriers within church, we were focusing outward. We need to look at some of barriers within the church. Areas where we could improve - discipleship, overreliance on priest, try focusing on some new things – new outreach, services outside church using nature as conduit, explore mission farm and we need more young people.

Linda Webster talked about worship services and ways to bring younger people into the church. Younger people were looking at care of creation services, services outside on hikes or by stream. We should talk with Mission Farm or Rock Point.

Earl shared that there is a younger priest in diocese now – Rachel Field. She is starting a creation focused ministry – maybe we should talk to her in the near term. Lisa Ransom at Mission Farm. And Rock Point maybe a consideration in finding different worship services.

Linda Webster shared what she heard at a Zoom meeting on the findings of Thrive. They are supporting this kind of outreach.

Cindy Cobb said when she was looking at mission statements, one had Women’s Club that was hiking and going to beach. Another church had Women’s Retreat. Maybe looking into that for Good Shepherd.

Marjorie Strong shared that VPIRG is starting new group – VPIRG Votes. This may be a good point of contact – an area to investigate. Peter Cobb was involved in VPIRG formation. Some people are interested in pastoral care, however vestry has to give them permission and focus.

Linda Webster said some people really like outreach but some might not, so we need to differentiate between those people. Earl says now that he has been here ten years, he has good sense of who that is and how to do that. Time to start looking how to do this. Cindy Cobb shared that we overburden the senior warden as well.

Marjorie Strong shared how young adults feel about the struggles of young children in church and how they often self-sensor even though we as a church don’t. They feel very self-conscious. Amy Eschelbach shared that when her child was younger, they could sit in the back and there were toddler toys – maybe make a child friendly section.

Parochial Report:

Phil Moros sent out spreadsheet of different financial things to see if any trends. Average Sunday attendance has gone down but holding steady. Pledges went up with 2016 and 2017 being the

highest. The 2020 number dropped down to 25 pledges. Average pledge \$1,300-\$1,400 even though number of people pledging has gone down. Correction: column 2020 should be 2019. There is an error in the plate for 2019 - should be about \$5,000. The investment used for operating expenses is about the same -a few years where it dipped. Overall investments in 2010 were \$316,000 – low point was 2015 at \$175,000 – now back up to about \$300.000. The number to be concerned about is average attendance and the people who pledge (think they are who is active at church). Age demographics is pretty subjective – overall over 60. Do we have sufficient numbers to meet mission – it is subjective, but we are getting it done- core functions being taken care of. Sometimes people are over-stretched. Linda Webster received membership listing – she wants to sit down with someone with more history to see if we could reach out to them. Maybe a homebound new ministry. Earl said that is pretty raw data that hasn't been cleaned up in years. We need to add more recent attendees and several who won't be coming back, until Jesus does. We need to look at the listing so we have a more accurate picture of who we really are. Do we offer Christian formation programs - Bible study, Reesie's Christian formation, Sacred Ground, Women's Mystics, now out of pandemic look at other things. Time of day is important to look at and may tie into getting activities out of church. Outreach ministries – feeding program, pet feeding program. Do we have sufficient funds and members to continue – most part self-funded and while graying, not there yet. Is Hedding kitchen and fund raising designed to be more of a community kitchen? Per Earl, that was intent but problem how to coordinate that. Now have solved that and more likely to happen. Linda Webster asked question about self-funding and if there are options to subsidize that. Phil Moros does tell people they can turn in receipts. Church is paying for some breakfasts. We should make that known so won't be a barrier to some people.

Does financial giving meet needs of congregation – yes. We have used investments for capital projects which is common. Financially - least of our worries for now. Can we financially meet the requirement of full-time clergy – No. In the past the diocese spent time getting us use to not having fulltime clergy. Full time clergy is not realistic in today's climate in Central Vermont. Two part time jobs – stretched too much and is not viable. Thinking outside box, how much can we take on to deal with liturgical side of church, like morning prayer and local ministry and rising up local people. We need time to build up lay ministry – 3-5 years to do that is unrealistic to re-tool congregation. Earl said that our rectory is an advantage. Are there other parishes within reasonable distance looking for constellation model? Earl indicated that timing is an issue because churches are calling at a different times. What percentage of active members pledge – 2019 was about 75%. How many members tithe – we don't know. Describe your pledge drive – a few statements and good will; more comfortable for most - people pay 100% of pledge. Different ways get same result. Describe stewardship formation – not much to describe because we don't do it – we should do more, but it has been intermittent – "fluid".

Cindy Cobb sent everyone her notes on community analysis. Cindy will meet next week with Trisha Lewis from Barre Development Group – if she gets more information, she will tell committee. Cindy reviewed information from All in for Barre Group – summarized in notes sent. All in for Barre Group came out of Vermont Council on Rural Development. There was full report dated in December 2021. August of 2021 met with 125 participants who came up with 10 forums- which look like everyone else's – housing, substance abuse, isolation, transportation, aging in Barre, opportunities in face of climate change. Narrowed down to action items: improve river access, developing community center, and housing task force. Challenges and needs in town – housing for all, not just for unhoused but for renters and buyers; economic development – some

new ones but lost some; and isolation-especially in last two years, fewer opportunities to work together as a group to get to know other people; lack of programs for young people and ways to support young families; and substance abuse. Changes in town – looking at 2022, Barre sees itself coming out of this pandemic – new swimming pool, library book club open again, library has activities for children, Barre rec department pulling in grant money – working with 4-H, senior center doing programs again, free movie nights. Pandemic changed everything. Five years ago, we saw people leaving Barre for jobs, retiring away from Vermont, people who became homebound, breakfast program in person, churches still holding harvest dinners, Christmas sales, Scottish tea sale – people were coming together and connecting to other churches - working together- ecumenical services. 10 year ago – churches, neighborhoods, families doing evening meals at Haven which has been in existence since 1986, Barre Ecumenical Presence is important. If someone asked directions to church, could local store personnel give them – maybe. Ask for granite church-then can give directions. What would community miss most if congregation no longer present - meeting space, performance space, ice cream, feeding program, and public witness with vigils.

Marjorie Strong shared additional demographics. Found 2010 housing report. Barre City population in 2010 at 9052 – in 2020 at 8491 (if look at 2022 up a little from 2020). Barre Town population in 2010 at 7924 and 7923 in 2020. Washington County population was 59,534 in 2010, 58,739 in 2020 and 59,399 in 2022. Pandemic did increase population but how long will it stay. Race category – 96,000 in 2010 and 94,000 in 2020 but there was a new category which was white-Hispanic. Black was 0.7% in 2010 and 0.8% in 2020. Asian was 0.8% in 2010 and 0.8% in 2020. Biracial was 1.8% in 2010 and 1.9% in 2020. Demographic about the same in Washington county. Age in Barre City, 2010 to 2020 didn't change much. Biggest change: age 0-9 in 2010 was 11% and in 2020 was 9%; age 10-19 was 13% in 2010 and 14% in 2020. The differences in all categories were not statistically significant. Per AARP magazine – article about living to 100 if in your 60s, one thing was to engage your spiritual side – attending religious services four times per month, linked to 4-14 years of increased life expectancy. Earl stated that is because isolation is issue and faith overcomes that.

Phil Moros asked if we can carry items over to next meeting - yes. Earl wanted to say that there is a lot of stability in the numbers and Good Shepherd mirrors that stability, however we need to make sure that we don't become stagnant with those stable numbers. Earl wanted to thank everyone for doing this and all the important work and attention.

Meeting ended at 7:01 PM with all saying the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Willis

Table 1

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE	42	36	47	43	40	40

TOTAL PLEDGES	29	26	26	31	28	24
AVERAGE FINANCIAL GIVING/PLEDGES	\$1304.41	\$1403.85	\$1403.85	\$1306.45	\$1535.71	\$1676.00
PLEDGES	\$37828.00	\$36500.00	\$36500.00	\$40500.00	\$43000.00	\$40224.00
PLATE/REGULAR SUPPORT	\$16678.00	\$5900.00	\$22000.00	\$10000.00	\$10000.00	
INVESTMENTS/ USED FOR OPERATING	\$8900.00	\$9018.00	\$989.00	\$6571.00	\$7224.00	\$8434.00
BEQUESTS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10000.00	\$2225.00		
OTHER OPERATING INCOME GIFTS	\$2637.00	\$5800.00	\$6690.00	15663.00 ***	\$8353.00	\$19417.00
CASH IN CHECK SAVINGS	13000	86000	17800	17378	17378	11174
VALUE OF TOTAL INVESTMENTS	316000	210000	288784	218000	218000	175000

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	2016	2017	2018	2020		
AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE	35	41	37	34		
TOTAL PLEDGES	35	34	33	25		
AVERAGE FINANCIAL GIVING/PLEDGES	\$1353.26	\$1367.65	\$1268.73	\$1420.48		
PLEDGES	\$47364.00	\$46500.00	\$41868.00	\$35512.00		
PLATE/REGULAR SUPPORT	\$7600.00	\$3700.00	\$6000.00	\$24000.00		

2

1. Does our mission statement accurately reflect our current understanding of ourselves? Why or why not? [L]
SEP
 2. How is the congregation living out our current mission statement? [L]
SEP
 3. What barriers exist that hinder the fulfillment of the stated mission of our [L]
SEP congregation? [L]
SEP
 4. Imagine and share how those barriers might be overcome. [L]
SEP

1. In the past ten years what has happened in your congregation with respect to membership?
 - List your congregation's average Sunday attendance for the past 10 years. [L]
[SEP]
 - List your congregation's financial giving average for the past 10 years? [L]
[SEP]
 - What is the age demographic of the congregation? [L]
[SEP]
5. Do you believe you have sufficient numbers of people, who are active and committed to the work of the congregation, that you are able to meet your mission? [L]
[SEP]
6. Do you offer regular Christian formation programs? [L]
[SEP]
7. What are your current outreach ministries? Do you have sufficient funds and interested [L]
[SEP] members to do the work of outreach? Explain. [L]
[SEP]
8. Does the financial giving of current members meet the needs of the congregation, or do [L]
[SEP] you need to rely on bequests, special gifts, investments and/or loans to pay expenses? [L]
[SEP]
9. Does the current level of financial giving allow us to do anything new or is it merely [L]
[SEP] enough to maintain what we are already doing? Explain. [L]
[SEP]

10. What percentage of the active membership pledges? [L]
[SEP]

11. What is your congregation's average pledge? [L]
[SEP]

12. How many members tithe? [L]
[SEP]

13. Describe your pledge drive. [L]
[SEP]

14. Describe your stewardship formation. [L]
[SEP]

Discernment Committee 2022

Looking at Our Town

Hoping to speak with Tricia Lewis from The Barre Development Group.

Met with Tess Taylor. Phone Conversation with Rev Earl Kooperkamp

Reviewed information from All in For Barre Report and Action Plan 2021 Background:

All in For Barre : Grew out of VT Council on Rural Development Community Visit program

Feb 20, 2020 Steering committee met w community members who represent diverse interests in the community

July 20, 2021 24 local residents met to plan a launch for the Community Visit process

Aug 25 2021 10 brainstorming forums/ 125 participants/

Forum Topics Chosen By the Planning Team

Substance Use Disorder

Aging in Barre

Transportation

Housing and Homelessness

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Opportunities in the face of climate change

Supporting Barre students and families

Recreation Arts and Culture

Addressing empty buildings and downtown vitality

Sept 29, 2021 3 action ideas emerged as key priorities

1.Improve River Access

2. Develop a Barre Community Center

3. Start a Barre Housing Task Force

Full report is on line

My take away: COGS sees the challenges in Barre pretty much the way the initial steering committee did: Substance abuse, supporting families and the aging population, and housing.

Asking:

What challenges/ needs in our town?

1. Housing: For the unhoused population as well as housing inventory for renters, buyers at all levels. Very little inventory. Could the area be creative with a revolving loan fund? Or Change some areas to allow more densely populated neighborhoods,
Housing needs have been recognized by the state (invested 455 million last year to address the homeless crisis).
2. Economic Development: There have been a few new restaurants coming to Barre but industry has been fairly stagnant. Some new retail but lost others
3. Isolation has been a problem especially in the last 2 years. Fewer opportunities to work together to get to know one another. A lack of Moral programs for youth
Young families need support/ things to do
4. The opioid problem and drug use continues to be a problem. 2014 then Gov. Shumlin devoted his State of the state speech to the problem

What changes have you seen in our town in the last year ? in the last 5 years , the last 10 years?

1. 2022

Swimming pool has been rebuilt
Library is holding Book Club again
Library has activities for children of various age groups from Story Hour to chess club, and Leggo Club
Barre Rec Dept offered summer camp programs with the assistance of the 4 H program (these camps are 1 or 2 hours x 5 days in the summer
Free Movie night I think offered by The Barre Partnership Some Senior Center Programs are opening up again

2. 2020- 2021

The pandemic changed so much. Increased isolation, increased societal problems, closed businesses, cut children off from classmates teachers etc.

Church services pivoted to zoom

Breakfast program couldn't be held in person.

People working together on the breakfast program were separated. No Church suppers or other events that had congregation working together.

Bible study went on zoom

3. Five years ago

We saw people leaving Barre for jobs or to retire away from VT. Our congregation numbers dropped off as people moved, died, became homebound COGS had in person breakfast program for homeless and food insecure people Churches held Harvest dinners and/ or Christmas sales/ Scottish Tea

4. Ten years ago and more

Good Samaritan Haven was supported throughout the community with evening meals from various organizations, neighborhoods, churches (since 1986)

Barre Area Clergy had an ecumenical presence with combined summer services, Ecumenical services 1 or more times a year. (With the departure of 2 strong leaders in the past roughly 18 months that lost some of the gusto but it is coming back evidently.)

If someone were to ask directions from a local clerk at a store or gas station to our congregation would the clerk be familiar with or know of the congregation in order to give those directions?

Maybe.

What would your community miss most if your congregation were no longer present?

Meeting spaces (although some groups have opted not to go back to meeting in person.)

Performance space (Rock City plans to restart rehearsals next month)

Ice cream at Barre Heritage days