

**Senior Warden Report
Church of the Good Shepherd
Annual Meeting
January 21, 2024**

Last year – 2023 – was certainly a momentous year in the life of Good Shepherd. I felt proud to be part of it all with you as your Senior Warden. Last week you heard me describe the four-page list of activities that you participated in as a church body, outlining a wide array of involvement as we implemented year one of our Discernment Plan – Becoming Beloved Community. This included responding to our community’s needs as Barre was impacted so harshly by the July flood. I will let you reference the list for the many details but want to highlight a few of our overall accomplishments which set the tone of who we are at Good Shepherd. In caring for our local community, Good Shepherd stood out as a leader in flood response – being a respite & resource center, providing water, food, & critical supplies, taking a hands-on approach in cleanup activities throughout the area, opening our church to groups who has been displaced by the flood, and leading the way for long term planning through strong fundraising and participation in Barre Up, clearly sending a strong message of loving our neighbors as Jesus would have us do in following His teachings. Messages of appreciation have come from our city leaders, fellow churches, and people who personally felt touched by our caring approach such as providing Christmas Decorations for those who lost all of theirs in the flood -- All part of Becoming Beloved Community!

In response to your feedback last year, we expanded our food assistance & pet support programs, we raised almost \$10,000 for mission outreach for both local programs in need such as Good Samaritan Haven and Rainbow Bridge, as well as

areas across the world in crisis – Turkey, Syria, Ukraine, and Jerusalem. We also supported our local food pantries with supplies. We have grown as a church, both in number and stewardship. We have a number of children with us now each Sunday and we have begun to look at new ways to include them in life at Good Shepherd. This coming year, we will look at a more formalized Sunday School offering and continue programming for families such as our Diaper program, Pumpkin Carving event, and Holiday Babysitting for parents. We are also caring for each other with fun coffee hours in our lovely garden, fellowship events, and outreach to parishioners in times of need with cards, food, and visitation. You will also hear more about plans for a church directory later in this meeting. Our Vestry and Junior Warden have been hard at work to ensure the overall wellbeing of Good Shepherd and its physical plant and we look to address creation care issues in the process. We have also established a Finance Committee to prepare for long term funding needs. The same thread of loving of our neighbors is demonstrated within our church as well as in our community.

Our worship experiences have taken on many new elements to emphasize our love of God and thanksgiving for the many blessings for each of us and Good Shepherd overall. Our new organ brings such vitality to our services along with new choral and instrumental offerings. We have joined with fellow Episcopal & other inter-faith churches for worship, along with demonstrating our faith in the community with the procession throughout downtown Barre on Good Friday and Blessing of the Animals in City Park on St. Francis Day. And this year, we definitely added a new experience where Rev. Kooperkamp was asked to bless the Motorcycle Ride for Breast Cancer. It was truly amazing to see how touched the

riders were to have this blessing as part of their event. Again, more and more connection with our community!!

Good Shepherd was strong in advocacy through Vermont Interfaith Action and the Poor People's Campaign and leading an effort to end Gun Violence through a letter to our state and federal leaders along with the support of our Diocesan Convention. We addressed affordable housing and housing for all, including a phone campaign which stopped the eviction of the unhoused at the end of the hotel-motel shelter program. We took a stand in encouraging communities to be welcoming of all Vermonters through the Declaration of Inclusion. Again, caring for all of our neighbors.

We will carry this theme of loving our neighbors and striving for Becoming Beloved Community into 2024. As you know, we will be visiting with all of you in our upcoming Congregational Meetings to hear your ideas of how to move forward more specifically in 2024. After hearing the many reports today as to where we are at Good Shepherd in response to God's call to us, we want to hear from everyone, so we have a unified direction in continuing our work for our community, our church, and each other. Sign-Up sheets for the meetings are available today. Thank you again to everyone for such strong investment in carrying forward our message & active example of working to become Beloved Community.