

## Ministry Update Report February 2024

### A. Upcoming Activities and Dates

Feb 22	1:30	John Elliott 350 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning
Feb 24	10-noon	Windham Association Church Collaboration Meeting
Feb 25		Baptism Isabelle Rose Soucy
Feb 26	7p	Ministry Leaders Meeting via google meets
Mar 28	7p	Maundy Thursday
Mar 31	6a	Easter Sunrise
Apr 21		Earth Day Worship
tbd		Offsite all church vision retreat at Crystal Pond (May or June)
Jun 21	9-4p	SNEUCC Annual Meeting UMASS Amherst

I will be unavailable Saturdays January 9 – May 11.

### B. Webinars and Training

Feb 28	7:30p	Vision, GB, FCCW	SNEUCC <a href="#">Rebirth and Renewal</a> - reimagine ministry and engage new people
Feb 27	2-3p	Vision, GB, Property	PRC: <a href="#">Well Done: A Good and Faithful Path to Church Closure</a>
Feb 29	2-3p	Vision, GB, FCCW	PRC <a href="#">Does your church's culture impede creativity and change?</a>
Mar 9	9-4p	Everyone	Super Saturday in Southbridge
Mar 21	12-1p	Vision, GB, Property	SNEUCC <a href="#">Losing Our Building; Finding Our Soul</a>
Mar 23	8:30-12:30p	Anyone new to UCC	<a href="#">Exploring the UCC</a>
Apr 4	12-1p	Green Team	SNEUCC: (re)Introducing the <a href="#">Green Congregation Challenge</a>

### C. Ministry Update

We (Bruce Staehle and I) have invited all ministry leaders to participate in a Google Meet on Monday Feb 26. The purpose of the meeting will be to a) introduce the idea of a highlighting ministries and teams in worship, a.k.a. Ministry Moment, b) encourage each ministry/team to create a 1 minute video about the ministry, c) begin the process of creating/updating the website to reflect our current teams and ministry opportunities, d) briefly review Google Workspace, communications guidelines, and other tools, e) identify other questions and topics for discussion.

Following the meeting we will summarize the key points, questions, etc. We will then share the notes with all the ministries and teams, as we know some will not be able to make the meeting.

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### 1. Faith Formation

We continue to struggle with engaging our families as well as our young people. What seems to work are service oriented activities in which the youth feel that they have a purpose.

In February Debby Kirk organized a highly successful activity. Others are planning similar activities as well.

We have ordered and are beginning to distribute materials to supply our families with resources to use at home.

In addition, we created a position description for a job that is focused on coordination and communication with families and volunteers but does not bring the programing responsibilities. The thinking was that in the interim period having someone take care of these communications would alleviate volunteers and the pastor.

#### Objectives:

Connect, communicate, and coordinate with families and volunteers in the Children & Family/Youth Ministries.

Assist families and volunteers by curating, preparing, printing, and emailing materials of interest to support the ministry activities.

#### Responsibilities:

- Interact with families and volunteers on a regular basis to build relationships, encourage participation, and better understand interests and needs.
- Maintaining a current list of families and children contact information, interests, etc.
- Maintaining the roster of volunteers
- Emailing, printing, and/or posting materials for families to use at home or for volunteers to prepare for upcoming program
- Sending periodic communications and reminders about upcoming activities
- Creating informative, fun, and welcoming signs, bulletin board displays, and other items to promote the ministry, showcase children's work, and generally make our space kid friendly.
- Assisting leaders in rethinking the content and display to the pray-ground.
- Organizing topic/seasonal activity packs for children and youth to use during worship.
- Supporting the Ministry leaders with other coordination and communication related activities.

#### Goals:

- Engaged, excited, and informed families
- Informed volunteers.
- A joyful, kid-friendly environments and displays

We will begin with 4 hours a week on a three-month trial basis beginning in February.

The first Labyrinth conversation will occur the first week of March. This first conversation is organizational and will be limited to FCCW congregants.

## 2. Faith In Action

A couple of additional people signed up for the Green Team, DoJustice, and/or LoveYourNeighbor Google Groups. More promotion and clarification of what the groups are and how they are meant to work is likely needed, perhaps as part of the Ministry Minutes.

In the meantime, the watch word is focus. And for this year it means focusing on the Seniors Ministry and the Loneliness Initiative.

## 3. Care Ministry and the Deacons

The Care Ministry continues to function as it has, with many informal activities happening. Volunteers have resisted organized efforts and training. Therefore, we will experiment with one or more Google Groups/ email distribution lists/ This will be a way of communicating needs as they arise to the volunteers and for volunteers to then respond to the request by email to indicate if they are covering a specific request.

The Deacons continue to look at their revised roles and are prioritizing the formation of an altar-guild like group as well as team of volunteer greeters. The consensus is that establishing these two teams will allow the deacons to focus their energies elsewhere.

Because of her brother's health needs, Christina is stepping down as "senior deacon" and Debby Kirk and Aimee Ahearn are stepping up and into this role.

The deacons are also looking at ways to make the Benevolence Fund more visible in order to use the funds in service and support of people in our community, as intended.

## 4. Worship

The Flourish worship series seems to have hit a chord with many commenting on the meaning, joy, and hope that they found in the series. And several people expressed gratitude for the Lenten worship series theme, Resting Well: An Invitation to Wholeness. Both series have connected with the hopes and challenges of people today.

Following Easter Sunday, we will begin a series entitled "A Future and A Hope." The series will run through the end of June and is based on Jeremiah 29:11:

For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

The series is intended to encourage further reflection on our future and God's vision for us.

Summer Worship planning has begun as we have formed a team that includes two deacons from East Woodstock, Rick Lamarre, Kathy Packard, and me.

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The Creative Worship Team and Deacons have been asked to reflect on and suggest modifications through an online form to the Worship Vision, Guiding Principles, and Team Expectations that were developed as part of our retreat last year. Their input will help refine these statements as we prepare for conversations within the congregation. The request was made three times, (Feb 8 and Feb 21 by email, and Feb 13 during the Creative Worship meeting). To date two people have responded.

### D. Communications

We will no longer publish a bi-monthly “Share” newsletter.

Here is why: It will save time and money. There are only 10 people who only receive the paper version of the newsletter and do not come to worship.

Instead of the monthly email, we will create a one- or two-page quarterly update that is sent to people who want a paper newsletter. Some of the content can also provide the basis for the message we send out with quarterly statements.

The Communications Guidelines have been updated to reflect the updated image policy adopted by the Governing Board last month. The current version of the document is in the Communications folder.

And the website has been updated to reflect the new bylaws.