

**St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Minutes**

June 9, 2020

Conducted as both an in-person and on-line meeting via ZOOM platform due to COVID-19 Social Distancing Restrictions

Present in-person: Fr. Bailey Norman, Judith Delaney, Judy DiGregorio, Cyril Meredith, John Murphy, Brent Sigmon

Present on-line: Nancy Anderson, Bonnie Bautz, Barbara Bovee, Lew Felton, Liz Herbes, Jo Kelley, Sandi Robertson

Call to Order:

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

Approval of Agenda: Fr. Norman

The agenda was unanimously approved (Judith Delaney/Judy DiGregorio).

Approval of Consent Agenda: Fr. Norman

The consent agenda, as follows, was unanimously approved.

- Vestry minutes of May 12, 2020 were not available due to extenuating circumstances. Courtney Manrod wanted to convey that she has felt loved and supported by her parish family. May and June minutes will be approved in July.

WARDENS' REPORTS:

Senior Warden: Brent Sigmon

Mr. Sigmon referred to his written summary provided in advance of the Vestry meeting. In addition, he mentioned two roles for which we need to be looking for the right parishioner to fill. All the financial systems are in a cloud-based system, called Realm. This is administered by Rob Steele. There is a need for a back up to Mr. Steele. There are additional features of Realm that can allow members to view their own financial records and can also be used for communication within the Parish. Implementation of these additional features probably requires someone in addition to those involved with the financial side.

Junior Warden: Judith Delaney

Ms. Delaney referred to her written summary.

Priest-in-Charge: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman continued the discussion of Chapter 2 of The Agile Church by Dwight Zscheile. He posed three questions for discussion on identity –how has society changed over time; how has St. Stephens changed over time; what is St Stephens known as and; how would you like St. Stephens to be known? Chapter 3 will be discussed next month.

Because of the pandemic, Fr. Norman has had more time to get to know local ministers and the church sexton. As a result, he has developed relationships with Black pastors in the community. This led him to send out an invitation to the Parish to join the Oak Ridge protest march last week. There were about 15 people from St Stephens there. What was most striking to him was the opportunity he had to have conversations with folks with whom he normally wouldn't interact. This is an invitation for us to listen to what is going on outside the walls of the church. Fr. Norman's hope is that this is not a one-time thing for St Stephens but the beginning of going out into the community and engaging people where they are. Fr. Norman had pushback from some parishioners about the invitation to the protest. He hopes that we continue to listen and get involved in the community. He asked Vestry members to jot down thoughts about this for next meeting.

Fr. Norman invited conversation on opening the church back up. He prepared a document sent to all vestry members before the meeting which is discussed in more detail below. He has heard from parishioners who want to come back to church. He is considering having an outdoor service in early July and indoor services sometime after that. When this does occur, Fr. Norman wants to do this responsibly with a plan considering all contingencies. Through conversations with Simon Ballintoy, he indicated there will be no singing initially because of the apparent increased risk of COVID-19 that results. There will be instrumental music throughout the service. He raised the issue of sending out a survey to the parish to gauge the desire to open the church. He asked vestry members to send thoughts to him about a survey. In the end, it is the decision of the Vestry and Priest-in-Charge to make the decision.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

Approval of the May 2020 Finance Committee Report: Cyril Meredith

Mr. Meredith presented the March 2020 financial report and communicated Finance Committee recommendation for approval. He noted that the church is in the black financially. The May financial report was unanimously approved.

Communications Development: Sandi Robertson

Ms. Robertson informed Vestry that the Communications Committee had received quotes for a communications system from two vendors. The preferred vendor is Broadway Sound. The quote which was provided to the vestry prior to the meeting meets the goal of providing a high quality system that will stream the service without being intrusive. It includes 2 cameras that will be placed over the main door into the Sanctuary and near the organ, and a camcorder that will allow streaming of outdoor services. It does not include a computer which Jim Ball is investigating as well as how to hardwire the system. Motion was made to accept the Broadway Sound quote (Sandy Robertson). Motion passed unanimously.

There will be an opportunity for service each Sunday because someone will be needed to operate the system. Members of the EYF may be interested.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Clergy Housing Fund Disbursement: Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman reported that closing on his family's Oak Ridge home will occur on June 15. At that time the Promissory note with the church will be activated.

Beyond the Quarantine: What will St. Stephen's and the Church look like? Fr. Norman sent an email with a document about opening the church to the Vestry. The majority of parishioners are cautious about re-opening. Earlier mention of involvement of parish in community is part of Fr. Norman's eagerness to open. But he wants a protocol for reopening. He is not pushing for a date but challenged vestry to think about it. The thought is to send out a survey to the parish as the Methodists across the street did this week. Concerns about the survey are to keep it simple, be careful not to bias answers by the way questions are asked. It was felt that it was good for parishioners to feel like their opinion is valued but as elected leaders of the parish, the vestry should make the decision. A survey will allow information about how many are ready to come back. This will help with how to set up the church when it does reopen. CDC guidelines about opening will be followed including questioning about symptoms prior to attending a service. Hand sanitizer on stands will be placed at major entrances, masks will be provided by the church, seating will be marked for social distancing; there will be no inside singing. Outside services will have a processional and recessional with cantor or instrumental for the rest of the music. There may be the need for an enforcer to make sure the health guidelines are followed. Communion will use host instead of bread and no intinction of wine if wine is even used. What happens if more want to come than we can accommodate? Bailey may have to do multiple services temporarily. Time of the outside service may change because of the heat. Bailey asked each vestry member to read the document that he provided to them, and provide annotated comments using tracked changes to him by Monday, June 15. By Thursday, June 11 Bailey will draw up a survey for Vestry to review. He asked the Vestry to pay particular attention to cleaning and set up. Areas where feedback is most needed –

- children and nursery – want to include them but how do you do that safely. Sharon Thomas is willing to come back whenever we are ready. Not sure about Connie Douglas.
- funerals – 4 already. How to do funerals that are safe but as normal as possible; funeral receptions – DOK did it “to go” for Mary Lockhart's funeral.
- If we do outdoor services, can we have some sort of fellowship afterwards.
- Opinion on sending out survey

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Given the June 9, 2020 Vestry meeting was conducted both “in-person” and “virtually” via Zoom, written reports were submitted by chairs in advance of the meeting. The reports were provided to the Vestry prior to the meeting.

Program Committees

Christian Education: Nancy Anderson

Fr. Norman is talking with folks about setting up to be ready to go in the Fall. He has talked with Caroline Woods about EYF. Jack Campbell is stepping down as leader of the Adult Bible Study.

Fr. Norman is looking for someone to step up and if that does not happen how the class might be restructured. There is interest in continuing the Thursday Book study. Fr Norman is considering continuing this after he has settled into his new home.

Evangelism: Judith Delaney

Michael Trank wants to redo the Welcome Message included in the Welcome Bag for newcomers. It would be put on a QR code that would be on the back of a key fob included in the bag. The length would be about 8 minutes. Fr. Norman, Michael, and Adam Ballintoy are meeting this Friday, June 12 to discuss.

Liturgics: Jo Kelley

Outreach: John Murphy

The committee is discussing doing Clearfork this summer via activity boxes for the children. A decision will be made in a couple of weeks about Clearfork.

Pastoral Care: Liz Herbes

Administrative or Support Committees

Buildings and Grounds: Lew Felton

A committee has been formed. The members are Nancy Carow, Tom Clary and Cameron Ellis. Brent Sigmon is talking to gardeners about keeping up the grounds.

Bylaws and Policies: Lew Felton

Communications: Sandi Robertson

Finance: Cyril Meredith

The committee hopes to have on-line giving up and running by the end of July.

Gifts and Memorials: Barbara Bovee

There is no report since the last meeting was in early May.

Memorial Garden: Brent Sigmon

Nominating: Brent Sigmon

Parish Life: Bonnie Bautz

Bonnie reported that several parishioners have asked about having the text of sermons on-line. Fr. Bailey said he would work on that.

Stewardship: Judy DiGregorio

Fr. Norman has tried to contact Alan Liby twice with no response. He will try again.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth D. Ellis
Standing in for Courtney A. Manrod, Secretary

Next meeting July 14, 2020