

**Discernment Team Minutes
Church of the Good Shepherd
October 25, 2022**

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

Opening Prayer

The meeting started at 5:30 pm with the Prayer of Discernment being read by Phil Moros. Linda Webster agreed to be the scribe for the meeting given the excused absence of Cindy Willis.

Review of Minutes: The minutes required one correction – changing the name of Sue Ryan to Sue Lyons (Page 1, item 2 under Follow-Up of Individual Parishioners). Correction is reflected in the attached minutes for approval.

Agenda

The team reviewed the Draft outline of the Discernment Plan for Good Shepherd as determined per our discussion at the last meeting on October 11, 2022. The Outline is attached and includes all points of input from the congregation discernment meetings and follow-up individual interviews.

Below are the contents of the updated outline with changes noted in blue per discussion at this meeting. Items dropped are listed at the end with points of explanation.

DISCERNMENT PLAN

DRAFT

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

NOTE: The following items were dropped from the last draft. Explanations are provided.

- Growth: Support older parishioners who have indicated a strong legacy with the church and desire to be responsible in building a younger congregation to ensure the well-being of Good Shepherd going forward. Mobilize this investment to enhance congregational energy & breadth of leadership (Determined that investment of all parishioners is needed so singling out a section of the parish was not needed).
- Clergy: Assess the option of having Linda Moore continue with us when Rev. Kooperkamp retires, giving her time to gain experience with the Diocese in the interim (This is not something we as a parish can deem to happen. It is a joint decision between the parish, Rev. Moore, and the Diocese. There is a process that must be followed when calling a potential priest. It would be particularly

difficult to look at Rev. Moore's waiting for 3 or more years until Rev. Kooperkamp's retirement takes place.)

- Clergy: Have the current clergy in place train the incoming priest with overlap of 3-4 months to both assist the incoming priest with the transition as well as help the congregation develop confidence in the incoming priest. (This is not a decision made at the church level. There are Diocesan policies to be followed. We can have input but not final say).
- Mission: Lunches for the homeless & food-insecure ----- times a week through Enough Ministries (This need is already being met in other ways so we shouldn't duplicate services.)

Next Meeting

Plan for the next meeting is to finalize the above draft of the plan and formulate the plan for Evaluation, Communication, and Items requiring Assistance from the Diocese. The team felt that the sample spreadsheet presented by Marjorie Strong (attached) was a good format to utilize for the evaluation component. Marjorie will explore options for such a spreadsheet set-up once we determine details of our evaluation plan. Minutes and updated draft of the Discernment Plan will be sent to team members by Linda Webster for their review in preparation for the next meeting on November 7, 2022 at 5:30 pm.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Phil Moros at 7:50pm following the team joining in the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Webster