

## **St. Stephen's Episcopal Church**

### **Vestry Minutes**

April 14, 2020

*Conducted as on-line meeting via ZOOM platform due to COVID-19 Social Distancing Restrictions*

**Present:** Fr. Bailey Norman, Nancy Anderson, Bonnie Bautz, Barbara Bovee, Judith Delaney, Judy DiGregorio, Lew Felton, Liz Herbes, Jo Kelley, Cyril Meredith, John Murphy, Sandi Robertson, Brent Sigmon

#### **Call to Order:**

Fr. Norman called the meeting to order at 6:42 p.m.

#### **Opening Devotion:** Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman opened the meeting with a prayer.

#### **Approval of Agenda:** Fr. Norman

The agenda was unanimously approved (Delaney/DiGregorio).

#### **Approval of Consent Agenda:** Fr. Norman

The consent agenda, as follows, was unanimously approved (Herbes/Meredith).

- Vestry minutes of March 10, 2020.

#### **WARDENS' REPORTS:**

##### **Senior Warden:** Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon referred to his written summary provided in advance of the Vestry meeting.

##### **Junior Warden:** Judith Delaney

Ms. Delaney also referred to her written summary.

##### **Priest-in-Charge:** Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman discussed the local Oak Ridge Ministerial Association and St. Stephen's potential for involvement therewith. The Association's goal is engagement clergy and congregations, leveraging the unique gifts and resources of each entity for the benefit of a wider community. Cooperation and outreach are foundational aspects of the Association. The importance of St. Stephen's maintaining a focus on worship was noted during the conversation. Fr. Norman mentioned a local church has inquired about the possibility of conducting an event at St. Stephen's labyrinth.

Fr. Norman segued the conversation into a discussion about St. Stephen's future, by asking reflective questions (e.g., What is our mission? How do we currently envision ourselves? Where do we want to go?) and continuing reviewing of Dwight Zscheile's book [The Agile Church](#) (Chapter 1). One aspect of learning how to be agile is by "not doing things the way they've always been done" while getting past innovating "on the fly". It was noted that St. Stephen's has throughout its history successfully adapted to a changing environment by faith and in community. Most recently St. Stephen's staff, Communications Committee members and others

have enabled delivery of on-line worship services. It was also noted that parishioners have widely embraced these services, receiving vital spiritual sustenance in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pastoral Care practices have evolved with establishment of phone trees. Virtual EYF meetings have been implemented. Christian Education teachers have called families to check in. Many adaptations are activities aimed at keeping in touch on a personal level and providing support to those who may benefit. Fr. Norman reminded Vestry about the importance of conducting thorough conversations across St. Stephen's, investigating individuals' inherent assumptions and expectations and establishing a vision for what St. Stephen's will be in the future.

## **ITEMS FOR ACTION**

### **Approval of the March 2020 Finance Committee Report:** Cyril Meredith

Mr. Meredith presented the March 2020 financial report and communicated Finance Committee recommendation for approval. He noted that funds for 3 months of pre-paid pledges was moved from a restricted account to the general operating fund, as discussed last month. Mr. Meredith reminded Vestry of Bishop Cole's and the DIOET's decision to forgive April and May 2020 diocesan pledges, equating to about \$9,500 in forgiveness for St. Stephen's. Finance Committee will consider its reallocation during mid-year budget/cost review. The March financial report was unanimously approved.

### **Formal Approval of Painting Expenditure:** Brent Sigmon

Mr. Felton provided a status update of the Nave painting project. During a Zoom meeting "dry run" conducted on March 31, 2020, Mr. Felton discussed the need to paint the Nave, on-going conversation with painting contractor and the current opportunity to paint in the near term while in-church services have been suspended while COVID-19 pandemic social distancing restrictions are in place. On April 8, 2020, via e-mail, Brent Sigmon introduced a motion for Vestry to authorize expenditure of up to \$5,000 for painting the Nave. The project includes measures to protect the organ from sanding dust as well as painting the Narthex. Finance Committee reviewed the proposal on April 7, 2020, and unanimously recommended to proceed with painting, using Capital Revolving funds (\$13,000 current balance before painting project). Vestry unanimously approved the motion via e-mail.

## **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **Clergy Housing Fund Disbursement:** Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman reported that he and his family are still in the process of moving. They will close on the sale of their home in Mobile in the near future and subsequently initiate a purchase contract for a home in Oak Ridge.

### **Audit Expense:** Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon reported that the cost to perform the requisite annual financial audit has increased \$1,000 in 2020 (to a new cost of \$5,000). Vestry unanimously approved a motion to increase the 2020 financial audit budget to \$5,000 (Meredith/Herbes).

### **Update on Nave Painting:** Lew Felton

(information provided in agenda item, **Formal Approval of Painting Expenditure**, above)

**Communications Development:** Sandi Robertson

Ms. Robertson informed Vestry that the Communications Committee is evaluating St. Stephen's needs and potential improvements for its communications systems. St. Stephen's has been responding to current demands to live stream worship services "on the fly" using outdated systems not designed for that use. The Committee is reviewing equipment upgrades including associated service and maintenance contracts. Additionally, the Committee is evaluating how to update the church website including technology to access and upload files.

**Beyond the Quarantine: What will St. Stephen's and the Church look like?** Fr. Norman/Vestry  
(information provided in agenda item, **Wardens' Reports, Priest In Charge**, above)

**2020 Vestry Retreat:** Fr. Norman/Brent Sigmon

The retreat will be rescheduled to a future date when the Vestry can meet in person (after expiration of COVID-19 pandemic social distancing restrictions). In the interim Vestry members were encouraged to think about how they would articulate St. Stephen's mission and vision as well as identify associated actions.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

*Given the April 14, 2020 Vestry meeting was conducted "virtually" via Zoom, written reports were submitted by chairs in advance of the meeting. The reports are included as an addendum to these minutes.*

### **Program Committees**

**Christian Education:** Nancy Anderson

**Evangelism:** Judith Delaney

**Liturgics:** Jo Kelley

**Outreach:** John Murphy

**Pastoral Care:** Liz Herbes

### **Administrative or Support Committees**

**Buildings and Grounds:** Lew Felton

**Bylaws and Policies:** Lew Felton

**Communications:** Sandi Robertson .

**Finance:** Cyril Meredith

**Gifts and Memorials:** Barbara Bovee

**Memorial Garden:** Brent Sigmon

**Nominating:** Brent Sigmon

**Parish Life:** Bonnie Bautz

**Stewardship:** Judy DiGregorio

**CLOSING PRAYER AND ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting closed with a prayer and adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney A. Manrod  
Secretary

Next meeting May 12, 2020

# VESTRY REPORTS

## April 2020

### **Building and Grounds – Lew Felton**

Below are “General Areas” of building and grounds projects and issues that are being worked. These will be used to prioritize, organize and execute major projects. The areas listed below are listed in priority order.

In addition, included is a miscellaneous problem list that will be maintained and reported on at each vestry meeting. I am developing a process to collect concerns to track on the “problem” list, assign responsibility, and track completion.

#### General Areas

1. Painting:
  - a. Painting of the Nave and Narthex are first priority. Project estimate presented to finance Committee and Vestry and approved. Marlow Painting will begin repair, preparation, and painting process on Tuesday 4/14: the job will take about a week and a half.
  - b. I will have a meeting with small group to discuss next steps: Cameron Ellis, Cyril Meredith, Barbara Steele, and Nancy Carow.
    - i. Urgent item, repair of wall where water leaked from window in room 209.
2. HVAC:
  - a. We have a proposal from our mechanical contractor, Volunteer Mechanical, Inc., to improve the HVAC in the Nave and in the Chapel. I will discuss with Cameron and recommend a plan of action.
3. Masonry Work:
  - a. There are several areas that need masonry repair and improvement, e.g. the front entry steps. I will be inspecting for potential masonry problems and safety issues and developing a plan to address.
4. Electrical Work:
  - a. There are several electrical issues that need to be addressed and correction made. I am developing a list and plan to address

Problem Tracking List: Lew is creating a spreadsheet that will present to the Vestry a regular report monthly that includes:

- Item #
- Plan to Address
- Responsibility
- Cost
- General Area
- Finance Approval
- Vestry Approval

### **By-laws and Policies – Lew Felton**

No report

### **Christian Education – Nancy Anderson**

When we are able to meet safely in groups, we will reschedule the Safeguarding God’s Children training. The committee looks forward to meeting with Fr Norman to discuss Sunday school scheduling/attendance, a possible children’s communion class, and prospects for VBS in July; review the Children’s Moment during Sunday services and the Fire by Night service; and update the 2020 Christian Ed calendar. Ms Anderson initiated a group email check-in and an invitation to meet online as needed.

### **Communications Committee – Sandi Robertson**

The Communications Committee has been quite active in the transitions to a virtual church. Fr. Bailey, Adam, and Simon have been adjusting and developing new techniques to bring our services to the internet.

The Committee met via Zoom on April 1st, largely to plan video/audio logistics. Going forward, we acknowledged that SSOR’s virtual presence need to develop:

- a. A new website/host/domain etc. There are technical details that I can’t explain right now (SEE ADDENDUM BELOW FROM ADAM BALLINTOY) but there are concerns that the site design is a bit outmoded and doesn’t accommodate the ease of updates/ technology that is most current. Adam Ballintoy suggested two hosting companies and recommended that committee members investigate them and discuss at our next meeting. (Wordpress and squarespace).
- b. We continue to troubleshoot various aspects of the streaming services that SSOR is offering during the pandemic. Basically, we are using equipment not designed for this purpose, but as our “live” recording ensemble is now two on-screen and one off-screen, we decided that we could get by on the equipment we had. (We had mic issues during Sunday, so this information might be updated further.)

Elizabeth Pack is compiling a list of possible streaming equipment, but for comparison's sake, a friend who is now streaming live concerts recommended a system that costs around \$600. (Mevo Plus with Booster)

The Communications Committee continues to be innovative and determined at this essential task.

**ADDENDUM FROM ADAM BALLINTOY:**

Over the last month, we have been incredibly busy diving into the deep end of virtual worship, and I am so proud of the excellent work this team has done. For some perspective, including tonight's Compline video we have produced 49 prerecorded videos since March 15 and livestreamed 5 worship services-- 54 videos in total! We have more exciting videos planned, so stay tuned!

As we get more comfortable with virtual worship, we plan to turn our attention towards the website. Many of you have asked about updating the website and this is something we are looking forward to tackling. Updating our website provides numerous benefits for our parish as a whole. It is important that our website maintenance be more accessible as this promotes shared knowledge and allows for quick updates. For technical security reasons, multiple people cannot have the current website administrative information. Our website is our new front door and is the first impression people get of our church. Updating the website means an overhaul in terms of layout, accessibility, content, overall design, and will most importantly allow information to be updated much more efficiently. One of the biggest additions we are planning is a page dedicated to newcomers. This page will provide a history of our church, explain our worship to those unfamiliar, and provide other information to help them feel connected. Our goal is for our new website to be desktop and mobile friendly. We are in the very early stages of discussing what this process looks like for us and will provide updates as available.

You can contact me if you have any questions.

**Evangelism – Judith Delaney**

No report

**Finance Committee – Cyril Meredith**

Finance committee met on Tuesday, April 7, 2020 by conference call. The following items were discussed:

1. Monthly Finance report for March, 2020 – reviewed, discussed and approval recommended by Vestry.
2. Audit for 2019 – documents, electronic and hard copy are with the Auditor. Cameron has not been able to follow up on latest status toward completion
3. Automatic Payments of Pledge – currently have PayPal account that is used by a relatively small number of parishioners. Fee is charged for each transaction which results in less dollars to the church. Discussed changing to a free PayPal account or possibly using the E-giving feature that comes with Realm which is part of our ACS church accounting software package. Finance is investigating.
4. Discussed painting the nave now when we are essentially not using it. Lew Felton presented an estimate of \$3,600 lump sum for painting labor. Paint is extra and is expected to run \$450 – 500 for two coats of paint. Tried to get other proposals but was unsuccessful. Requested approval of \$5,000 to cover the whole project with some expected left over. Funding is identified in Capital Revolving Fund. Finance recommends approval.
5. Discussed Diocesan pledge forgiveness for two months offered by the Bishop. The Bishop offered for parishes to not pay the April and May pledge assessment. Currently, St. Stephens is looking pretty good but not sure what will come if the virus shutdown continues. Finance is recommending accepting the offer to not pay April and May pledge but also not spend on anything else either. If we remain financially sound throughout the year, we could go ahead and make the payments for April and May at the end of the year.
6. Discussed the CARES act loan program – recent act of Congress gave non-profit organizations the authority to borrow money and then have the loan treated as a grant and forgiven if certain criteria are met. Finance authorized Cameron to explore the ins and outs of the program.

### **Gifts and Memorials – Barbara Bovee**

Gifts and Memorials is scheduled to meet again in May.

### **Liturgics – Jo Kelley**

No report

### **Memorial Garden Committee – Brent Sigmon**

\*\*\* See attached report



### **Nominating Committee – Brent Sigmon**

No report

### **Outreach Committee – John Murphy**

Committee zoomed its March meeting.

Approved SS donations to six organizations (2019) and added a seventh, Agape. Ask SS Treasurer to cut checks for full \$\$ amount and Liz will get them out to agencies as soon as practical.

Continued discussion of Clearfork program.

Asked Mary Ann Morse to contact Bailey and offer financial assistance from our budget to help in expected rash of outside personal requests do C19 hardships.

### **Parish Life Committee – Bonnie Bautz**

No report

### **Pastoral Care Committee – Liz Herbes**

Pastoral Care has continued to be active by:

- Providing emergency groceries and meals to families in need
- Helping families in need connect to appropriate resources (I.e. Meals on Wheels, Home Health Care)
- During this time of social distancing and social isolation, working closely with Father Norman to ensure that all single and elderly parishioners are checked on with periodic phone calls
- Working with Father Norman to ensure that with time, all parishioners will be checked on with calls by members of the congregation

### **Personnel Committee – Judith Delaney**

No report

### **Priest-in-Charge Report – Bailey Norman**

My work has certainly changed substantially from when we met a month ago! My primary tasks have been organizing and expanding our net of checking on our parishioners in need (with the ultimate goal of creating a parish-wide phone tree), making pastoral calls to folks by phone, working with our Communications Committee in developing our virtual presence, and organizing and preparing for Holy Week and Easter.

I've made the comment (and heard it from others about themselves) that I'm not doing a whole lot. I realize very quickly that this statement is not true for myself and for pretty much all of you. We are doing things very differently right now, which in many ways means we are working harder developing new systems, new ways of engaging with each other, and perhaps even some new paradigms that will last us into the other side of our quarantine period.

We will discuss some at our meeting, but please begin imagining what our return Sunday will look like (i.e., how we will celebrate once we are able to be together in person once again). I think it is important for us to make that in itself a big occasion, but what about long-term? How will we pass the peace? Will it change how we do communion (not saying it will, but it is an interesting question to think about)? Will we have enhanced safety protocols for coffee hour and times we gather for food? How will our live-streaming look when we are physically gathered again? Please give some serious thought to these questions and others you might develop.

### **Senior Warden Report – Brent Sigmon**

Many, many thanks to all who have helped to keep us functioning as a community through this period. We are physically distant, as the times require, but less socially distant than the term implies. Thanks especially to our communications committee—Adam, Sandi, Elizabeth, Jim, and Simon.

The bishop has scheduled a Zoom meeting for Sr. Wardens on Monday the 20th to check-in and reflect on what our parishes are experiencing during this period. I plan to participate. If you have any particular thoughts for me as I prepare, please let me know.

I am beginning to explore the capabilities of the Realm online software that we have not yet implemented, with the goal of developing a plan for moving forward. The potential capabilities touch many aspects of our life as a church community—finance and stewardship, communications, parish life, pastoral care, evangelism.

### **Stewardship Report – Judy Digregorio**

The Stewardship Committee has not met recently, but we have received info from the Episcopal Church Foundation about online giving and tax changes that will need to be discussed with Father Bailey and the Communications and Finance Committees and maybe others as we plan this year's Stewardship Campaign. We anticipate a meeting in the near future.