

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Minutes
March 10, 2020

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

Absent: Liz Herbes, Sandi Robertson

Call to Order:

Fr. Norman called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Opening Devotion: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman opened the meeting with a prayer.

Vestry Discernment Conversation: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman initiated a process with the Vestry to discern a strategy to guide St. Stephen's into the future. At the outset, Fr. Norman began by discussing the importance of:

- establishing mutual expectations between himself, Vestry and Parish;
- jointly articulating a future vision;
- gaining and maintaining mutual trust;
- continuing mutual ministries and engaging more parishioners therein; and
- establishing and renewing relationships within our Parish.

Fr. Norman noted this is a time of continuing transition for St. Stephen's and reinforced he is comfortable with his Priest-in-Charge role and its structure. Using the book, The Agile Church by Dwight Zscheille, as a reference and tool to aid this discernment process, Fr. Norman discussed the concept of "making good mistakes". Otherwise stated this is the importance of trying new things for the right reason to ultimately enable improvements that better benefit our parish. It was noted SSOR is ready to continue to embrace the new while, at the same time, ready to settle into it. The concept of incorporating wisdom of the past into how we define our future was emphasized. Fr. Norman reinforced "an agile church is above all a spirit led church". We were reminded to "trust God to take us where we need to go; it's the spirit that is going to get into our heads and lead us, anchoring us in the important tasks and strengthening us to accomplish them".

Approval of Consent Agenda: Fr. Norman

The consent agenda, as follows, was unanimously approved (Delaney/DiGregorio).

- Vestry minutes of February 11, 2020.

WARDENS' REPORTS:

Senior Warden: Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon discussed the initial Sharing Faith Dinner held at his home the first week in March.

He served as moderator for the dinner. He suggested, for those who will be hosting/moderating future dinners, that it is beneficial to “be gentle with the instructions”, allowing people to pass or draw another card if they desire. Doing so is in keeping with the purpose of the dinners to deepen faith and relationships.

Junior Warden: Judith Delaney

Ms. Delaney stated her input will be provided during discussion of subsequent agenda items.

Priest-in-Charge: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman referred to a document he sent earlier to the Vestry entitled, “When Should I Call a Priest?” . The document cites life examples of when it is beneficial for parishioners to contact the rector.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

Approval of the February 2020 Finance Committee Report: Cyril Meredith

Mr. Meredith presented the February 2020 financial report and communicated Finance Committee recommendation for approval. He mentioned that beginning in March 2020, the report will show incremental movement of pre-paid pledge income from Account PP020 to Account GF410 (the general operating fund). An action was taken for Fr. Norman and Mr. Meredith to determine what, if any, financial summary data will be included in future Vestry meeting minutes, The February financial report was unanimously approved.

Approval of the 2019 Parochial Report: Brent Sigmon

The 2019 Parochial Report was unanimously approved (Sigmon/Meredith).

Funding for Garden Shed Roof: Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon and Mr. Felton stated the garden shed roof has substantial leaks and needs repair given the shed’s location (abuts exterior church wall). They requested approval to expend up to \$4,000 for the repairs based on a roofing contractor bid. This job was discussed at Finance Committee meeting and they recommended approval. The importance and practicality of seeking competitive bids for non-specialty tasks was discussed. It was agreed further consideration will be given to if and what requirements St. Stephen’s may establish in this regard. The motion was unanimously approved.

Funding for Organ Settings: Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon informed Vestry that prior approved work to upgrade the organ (June 2017, \$5,200 from Stripling Fund) has not yet been accomplished and that additional scope is now needed (\$758). A new motion was offered to negate the prior June 2017 motion and to authorize \$5,958 for organ repairs using Stripling funds. The motion was unanimously approved (Sigmon/Murphy).

Formal Approval of Fr. Norman’s Letter of Agreement: Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon noted a copy of Fr. Norman’s Letter of Agreement needs to be added to the March 2020 Vestry minutes. A paper copy of Fr. Norman’s LOA will be physically attached to archival copy of March 2020 Meeting Minutes.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Building Security: Brent Sigmon/ Judith Delaney

The wardens discussed the importance of parishioners being vigilant while at church, maintaining situational awareness and keeping a watchful eye on their belongings.

Health Protocols for Liturgy: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman mentioned he will publish a letter to the Parish about protocols to protect against Covid-19 transmission at church in the upcoming E-News. Its content will mirror the recent Diocesan letter and include items discussed during services last Sunday. Fr. Norman stated that the Diocese discourages intinction because of its potential to transmit virus. Ways to healthfully “pass the Peace” will also be addressed.

Pastoral Care for Parishioners Living Alone: Judith Delaney

Ms. Delaney cited examples of parishioners not coming to church for fear of getting ill. Their situation is further confounded because they live alone with no one to care for them if they were to become ill. She discussed the importance of knowing who needs assistance. She has discussed with Fr. Norman. He will be initiating compilation of parishioner list with follow up to support those listed.

Initial Reflection on Service Time Changes: Fr. Norman

In addition to receiving unsolicited input from the general Parish, Fr. Norman solicited feedback during the last Liturgics Committee meeting regarding St. Stephen’s recent changes in service times. The feedback has been mixed, with some favorable, some unfavorable. Specific impacts are also varied, examples include: liking earlier ending time; impact to Christian Education class times; early service attendees preferring to be back in Nave; and loss of ambiance and music from former 9 am service. As we quickly approach summer, Fr. Norman stated the current service schedule will remain as is through the end of the program year. He will continue to engage with the Parish to further evaluate service schedule and format for next year.

2020 Vestry Retreat Date-April 18: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman noted the 2020 Vestry retreat is scheduled for Saturday, April 18, notionally from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. The Church of Resurrection in Loudon is a candidate venue. Final arrangements are pending.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Program Committees

Christian Education: Nancy Anderson

Ms. Anderson noted 4 youth and 6 adults cooked and served the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper. She stated there will be a Safeguarding God's Children training this Sunday. People signed up to attend include 4 new vestry members, 2 Clearfork volunteers, and one nursery worker. She indicated two committee members are updating the supervisory plan for children's and youth activities. The Committee is planning to conduct Vacation Bible School at St. Stephen's on the evenings of July 21-23. Ms. Anderson noted that summer children's chapel will begin the first Sunday after completion of the program year. The Committee is examining adjustments to St. Stephen's Sunday School calendar to better align with the City of Oak Ridge schools calendar.

Evangelism: Judith Delaney

Ms. Delaney noted several visitors have regularly attended church services at St. Stephen's, with some attending parish events. She encouraged Vestry members to wear name tags and to encourage the congregation to do so, as well.

Outreach: John Murphy

Mr. Murphy noted that, at its recent meeting, Outreach Committee members provided the Committee a detailed presentation of the program elements for which they are responsible. The briefings were informative and will help the Committee as a whole when it's time to re/allocate resources to the different elements. Mr. Murphy indicated there are three new Outreach Committee members and Outreach activities are going well.

Pastoral Care: Liz Herbes

Ms. Herbes reported via e-mail (absent from meeting) that Steve Herbes, Pastoral Care Committee leader, has been in contact with the Canon to the Ordinary from the Diocese of Rhode Island discussing their lay visitation program. Their program may be a model for SSOR. Mr. Herbes is to discuss with Fr. Norman.

Administrative or Support Committees

Buildings and Grounds: Lew Felton

Mr. Felton acknowledged the motion approved earlier in the meeting to repair garden shed roof. Mr. Meredith raised a concern about people parking at the base of the ramp. It is not an approved parking space and, when used as such, it obstructs parking in adjacent legitimate spaces. Mr. Felton acknowledged and will address along with the deep rut in the asphalt on the east side of the dumpster. Mr. Meredith mentioned that Susan and Jenny Meredith recently cleaned the area within the playground. A concern was raised about non/malfunctioning lights in the parking lot, lack of illumination poses a safety concern at night. City of Oak Ridge personnel have been contacted on multiple occasions regarding the need to repair the parking lot lights. They have not done so. It was also noted there are stains on the Nave's inside walls. Mr. Felton is to evaluate how to best address concerns.

Bylaws and Policies: Lew Felton

Mr. Felton stated he will speak with Fr. Norman and Mr. Sigmon about implementing absentee voting. He has been informed that a change to St. Stephen's By-laws will be needed to allow absentee voting.

Communications: Sandi Robertson

Ms. Robertson reported via e-mail Adam Ballintoy has a Communications Committee meeting scheduled to discuss SSOR internet presence and other community communication.

Finance: Cyril Meredith

Mr. Meredith stated the Finance Committee recommends that Caroline Wood, SSOR Youth Leader, be given charge of the teen library restricted fund (current value ~ \$1,300). He also mentioned this year's EYF operating fund is almost depleted. When a couch for the youth room was purchased in December 2019 via credit card, sufficient funds were in the account in 2019 for the purchase. However, the credit card transaction was realized in January 2020 and necessarily paid for from the 2020 EYF operating budget. At the end of 2019, the EYF was underspent and the surplus funds were moved to excess cash. The excess cash was then redistributed across multiple 2020 general operating accounts. The Finance Committee recommends Ms. Wood moderately overspend the 2020 EYF budget to sufficiently fund EYF this year. A motion was made to allow Ms. Woods to spend up to an additional \$1,000 (beyond current EYF budget) in 2020. The motion was unanimously approved. (Meredith/Bautz).

Parish Life: Bonnie Bautz

Ms. Bautz noted the pot luck meal welcoming the Normans went well. She noted \$468 was raised for the Rector's Discretionary fund by selling candy cakes. Parish Life is planning a July 4th ice cream social.

Stewardship: Judy DiGregorio

Ms. DiGregorio mentioned the committee is ready to engage with Fr. Norman when he arrives.

CLOSING PRAYER AND ADJOURNMENT: The meeting closed with a prayer and adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney A. Manrod
Secretary

Next meeting April 14, 2020