

DISCERNMENT PLAN
Church of the Good Shepherd
Barre, VT
November 2022

DRAFT

PROCESS: (A list of discernment activities will be added here when the congregation's approval of the plan is finalized.)

GOAL: To strengthen sustainability and enhance mission vitality of the Church of the Good Shepherd

TIMEFRAME: 3 to 6 years

STEPS:

SUSTAINABILITY

- **GROWTH:** Increase the size and stewardship involvement of the congregation and assess options to increase revenue and decrease expenditures
 - Welcome
 - Upgrade the quality of our Zoom system so it is more user friendly to new and current congregants and explore projecting worship materials for the church service
 - Establish a regular system of greeters for Sunday services as well as other programs held at the church
 - Develop a "buddy system" to help newcomers understand the flow of the worship service
 - Provide childcare during worship services
 - Develop a brochure of programs offered at Good Shepherd, list of contacts, etc. that can be given to people new to the church and help them assess how they might be involved in Good Shepherd offerings
 - Expand our definition of community by reaching beyond Barre to nearby communities that don't have an Episcopal Church (Berlin, Orange, Plainfield, etc.) & support each town to find ways of Beloved Community together through their connection at Good Shepherd

- Program
 - Offer opportunities that address family needs to promote growth of a younger population (partnering with community resources to offer pre-school, childcare, after school programming, vacation Bible School, etc. at the church per rental of space)
 - Visit the Unitarian Universalist Church in Montpelier and the Baptist Church in Websterville who have had great success with growth by family programming and see what we can learn from them
 - Emphasize more holy/feast days with special programming & educate to the beauty of our spiritual traditions and images. Hold services like Blessing of Pets that would be visible to the community like we do on Good Friday
- Finances
 - Explore solar power, heat pumps, increased insulation, weatherization grants, etc. to decrease costs – and demonstrate we are a good role model in creation care for our community
 - Increase rental of our church space
 - Strengthen parishioner education regarding stewardship and bequests
 - Support mission programs as noted in the Mission Vitality Section below that will both serve the community and possibly attract new congregants
- CLERGY: Work toward securing and sustaining a full-time clergy
 - Complete financial projections & research the process for securing full-time clergy
 - Research opportunities for federal student loan forgiveness to facilitate securing a full-time clergy as a professional serving a rural, non-profit community entity for a designated amount of time
 - Upgrade the Rectory to be a point of attraction to an incoming priest
 - Explore options for constellation with the Diocese as an interim measure upon the retirement of the Rev. Kooperkamp, if needed
- COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY: Enhance community understanding of who we are at Good Shepherd and how we serve the community
 - Strengthen our website to communicate more about who we are & what we offer
 - Clarify our values as a church to emphasize an inclusive message that “All are welcome at Good Shepherd,” dispelling any concerns that we might be elitist or part of the negative extremist religious segment in our country
 - Conduct Community Service Days to actively meet an identified need in our community
 - Continue participation in the Barre Heritage Festival

- Increase church visibility & hospitality by holding some regularly scheduled events like concerts, movie nights, church suppers, bake sales, pie days, seasonal events, etc. to promote a good connection with Good Shepherd
 - Use our new organ to offer organ lessons for children and adults
- LAY LEADERSHIP: Engage members of the congregation to take on specific areas of leadership within the church, emphasizing a stronger sense of ownership within Good Shepherd and the broader church overall
 - Support individuals who are interested in becoming a Deacon
 - Increase number of acolytes
 - Utilize Diocesan opportunities for education & spiritual formation of Lay Leaders to strengthen leadership skills
 - Establish training program for church volunteers re: mission projects, coffee hour, etc.
 - Create a parishioner-led pastoral care team to respond to parishioners in times of need
 - Increase opportunities for fellowship activities to strengthen parishioner connections, i.e., luncheons, craft groups, holiday gifts for charity, etc. to reduce isolation & engender a sense of belonging & leadership in the parish
 - Partner with other nearby Episcopal churches for shared spiritual formation programming

MISSION VITALITY

- CONTINUE CURRENT MISSION PROJECTS:
 - Breakfasts twice a week through Enough Ministries for those facing food insecurity
 - Dinner meal for The Good Samaritan Haven once a month
 - Worship service & lunch for residents of The Hilltop (temporary housing for the homeless) once a month
 - Support of Vermont Interfaith Action's housing initiatives for the homeless & affordable housing in general, lobbying action for Proposition 2 Constitutional revision to eliminate all exceptions regarding slavery, and other matters of social justice overall
 - Participation on the Creative Housing Solutions Task Force to address more affordable housing in the Barre area
 - Support of those parishioners participating in community programs such as Rock City Choral Group whose proceeds go to various designated charities, Restorative Justice programming and Circles of Support and Accountability for those transitioning from prison, Camp Agape for children of incarcerated parents, and Pet Food Pantry which provides food for dogs & cats of the homeless

- DEVELOP NEW MISSION OPPORTUNITIES:
 - Establish breakfast programs directly at Good Shepherd for those experiencing food insecurity
 - Establish a support program for those who are addressing addiction
 - Initiate Service Days in the Community aimed at special needs of identified populations, i.e., yard care for seniors & homebound, help with Habitat for Humanity program, upkeep needs at the Haven, etc.
 - Explore creation care programs and opportunities to worship at Mission Farm
 - Conduct periodic plate offerings for Episcopal Relief Fund & various local charities, highlighted on related spiritual Feast Days
 - Develop outreach to parishioners who are homebound or otherwise unable to attend church
 - Partner with community resources to provide program for parishioners who need assistance dealing with hardships from the pandemic
 - Partner with other nearby Episcopal churches for shared mission projects

Note: The Discernment Team will also outline for the Diocese a plan to set timelines for each task once the plan is approved. This will include designated leaders, model for evaluating progress, support we need from the Diocese, and a schedule of communication updates for the congregation, Vestry, and Diocese throughout implementation of the plan. Please let us know if you have any thoughts about any of these areas.