

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Minutes

May 12, 2020

Meeting conducted on-line 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 6:35 p.m.

Opening Devotion: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman opened the meeting with a prayer.

Approval of Consent Agenda: Fr. Norman

The following consent agenda was unanimously approved (Meredith/Delaney).

- Vestry minutes of April 14, 2020.

Approval of Agenda: Fr. Norman

An item, Painting Overrun, was added to the agenda. The amended agenda was unanimously approved (Sigmon/DiGregorio).

Book Discussion: Fr. Norman

Discussion centered on the beginning of chapter 2 of The Agile Church by Dwight Zscheile, specifically examining "faith and spirituality in a fluid and unsure age". Fr. Norman asked Vestry members for their thoughts about what church will look like in the near future and what changes they foresee in the next year or so. Vestry members said they are optimistic. They see St. Stephen's as "being there for one another" and in the process of figuring out how to do that today in face of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also said we will redefine ways to care for each other, including finding new ways to do the work of the church. Vestry said St. Stephen's will demonstrate acceptance, grow and be available in the long run for people who need church.

Fr. Norman asked Vestry what role the church plays in helping to be an example of a vibrant culture. Many Vestry members highlighted St. Stephen's YouTube Channel and virtual services as important elements in maintaining connection and community while providing spiritual nourishment. They said St. Stephen's is creating new habits and ways to be connected. Fr. Norman asked how St. Stephen's can promote good culture. Vestry responses included maintaining the parishioner phone tree to keep connected. It was noted that "normal" is where we are today and that "normal" evolves through time. The importance of retaining and broadcasting the spiritual while we help others was emphasized. Continued thoughtful incorporation and use of technology will help church to meet people where they are, especially youth.

WARDENS' REPORTS:

Senior Warden: Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon noted funding for the residence loan to the Normans have been withdrawn from the Clergy Residence Fund and that a promissory note and deed of trust are being established in accord with standards practices in accordance with St. Stephen' policy C-7.

Junior Warden: Judith Delaney

Ms. Delaney asked Vestry to consider how to stay connected with parishioners who do not use computers/smart phones. She stated the advantage of using the larger group's knowledge and hardware to connect/participate with parishioners. Fr. Norman requested a list of folks without access be compiled for subsequent review and determination of how to best address on individual basis.

Priest-in-Charge: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman noted his remarks will be provided throughout the meeting's subsequent agenda items.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

Approval of the April 2020 Finance Committee Report: Cyril Meredith

Mr. Meredith presented the April 2020 financial report and communicated Finance Committee recommendation for approval. He noted year-to-date favorable variance of approximately \$40,000. The April financial report was unanimously approved.

Mr. Meredith stated preparation of the 2019 independent financial audit is underway with the goal of completing it before the end of 2020. Mr. Meredith informed Vestry that costs related to the Nave painting project (specifically costs for protecting the organ during Nave painting) were higher than expected. Finance Committee determined during its May meeting the increase will be paid out of the Organist/Choirmaster's 2020 budget (which is underspent). Mr. Meredith noted St. Stephen's has a new check reader, allowing receipts to be read directly into accounting software and providing easily retrieved check records, as needed. Mr. Meredith noted on-line giving at St. Stephen's has increased.

Formal Approval of Chancel Floor Refurbishment: Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon discussed status of cleaning and lightly finishing the chancel floor. The work had received unanimous Vestry approval via an on-line vote the week prior to My Vestry meeting, (Sigmon /Felton)

Clergy Housing Fund: Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon noted Vestry's unanimous approval to amend the January 14, 2020, action to increase the amount of the loan to \$50,000, and amend the payments to \$83.33 per month. This amendment was approved via an on line vote taken April 23/24, 2020.

Painting Overrun

Mr. Sigmon made a motion to authorize the project cost from \$5,000 to approximately \$ 6,100 due to higher than expected costs to protect the organ during painting. Vestry unanimously approved the motion (Sigmon/Herbes).

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Website, sound system proposal: Sandi Robertson

Ms. Robertson informed Vestry that the Communications Committee strongly favors creation of a new website for St. Stephen's and that they are obtaining estimates for professional services to do establish the new site (with the staff to maintain).

Ms. Robertson discussed Communications Committee efforts to evaluate broadcast software (vs. streaming software) in support of St. Stephen's on-line worship. Their goal is to provide an environment befitting both in-person and on-line worship services.

Gifts to the Parish: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman informed Vestry that St Stephen's had received a monetary donation gift and would likely receive a second monetary donation in the near future. He asked Vestry members to consider and provide their input regarding how to best use these gifts.

Phone Tree: Liz Herbes

Ms. Herbes noted that she, Steve Herbes and Fr. Norman met to discuss establishment of a phone tree for the purpose of insuring that all St. Stephen's parishioners are periodically contacted thereby maintaining these important relationships. They discussed similar tools and will formulate a recommendation for St. Stephen's.

Ministry Roster: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman requested Vestry members provide him a list of the parishioners who work on their respective committees. Mr. Sigmon noted this information will provide important insight about St. Stephen's ability, now and in the future, to support lay ministries.

What does reopening St. Stephen's look like? Fr. Norman/Vestry

Fr. Norman initiated the conversation by asking, "What does reopening the church look like?" and "When do we open St. Stephen's?". Fr. Norman stated the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee (DIOET) has issued recommendations and guidelines for parishes to re-open churches for worship and routine activity and that he has discussed them with St. Stephen's staff. The DIOET guidelines and recommendations follow a three phase approach and allow individual parishes latitude in defining how they resume liturgical practices and community life. Parish level expectations and practices are to be enacted in a "Rule of Life" covenant. During a Zoom call on this subject with Knox Area clergy, Bishop Cole stated May 31, 2020 (Pentecost Sunday) is the earliest date worship could restart. This is not a mandated resumption date and each parish needs to account for their individual restrictions and recommendations. Outdoor services are a way to resume services. On-line worship services will continue in the interim.

In answering Fr. Norman's opening questions, Vestry consensus was that St. Stephen's should cautiously, conservatively, and slowly proceed with re-opening the church. Plans to do so should be informed by COVID-19 related data and feedback from parishioners. Efforts to enhance streaming and broadcast of worship services should be refined and implemented. Fr. Norman commented that most of the parishioner feedback he has received agrees with the Vestry consensus. Fr. Norman will issue a draft St. Stephen's Rule of Life to the parish for their review and comment.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Given the May 12, 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 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney A. Manrod
Secretary

Next meeting June 9, 2020

Reports for May 12, 2020, Vestry Meeting

Priest-in-Charge

Sr. Warden

Jr. Warden

No report

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Christian Education

Thanks to Caroline for organizing Youth Sunday with our middle and high school students covering the duties of sermon, lectors, intercessors, and musicians. She has also continued Zoom EYF meetings/activities including EYF Olympics, Social Distancing Olympics, EYF Trivia, Scripture Cookies (Bible scavenger hunt to find ingredients), and is continuing the Good Dirt Sunday school series.

I hope the vestry will follow up on Caroline's request for congratulatory letters to our graduating seniors, Fiona Yearwood and Gabe Ledford. Please mail them to the church, arriving by May 19.

I invite you to watch Jo and Linda's video providing an outline of Catechesis classes and showing how to set up a prayer space at home. They have also created activity boxes for the Catechesis kids, including books (purchased through a memorial contribution specifically allocated for our younger children), string art, slime kit, cut-outs to color and mount, and practical life activities. The children may also mail their paper creations to parishioners still in isolation. Jo and Linda have plans to do additional boxes with a Pentecost theme; the children may make a banner for Fr Bailey to use during Pentecost service.

Sherry Burchfield created a video (which is also available for viewing on the SSOR YouTube channel) for our youngest members with links to printable sheets for coloring, and suggestions for notes of encouragement to those parishioners who may need that.

Evangelism

Met Monday morning (5/11/13) with Fr. Bailey and Michael Trank to discuss current Evangelism efforts and the way forward. Due to the current restrictions, digital efforts toward Evangelism to our wider community will be the focus. We will coordinate with the Communication Committee.

Liturgics

No report

Outreach

Pastoral Care

More than 20 parishioners (including many members of the Eucharistic Visitors) are currently making phone calls to various members of our parish who live alone and/or are known to be going through a difficult time. Rides and some food and meals have also been provided by parishioners to at least two different individuals.

Steve and Liz Herbes have met with Bailey (online) to begin discussing how to best create and carry out a phone tree that would ensure that no one fell through the cracks, and that everyone in the church was called periodically. It was decided that Steve would explore with several other churches the models they have used for their phone trees and what their experience has been. This past week, Steve spoke with the Rector at St. Paul's in Murfreesboro, and exchanged emails with the Rector at Trinity in Crossville. He also spoke with the Coordinator of the Membership Program at St. Paul's, who also oversees their Shepherding phone tree program.

Hopefully the experience of these two churches will help us as we create a phone tree. Our hope is that will be an effective way to: (1) keep in contact with everyone in the parish, (2) learn about and respond to special needs, (3) recognize and make known special events, honors or involvements, and (4) give feedback to Father Norman on where a pastoral call is needed and keep him informed on special needs in the parish.

An attempt was made to hold a Pastoral Care Committee Meeting, but several of the members will not use Zoom due to security concerns, so there has been communication by email and phone but a Committee meeting is on hold.

Building and Grounds

Lew will discuss the painting project.

Bylaws and Policies

No report

Communications

Adam Ballantoy, Fr. Bailey, Elizabeth Pack, Caroline Wood, and others have continued to explore new options to bring virtual worship to SSOR online. The Youtube channel continues to demonstrate increasing viewership. Friday, Adam met with Broadway Sound to discuss streaming equipment options but details were not available at "press" time, but a quote is forthcoming by Monday afternoon.

For our virtual worship, the chapel is considered more camera-friendly than the nave, anyway, which works out well while the nave is being painted.

The communications committee, particularly Adam, Simon, and Fr. Bailey, is doing a remarkable job at being adaptable and open to considering new options in this challenging time.

Finance

Finance Committee met via telephone conference on Tuesday, May 5, 2020.

1. Finance Reports for April – reviewed and discussed the April finance report. Noted that some of the investment funds showed reductions and others did not and showed the same balance as for March. Cameron explained that he did not have the quarterly report for the Heritage or the Endowment funds from Sun Trust. The other funds are with the Episcopal Trust Company. Noted that another 1/12 of the prepaid pledges was moved from Temporarily restricted fund to the General Fund – Pledge account. The General Fund – Pledge account actual is running considerably ahead of planned so far this year. Expenses are also less than planned so far. Finance Committee believes that the Report reflects an accurate picture of St. Stephen's financial picture as of the end of April and recommends approval by Vestry.
2. Diocesan Pledge - The review of the Finance Reports revealed that we paid the Diocesan Pledge for April versus holding it as had been offered by the Diocese. Making the payment was a mistake. Finance is suggesting that we contact the diocese and find out if we can just hold May and June instead of April and May as they had offered. Bailey was going to broach the subject with Michelle Bolt.
3. Audit status – the Auditor has all information and has been paid and given the notice to proceed.
4. Organ foot pedal board – when the Organ crew came to cover the Organ for the painting, they and Simon discussed the foot pedal board. It had been sticking for quite some time and since they were here and the church closed, it was felt that now would be a good time to get it fixed. It had been self-repaired previously. The Organ crew would be doing a “real” repair. Simon did not get an estimate thinking that it would be a pretty small rice. He was surprised when received a bill for \$2,855.00. He checked with them and this also included the Organ covering. A total of 51 hours were spent plus \$55 in parts. No charge for pick up or delivery. Upon further investigation, it was learned that 20.5 of the hours were for the organ covering work. This translates to \$1,127.50 for organ covering and 1,727.50 for the foot pedal repair. Simon has had less expense than expected so far and believes that he can pay the foot pedal amount out of the Music budget. Finance is recommending that \$1,727.50 be applied to the Music Budget. Simon is being requested to evaluate his annual budget and if it looks like he will run over, he will come to Finance to discuss. As the total invoice must be paid, the \$1,127.50 for Organ covering is recommended to come from the Capital Revolving fund like the rest of the painting project. Total painting project will be \$6,097.50 versus an estimate of \$5,000. In the future, Simon will get an estimate before authorizing work and bring to Finance and Vestry before spending.
5. Finance is recommending the purchase of a new check reader for counters to use. The Auditor has recommended that we have a reader that records a copy of each check. The current reader only reads the check routing number. Rob Steele investigated a new check reader supplied by our accounting software company, ACS/Realm. It reads the check routing number, the check amount and takes a picture of the check. Having a picture will be useful when we get questions from parishioners about payments. The reader interfaces with the

software and will aid in statement preparation. Price is \$1,000. Gifts and Memorials has agreed to fund the purchase. Finance authorized the purchase. Vestry approval not required because the funds are coming from a restricted fund and the fund manager has authorized the expenditure.

6. On-line giving – we are getting more gifts/pledges on line now than in the past. We have been using PayPal and will also get the church set up with software from Realm. Realm charges for electronic giving slightly less than PayPal. When the Realm platform is up and running, we will send advice to the parish and then gently suggest that if someone is using PayPal, they might want to move to Realm. All of last year, we received about \$8,400. So far this year, we have received just over \$12,000 on line.

Gifts and Memorials

G and M approved using a \$1,000.00 donation to pay for a check reader. We also agreed to pay for an upgrade/ replacement of Bailey's computer.

Memorial Garden

No report

Nominating

No report

Parish Life

No report

Personnel

No report

Stewardship

Alan Liby will lead the Stewardship Committee this year. Others on the committee include Cyril #3, Judy DiGregorio, Rob Steele, and Judy Kidd. A zoom meeting for the committee will be scheduled soon.