

Stephen's Vestry Minutes
January 19, 2023

Present: Fr. Ashton Sims, Fr. Howard Hess, Leah Bailey, Adam Cavender, Tom Clary, Emily Doane, Betsy Ellis (Secretary), Cleon Hartman, Ashley Hillis, Rachel Kirk, Courtney Manrod, Cyril Meredith III, Jim Rousey, Barbara Steele

Absent: Fr. Bailey Norman, Beth Reed

Guests: Jim Anderson (Treasurer)

Call to Order: Courtney Manrod

In accordance with By-laws, the Senior Warden presided over the meeting and called it to order at 6:30pm. With Fr. Hess (then Vicar candidate) and the new Vestry members present, each person present introduced themselves.

Opening Devotional: Fr. Sims

Fr. Sims led a Lectio Divina using the passage from Luke 10:38-42 (where Jesus visits Martha and Mary).

Approval of the Agenda: Courtney Manrod

Ashley Hillis requested that a discussion item be added to the agenda concerning an Aid to Distressed Families of Appalachian Communities (ADFAC) grant submission to the DioET Opportunity Fund. Approved unanimously. (Hartman/Meredith)

Approval of the Consent Agenda: Courtney Manrod

The Minutes of the December 13, 2022 meeting approved as submitted. (Hartman/Clary)

LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Assistant to the Priest in Charge: Fr. Sims

Fr. Sims stated that Christmas went off without a hitch. Lent begins February 22 preceded by Shrove Tuesday pancake supper. The Bishop will visit the Sunday before Holy Week. Adult confirmation class will be held on Wednesday evenings with both confirmands and parishioners invited to attend.

A new year comes with a variety of challenges. Ashton's focus is to continue to move forward, devoting most of his attention to Outreach because of new approach; Pastoral Care given the heavy need within the parish; Communications because you cannot grow a church with a social media presence; and Adult Formation which is also needed to engage parishioners.

Senior Warden: Courtney Manrod

Courtney reiterated the importance of the focus areas discussed by Fr. Ashton. She reminded the Vestry of its role and the use of Committees to accomplish it. She encouraged vestry members to review applicable policies especially: E-1, *Vestry Responsibilities*; and F-1, *Organization of the Parish and Use of Committees*. She met with Fr. Norman who asked to give everyone his best. She asked Bailey what he would like the Vestry to do in his absence. His response was to keep St. Stephen's moving forward in mission and ministry.

Jr Warden: Leah Bailey

Leah checked with John and Olivia Cox about their thoughts on the Stewardship campaign. They felt it went very well. Leah asked if thank you notes will be sent to those who pledged. John will generate a template and personalize responses.

Leah provided an update on solicitation for a Parish wide monetary gift for the Normans. The gift will help offset out of pocket expenses for the Norman's travel to Mayo Clinic. A letter was sent out to parish asking for contributions and stated this is a non-charitable donation (because it is given directly for the Normans). This campaign will run through February 5, 2023. There is no monetary goal for this effort.

Leah asked if Vestry members would like to have a tutorial to help them read monthly financial and related reports. They said yes. The Finance Committee agreed to offer a short tutorial prior to a Vestry meeting.

Items for Action

Approval of December 2022 Financial Statement: Tom Clary

St Stephen's finished the year strong with the December offering. Income was overbudget and expenditures were underbudget. The Finance committee believes this is an accurate statement of the finances at the end of the year and recommends approval of the December financial statement. Unanimously approved by voice vote.

Approval of St. Stephen's 2023 Budget: Tom Clary

Significant items affecting the 2023 budget were discussed and include:

- The actual deficit at 2022 year-end was \$7,747 (vs. a forecast of \$56,215). This reduced 2023 income needs by about \$48,500 (given St. Stephen's requirement for a zero-based budget).
- The stewardship campaign raised \$506,680 in pledges for 2023 General Funds.
- Based on decade long prior experience, an additional \$23,000 was added to forecast pledge income. The expected total pledge income was increased to \$529,000.
- The proposed budget includes a 4% raise for the staff.
- St. Stephen's is transitioning to donation-based funding for Outreach ministry. Traditionally Outreach has been principally funded by General Funds (i.e., pledged income). This is a transition year. The 2023 budget includes \$15,000 for Outreach ministry (reduced from prior year budgets of \$25,000/year). The Outreach Committee will solicit designated donations to fully fund the ministry in 2023.
- Interest from endowment funds were used to provide required operating reserve and balance the budget.
- Undesignated funds in Gifts and Memorials accounts will be used for unexpected capital needs and sabbatical.

The Vestry acknowledged John and Olivia Cox, Stewardship Chairs, and Fr. Charles Fels for their contributions that resulted in a successful Stewardship campaign. Additionally, the Vestry acknowledged the Finance Committee for its preparation of the budget proposal. The 2023 budget was approved unanimously by voice vote.

Approval of short-term Vicar support: Courtney Manrod

The Bishop discussed the benefit of additional temporary Vicar support for St. Stephen's. The DioET identified a candidate, Fr. Howard Hess, and drafted a Letter of Agreement (LOA), very similar in scope and duration as Fr. Fels' LOA. Fr. Hess' LOA begins 1/23/23 and continues through 2/28/23. Funds are in the budget for this action however Vestry approval is needed since it exceeds \$1,000. Approved unanimously. (Rousey/Hartman)

(NOTE: the signed LOA is appended to these minutes).

Approval of Standing Committee chairs: Courtney Manrod

The list of the Chair and Vestry Representative for each committee is in the meeting packet. Approved unanimously. (Steele/Bailey)

Items for Discussion

Committee expenditures: Jim Anderson

Jim met with Rachel in December about 3 invoices that she was holding. They were provided by parishioners and include sales tax. He recommended paying these even though this will be an audit finding. However, going forward Jim will take the lead on educating committee chairs about credit cards and tax-exempt letters that are available for making church purchases. A motion to reimburse the parishioners in full was made and passed unanimously. (Rousey/Meredith)

ADFAC grant application for its backpack program to the DioET Opportunity Fund: Ashley Hillis

The grant application requires the backing of an Episcopal church. It must be submitted in April and will be on the agenda next month with additional details.

Reflection: where we've been and where we're going: Vestry

Courtney stated that what we do as individuals truly makes a difference. She emphasized what the church does matters – especially in the formation of people, community, and values. It requires working together and requires us to take personal care of our mental, spiritual and physical selves. She mentioned the importance of showing up (even if we don't know what to expect), looking for the face of God, and then waiting for opportunity.

She briefly recounted St. Stephen's journey and uncertainties from the past 5 or so years to today. Each person in attendance was asked to share their thoughts about where St. Stephen's has been and where it is going.

- There is stability and continuity after many ups and downs over last 5 years. Will the Bishop continue to supply curates into future?
- St. Stephen's continued to be a church through COVID and personnel issues. We will continue into the future.
- Rudderless before Priest-in-Charge but have an Assistant to help get us into the future. There is strong leadership for when Bailey comes back.
- How does the church support people within and outside the church throughout life's phases? Each phase of life brings different challenges. Families are in crisis and need us. "Come and see" but how do we get folks to come and see?

- We need new growth strategies. There have been huge culture changes and we have to attract younger generations that don't play by the same rules. People don't know what they don't know.
- St. Stephens has been seeking stability and we were just about to get it, but it was taken away again. That makes Vestry important and crucial to health of church. We need to develop and invest in people who will become leaders in church.
- The institution of the church has hurt a lot of people. This has led to disillusion among the young people.
- There are things about the Episcopal church that are attractive to young people.
- There is fear among the congregation that we will have to start all over again. There is concern about burn out among those who are carrying on the duties of the secretary.
- Despite all challenges I am inspired by what we have been able to do.
- We need bench strength to avoid asking the same people to do things over and over again.
- Folks who do the same thing for too long can become territorial and intimidating.
- Do more Outreach within Oak Ridge.
- Times of uncertainty are when God shows up, often in new and unexpected ways. Look to what God has in mind. Pay attention.

Reports

Committee reports are in the meeting packet.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

The meeting closed with the reading of a prayer suggested by Fr Hess. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Ellis
Secretary

Next meeting February 14, 2023