

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church Vestry Meeting Minutes

April 22, 2025

Present: Beth Bailey, Leah Bailey, Craig Brent, Ashley Hillis, Roger Johnson, Carol King, Alan Liby, Ben Shassere, Tyler Walker, Julie Webber

Absent: Fr. Bailey Norman, Cleon Hartman, Courtney Manrod

Call to Order: Fr. Norman

In Fr. Norman's absence, Leah Bailey called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Opening Devotional: Craig Brent

Craig Brent opened the meeting with prayer.

Approval of Agenda: Fr. Norman (Leah Bailey)

The agenda was approved unanimously as submitted (Liby/Walker)

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Rector's Report: Fr. Norman

In Fr. Bailey's absence, there was no Rector's Report.

Senior Warden's Report: Leah Bailey

Mrs. Bailey thanked all the people and organizations involved in Holy Week activities. On Easter Sunday, 750 eggs were retrieved in 3.5 minutes at the Easter Egg Hunt. Over 120 people came to brunch.

The meeting next month will start at 6:00 pm with a Diocesan Visioning Exercise that will take 35-45 minutes.

The Tennessee House and Senate passed a bill that "allows a charitable organization that provides housing to a person whom the charitable organization knows is unlawfully present in the United States to be held liable for a loss, damages, injury, or death resulting from a criminal offense committed by the person who is unlawfully present in the United States while the person is receiving housing services from the charitable organization if the charitable organization's conduct in providing housing constitutes negligence, gross negligence, or willful and wanton misconduct." In an abundance of

caution and concern, Mrs. Bailey has reached out to Canon Joe Woodfin and to Chancellor George Arrants for clarification on the Diocesan position and advice.

Junior Warden's Report: Ben Shassere

Priority List for 2025

Ms. Webber formatted the list. Mr. Shassere asked each Vestry member to choose a unique color and use that color to comment on the list. If you have a cost estimate for an item, add it to the list. This list will be reviewed at the May meeting. It will be placed on the website for parishioners to review. It will be the topic of discussion at the next Committee Chairs' meeting on June 22 after the 10:30 am service.

Estate Planning

Two meetings are planned for June, on June 1 and June 29. One will be focused on parishioners who are or are near retirement. The other will be focused on younger parishioners. Food and childcare will be provided for both.

FINANCIAL ACTIONS

Approval of the February Financial Report: Courtney Manrod

Alan Liby presented the report in Ms. Manrod's absence. The full monthly financial report has been color coded by type of fund for easier interpretation. This year \$553K was pledged + \$20K was added to the pledged amount. The additional funds added to the total pledged amount was half of the \$40K last year in unrealized pledges. Both Outreach and the Capital Revolving funds were removed from the budget. The 2025 budget forecasts use of \$53K of temporarily restricted funds to balance the budget.

The Boy Scout funds of \$1,700 have been carried on the monthly finance sheet for years. These funds do not belong to the Boy Scouts. The Finance Committee recommends that these funds be transferred to the Capital Revolving fund. Vestry unanimously approved this recommendation.

The Finance Committee voted to accept the financial statement. The Finance Committee requests Vestry approval of the March financial statement. Vestry unanimously approved.

New performance metrics for financial reports: Alan Liby

The monthly summary of finances will be published in the Evangel. A weekly summary of giving and expenses for the previous Sunday will be published in the Bulletin.

NEW BUSINESS

Year-round Stewardship Campaign: Alan Liby

Fr. Bailey asked Mr. Liby to review a program that he used in one of his other parishes, Project Resource. It starts with a focused Vestry retreat followed by the formation of a five-member team with dedicated roles. This program uses a United Way approach that calls on Vestry members and Committee chairs to pledge early with stated goals as an incentive for parishioners to pledge. The hurdle to overcome for next year's pledge drive is the identification of a leader for Stewardship. Feed any names of potential Stewardship leads to Fr. Norman.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Evangelism Committee: Brittany Shassere

Mrs. Shassere presented several items for feedback and the Vestry's blessing.

- A calming room for people who want a place with some privacy during worship. The service would be live-streamed to that room. Room 208 is the desired space.
- Invite, welcome, connect – To make the church more welcoming, a church cleanup day is scheduled for May 17th from 10am-2pm. Part of this effort is to tag items in the church to keep so that unneeded furniture and household items can be donated to Ecumenical Storehouse and additional items can potentially be donated to Habitat, Karm.
- Big "back-to-school" bash for the Oak Ridge community in Bissel Park on August 2nd from 11am-1pm.

Mid-year Parish Meeting: Fr. Bailey

Mrs. Bailey reported that the mid-year meeting will be on May 4 after the Cinco de Mayo parish potluck. The purpose of the event is to provide the parish with a report on finances, upcoming needs, and input on a new mission statement. Committee chairs will report on past activities and upcoming events.

New Mission Statement: Fr. Norman

This item was tabled in Fr. Norman's absence.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Vestry

Building and Grounds: Roger Johnson

Caleb Justice offered his carpentry skills.

By-Laws and Policies: Courtney Manrod

Ms. Manrod is working with cognizant committees to update St. Stephen's:

- Fiscal policies;
- Personnel policies; and
- Gifts and Memorials policies.

Christian Education: Ashley Hillis

The Easter Egg Hunt was awesome.

The last Sunday School for children is May 18.

The kids will pack backpacks at ADFAC on July 19 at noon. Sunday School teachers are needed for next year.

Communication: Julie Webber

Bill Lawrence and Jamie LaRose did a targeted mailing to households within a 10-mile radius of the church. At least two recipients of the mailing attended Easter services.

Emergency Preparedness: Ben Shassere

No report.

Evangelism Team: Tyler Walker

Mr. Walker was the Vestry representative in April. He received a comment about the need for a representative of Bread Upon the Waters at the 8:00 service. Brittany Shassere will follow-up with Michael Trank.

Finance: Courtney Manrod

1. Tom Beehan completed a property and liability insurance review, and it was determined the policy structure and coverage to be adequate for the church.
2. Revised weekly and monthly format to streamline to report performance metrics:
 - a. Reporting of gifts received weekly and comparing them to cumulative year to date receipts and the total annual pledge amount.

- b. Monthly reporting of actual income received year to date compared to actual expenses.
3. Provided first quarterly financial status in the Evangel.
4. Pursuing alternative income sources including grants, TVA incentives for infrastructure improvements, and in-kind donations for pledge credit.
5. Reviewing improvements to St. Stephen's Stewardship program, hopefully this may increase the pledge base.
6. Re-established the capital revolving fund. The fund has been seeded with \$2,500 from the 2025 General Fund. Reallocation of funds from other restricted accounts to the capital revolving fund are under review.
7. Supporting Gifts and Memorials Committee. They have reinvigorated the planned giving program and are reorganizing management of G&M funds.
8. Supporting the development of an integrated, prioritized list of unfunded needs in concert with the Junior Warden and G&M Chair.
9. Review of monthly financial transaction detail was initiated at the April meeting to help ensure effective fiscal management.
10. Initiated update of St. Stephen's fiscal policies: This topic was introduced at the April Finance Committee meeting. All FC members were asked to review all fiscal policies. St. Stephen's fiscal practices will be flow charted to aid the updates. Individual FC members will be assigned responsibility for the update of a policy.
11. Instructions for counters are being updated. Among other things, the updates will better ensure accurate posting of weekly plate receipts.
12. Finance Committee has recommended to Vestry postponing active change of banking-type institutions as the current interface is meeting St. Stephen's needs.
13. Courtney is exploring the opportunity to retain the services of a qualified and reasonable priced expert to consult with St. Stephen's about how to fulfill the requirement for an annual financial audit.

Gifts and Memorials: Beth Bailey

The committee met on April 1. Dan DiGregorio is the Chair. The topics of discussion were the Wish List and Planned Giving presentations to the parish. There are currently two wish lists that should be merged into one. Before this can be done the G&M

financial account must be formalized. There was discussion of the process to release the restriction on memorials that have not been spent one year after the parishioner's death.

Hospitality Area: Beth Bailey

No report.

Liturgics: Ben Shassere

No report.

Memorial Garden: Cleon Hartman

No report.

Outreach: Cleon Hartman

No report.

Parish Life: Leah Bailey

The end of March saw Parish Life partner with Outreach on our monthly parish potluck with a Caribbean themed menu and a program presented by Cameron Ellis, Dr. Wilkine Syllin and Samuel DuMond about our medical clinic in Petit Harpon. This was a lead-in to April's Outreach organization, which is the Clinic.

The six Lenten Simple Soup Suppers were a wonderful success, with thanks to all 16 who contributed soup!

On April 6th, we were gifted with an incredible Evensong service by the UT Chamber Singers. A reception, hosted by Parish Life and the Choir followed.

Easter Brunch had over 100 people in attendance, and a wide variety of food was provided by the congregation. Many thanks to all who helped set up, serve, and clean-up!

Coming in May:

May 4th: Parish Potluck with a Cinco de Mayo theme followed by a mid-year Parish Meeting

May 11th: Youth Sunday with a kid-friendly Coffee Hour to follow the 10:30 service

May 17th: Smokies Game at the new Covenant Health Stadium. Tickets will be sold 4/27-5/11 during both Coffee Hours.

May 25: Lemonade in the Grove begins—weather permitting.

Pastoral Care: Carol King

Mrs. King is getting together people to send cards to shut-ins and people who are ill. She is working with Ms. B. Bailey to get help in writing the cards from the Hospitality folks. A list is being developed of people who will check the AED machines each month. She is working on getting family contacts for all the parishioners who the EVs visit. This need was identified after a parishioner who receives EV visits was hospitalized but the Parish was not notified and unable to locate the person for several days.

Personnel: Craig Brent

Work is continuing to update language in the Personnel Policies.

Stewardship: Alan Liby (See above.)

Technology/IT: Julie Webber

Brad Hillis and Simon Ballintoy met with Hyperion today. This contract is up in July. The digital sign committee will meet soon.

The meeting closed with the Lord's prayer at 8:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Ellis, Secretary

Next Vestry meeting is May 20, 2025, at 6:00pm

ATTACHMENT 1

2025 Finance Committee

TO DO LIST

2025 Finance Committee membership:

J. Anderson, tbd

J. Cox, tbd

J. Delaney, tbd

D. DiGregorio, G&M Interface

B. Ellis, Counters Lead

A. Liby, Parish Treasurer, Stewardship Interface

C. Manrod, Finance Committee Chair, Performance metrics,

Fr. Norman, Rector

J. Rousey, Memorial Garden Chair, Pledge Database Manager

B. Sigmon, Committee Secretary, Budget Database Manager

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Holistically manage finances

Create a sustainable budget that supports church growth

Establish forward looking work processes

Note: These principles are established to help ensure the future viability of St. St. with respect to its: finances; work processes/policies/volunteer hour requirements; and physical infrastructure.

We need better income planning including investment oversight.

Improve Communication

Revise monthly report format to streamline data presentation and messaging

Establish performance metrics

Implement routine financial status communication with the parish

Diversify income/manage expenses/restore reserves

Increase pledge base

Reestablish capital revolving fund

Reinvigorate planned giving campaign

Develop prioritized unfunded needs list, interface with G&M wish list

Ensure effective fiscal management

Review/revise work practices

Update fiscal policies (e.g., internal controls related to electronic banking)

Refresh Counters training

Explore banking partner change

Conduct property and liability insurance review

Conduct independent financial audit/review

Monitor investment performance

ATTACHMENT 2

Communications update for Vestry meeting

The communications team has primarily focused on Evangel, e-News, and Facebook. We have started promoting this year's Clearfork Learning Camp. For the first time, we will utilize Facebook resources to publicize the camp. I'll include the upcoming Evangel piece as an attachment.

We have also updated and corrected parts of our website. Although it is still a work in progress, we expect further updates by the end of this month. I am optimistic that a new website will be available soon. Andrew Morehead is a strong supporter of this initiative.

He continues to assist with demographic information. We reassessed our target audience, and he refined it to identify our most likely direct mail pool nearby, reducing our target radius from 20 miles to 10 miles from St. Stephen's.

Interestingly, within a 20-mile radius, there are eight other Episcopal churches, while within a 10-mile radius, we are the only one. I am waiting for more information regarding the approximate cost of direct mail to the group with the most potential: 8,000 families with children, 7,000 of whom are under age 15.

We are promoting and participating in local activities in Oak Ridge, with the first being the upcoming ORCMA fun run (sadly, I am not participating). The Facebook placements for this event have been the highest: 2,244 views (we have significantly expanded the number of target groups). However, the interactions remain low at 14. In comparison, the St. Patrick's Day post only had 64 views.

The website's statistics have changed somewhat. One interesting statistic is that 49 people returned to our site compared to the previous 30 days. Another noteworthy statistic is that views on the vestry page increased by 57% (possibly after the update, I'm not sure).

We had 864 visits in the last 30 days (7 today, 23 yesterday). The number of unique visitors is 438 (2 today, 23 yesterday). The most visited page after the homepage is Clergy-Lay Staff. One interesting observation is that 76% of the visitors leave the site after viewing only one page (bounce). This is connected to our overall website content.

IMPORTANT ADDENDUM

Brother Andrew has helped us to produce 597 records of families living within our target area, 10 miles. The Diocese will pay for the mailing list cost (go Andrew!) and we will

pay the outsourced mailing house cost. The recommended mailing house is Burns Mailing and Printing in Knoxville; I'll contact them to research costs and lead time.

The most important thing now is to determine the message (s) we want to send out and, the frequency, depending on cost. This is a great opportunity for us to spread the word to new folks:

Age of Head of Household, 35-64

Children present, ages 0-15

Education, Some college, grad school

Income, \$40K-Beyond

Length of residence, 1-5 years

Dwelling type, Single Family Dwelling