

DISCERNMENT TEAM MINUTES  
Church of the Good Shepherd  
Barre, VT  
November 7, 2022

Those in Attendance: Phil Moros, Felicia Martineau, Cindy Cobb, Amy Eschelbach, Marjorie Strong, and Linda Webster

AGENDA

- Opening
  - The meeting was brought to order by Phil Moros at 5:30 pm with Felicia Martineau reading the Good Shepherd Mission Statement. Linda Webster agreed to take minutes.
  
- Approval of Minutes
  - Corrected Minutes from the October 11, 2022 meeting were approved by the team per motion of Marjorie Strong and a second by Cindy Cobb.
  
  - Minutes from the October 25, 2022 meeting were approved by the team per motion of Amy Eschelbach and a second by Marjorie Strong.
  
- Review of the Updated Discernment Plan Draft from October 25, 2022 (Attached)
  - To update the group, Felicia reviewed an excerpt from the Bishop's recent Letter of Appeal which described constellation happenings in the Diocese.
  - Change made to the October 25 Discernment Plan draft on page 3 under Lay Leadership, item 1 – changing “our Deacon” to “a Deacon”
  - Item added under Lay Leadership: “Create a parishioner-led pastoral care team to respond to parishioners in times of need”
  - Phil will review the Final Draft of the Discernment Plan with the congregation on December 4, 2022 during the church service. The congregation will be advised of such via weekly church announcements and newsletter and encouraged to read the plan in preparation for the upcoming discussion. The Final Draft of the plan will be available on the church website by November 28, 2022.
  - Phil will also lay some groundwork at the church's Pledge Sunday Gathering, November 13, 2022, introducing the importance of everyone's stewardship needed in investment of funds, time, & talent to make the wishes of the congregation (as outlined in the Discernment Plan) work.

- Anticipated Support Needed from the Diocese to Implement Our Discernment Plan
  - Grants to support mission outreach
  - Programming for training lay leaders
  - Support in exploring student loan forgiveness to attract priest candidates
  - Regular updates from the Committee on Congregational Development & Formation
  - Guidance from the Diocesan Congregational Discernment Committee (DCDC) as questions may arise during implementation of our plan
  - Support as we explore local and state grant opportunities – Marjorie Strong offered to research possible options
  - Coordination with the Diocesan Clergy Recruiter as needed
  
- Model for Evaluating Progress during Discernment Plan Implementation
  - Spreadsheet format outlining
    - Goal
    - Overall timeframe
    - Subsequent tasks
    - Timeline for each task
    - Designated leaders
    - Status of cost factors
    - Checkpoints & plan if not meeting specified timelines
    - Timeline for reporting to the Vestry
  - Marjorie Strong will provide a general spreadsheet format as an attachment to the Discernment Plan when presented to the Diocese. The spreadsheet will be completed and implemented once approval of the plan is received from the Diocese.
  
- Communication Process for Updating the Vestry, Congregation, and Diocese regarding Plan Implementation/Progress
  - Leaders will be designated for specific sections of the plan. Each leader will be responsible to provide progress reports to the Vestry quarterly until task is completed. The leader may request an earlier meeting if Vestry support is needed.
  - Vestry minutes will be posted on the church website so the congregation will have the plan update information available for their review.
  - Status of the Discernment Plan Evaluation will be reviewed with the Diocese (DCDC) annually or earlier if needed.

- Other Discussion

- Marjorie Strong noted the option of learning from Bethel Episcopal Church as they have a strong lay leadership focus. They are also interested in mission outreach similar to our focus. She will see if connecting with some of their leaders would be possible.

- Adjournment

- Phil Moros adjourned the meeting at 7:35 pm. The next meeting of the team will be held on December 6, 2022 following presentation to the congregation on December 4, 2022. The goal will be to make any changes to the final draft per input from the congregation and review the Process, Evaluation, Communication, and Diocesan Support sections so the plan can be finalized.
- Decision will be made at this meeting as to how and when the plan will be submitted to the Diocese for approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Webster

DISCERNMENT PLAN  
Church of the Good Shepherd  
Barre, VT  
Updated October 25, 2022

**DRAFT**

**PROCESS:** (Initial methodology outline will be added here when the process is complete)

**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 to 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

- Support mission programs as noted in the Mission Vitality Section below that will both serve the community and possibly attract new congregants
- 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

- 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
- Explore options for constellation with the Diocese as an interim measure upon the retirement of the Rev. Kooperkamp, if needed
- Upgrade the Rectory to be a point of attraction to an incoming priest

- 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
- Outline the church’s information and program opportunities on our website so the community can be informed
- Conduct Community Service Days to actively meet an identified need in our community
- Continue support of the Barre Heritage Festival by offering free ice cream for participants during the annual community celebration
- 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 to 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 our 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.
  - 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 for 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 for 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 issues.

- 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 might need assistance dealing with hardships from the pandemic
- [Partner](#) with other nearby Episcopal churches for joint mission projects