

The following is a summary of things for Council to know. This is for your information only. There are no actions or decisions from council.

- I. Opening Reflection
- II. Faith Formation and Family Ministries thoughts and questions
- III. Calendar and Communications (Update)
- IV. Other updates and things to know

## I. Opening Reflection

Therefore, sisters and brothers,  
since the invitation of Jesus makes us confident to enter the holy place by the new and living path opened for us through the veil—that is to say, the body of Jesus—  
and since we have the supreme high priest presiding over the house of God,  
let us enter it filled with faith, integrity, and sincerity in our hearts, our hearts sprinkled and cleared from any trace of bad conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.  
Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the One who made the promise is faithful.  
Let us always think how we can provoke each other to love and good works.  
Don't stay away from worship and gatherings of the community, as some do, but encourage one another; and do this all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

- *Hebrews 10:20-25 The Inclusive Bible*

“To journey without being changed is to be a nomad. To change without journeying is to be a chameleon. To journey and be transformed by the journey is to be a pilgrim.”

—Mark Nepo. *The Book of Awakening*

As we begin a new year of ministry in which many boards and committees have new leaders and new members, I believe it is helpful to ground ourselves in the simple wisdom from Bruce Tuckman's “Developmental Sequence of Small Groups.”

Tuckman observed that healthy groups move through five stages: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, Adjourning. Each time the makeup of a group changes the groups begin the journey again. For over 50 years, Tuckman's stages have provided helpful insights in forming strong, healthy teams; and explained why some groups become “WOW groups” and others struggle along.

The following two pages provide a summary of Tuckman's stages. It is provided to help ground us in our work as council, on boards, groups, teams, and task forces.

1. Forming: The process of coming together as a new group, which occurs each time there is a change in the makeup of the group.

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- a. For a new group this is obvious, for existing groups, it is often overlooked and make it difficult for new members to enter in – and for long time members to work effectively with new leaders.
- b. High functioning teams make time to “regroup” by clarifying and adapting team goals, purpose, and guiding principles; and individual roles and expectations/responsibilities.
2. Storming: This is the most critical and difficult stage. It has to do with how we function within the team and how the team works through differences, addresses questions, and handles conflict.
  - a. Communication is important, as are the items high functioning teams address in stage 1. Assuming “everyone knows” or skipping past the items, complicate how teams work through challenges.
  - b. Existing groups are at a disadvantage as they often assume a great deal and see to regrouping and regrouping as a waste of time. It makes “learning the ropes” difficult and a joining the system a test of fortitude and grace.
  - c. High functioning teams make time to check in, space to listen with one another, welcome constructive criticism, and reflect on group process, e.g., what are we doing well, what might we do differently, what should we no longer do.
  - d. Many teams try to skip this step, suppressing questions, challenges, and conflict.
  - e. In my experience, most conflict can be traced to 1) a lack of shared understanding of goals, guiding principles, roles, policies, practices; and/or 2) lack of opportunity for an individual to share their gifts, ideas, questions and concerns in a meaningful way. The Storming phase is complicated when a culture of conflict avoidance is the norm; when groups, leaders, and/or individuals personalize challenges; when space and time are not made to clarify and communicate what is and is not working; and when goals, principles, roles and responsibilities, policies and practices are not documented and/or shared. (Note the structure of the *Community Framework template*).
3. Norming: Constructive conflict in groups, life and relationships lead to clarification and a healthier way to be in relationship with one another. Norming, as implied, is the stage in which the group refines and adapts processes, policies, and practices such that the individuals can work well together to achieve a shared purpose.
  - a. Healthier groups make time and space to listen, adapt, adjust, and document goals, purpose, expectations, etc.
  - b. Less productive and challenging groups/ teams assume what was is sufficient; gloss over differences; fail to form a shared/team identity and purpose; agree publicly to adaptations, while disagreeing and resisting individually; and/or fail to apply/internalize agreed to group purpose, policies, practices, etc.
  - c. In my experience, alignment (rather than agreement) and true consensus (rather than fiat and votes) are the hallmarks of groups working to adapt norms that respect, celebrate, and work for all its members.
4. Performing: Positive energy, a sense of purpose, alignment, and cohesion characterize this stage. When conflicts, crisis, and differences emerge – and they will – the shared

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sense of purpose and principles ground the group to address them in healthy and constructive ways.

- a. Healthier groups reap the benefits of intentional reflection, review, and adaptation. Challenges may demand attention, however focus and morale often remains high despite challenges – and sometimes can be enhanced as the group moves in concert to address them.
  - b. In my experience, a critical difference between healthier and unhealthier groups can be found in what is driving the impulse to perform as a group: inspiration or motivation? Inspiration is positive, hope filled and joy full. Motivation is based in fear, loss, and negativity.
5. Adjourning: Tuckman added the fifth stage to acknowledge the helpful ritualization of membership and leader transitions, as well as the way a group marks the occasion of completing its purpose.
- a. Healthy groups make time and space to ritualize endings and beginnings. They celebrate as well as mourn the completion of the groups purpose, reason for being, and shift in membership.

## II. Faith Formation and Family Ministries

Life-Long Learning, a.k.a. Faith Formation, includes the Tuesday Bible Study, Five Loaves book groups related to Outreach and February's Worship them, as well as a monthly activity/event for families and twice monthly zoom times with the pastor, children, youth and families.

We budgeted for a coordinator. We need to clarify who will be accountable, responsible, and consulted as part of the process. It makes sense to follow a similar approach that we followed for the Music Director. We do not have an active/functioning Faith Formation Committee. We need to give this focus. Who will work with/meet with pastor to move this forward?

## III. Calendar and Communications

Jess is in Tues and Thurs morning. You can email [Office@FirstChurchWoodstock.org](mailto:Office@FirstChurchWoodstock.org)

The following chart to help coordinate the many communications in the coming weeks.

What	When	Where/Who
Weekly Email	Monday end of day	Send to Jessica
Bulletin Items	Sunday prior	Send to Pastor, Announcements to Jessica
Sunday Worship (items that alter the flow of worship)	No less than Sunday three weeks prior	Speak with Pastor, Leilani / Maria for Music
March- April Share	Thur Feb 17	Send to Jessica
May – June Share	Tues Apr 19	Send to Jessica
July – Aug Share	Tues Jun 21	Send to Jessica

Sept – Oct Share	Mon Aug 22	Send to Jessica
Nov – Dec Share	Tues Oct 18	Send to Jessica

## IV. Updates

### Worship

In Person worship resumes Feb 20<sup>th</sup>. As anticipated, the Covid Surge has abated and the risk level in Windham County is no longer severe. As of Feb 7, the infection rates have fallen to the same level they were at the beginning of December.

Feb 20 and 27 we will continue with the series Bread for the Journey, which is a prelude to the book study 5 Loaves, 2 Fishes and 12 Volunteers.

March 5 is Ash Wednesday. We will hold a joint service with Good Shepherd and East at 7pm First Congregational. It will be reflective, based on pilgrimage, at feature music from the three congregations, as well as the imposition of ashes and communion. I am meeting tomorrow with Pastors Sue and Alice to finalize details.

During Lent worship will explore values. It is a way to introduce the Vision and Values initiative and probe the spiritual, relational, and practical dimensions of values: what they are and why they matter.

Creative Worship Team now meeting monthly 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday 9-10am  
Music Leadership (Maria, Leilani, and I) meet every other Monday at 4pm

### Lifelong Learning/faith formation

Book study sponsored by outreach will begin in the coming weeks. Five Loaves, Two Fishes, Twelve Volunteers. We have invited the author to a conversation the afternoon of March 27. Register to participate and/or facilitate <https://tinyurl.com/5loavesBookStudy>

Family Ministries monthly activities being coordinated by Paula. With an intergenerational environment-focused worship service being planned for April 24 (Sunday after Easter and Earth Day weekend). Trying to also coordinate monthly virtual conversations with youth, children, families, and pastor.

Jan 30 2<sup>nd</sup> Hour Conversation with Rev. Emma Brewer-Wallin was insightful, enriching, and hope filled.

#### Big challenges and realities:

- Many feel overwhelmed and hopeless about how big the challenges are with the climate, the world, our country, racism, poverty, etc.

#### Big question:

- How can we act together?

#### Big ideas:

- Mentor and encourage each other to do what we can, where we are, with the gifts we have.
- Inspire and support young people

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- Look to our heroes, a la Fred Rogers
- Become familiar with Poor People's Campaign five interlocking evils
- Engage and participate in upcoming conversations about restructuring (simplify to focus more on mission and ministry) and Vision and values (clarify collective priorities and mobilize around small number of areas where we have energy)
- Share power with others and in groups; create ministries around key areas of justice and climate action so others beyond committee members can connect, belong, have impact
- Name intentions as to not feel so overwhelmed
- Worship series and/or group studies on hope, nonviolent communication/resistance,
- Look at SNEUCC Green church levels, what level are we at today? How might we go to the next level?
- Electric Car show and tell?
- Car Charging station at church?

### **Restructuring**

First meeting next week. Google Drive created and resources from others posted and shared with team. Will begin by creating charter, i.e., creating a statement of our share understanding of our charge, guiding principles, key activities, and roles.

### **Vision and Values**

First meeting next week. Google Drive created and resources and examples from others posted and shared with team. And surprise! We will begin by creating charter, i.e., creating a statement of our share understanding of our charge, guiding principles, key activities, and roles.