

**St. Stephen's Vestry Minutes**  
**June 13, 2023**

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

**Absent:** Adam Cavender, Cleon Hartman, Barbara Steele, Jim Anderson (treasurer)

**Guests:** Liz Herbes, Steve Herbes

**Call to Order:** Fr. Norman

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

**Opening Devotional:** Fr. Sims

Fr. Sims presented a short meditation and prayer

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

Finance portion 12 a, b, and d moved up on the agenda (Bailey/Rousey)

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

Approved May 2023 meeting minutes as submitted (Clary/Meredith).

**Item for Discussion**

**Pastoral Care initiative:** Steve Herbes

There is a need for an intentional lay ministry program at St Stephens. This effort would augment Eucharistic Ministers and Daughters of the King activities. The Clergy and Pastoral Care are in discussion about starting a training program based on the Stephen Ministry which was active at St Stephens in the past. The suggestion is for 15 hours of training focusing on active listening in a way that transmits caring and empathy. This training would develop "companions" who interact with a person so they feel free to talk about whatever they want to talk about. The goal is to make the person comfortable with someone companioning with them. The training will begin in October. After the training is complete, the companions would meet with clergy to share experience.

**Items for Action**

**Blessing box installation:** Liz Herbes

A blessing box is a box that goes in a public space. It acts as a service to the community. Passersby are encouraged to take what they need or to add things they would like to share. There are several of these boxes located throughout Oak Ridge. They are stocked with non-perishable food items and personal care and cleaning items that cannot be purchased with food stamps. This falls in line with the new approach to Outreach by giving the parish more voice and knowledge about how Outreach is spending the money allotted to it. The box will be placed in an area of the grounds so that parishioners and passersby have easy access to it. Michael Trank will build the box and Suzanne Bailey will take charge of making sure it is stocked and work with the Communications Committee to advertise to the parish. Signage on the box will be in English and Spanish. Passed unanimously. (Rousey/Hillis)

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

Receipts and income are tracking on target. The financial statement was approved as submitted.

**Paid singer status:** Courtney Manrod

Because the current status of paid singers at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church as independent contractors was questioned, the Senior Warden, at the May 2023 Vestry meeting, requested the Personnel and Finance Committees both review the situation and for each committee to provide the Vestry a recommendation regarding the paid singer employment status (i.e., change employment status or not). The Personnel Committee conducted an assessment, per IRS and State of Tennessee to assess the workers' status and determine if a change in status is warranted. Additionally, the Finance Committee reviewed the current employment status of the paid singers and impacts (e.g., financial) to St. Stephen's if a change in status were to be made. Both committees recommended to Vestry in its June meeting that the paid singers employment status as independent contractors be retained. The Vestry approved continuation of paid singers as independent contractors.

**Boy Scouts of America funds disbursement:** Tom Clary

There is an account at TN Bank that contains funds that belong to the Boy Scouts from when St Stephens sponsored a troop. The Finance Committee recommends that funds be released to Boy Scouts USA and the bank account closed. Passed unanimously.

**Basketball Goal installation:** Fr. Norman

Cleon Hartman is ready to put up the goal where the dumpster is currently located. There is a site identified to move the dumpster. He is looking for someone to pour a concrete pad for the dumpster. Vestry approved unanimously. (Bailey/Hillis)

## LEADERSHIP REPORTS

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

There is a Parish commitment to remaining a two-priest parish. Fr. Sims' curacy is ending in December. Fr. Bailey would like Ashton to stay, but there is a discernment process that Ashton must go through. With guidance from the Diocese, he will explore next assignments and ministry opportunities.

Fr. Bailey has observed that Sunday morning attendance is becoming a bit sporadic. He is going to begin reminding parishioners of the importance of their presence each Sunday to build and maintain a thriving Parish community. There is a need for more volunteers, especially ushers, Sunday School teachers and leaders for EYF. He discussed the importance of Vestry members attending funerals held at St. Stephen's. Doing so demonstrates the Parish's vital support and compassion for the affected family and friends.

Clearfork Camp was a success with about 25 children in attendance each day. The age range of the children was from 5 to 17. Bailey expressed concern about the number of volunteers who were there each day which went from 10 on the first day to 4 on the last day. Given the number of children who were there, additional volunteer help was needed to best support the children and ensure compliance with Safe Church requirements.

There have been requests from parishioners for more timely communication and transparency about Vestry's deliberations. Bailey has an idea to hold a 30-minute session between services on the Sunday following the Vestry meeting to provide information about the meeting the previous week. Bailey and Courtney Manrod will try this next Sunday. There will also be an effort to get the meeting minutes out more quickly by using email to vote on approval of the minutes rather than wait until the next Vestry meeting to approve them.

Jennifer Davis has transitioned as the new editor of the E-News. Bailey asked that any feedback be given to him. He meets with Jennifer weekly.

The Stewardship Committee is ramping up and looking for volunteers. John and Olivia Cox have agreed to Chair the effort again this year. Bailey noted the importance of the need for Vestry's visible support of St. Stephen's stewardship program.

The Communications Committee made a request to publish a statement embedded within routine publications that acknowledges Pride month. The messaging is to emphasize that St. Stephen's is a safe place for all.

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

Fr. Ashton is getting back into a similar pattern that he had before last September with the return of Bailey. He is excited about upcoming events and planning for Christian Education for the Fall.

There will be a feedback session about Clearfork after the 10AM service on Sunday (6/18). Clearfork is a flagship ministry for St. Stephen's. More people should be engaged so that we offer our best to the children who attend.

**Senior Warden:** Courtney Manrod

Ms. Manrod acknowledged grounds work accomplished over the past month especially the relocation of river rock by Nancy Carow and Brent Sigmon and tree and stump removal coordinated by Cleon Hartman.

**Jr Warden:** Leah Bailey

Ms. Bailey echoed Fr. Ashton's remarks about Clearfork..

She initiated use of a Square device to accept credit card payment for baseball tickets. Rachel Durfee wants to use it for other events requiring payment. There are plans to use it for WOW.

St. Stephen's current tax-exempt certificate expires on June 30, 2023. A new certificate for 2024 will be obtained before that date. St. Stephen's is examining its status as an active corporation per the State of Tennessee as there is an indication that the status has lapsed.

## **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.

**Christian Education,** Rachel Kirk

EYF events are being communicated to that group.

**Communication, Ashley Hillis**

If there is anything that needs to be publicized, send it to the committee.

**Evangelism, Beth Reed**

Ms. Reed met with Caroline Wood about the Safe Church program to ensure we understand all requirements including multiple background checks. Safe Church program requirements and St. Stephen's implementation thereof will be an item for discussion at next month's Vestry meeting.

**Finance Committee, Tom Clary**

Mr. Clary emphasized the Committee's intention to support funding for a second priest in the 2024 Budget, subject to pledge drive results

**Memorial Garden, Jim Rousey**

The blocks in the wall have black stains on them. Several ideas for cleaning them have not been successful and removing the wall and the foundation under it is prohibitively expensive. The decision is the paint the wall.

**Outreach, Emily Doane**

A Zoom presentation is being planned with Fr. Mike Wallen who is at the Rio Grand Border line ministries in Texas. His organization was the recipient of our mite box offering, TORCH is the June ministry. The Blessing Box will be installed.

**Parish Life, Leah Bailey**

Lemonade and light refreshments will be provided in the grove after the 10am service throughout the summer. On July 2 there will be the "American as Pie" event after the 10am service. It will have a patriotic theme and six more pie bakers are needed. On July 30, there will be "Mass in the grass" at Courtney Manrod's home.

**Personnel, Courtney Manrod**

The Personnel Committee is undertaking review and update for church personnel files and records. The end goal is to have a complete set of records for each and every employee, including tax records, benefits elections, offer letters, etc. Fr. Bailey will consult with personnel committee during this process as the supervisor of other clergy and lay employees.

After consultation with an employment attorney, the Personnel Committee is examining alternatives to letters of agreement as employment documents for St. Stephen's lay staff. Alternates such as an offer letter with accompanying detailed job and benefits descriptions may be preferable as they avoid the potential to be interpreted as binding employment contracts.

**OLD BUSINESS**

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

Fr. Norman reported he is making great progress regarding his return to work and now working up to 40-50 hours per week.

Elizabeth is continuing to progress in resuming her role in the church office. She is currently working 20 hours each week and will likely increase to 25 hours per week soon. Her efforts are productive and she continues her commitment to the role and to faithfully serving St. Stephen's

**Emergency Preparedness and Security, Courtney Manrod**

St. Stephen's is taking action to improve security measures and prepare for emergency response. Doing so best positions St. Stephen's to protect people, our facility and its contents. As we prepare, we honor our mission by seeking that vital balance of being a warm, welcoming place while safeguarding all present.

St. Stephen's has convened an Emergency Preparedness Task Group to oversee preparedness planning and implementation including security improvements. The Group's unanimous first step is to quickly improve access control to and from our building. Communiques describing preparedness planning and proposed actions will routinely be sent to the Parish for their information and input.

**St. Stephen's Goals, Fr. Bailey Norman**

Review and refreshment of Parish level goals is a 2023 Vestry priority. Vestry will work with the Diocese as well as a facilitator (at its August retreat) to review and update the goals, especially those associated with successfully completing the Priest-in-Charge process.

**Vestry Retreat, Fr. Bailey Norman**

The annual Vestry retreat is proposed for 8/26/2023. Fr. Howard Hess has agreed to facilitate the retreat.

**Quiet Room, Fr. Bailey Norman**

The proposal to provide a separate area within the church for viewing of the service is still under active consideration.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Gift to St. Stephen's, Fr. Bailey Norman**

An undesignated gift of \$10,000 was given to the church from the estate of Dorothy Skinner.

The meeting closed with the Lord's prayer led by Fr. Norman. The meeting adjourned at 8:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Ellis

Secretary

*Next meeting July 25, 2023*