

St. Stephen's Vestry Minutes

April 13, 2010

Attendees: Fr. Jonathan Sams, Pastor Manisha Dostert, Deane Blythe, Bob Bagnall, Alan Giles, Don Ingersoll, Ronny Karlsson, Nancy Papet, Michelle Pickering, and Norma Ross

1. Fr. Jonathan opened the meeting with a prayer, followed by the sharing of good news from each of our lives.
2. **Clerk's Report:** Don Ingersoll presented the draft minutes of the March 9, 2010 Vestry meeting for approval. Bob Bagnall moved, seconded by Michelle Pickering, that the minutes be approved as amended. Motion carried without dissent. (Copies of approved minutes are posted on the Parish website.)
3. **Rector's Report:** Fr. Jonathan asked that we persist in your prayers for our parishioners who are unemployed or facing serious health issues. As we heard at the 10 am service last Sunday, Mike O'Neill has suffered a sudden and complete loss of hearing. He will undergo an MRI on Wednesday to try to determine the cause. Also, James Addington has died. While James was not himself a church member, his wife, Ava Lee, has been for many years; and the two of them made up a truly memorable pair. May he rest in peace, and please remember Ava Lee in your prayers as well, as she suffers from a host of other ailments.

Fr. Jonathan reported that only a few seats remain unreserved for Miranda's recognition party and that anyone planning to attend should turn in their reservations soon if they have not already done so. He explained the plans for the event. Alan Giles agreed to organize and lead a committee to clean-up after the party.

Fr. Jonathan reported that Ray Aiello has been offered the new Sexton position, and he has accepted. He comes highly recommended by his references. The plan is for him to have a 2-week overlap with Miranda before she retires. He has many years experience in building maintenance and as Facilities Coordinator at a large church. He is single and lives in Pleasant Ridge.

Ray will be our first employee in many years who has not been a parishioner. He will be working under the terms of a detailed job description prepared by the Buildings and Grounds Task Force. It is important for everyone to know that this job description does not include everything Miranda has been doing. She did many things in her role as a parishioner, not as a paid employee. Consequently, we should not expect Ray to do everything that Miranda was doing. He will be working in coordination with the Buildings & Grounds Committee, and like all staff, he will be under the general supervision of the Rector.

We will introduce Ray to the congregation once he has begun work.

Fr. Jonathan will meet with Ray on April 23 to finalize his salary and complete necessary employment documents. Fr. Jonathan requested that the Vestry authorize him to negotiate a salary not to exceed the \$15.25 an hour, which was the

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advertised ceiling. Ray's experience and laudatory references justify paying him more than the minimum in the pay range we advertised. Our proposal will be that he works a 90-day probationary period at \$14.00, and, if his performance is fully satisfactory, then receive a higher rate.

Fr. Jonathan noted that our annual budget for the sexton did not anticipate any sexton overlap, and that it assumed a \$14 per hour wage. The Finance Committee will revisit the budget and recommend any adjustment to the Vestry once the contract terms are set.

Motion by Nancy Papet, seconded by Norma Ross that Fr. Jonathan be authorized to negotiate and enter into a contract with Ray Aiello to be our new sexton. Terms should include a probationary period of between 45 and 90 days at \$14 per hour; and if successfully completed, his wage would increase to no more than \$15.25 per hour after the probationary period. Motion carried without dissent.

Fr. Jonathan reminded us that we need to decide how to address the fact that we have not been contributing to a pension fund for Miranda since she met the Episcopal Church's criteria for doing so in 2005. He has spoken with the Diocese and determined what our options are. He will now discuss them with Miranda to see which option she prefers. The amount we are in arrears is \$4,410. Once Ray Aiello works the requisite time, we will need to contribute to a pension fund for him too.

Motion by Bob Bagnall, seconded by Michelle Pickering, that the Finance Committee be authorized to provide funds to meet our pension obligation to Miranda in the manner she chooses. Motion carried without dissent.

Fr. Jonathan mentioned that 3 events are coming up, and we should try to attend at least one of them:

- The Diocesan Mission Budget hearing on May 8th from 10 a.m. to noon at Pontiac All Saints'. This will have consequences for all congregations, including ours. (Alan Giles and Deane Blythe said they would attend.)
- The Troy Interfaith National Day of Prayer service May 6th from 7 to 8 p.m. at the Troy First Presbyterian Church.
- The Troy Faith Community Prayer breakfast at St. Nicholas Social Hall, 760 W. Wattles Rd. (May 7th 7:30 to 9:a.m.)

4. **Associate Rector's Report:**

- **Safeguarding God's Children Online:** Deacon Liz has done a marvelous job of getting many of our teachers and vestry members signed up for this course. I hope you have had a chance to go through this important online course. Don Ingersoll commented that he completed the program and found it easy to use and very informative. This program is required for Vestry members.

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- Urban/Suburban Partnership: Progress is slow, but there is progress! I have met with Robin McCants, coordinator of Acts In Common, an organization that helps urban churches, and Priest Shannon McVean-Brown of St. Matty's/St. Joe's Episcopal Church on Woodward Ave. They are interested in furthering the partnership. Also, Colin Davis and his singing group, the Strolling Tones, went to St. Matt's/St. Joe's for Mardi Gras. They had a pancake breakfast together, and then sang for the enjoyment of all. It was a wonderful experience of partnership!
- Computer Issues in the Office RESOLVED!: Thanks to Geoff Walter, Don Ingersoll, and Cathy Hoffmann who worked diligently to solve some of the major challenges we were having in the office with network and software issues.
- Confirmation and J2A Pilgrimage: We expect to have 12 young people confirmed at St. John's, Royal Oak. Eight young people and 4 adults (Father Jonathan, Nancy Irey-Sams, Alan Giles, and Jeanne Blythe) will be making a pilgrimage to San Francisco, CA and the surrounding area June 22-June 29.
- Installation of 2 pastors -- Father Gary Hall and Pastor Mark Behenna: When Jonathan and I went over to Christ Church Cranbrook, and then Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church across the street, I admit thinking about partnerships. I am not sure CCC is yet at a stage that they can think beyond the ministries within their walls, although Father Hall was willing to have a conversation about youth groups. At Beautiful Savior, I was surprised how many of the members of the church wanted us to do things together. Judy McQuiston made a valiant attempt to get the church involved in the Red Cross drive, but it did not work well this time. The senior pastor was certainly excited about exploring shared ministries, so that is something to look at down the line.
- Bulletin and Witness: The Church office has requested that anything that you have to place in the bulletin that is full page be kept at full page (8.5x11) and they will shrink it! Also, Witness deadlines are changing, so things going in the Witness should probably be in by the 7th of each month.
- Generous Giving Makes a Difference: Over \$1,500 was raised via the "Caring Egg" program. Many gift cards were purchased with the funds and provided to grateful parishioners. Some \$10 gift cards remain undistributed, and will be held for future use. Also, the Pancake Breakfast netted \$400 for the youth.

5. Finance Report: Deane Blythe walked the Vestry through the Flash Report, which summarized monthly and year-to-date information. Referring to Treasurer Dave Stein's analysis, Deane noted:

- Revenues are up over the same period last year and expenses are down over the same period last year. However, the expenses for the March were \$7,321 over revenues.

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- Year-to-date revenues are also ahead of last year and expenses are also down year-to-date. Again, we are still operating in the red by \$10,617 for the year. Last year we were behind by \$19,435 for the same period.
- Monthly expenditures are in line with our normal operating expenses.
- Based on our 3 months of data, our model predicts that full year revenues will be \$35,000 short of our budgeted expenses, and we know that our budget does not include all expenses we are likely to incur. At the annual parish meeting, parishioners supported “doing the right thing” when we presented areas where we didn’t think we would have the funds to do as much as the Vestry would have preferred. Also, the costs for sexton transition and pension liability as discussed earlier are not included in the budget.
- Consequently, it seems necessary and appropriate that we ask parishioners to step up and provide the added support needed to enable us to meet their desire “to do the right thing.” About \$600 to \$700 more per week is needed. The Finance Committee will consider how best to do this.

Vestry comments supported the need to make parishioners aware of this situation. They suggested a Witness article with updates from time to time, and a very succinct “Temple Talk” in late May or June. Pastor Manisha recommended that we remind parishioners that by giving we live out our faith that God will put our treasure to better use here than we would at home.

6 Review of Vestry goals and Group Activities:

Transition and Reconciliation

Don Ingersoll reported that the Lore Committee met on March 17th and developed a strategy for meeting its objectives. In general, the strategy for capturing “the Lore” is to conduct and tape public interviews of Fr. Jonathan and Pastor Manisha on “acceptance and reconciliation” topics designed to bring out concepts and approaches that have served St. Stephen’s well. The ultimate goal is to help parishioners and leaders understand their roles in creating the supportive environment we seek to preserve as our leadership changes. Different people will do things in different ways, but having a good perspective and useful tools available can ease what is an inherently difficult process. Changing sextons is hard, changing Priests is even harder. The committee will meet again on April 19 to develop a more detailed plan and begin pre-testing topics and questions.

Building and Grounds:

Alan Giles reported that the Building and Grounds Group is still working on the scope and functional requirements for some of the Capital Improvement Plan

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projects, including the drainage issue underlying the sidewalk problem.

The group completed its Spring raking, and on May 22 there will be a cleanup day. Another date will be set soon for painting the bathrooms for which prep work has been completed. If the new bulletin boards have arrived by then, they will be put them up at the same time and do any related painting.

Looking Out/Building Up: (Building membership & reaching out to the world)

Ronny Karlsson has ordered the replacement bulletin boards. He is not sure when they will arrive. The Endowment Fund has awarded a grant to pay for them (estimated cost is between \$1,050 and \$1,100).

The Adult Faith Group has been busy executing its extensive Easter season program, and is now focusing on arranging for an evangelizing course to be held in 2 sessions in May.

Pastor Manisha added to the information provided in her Associate's report by saying that when she talked with Dave Williams and others regarding a partnership with St. Mathew's and St. Joseph's Church, they were very excited at the prospect of having a true partnership, and not just a suburban church "fixing things for them."

7. Old Business:

- The basketball court matter remains open. Reportedly, other adjacent property owners may be encroaching or dumping things on our property.
Deane Blythe, Fr. Jonathan and Don Ingersoll agreed to walk the perimeter of our land to assess the situation first hand and report their finding to Judy McQuiston.
- Don Ingersoll reported that the office staff found 4 more "Vestry tags" in various places. He provided tags to attending Vestry members who needed them, and he has 2 more left for others who may need them. Consequently, no new tags will be purchased.
- Vestry liaisons were encouraged to sign up for their ministry fairs. The expectation is that on that Sunday, in addition to hosting fellowship hour, the Liaison will do a very brief "Temple Talk" to inform the congregation about their mission. An information table should also be set up in the Fellowship Hall where Parishioners can provide input, get information and express an interest in helping.
- At the March Vestry meeting, we agreed to send an email broadcast asking parishioner to turn in keys to the Church if they no longer needed them. These were to be provided to Vestry members who lacked a key. Don Ingersoll subsequently heard that the locks to the Church would be changed when the new Sexton takes over. The sense of the Vestry was that they wanted to know how much this would cost, and why it is being done now. If the locks are changed, we need to be sure everyone knows, so that we don't have any unfortunate incidents.

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We also need a new process for assigning keys. Miranda does it now, but the new sexton will not be in a position to judge the validity of requests for keys. We should implement the new process coincident with the sexton transition.

9 New Business:

Heritage Day will be the day after Miranda's party, so most if not all of the historical displays will have to be set up on Sunday morning. Traditionally, the Hospitality Group organizes everything for the Heritage Day Fellowship Hour except for setting up the memorabilia and DVD showing our past, which Vestry volunteers have done. Various display alternatives were discussed. Alan Giles agreed to coordinate with Michelle Pickering to develop a display plan that might include putting some materials out for Miranda's party. Alan agreed to marshal assistance to execute the Vestry's portion of the set-up.

Fr. Jonathan noted that we have a lot of memorabilia, and that we should have a Parish Archivist to keep it organized. Such a person might also see to it that significant events are captured as they continue to occur, and that materials are archived in an organized and safe way.

10 Fr. Jonathan adjourned the meeting with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Ingersoll

Clerk