

## St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

### Vestry Minutes

August 11, 2020

*Conducted as an on-line meeting 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, Cyril Meredith, John Murphy, Sandi Robertson, Brent Sigmon

**Absent:** Jo Kelley

#### Call to Order:

Fr. Norman opened the meeting with prayer at 6:33 p.m.

#### Approval of Agenda:

Fr. Norman  
The agenda was unanimously approved (DiGregorio/Herbes).

#### Approval of Minutes:

Fr. Norman  
The minutes for July were approved unanimously as submitted (Sigmon/Bovee)

#### BOOK REVIEW:

Fr. Norman continued Vestry discussion of *The Agile Church*, focusing on: the concept that faith is "lived out" in the context of time and place; and the concept that churches face technical as well as adaptive challenges. Sacred texts are heard and liturgy is experienced in different ways through time (i.e., different context). Our understanding of Jesus Christ's incarnation and how we live our faith are similarly dynamic.

Adaptive challenges tend to be more "open ended" than technical challenges. St. Stephen's implementation of Clearfork and Walk-Over-Wednesday ministries are examples of adaptation, reaching out to broader community in new ways. While modification of these ministries (e.g., to address pandemic restrictions) is illustrative of a technical challenge. St. Stephen's has been actively addressing multiple challenges (e.g., onboarding of new clergy, continuing ministry in midst of a global pandemic). Vestry discussed meeting peoples' needs while demonstrating the love of Christ as a vital on-going adaptive challenge for St. Stephen's. They noted an important part of meeting needs is to be in communication, to listen and understand what is needed. Fr. Norman noted that "the church is here for the people who are not yet here".

#### WARDENS' REPORTS:

##### Senior Warden:

Brent Sigmon  
Mr. Sigmon informed Vestry they will be receiving a communique from DioET Canon to the Ordinary, Michelle Bolt, in preparation for the upcoming initial Mutual Ministry Review (to be conducted on September 2).

##### Junior Warden:

Judith Delaney  
Ms. Delaney referred Vestry to her written report. She acknowledged parishioner Michael Trank for crafting materials that support outdoor services.

**Priest-in-Charge:** Fr. Norman

Fr. Norman noted the opportunity for more in-person pastoral visits, adapting pastoral care in a pandemic environment.

## ITEMS FOR ACTION

### **Approval of the July 2020 Finance Committee Report:** Cyril Meredith

Mr. Meredith submitted the finance report with Finance Committee's recommendation for approval. There is a favorable balance for the year to date, income is ahead and expenditures are behind those forecast. The July financial report was unanimously approved.

A motion was made to withdraw St. Stephen's application for a Payroll Protection Plan loan, as offered by the pandemic stimulus program. Given its favorable financial status, it was determined St. Stephen's does not need the loan. The motion was unanimously approved (Meredith/Felton).

### **Building and Grounds:** Lew Felton

Mr. Felton has received an estimate of \$2,000 to clear trees (remove 8 trees and trim other deadwood). A second estimate was requested. A motion was made for Vestry to approve expenditure from the grounds account (GF 636) of up to \$2,000 for clearing trees. Vestry unanimously approved the motion (Sigmon/Bautz).

## ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

### **Discussion: What does "Reopening" the Church look like?:** Fr. Bailey Norman

Fr. Norman requested Vestry comment on a proposal for re-opening worship at St. Stephen's. Initial services would be early morning held outdoors with an attendance cap and no music. Later morning live streaming services would continue. Forecast to resume services sometime in September. Fr. Norman asked Vestry to e-mail him their comments on this proposal. Results from a recent parish survey about resuming worship services revealed approximately 75% of respondents had some degree of hesitancy about resuming in-person worship; 25% of respondents indicated they wanted to resume in-person worship now or in the near future; some respondents replied they would not resume in-person worship until a COVID-19 vaccine was in use.

### **Program Committees**

#### **Christian Education:** Nancy Anderson

The Committee is debating the viability of continuing Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Some are questioning the availability of sufficient adult resources to continue the program. They stated parents of affected children should be contacted to obtain their thoughts about what Sunday School education programs should provide, decide if Catechesis should continue and expressed the need to identify suitable alternatives.

#### **Evangelism:** Judith Delaney

No information beyond that submitted in written report.

#### **Outreach:** John Murphy

No information beyond that submitted in written report.

**Pastoral Care:** Liz Herbes

Committee will formalize plans for phone tree and disseminate in near future.

### **Administrative or Support Committees**

**Buildings and Grounds:** Lew Felton

Disassembly work has begun to repair damage from a prior water leak in Room 209. Mold was found inside the wall.

**Bylaws and Policies:** Lew Felton

The DioET Chancellor is working on a diocesan wide proposal for parish annual meeting voting practices. A revision to Roberts Rules of Order has been published, it accommodates exchanges on digital media.

**Communications:** Sandi Robertson

Installation date for permanent equipment has been delayed, revised date has not been established.

**Finance:** Cyril Meredith

The 2019 draft financial audit was distributed to the Finance Committee for review. The 2021 budget process will begin in September 2020.

**Gifts and Memorials:** Barbara Bovee

No addition to written report.

**Memorial Garden:** Brent Sigmon

No addition to written report.

**Nominating:** Brent Sigmon

It's time to solicit 2021 Vestry candidates.

**Parish Life:** Bonnie Bautz

No addition to written report.

**Personnel:** Judith Delaney

Committee plans to review staff salary structure.

**Stewardship:** Judy DiGregorio

Gearing up to Fall pledge drive.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Fr. Bailey Norman

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Courtney A. Manrod, Secretary

Next meeting September 8, 2020

## Reports for August 11, 2020, Vestry Meeting

### Jr Warden

While setting up for Michael Manrod's funeral, we discovered we didn't have a good way to support the processional cross and torches outside. Michael Trank has solved that problem with his phenomenal woodworking skills. The stands are pictured below. He also refinished the handles of the torches and polished them.



## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Christian Education

Children: Fr Bailey, Nancy, Linda, Sherry, Brent, Judith met recently to discuss plans for the fall regarding children's ministry. Highlights:

- We very much agreed that virtual ministry should continue - Sherry's lessons have been popular, and she has agreed to continue those indefinitely.

- Linda will be working on putting Catechesis boxes together to send out to our families.

- We discussed the possibility of having an in-person event on August 22. This is a Saturday, and it would be an event in the grove that morning from 10-12 with food and games - with appropriate distancing and mask protocols in place. **Some concerns have been raised about whether we should have this in-person event with the high numbers of COVID cases we have in Anderson County, in addition to the fact that the restart of school means that we will likely have an uptick in cases before they start going down again.** Fr Bailey has asked committee members for feedback as to whether you think it appropriate to have it. We do hope to do some other in-person gatherings once a month beginning in September.

- Regardless of whether we meet in person or not in August, Fr Bailey would like to develop some virtual community with the PARENTS. While it can be challenging to build community on Zoom, with the virus socked in indefinitely, Fr B is ready to try and do whatever it takes to enhance this community until we can do social gatherings.

Youth: EYF had an in-person gathering weekend at Grace Point, although we only had two youth families present (the Merediths and the Kirks) in addition to Brian Robertson, Caroline, Craig, and Fr Bailey. The event was fun, and everyone felt fine since they were outside the whole time either under the pavilion or out on kayaks. Caroline and Fr Bailey met and have come up with the following ideas:

- She will begin weekly IN-PERSON EYF's beginning the Sunday after Labor Day. We will combine EYF and Sunday School into one session beginning around 11:30 (as soon as online church has ended, subject to change if/when we get back to physical worship this fall). EYF will have a confirmation curriculum for conversation/discussion, but we will also do lunches and have some fun activities mixed in.

- Fr Bailey would like to engage the youth parents (some of whom, of course, overlap with having kids in the children's ministry range) in some sort of virtual ministry for now. I spoke with the Merediths and Kirks on Saturday at Grace Point, and they are definitely interested. He will contact the other youth parents directly this week to inform and invite them both to join the ideas already presented and to give any feedback they may have.

Adult: Part of this has already begun with the resumption of a new book series on Just Mercy and Fr Bailey's Bible study on Acts. Fr Bailey has had conversations with Victoria and with Jamey Kennedy about offerings.

- Victoria and Fr Bailey met and discussed possible virtual adult forum topics that could be offered on Sundays or at another time. She will present some specific suggestions to Fr Bailey soon, but we have an idea of what we might like to offer in that regard.

- Jamey is interested in offering essentially a class that would be a combination of theological reflection a la EFM and freestyle writing. Her motivation is to give people some tools to articulate and express their own thoughts and struggles with COVID and how their faith has been affected.

- Overlapping with Fr Bailey's desire for community with parents and other younger adults, there is some interest in doing topics that are related to younger adults. Keep in mind that parents and young adults are usually two separate crowds. We will likely have interest from some parents, but we need to identify not just topics but the young adults who would be interested in a topic for them. Caroline and Fr Bailey have briefly chatted about the latter, and he hopes to speak with her and some others about that again soon.

### **Evangelism**

Michael Trank has the script prepared for the new video and hopes to film toward the end of August. He also has key chains showing the QR code to go add to the other information in the bread bags which are taken to visitors.

### **Liturgics**

No report

### **Outreach**

The outreach committee met via zoom on July 26. Thirteen members attended.

1. St. Stephens shared management of the Ecumenical Storehouse with First Christian during the month of July. Due to the pandemic we were not as busy as usual but still filled an important niche to needy people in the area. Roger Johnson and Jim Kring continue to do a great job in their lead roles
2. The Committee decided that charitable organizations that we contribute to should be reviewed every two years. Review of these organizations was initiated in 2019.
3. Due to the virus WOW will not function during the remainder of 2020. We hope to resume this ministry in January 2021
4. The final "fun box" (third) was delivered to 52 kids in the Clearfork Community. The possibility of some type of weekend activity is being considered-based on the virus. Linda Twohig has done a great job in leading this effort.

The next scheduled Outreach Committee meeting is scheduled for August 20.

### **Pastoral Care**

Steve Herbes and I met with Father Norman (via FaceTime) twice and have finalized a list of potential callers for the Connection Phone Tree, as well as have written a draft of the Connection Phone Tree Program. It is now being reviewed before finalized. The draft contains the 1) Purpose and Goal and 2) Program Structure and Implementation. Once some issues are resolved, a final copy will be sent to the Vestry.

### **Building and Grounds**

1. The water leak into Room 209 has been repaired and the contractor has been notified that they can now repair the inside water damaged wall. No date has been scheduled for this repair.
2. We are continuing to identify funding for repair/upgrade of the HVAC system. The work of upgrading the control system and repairing a number of issues with our system will require about \$10,000. We have received a proposal for the work from our mechanical contractor, Volunteer Mechanical, Inc., but we have not authorized to start work.
3. As reported earlier, we have named members of the Building and Grounds Committee, but in light of the fact we cannot, and should not be visiting the church now we have not met to develop and specific plans. The members are Nancy Carow, Tom Clary, Brent Sigmon, and Cameron Ellis. We will also update our Building and Grounds Policy which is out of date.

### **Bylaws and Policies**

We sent an email to the DIOET with questions and recommendations regarding our upcoming annual meeting. The email text:

“We are discussing our 2020 Annual Meeting: timing, attendance, voting, etc, and some changes will be needed in order to conduct our meeting this year. The following information is relevant for this decision.

- It is questionable whether we would want to hold an in-person annual meeting this fall,
- Even if we did, it is questionable whether we could get a quorum to attend (more than 70% of our parishioners consider themselves in the high-risk category).
- Our by-laws do not currently allow for absentee voting, and to change the by-laws requires the same quorum as our annual meeting.
- Given that many other parishes are likely in a similar situation, does the diocese or the national church have any guidance on how to proceed?

It appears that the quickest way to proceed is to allow St. Stephens to develop and implement a some sort of one-time policy or procedure for our 2020 meeting. We welcome any comments concerning this idea or any other thoughts on this matter.”

We have not received a reply and I am assuming this is a matter they are considering for the entire Diocese.

I am developing a “strawman” procedure for consideration, but the points above heavily influence what we can do. As an example, if we can’t have an in-person meeting, which meant we can assemble a quorum of the parish, can we even legally have a meeting. Once some of these “legal” matters are decided then we have to determine the logistics of voting, allowing the entire parish the opportunity to vote if they want to.

I welcome your input on this issue.

### **Communications**

## **Finance**

Following is the Finance Committee Report covering the Meeting held August 4, 2020. The Committee met remotely via Zoom.

The Committee reviewed the Finance Report for July 2020. Through July, we are 58% of the way through the year. We have received pledges at 61% and expenditures are at 55%. Through July, the Church is doing well. We had budgeted to be \$24K negative on a Net total basis but we are actually \$7K positive. Finance Committee believes the report accurately reflects St. Stephen's financial picture through July and recommends Vestry approval.

The Draft copy of the 2019 Audit has been received. It was distributed to the Finance committee for review and comment, if necessary. After receipt of any comments, the draft will be returned to the Auditor for issuance in Final. The Final Audit will be presented to the Vestry for acceptance at a future meeting.

Brent identified to Finance that there are eight (8) trees on the property that need to be removed. At least 3 are believed to be a safety hazard. Brent has a quote from a local tree removal company that has worked for several parishioners. Work has been done well. The price to remove all 8 trees was \$2,000. Brent sought ideas of where we could fund the work. Finance unanimously recommended charging the expense to the GF 636 Grounds account. This will result in overspending that account but given the overall church financial picture, Finance believed that this would be not be a problem as the work must be done.

Rob gave an update on the On-line giving program. The program seems to be going well. Still need to work out some complications to make it easier to link the funds received to the correct account. Currently, the process is cumbersome.

Beginning next month (September), we will begin the budgeting process for 2021.

## **Gifts and Memorials**

The Delaneys gave a donation to finance a computer for online programs at church. Chap Toomer's estate left a life insurance policy as a planned gift; the interest from it will be used by the Heritage Endowment. We approved, by email vote, funds to help pay for upgrades to the HVAC. There seemed to be a glitch on the website re: wish list but has now been resolved. The Stripling fund was used to cover many items on the list.

## **Memorial Garden**

## **Nominating**

The Nominating Committee, consisting of the outgoing members of Vestry, has begun to collect names for consideration. A notice to the parish, asking for nominations, will begin being published later this week. Please give your suggestions to Jo, Cyril, John, or Brent.

## **Parish Life**

No report

## **Personnel**



No report

**Stewardship**

The committee met July 15 by Zoom. We discussed dates, timelines and structure for this year's campaign and reviewed the church stewardship list to update it as needed. We also discussed the stewardship letter which Bailey will finalize and send out later in the fall.