

St Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
January 21, 2025

Present: Fr. Norman, Beth Bailey, Leah Bailey, Craig Brent, Cleon Hartman, Ashley Hillis, Carol King, Alan Liby, Courtney Manrod, Ben Shassere, Tyler Walker, Julie Webber

Absent: Ray Evans

Guests: Simon Ballintoy, Heather Hartman

Call to Order: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Opening Devotional: Fr. Norman

The Vestry said a devotional together.

Approval of Agenda: Fr. Norman

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

Approval of the Consent Agenda: Fr. Norman

The December meeting minutes were approved as submitted. (Manrod/Hartman)

Vestry Onboarding: Simon Ballintoy and Courtney Manrod

The Vestry will begin to use Microsoft 365 Copilot to communicate, share, and store documents. Mr. Ballintoy walked the Vestry members through the onboarding process. Ms. Manrod reviewed the financial report to explain what is in each portion of the report.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Rector's Report: Fr. Norman

At the Warden's meeting the decision was made to adjust things somewhat. The onboarding was part of that adjustment.

Laura Henrik has started working every Sunday. In the next few weeks there will be a meeting after church for Laura to meet with parents of children to share ideas about the Christian Education program.

The structured eucharist class has started and will go through Lent.

Fr. Norman started his second term a head of the Ministerial association, His Vice Chair is Joey Collins who works for Aid to Distressed Families of Appalachian Counties (ADFAC). There are many new clergy in town which makes Fr. Norman one of the more senior clergy in Oak Ridge.

Fr. Norman asked the Vestry to be mindful of people in the parish and workplace who are very fearful of what is coming with the change in Administration at the Federal level. He asks that the Vestry listen to the person, and with the person's permission, let Fr. Norman know. Part of being a church is taking care of others.

Senior Warden's Report: Leah Bailey

There is a Vestry party at Emily Doane's on Saturday, January 25.
Vestry will be installed at both service next Sunday, January 26.

There is a practice at St. Elizabeth's Farragut, that Mrs. Bailey would like to start. The Sunday before the Vestry meeting, a Vestry member goes to all the services and coffee hours to listen and talk to parishioners. The vestry member reports what was shared to the Wardens so that the Wardens can adjust the Vestry agenda if needed. She wants each Vestry member to take a month. Mrs. Bailey will contact members to see what month each wants to take.

The stove and fire suppression system were cleaned and certified as safe. This cleaning and certification should be done annually. A line item for this activity was added to the 2025 budget. A list of authorized users will be created for those who have received training on how to operate the stove.

Junior Warden's Report: Ben Shassere

Priority List: There is a need to develop a Priority List for 2025. The purpose of the list is to identify things that need to be done outside of the budget of each committee and then to prioritize that list. Each member should make a list for the committee they are responsible for and bring it to the next Vestry meeting so that a list can be developed and prioritized.

The 2025 budget is mostly complete. Gifts and Memorials funds that are no longer restricted can be used to fund items on the priority list with G&M permission.

Define Committee Responsibilities: Committees run the church. Each Committee should read the by-laws for their committee and operate within them. At each Vestry meeting, there should be a discussion about what each committee is doing. Ideally, the Committee Chairs would meet with the Vestry twice a year.

One of the biggest complaints from former Vestry members and Committee Chairs about serving in those capacities is parishioners complaining to them. If the individual complains, send them to the Wardens or Rector. But if the individual is just venting, then just listen. This approach takes the stress of those who serve on Vestry or as a Committee Chair.

FINANCIAL ACTIONS

Approval of the December 2024 Financial Report: Courtney Manrod

St. Stephen's successfully concluded 2024 with a \$56 surplus in the General Fund, effectively "breaking even" for the year. This is a favorable outcome given the forecast \$137,000 challenge that was adopted at the beginning of the year. Increased income and reduced expenses worked together to close the gap. This December report, which is also the end of year report, will be revised when 4th quarter investment performance is available.

Approval of the 2025 Budget: Courtney Manrod

The Finance Committee proposed a balanced 2025 budget that also meets operating reserve requirements. Operating expenses (disbursements) exceed pledge income by \$53,402. Other funds (in the amount of \$63,074) are available to balance the budget. These other funds plus the amount of 2025 pre-paid pledges enable St. Stephen's to exceed the requisite 10% operating reserve requirement.

The only income source to fund the 2025 budget is pledge income, the actual amount pledged for 2025 plus addition of \$20,000 based on our "experience". Action is needed to diversify income streams. Multiple ways to do so can be simultaneously pursued. The 2025 salary and wage budget is less than 2024. The 2025 health and disability insurance budget is higher than 2024 and more than offsets any salary and wage savings. Action is needed to address unsustainable increases in health and disability insurance costs.

In 2024, unplanned repairs of our building's mechanical systems resulted in a cost overrun of ~ \$30,000. Fiscal Policy C-1 requires a Capital Revolving Fund that "an appropriate amount of money be set aside to provide for capital expenditures and extraordinary maintenance expenses that are of a non-recurring nature, so that the general Parish program budget (i.e., the General Fund) is protected from unanticipated expenditures of the type cited." Action is needed to raise funds to restore the Capital Revolving Fund to address unplanned repair and maintenance.

The General Fund 2025 budget allocation to Outreach activities is level from 2024 to 2025 (\$5,000 each year). This allocation supplements the Loose Offering support for Outreach (~ \$15,000 in 2024).

The proposed 2025 General Fund budget is built to holistically manage St. Stephen's finances and create a sustainable budget that supports church growth. There is a need to stretch and grow Christ's church. Fr. Norman applauded the work of the committee. The budget passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Vestry

Confirmation of Committee Assignments: Fr. Norman

Committee assignments for 2025 were finalized. At each Vestry meeting, the Vestry representative for a committee should come prepared to report on the activities and any budget items for that committee.

Hospitality Area Renovations: Beth Bailey

Ashley Hillis and Mitzi Burgess want to donate paint and new blinds for the Hospitality area in memory of Terry Burgess. G&M and the Committee Chair have accepted the gift. The work can proceed.

Evangelism Team: Tyler Walker

Brittany Shassere is the new chair. The committee members are Deborah Clary, Linda Twohig, Judith Delaney and Heather Hartman. Two events are planned: Sweetheart Dance on February 16 from 5:30-7pm and a Fun Run to benefit the ORCMA youth orchestra on March 26 at Bissel Park.

Final Pledge Drive Status: Tyler Walker

A total of 102 pledges were received with an average pledge of \$5317. There were 11 new pledges. Among previous pledgers, 40 increased, 11 decreased and 40 were unchanged in amount pledged.

Building and Grounds: Cleon Hartman reported in Ray Evan's absence.

The HVAC contractor is making a prioritized list of what needs to be done to the system.

Upgrading the lighting came to a halt due to lack of funds. Minor painting is on-going. A water break occurred resulting from improper plumbing under a sink. There is a new cabinet under the big sink in the kitchen thanks to Michael Trank.

By-Laws and Procedures: Courtney Manrod

Updates are needed to some documents. Each committee is responsible for updating its by-laws.

Christian Education: Ashley Hillis

The committee is getting to know Laura Henrik with conversation about what currently is being done and what is desired in the future. Rev. Henrik's background is in Christian Education and she is excited to be here. There is a meeting of the committee and Laura with parents scheduled for February 2. The committee is moving forward to hire an additional nursery worker.

Communication: Julie Webber

The new Chair is Bill Lawrence. Outlined goals for the year are to enhance parish communication and community outreach; increase social outreach through boosts on Facebook; targeted communications by direct mail with help from Diocesan POC for communications; update the website appearance and establish walls for internal and external access to the website; and education about Holy Week.

Emergency Preparedness: Ben Shassere

There is a goal to replace keys with key card access this semester. The old estimate for this activity has to be refreshed.

Gifts and Memorials: Beth Bailey

Barbara Neill is the current chair, but she would like to step down as chair. Immediate priorities are to update the financials and catch up on the backlog of acknowledgement letters. This committee's policy restricts membership to seven members who have specific roles. One of those responsibilities is the Wish List. Dan DiGregorio is working on sending out a call for Wish List ideas.

Liturgics: Ben Shassere

The committee has not met yet.

Memorial Garden: Cleon Hartman

This committee has not met yet. There is a need to train additional people to prepare burial holes in the garden. Traditionally, weeding of the garden has been paid out of Building and Grounds funds. Mr. Hartman questions that because of a specific fund for maintenance of the garden.

Outreach: Cleon Hartman

The Blessing Box serves a large need in the community. There are funds to restock the box which is done daily. The WOW program experienced a sudden precipitous drop in attendance from about 60 one week to 3 the next. It was discovered that another program at the high school had started on Wednesdays providing free pizza. The adult leader of that new program was unaware of WOW and readily agreed to change the day of the new program. Student attendance at WOW has rebounded to ~60 students each week.

Parish Life: Leah Bailey

The monthly pot-luck is scheduled for January 26. On February 2 we will celebrate Candlemas, a mid-winter mass to bless the candles used in the church. French traditions about this event will be presented to the children while their parents attend the meeting with Laura Henrik and the Christian Education committee. On February 8 there will be a pizza and pool party from 5-8 open to all parishioners free of charge. On February 16, the monthly pot luck will be a breakfast between the services. Cathy Chippendale will cook eggs, bacon and biscuits, and parishioners will be asked to provide sides.

Pastoral Care: Carol King

Jamey Kennedy is the Chair. Training in the use of the AED is planned. Carol Gardener is the head of the Eucharistic Visitors. To expand contact with parishioners who are unable to come to church, the idea of calling parishioners during the week is being considered with the thought of recruiting additional parishioners to help with this the calling. Steve Herbes is considering starting another Grief Support group if there is enough interest.

Personnel: Craig Brent

Adam Cavender whose term on Vestry is over is staying on the committee. Larry Hopson will have shoulder surgery in February and will be out for at least 3 months.

Stewardship: Alan Liby

A Chair has not been identified yet.

Technology/IT: Julie Webber

A meeting with Simon Ballintoy is scheduled for January 22.

Envisioning: Heather Hartman

Mrs. Hartman had no report at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Ceiling Light Fixtures: Cleon Hartman

Funding for this effort is depleted. Mr. Hartman was asked to get an estimate to complete replacement of the fixtures. The estimate will be sent to Gifts and Memorial for funding consideration.

NEW BUSINESS

The Vestry Retreat is scheduled for February 15 from 9am-3pm at St Elizabeth's in Farragut.

Mr. Hartman pointed out that there is a line item in the budget for the Boy Scouts. The church has not sponsored a troop for many years. He contacted the local District office about what to do with these funds. If these funds are gifted to the District office, they will be used to provide books and other items to Scouts in need. The Finance Committee will need to approve releasing these funds.

The meeting closed with the Lord's prayer at 9:15pm.

Next Vestry meeting is February 15, 2025

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Ellis
Secretary