

**St. Stephen's Vestry Minutes**  
**July 25, 2023**

**Present:** Fr. Bailey Norman, Fr. Ashton Sims, Jim Anderson (treasurer), Leah Bailey, Adam Cavender, Tom Clary, Emily Doane, Betsy Ellis (Secretary), Ashley Hillis, Rachel Kirk, Courtney Manrod, Cyril Meredith III, Beth Reed, Jim Rousey, Barbara Steele

**Absent:** Cleon Hartman

**Guests:** Judith Delaney

**Call to Order:** Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**Opening Devotional:** Ashley Hillis

Ms. Hillis shared the Great Thanksgiving from the book of Common Prayer.

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

The agenda was approved as submitted. (Bailey/Steele)

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

The June meeting minutes were approved by vote via email.

**LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

**Priest-In-Charge's Report:** Fr. Norman

As a ministry of the Outreach Committee, the Blessing Box was blessed today and is now in service. Someone has already visited it. Michael Trank built the Blessing Box, and Tom Clary and Cleon Hartman helped install it. Suzanne Bailey will manage restocking of the contents. Donated items for the Blessing Box can be placed in collection baskets in Narthex and Hospitality area.

Fr. Norman met with Father Howard Hess to plan this year's Vestry retreat. The retreat will focus on growth of our Parish. The date for the retreat is August 26. It will be conducted at Church of Resurrection in Loudon from 9am to 3pm. After their retreat planning, Frs. Norman and Hess met with Canon Michelle Bolt to discuss St. Stephen's next mutual ministry review (MMR), as much of what will be discussed at the Vestry retreat will support the MMR. Given the substantial progress to date with Fr. Norman's return to work, it is intended that the MMR will be used to help facilitate resumption of Fr. Norman's transition from Priest-in-Charge to Rector. The MMR will be scheduled for November 2023. Canon Michelle will send questions to the Vestry in preparation for the MMR.

**Assistant to the Priest in Charge:** Fr. Sims

Fr. Sims followed up on two items from last meeting

- Clearfork—In reviewing this year's camp, there was concern about having adequate staffing each day and following Safe Church requirements. To address these issues for next year's camp, the planning committee will start the planning process earlier and look for volunteers beyond St. Stephens membership.
- Church growth—Church growth is not just about newcomers but also about growth of folks already here. Fr. Sims discussed plans to initiate this October a Wednesday evening program of fellowship and Bible Study. The meal would start about 5:15, followed by 60-75 minutes of programming for both adults and children. Childcare will be provided. The first program will be the Gospel of Mark.

He plans to offer this program in segments that account for school breaks and busy liturgical seasons.

**Senior Warden:** Courtney Manrod

Ms. Manrod personally invited the Vestry to Mass in the Grass to be held at her property this coming Sunday. She encouraged folks to bring a picnic lunch and swimsuit for the water slide and pool. Parish Life will provide watermelon and lemonade. If it rains, the 10 am service will be at the church.

She referred to an emerging momentum within the Parish and the accompanying opportunity for growth. She discussed the importance of a continued emphasis on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of work processes to best support Parish growth.

**Junior Warden:** Leah Bailey

The current ad hoc committee for the London Choir trip expires at the end of July. She requested that an agenda item to dissolve this committee be placed on the agenda for the Vestry's August meeting.

The tax-exempt form is available. The tax-exempt status with Kroger will be ready by end of the week.

WOW starts back up the third Wednesday of September. Nancy Anderson will be sending out a letter soliciting more volunteers.

**Item for Action**

**Approval of June 2023 financial statement:** Tom Clary

Total income and expenses are each tracking a little ahead of that planned for the year to date. Dr. Clary reminded Vestry that reserve funds (a.k.a., investment income savings) were used to develop a balanced budget for 2023. He noted the reserve funds will be depleted at year end if giving is not increased beyond the current pledge amount. He stated that Finance Committee is looking at additional ways to increase income to support our growth. Dr. Clary affirmed a \$30,000 increase in investment income so far this year and noted that 21% of donations are coming in on-line. The July 2023 financial statement was unanimously approved by Vestry.

**Items for Discussion**

**Safe Church:** Judith Delaney

Ms. Delaney is St. Stephen's new Safe Church coordinator. Anyone who serves at St. Stephen's as a volunteer or paid worker is required to take this training including but not limited to: clergy, youth and children's ministers, **vestry members, key holders**, lay leaders, all paid church staff, and volunteers for youth activities. Position specific background checks are also required. Reporting of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct is mandatory. The Parish is behind in fully meeting Safe Church training and background check requirements. St. Stephen's will prioritize completion for positions with most access to children and vulnerable adults and other criteria. Training is free and totally on-line. Training is required every 3 years and public records checks are required every 5 years. Implementation of Safe Church program will be formally incorporated into St. Stephen's policy. The Finance Committee has been asked to develop a plan on how to pay for required public records checks.

**Mid-Year financial review:** Jim Rousey

Mr. Rousey presented the results of the Finance Committee's requisite mid-year budget review. Projected revenues through year-end will total \$559,622, a reduction of \$21,699, primarily due to budgeting for loose offerings, prior year pledges, and disability insurance proceeds that did not materialize. Projected expenses – budgeted at \$646,075 – are estimated to climb to \$662,727, an increase of \$16,652 due primarily to inflated costs of goods and services. The FY23 budget was planned to have a deficit of \$64,774. The

projected deficit is now forecast grow to about \$103,000 by year-end. On-hand reserves (checking and investment income) currently total approximately \$105,000. The financial status at year-end (12/31/2023) will depend on how well the parish limits non-essential spending while increasing income. The Vestry and Finance Committee will develop an action plan to increase income and restore reserve funds.

Fr. Norman requested Vestry to formalize its commitment to remaining a 2-priest parish if that was Vestry's desire. The Vestry unanimously approved that commitment with the understanding that Ashton remains at St. Stephen's through 2024. (Rousey/ Hillis)

**Buildings and Grounds actions:** Cleon Hartman

No discussion as Mr. Hartman was absent from the Vestry meeting.

**Communications:** Fr. Norman and Ashley Hillis

Fr. Norman noted there is much activity under the Communications Committee. They will develop a strategic plan for communications. The goal is to present the plan at the September Vestry meeting.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Each Committee chair was given the opportunity to make a report about their committee's activities. Those committees with activities to report are listed below.

**Adult Formation,** Emily Doane

Big picture planning for next year is complete. The entire Fall program will center on the Bible. Since the anime series went well last year, plans are to do another one on "weird things about the Bible." She is looking for additional session presenters and wants to pair folks up to work together.

**Christian Education,** Rachel Kirk

The number of children enrolled in Sunday School for the upcoming school year is in the lower 20s. Seven teachers have been recruited for next year. Linda Twohig will lead Catechesis of the Good Shepherd with Jo Kelley as support. An assistant in the Catechesis Room is still needed.

**By-Laws:** Courtney Manrod

A review of all policies will occur in September and October.

**Memorial Garden,** Jim Rousey

The block wall will be repaired, the blocks repointed, and the wall painted.

**Parish Life,** Leah Bailey

Lemonade in the Grove is completed for the summer. The "American as Pie" event was a big success. She gave the calendar of events for the next 3 months.

- August 6—blessing of the backpacks at the 10am service followed by punch, cookies and cupcakes and light hors d'oeuvres in the Parish Hall
- August 13—potluck farewell for Adam Ballintoy with pineapple ribs on the grill and cheesecake
- September 10—potluck luncheon with a presentation (TBD)
- September 24—Ice cream truck from Lolli and Bobos after the 10 am service with collection of demographic information for the parish report to the Diocese
- October 1—"The Great British Wrap-up" with a presentation about the Choir's London trip and tea, sticky toffee pudding, scones and finger sandwiches

- October 29—“Family Boo-charist” at the 10am service followed by “Good Lord! It’s a Gourd! In the Parish Hall with all things pumpkin and apple
- December 3—Advent Fair

**Personnel, Adam Cavender**

The personnel files are being reviewed for completeness. Bonnie Nestor is helping with the effort.

**Nominating, Barbara Steele**

It is time to start thinking about nominations for Vestry. Provide names to Barbara.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Employees return to work, Fr. Bailey Norman**

Elizabeth has shown improvement over the time Bailey was gone on the London trip. She is able to multi-task. She revamped the full text bulletin to make it easier to hold and more cost effective. Her current hours are 9am-2pm.

Bailey’s progression continues to be on an upward track.

**Emergency Preparedness and Security, Courtney Manrod**

St. Stephen’s has taken interim action to improve security measures by placing administrative controls on building entry. A proposal is being developed to implement a key card system which will eliminate the use of the current keys. An assessment of the church’s internal and external vulnerabilities is being done by a professional from UT Law Enforcement Innovation Center. Assessment results will be factored into the overall security and emergency response plan for the church.

**Vestry Retreat/Goals, Fr. Bailey Norman**

Fr Norman stated two items for the retreat: establish developmental goals for the coming year one of which will be to develop a more robust approach to increasing income, and discussion of the MMR.

**Basketball goal/court, Fr. Bailey Norman**

Fr Norman reevaluated the location for the basketball goal. He recommends putting it in the flat patch of grass across from the back alley.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Nothing to report

The meeting closed with the Lord’s prayer led by Fr. Norman. The meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elizabeth Ellis  
Secretary

*Next meeting August 26, 2023 (Vestry Retreat)*