**Church of the Good Shepherd**

**Barre, VT**

January 25, 2023

The Rev. Canon Susan Ohlidal

Canon for Mission Vitality

The Episcopal Church in Vermont

5 Rock Point Road

Burlington, VT 05408

Dear Canon Susan:

In July 2022, the Church of the Good Shepherd embarked upon a discernment process. We are very excited about the outcome of this experience and appreciate being able to share our plan with you and the Diocesan Congregational Discernment Committee for your suggestions and approval. We identified a variety of ways to improve and grow -- some major, some minor, but all with much caring and investment in supporting the people of Barre. The major issues are those outlined in our plan, requiring ongoing strategizing and effort over the next few years. This process has confirmed our sense of Beloved Community with each other as a congregation and our community at large, along with a strong desire to strengthen and enhance these crucial relationships.

Good Shepherd has been part of the Barre community since 1890. The value of our church is not measured only by our bank account or the number of people in the pews. It is a vital source of spiritual nurturance and day to day sustenance for our congregation and community alike. As our mission statement says: “The Church of the Good Shepherd is a community gathered by God through Jesus Christ to witness to the presence of God in our lives, to teach and to learn the Good News of Jesus Christ, and to care for others in and out of God’s church.” We do this through creating a Beloved Community in and out of our church. We provide sustenance for the people of Barre through a variety of food and clothing initiatives, we have partnered with them to address housing needs, and we model what is at the heart of Beloved Community in supporting those transitioning from prison, those struggling with substance use disorder, economic disparity, and social and racial injustice. We provide fun times for families, a lovely garden for periods of reflection and respite, and public witness with the community during times of grief – all in our desire to support and care for people in and out of God’s church. Homelessness impacts 400 people in Barre (approximately 50 of which are children) and the poverty level overall is 22.7%, 9.9% higher than the national average (Census Data 2020). Our commitment to these populations of Barre is strong. We know we need to grow our church population to continue our investment in this extremely important mission work. Thus, attached you will find our five-to-six-year plan to address our growth in several areas. We ask the Committee’s support and input to help us make this happen, knowing that Barre relies heavily on the spiritual impact and humanitarian efforts of Good Shepherd.

Thank you for the discernment materials provided to assist in our process. We look forward to coordinating with you in pursuing our goals.

Respectfully,

The Discernment Team

Church of the Good Shepherd