

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. Upcoming Events and Calendar
- II. Updates
- III. Reflection from 18month review
- IV. Church Size Theory

I. Upcoming Events and Calendar

A reminder that the May/June Share will be sent out the week of April 25. Please submit articles to Jessica by Tuesday April 19.

A list of upcoming special services and events include the following:

- April 10, 10am Palm Sunday
- April 14, 7pm Maundy Thursday
- April 15, 8pm – April 15 3pm Easter Vigil
- April 17, 6am Ecumenical Sunrise Service behind Woodstock Academy
 - 10am Easter Celebration
 - 11:30am Easter Egg Hunt
- April 24, 10am, Intergenerational Earth Day Worship
- May 14, 1pm Memorial for David Teed
- May 21, 1pm Memorial for Paul Stanton
- May 28, time TBD, Memorial for Linda Chase

In July and August we will continue the traditional of worshipping jointly with East Woodstock from July 3 – September 4. July worship will be held in First Church and August – September 4 at East. Pastor Sue will be away for two weeks in July and I have agreed to preach then, and in turn Pastor Sue will preach one Sunday in August and September 4.

In addition, for the two weeks following Easter, Pastor Sue will be away and I have agreed to be “on call” and available to East should there be a pastoral emergency.

II. Updates

Worship

Following Earth Day worship, our worship series will focus on hope. Specifically, how we find hope and remain hopeful, despite challenges, uncertainties, and disappointments. Based in the insights from the 2nd Hour Conversation the end of January and the Creative Worship Team, the series will also look at what other faith traditions might have to say about hope.

I would welcome individuals who feel inspired and might consider offering a faith story or reflection one Sunday on this theme. Or would consider offering a story/reflection in the fall.

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Creative Worship Team continues to meet monthly 2nd Saturday 9-10am. In April, we will review feedback on our vision for worship, what makes worship worshipful.

Music Leadership (Maria, Leilani, and I) meet every other Monday at 4pm

Supporting Students at Woodstock Academy

A great deal has happened in the short time since Woodstock Academy first approached us to assist in supporting the students coming from the Ukraine.

- I and members of Outreach met with staff from the academy to better understand their needs.
- Paula has expressed a desire to help coordinate and has arranged with a local artist who has created a design we can use on T-shirts, the web, etc.
- I briefed the Windham Association earlier this morning.

The following is a quick summary of what is happening with the Ukrainian students are at/coming to Woodstock Academy and ways our congregations can participate in coordinating community resources in support of the students.

We are still in the early days and needs continue to emerge as students arrive and Woodstock Academy staff better understand each student's circumstances. To summarize:

- Woodstock Academy have agents in Europe who help recruit international students
- As the refugee situation worsened, Academy used their agents to help get the word out that they were willing to bring students to Woodstock to complete the year and/or their high school education
- Initially they planned on 7 or 8 students, they are in conversation with 12 – 15 students, of which 2 have arrived, 2 are arriving this week, and others will follow later this month or in May.
- Visa interviews are the hold up, and they are speaking with Sen. Blumenthal to try to accelerate this.
- The Academy will cover housing, food, tuition for the students and established a "Displaced Students Fund" to cover other incidental expenses, e.g., clothing, bedding, medical expenses, trips, etc.
- Because of our shared history, location and relationships, the Academy reached out to us to help identify potential resource and begin coordinating support for the students, allowing the Academy to focus on getting the students here and supporting them as they arrive.

There are several activities that we are beginning to organize around.

- a. Identifying and communicating with supportive congregations, community organizations and potential volunteers
- b. Securing housing for students when the academy is closed (and for student family members): The Academy has training for potential hosts. Ideally, they are looking for families who can take in two students.

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- c. Organizing Community/Social Activities: Community events that express support for the students and celebrate the culture, and during the summer field trips or other kinds of activities to help small groups of the students enjoy the summer and explore the area.
- d. Planning community fund raising events: Fund raising seems to be going well, so the need is less on money and more about encouraging community support and helping to make the support less cumbersome and time consuming
- e. Getting the word out when there is an urgent and/or emerging need
- f. Facilitating/organizing meetings of volunteers for training, protocols, etc.

We created a form and a page on our website that lists current needs and invites people to share their interest in assisting.

The URL for the information page, which has links to the intake form and the Academy's giving page is:

<http://firstchurchwoodstock.org/supporting-ukrainian-students/>

The URL for the intake form is: <https://tinyurl.com/HelpWAUkrainianStudents>

Current thinking is to form a Steering Committee, who will occasionally meet with the Academy and coordinate the activities listed above. Planning community events and fund raisers may be best handled by a sub team, while other items might be addressed by members of the Steering Committee and/or a volunteer or two.

Congregations and Volunteers can:

- a. Help communicate the needs and upcoming events
- b. Share the link to the info page URL and/or the URL to the form
- c. Point potential volunteers/resources to the intake form
- d. Participate in the leadership team and/or a sub-team to coordinate activities, communicate with resources, plan the events, etc.

III. Reflection from 18-month review

As part of my third, six-month evaluation, I was asked "How as a congregation could we support you better?"

Here is how I responded.

Be conversation partners and co-creators of our future

- Be curious.
- Clarify the purpose, shared expectations, guiding principles, roles, goals, etc. of leaders, council, boards, committees, teams, and pastor.

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- Offer constructive criticism and options and alternatives such that we work together to address our challenges and innovate in the moment.
- Read, reflect, and engage with the communications, i.e., weekly email, bi-monthly share, reports from council on the website.
- Honor the processes, responsibilities, tools and emerging teams and shifting model for ministry, e.g., Worship Google Drive, creative worship team, etc.
- Be respectful of time

Acknowledge and Work together to Engage Grief, Loss and Change.

- Be realistic about where things are; the additional effort needed as we try to re-emerge post-Covid and still adjust to ongoing Covid-waves; and express grace and understanding as we move into more in-person forms of programing.
- Be proactive and positive in communications, and deal directly with the person or team responsible for the related area in the life of the congregation and encourage others to do likewise.
- Reflect on challenges, learn from the past, and work together to encourage and model healthy processes and boundaries.
- As applicable, work with the pastor to identify positive, healthy ways to let go of grief, loss and/or changes in the shape, structure, staffing, and size of the ministry.

Help Deepen and broaden Connection

- Take the initiative to meet with the pastor to share how you are doing, what you might need, share your story, observations, etc.
- Proactively introduce me to inactive congregants and people in the community.
- Include and connect with people beyond the known longtime members of the congregation.

IV. Church Size Theory

As we begin to explore our structure, one of the helpful bits of wisdom that we will be referencing is called Church Size Theory.

Church size theory simply boils down to this: what it takes for individuals, leaders, and the pastor to nurture healthy, loving and just relationships will differ as the size of a congregation grows and declines. This has everything to do with nurturing quality relational connectedness, communications, and how decisions get made.

Healthy, vibrant churches intentionally reflect size - their current and anticipated size - in the way they structure their ministry, teams, expectations, roles and responsibilities of leaders, pastors, and congregants. People who research Church Size have found that many churches run into trouble when their structure and/or expectations are misaligned with their size.

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Church Size affects the role of leaders, boards, pastors, as well as our worship, ministry activities, programs, and facilities.

By the numbers:

Family Church < 50

- Pastor's primary role is to administer the sacrament and provide pastoral care to the "family"
- Decision making authority rests with a small number of influential persons, who may not have any official/elected role. However, things are done and undone based on their preferences.
- It is hard for newcomers to break in, people who have been around for a decade are still considered "new."

Pastor-centered Church 50 – 150

- Pastor is the hub of the wheel, who is the coordinator of activities, helping to channel passions of the people and focus the energy of the congregation.
- Decision making authority for fiduciary governance related to, but separated from operational and programmatic decisions

Program size church 150-350

- Pastor's primary emphases shifts from interpersonal relationships to planning, recruiting, training, supervising and evaluating—from creating and nurturing personal relationships to creating and nurturing leaders who can sustain successful programs
- Decision making vested in leaders of boards and programs

Corporate Church 350-750

- Pastor's role focuses narrowly on the activities where their influence will have the greatest impact: worship planning and sermon preparation, visioning, developing a high functioning staff and working with the governing board.
- Pastor focuses on relationship building external to the congregation to generate and sustain the energy and momentum for the church constantly to be moving forward
- Decisions often reflect culture and personality of key leader or leadership team and may be top-down, matrixed, collaborative.
- Policies, plans, budgets become tools to manage the organization/institution.

Different pastors have different gifts, skills and callings that map to one or more sizes and size transitions. Shifts in size necessitate shifts in expectations as well as culture. Frustration and conflict often arise when there is an expectations mismatch.

Additional Resources

One Size Doesn't Fit All by Gary L. McIntosh, Fleming H. Revell

Size Transitions in Congregations by Beth Ann Gaede, editor, The Alban Institute