

St. Stephen's Vestry Minutes
February 12, 2024

Present: Fr Bailey, Fr. Ashton, Leah Bailey, Craig Brent, Adam Cavender, Tom Clary, Emily Doane, Betsy Ellis (Secretary), Alan Liby, Courtney Manrod, Beth Reed, Ben Shassere, Tyler Walker

Absent: Cleon Hartman, Ashley Hillis

Call to Order: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman called the meeting to order at 6:29 pm with a prayer.

Opening Devotional: Craig Brent

Mr Brent offered a prayer.

Approval of the Agenda: Fr. Norman

The agenda was unanimously approved as submitted (Liby/Bailey).

Approval of the Consent Agenda: Fr. Norman

The January 2024 minutes were unanimously approved as submitted (Bailey/Liby). Heather Hartman was on the agenda to present an update on the envisioning Committee. The update will be given by others present who are on the committee.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Rector's Report: Fr. Norman

The Diocesan Convention was this past weekend. It was the most uncontroversial convention Bailey has ever attended. Courtney Manrod was voted to a 3-year term on Bishop and Council. Bailey noted conversations at convention indicating tensions were increasing within parishes due to the upcoming Presidential election. Bailey asked that if you hear such conversations within the parish derail them. His position is that politics do not belong in the church, but rather, the work of the church is to worship God and serve our neighbors.

He did an exercise concerning the Developmental Goals by posing a "what if" question. The property directly behind the church has been completely remodeled and is for sale for \$1.2M. He asked the Vestry to think about what St Stephens could do with property if the parish bought it. A variety of suggestions were made. He also asked what it look like to be good neighbors if the property was rented out.

Several families with children have asked for a more "kid friendly" Ash Wednesday service. Bailey is going to offer a shortened service in the Chapel at 4 pm on Ash Wednesday. He may add that service to the schedule next year.

Assistant to the Priest in Charge: Fr. Sims

Fr Sims was doing home visits before COVID began. He is planning to resume that activity.

Senior Warden: The Vestry has a of the committee structure which is organized to get work done. She asked everyone to review Policy F.1 which addresses the committee structure. The parish has been at a cross-road for several years with work getting done ad hoc. She wants to do the work faithfully and cheerfully so the parish can take advantage of the opportunities presented to it.

There is a financial challenge. We have to determine what we are trying to solve, what we know (data) and what is the solution. Consensus will be required about what we are trying to solve before we can move forward.

Junior Warden: Leah Bailey

Fr. Norman reviewed the draft of the Parish Directory to delete anyone who is no longer in the parish. Efforts are beginning to contact parishioners who did not provide a completed census card. Subsequently, the Realm database will be. The updated database will make it easier to complete the Parochial Report to the Diocese.

Ms. Bailey attended her first Diocesan Convention. Based on conversations among the attendees, our concerns about folks in seats and engagement of parishioners are also concerns in other Diocesan parishes

The process to call Fr. Norman as rector is now complete. He was recognized as rector at convention. The blessing of new ministry is scheduled for April 13, 2024 at 11 am.

The Family Resource Center emailed requesting items to put in bags to give to families whose electricity and/or water has been turned off. Items requested included non-perishable food, flashlights, batteries, warm socks and gift cards for food and gas. Outreach is also asking the parish to get involved in this effort.

Items for Action

Approval of the amended December 2023 financial statement: Tom Clary

Mr. Liby presented the report in Dr. Clary's absence. The report presented at the January Vesty meeting was not balanced. A correction was made to the investment income. The report was unanimously approved as submitted.

The balance in the restricted accounts is over \$200K. These accounts drew very little interest in 2023. Other options are being considered to increase the interest accrued on these accounts.

Approval of January 2024 financial statement: Tom Clary

Mr. Liby presented the report in Dr. Clary's absence. The financial statement for January with income exceeding expenditures. This is what is usually seen as the result of pre-paid annual pledges at his time of the year. The financial statement was unanimously approved as submitted.

Approval of 2024 Standing Committee Chairs: Courtney Manrod

Chairs have been identified for all committees except Evangelism and Information Technology. The slate of chairs identified to date was approved unanimously. (Bailey/Reed)

Vestry party date: Courtney Manrod

Emily and Matthew Doane have graciously offered to host the party from 4-6 pm on March 2, 2024. Members who rotated off the Vestry are invited. Spouses are invited. Bring your own beverage.

Items for Discussion

Challenge Progress

Rev. Bailey Norman/Courtney

Manrod/Tom Clary

When the budget was passed last month, four contingencies were attached.

- Communicate with parish by mid-Feb;
- Review planned expenses, especially service contract to identify potential savings by end of April
- Look at income vs expenses by April; and
- Identify ways to close the funding gap.

For the initial communication with the Parish, three letter options have been drafted to define what financial challenges the Parish is facing. This will be augmented with additional information shared during Sunday announcements. In addition, there will be more communications with different themes as well as conversations with the Parish using a similar approach as what was done for the Envisioning effort.

The draft letters were handed out and discussed. Dates for the Parish discussion will be included in the letter that is sent out to the Parish. Courtney, Tom and Bailey will email it to Vestry members for approval.

The idea of an all-parish retreat with the theme of growth led by Fr. Howard is being considered.

Committee Reports

NOTE: Unless noted below no reports were submitted.

Parish Life: Leah Bailey

Over 70 people attended Mardi Gras on February 3rd. The Parish Hall looked great, smelled delicious, and with the Zydeco music playing, it sounded great as well! Tomorrow (2/13) is the Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. Donations will go to defray the costs of the Youth Camino Trip in the Fall. Dinner will be served from 5:30-7:00 pm with the Burning of the Palms at 6:30 pm on the front patio.

The Lenten Simple Soup Suppers begin on February 21. Two different soups--one vegetarian--will be served each Wednesday during Lent.

Parish Life has partnered with Christian Ed. on two events during Lent. The Lenten Fair will be held on February 18, and a "Celebrate Spring Break Pool Party" for parish families and friends will be on Saturday, March 9th at the Civic Center Pool.

Old Business

Developmental Goals: Fr Norman

Fr. Norman will review a few goals each meeting. He chose two goals -- "Define our mission" and "Integrate lay leadership." Defining our mission might be the solution to the indifference that seems to be what is going on with church attendance. As a result of streaming the church service during COVID, folks have gotten out of the habit of attending church in person. Integration of lay leadership will require identifying and asking particular people to join us for a particular effort. There has to be a way to serve as well as a place to find rest and refreshment.

Envisioning Update: Heather Hartman

Craig Brent presented in Heather's absence. The number one issue from the focus group discussion is church growth followed by youth. The group is working on transparency to share the information from the surveys and focus groups. Heather will present the results and ideas for moving forward at the next meeting.

Personnel Status: Fr Norman/Adam Cavender

Simon Ballintoy started as Parish Administrator. His letter agreement hasn't been signed yet. The goal is to two-fold: an easier transition when the position is filled permanently, and determine what the duties of the position, and identify its boundaries. A new email address will be created for the Administrator and the email for the Secretary will be deleted.

Revised Day/Time for Vestry Meetings: Fr Norman

Several options were offered but no change has been made to date.

New Business

Fr. Howard has agreed to lead a Vestry retreat. No date has been set for it.

The Evangelism Committee is forming. The requirements for membership is to be passionate at St Stephens and willing to talk to other. Ask Courtney about the approach St Francis Norris used with its evangelism effort.

The Parochial Report is due to the Diocese on March 1. Bailey and Rachel are working on it. When it is finished, it will be emailed to the Vestry for review and approval, signed by the Secretary and sent to the Diocese.

Parish Life has scheduled a whole parish pizza and swim party for Saturday, March 9. Pizza party will start at the church at 5 pm. The swim party is from 6-8 pm at the Civic Center swimming pool. The church has rented the pool for that time period.

Fr. Norman adjourned the meeting at 8:53 pm.

Next Vestry meeting is March 12, 2024

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Ellis
Secretary