

# St. Stephen's Vestry Minutes

December 13, 2011

**Attendees:** Fr. Walt LaBatt, Pastor Manisha, Deane Blythe, Mark Dutil, Frances Hammond, Don Ingersoll, Karen Morley, Elizabeth Roberts, and Roy Waters.  
Guest Jim Carnagie

**Call to Order and Prayer:** , Junior Warden Deane Blythe called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. The Vestry shared good news from each of their lives. Don Ingersoll led us in an opening prayer.

Deane Blythe introduced Jim Carnagie who graciously conducted a physical inventory of St. Stephen's valuables starting last summer. The need for such an inventory was raised by our audit committee, and it is required by the Canons. Jim explained how he conducted the inventory, where copies are, and how it can be used.

Jim informed us that we are insured by the Church Insurance Company, and have \$3 million in coverage for our buildings, and \$259,000 coverage for its contents. In reality, we have much more coverage, as the Diocese has a blanket policy that covers whatever our policy doesn't cover up to a very high limit. Jim contacted our insurance agent and was told that we didn't need evidence of our contents. Nevertheless, prudence suggests having it so that we better ensure that we recover any losses.

Jim said that Fr. Jonathan helped him identify valuables and provided insights regarding origins. Fr. Jonathan also mentioned that his experience with the Church Insurance Company is that they are very fair about reimbursements. Fr. Walt noted that this has been his experience as well.

Jim explained that he took digital photos of all rooms, drawers, wall, the kitchen, classrooms, etc. His results are captured in a paper report and digitally on thumb drives (3 copies). In addition, Jim has a copy on his home computer.

Jim noted that he does not have values for things. We have some original art that may be very valuable, but getting appraisals is expensive if you can find someone to appraise them. We have all the info about the paintings, so if something happened to them, we can probably come up with a reasonable value.

The Vestry thanked Jim for using his accounting expertise to design the inventory, and for the time he committed to doing it.

Deane Blythe added that the Finance Committee will consider how to ensure that we keep the inventory up to date, and whether any appraisals are merited.

**Clerk's Report:** Don Ingersoll presented the draft minutes of the November 8 2011 Vestry meeting for approval. These minutes included a record of email

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votes taken by the Vestry subsequent to that meeting. **Roy Waters moved, seconded by Mark Dutil, that the minutes be approved as presented. Motion passed without dissent.** (Copies of approved minutes are filed in the office, and posted on the Parish website.)

**Finance Report:** Deane Blythe said that November was not a great revenue month (\$28,361), but expenses were also very low (\$24,123). Year-to-date we are in deficit by only \$9,670 which is relatively low for this time of year. The main reason our expenses were so low is that we don't have the expenses of a full time rector. Depending on how we do in December, we could have a \$10,000 to \$15,000 profit for the year. The caution is that we only have 2 Sundays left, and one of them is Christmas Day. Also, next year will be an expensive one with rector search and relocation costs.

Dave and Deane believe we should send a note out via the email chain reminding folks to plan for how to get their pledge met given the few services left this year, and the importance of finishing the year strong considering next year's costs.

The Vestry agreed that such a note would be useful with no downside.

**Roy Waters moved, seconded by Frances Hammond, that the financial report be accepted. Motion carried without dissent.**

**Rector's Report:** Fr. Walt submitted the following written report:

My first couple of weeks at St. Stephen's haven't been too bad. My first Saturday evening service was a little hectic, as I hadn't had a chance to review it before hand, but we got through it alright.

And actually, my introduction to St. Stephen's hasn't been too hectic. Reviewing and catching up with the planned services has occupied much of my time. I believe we are ready for the holiday services and the Bishop's visitation. Incidentally, the Bishop always desires a visit with the Vestry when he visits. So at our last Executive Committee meeting we decided to hold it at 9 a.m. that Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>. It shouldn't last too long as he has to meet with the confirmands before the 10 o'clock service as well. We listed the search process as the topic of conversation. I hope as many of you as possible can make it to the meeting.

I am planning on meeting with the Worship committee, but the changes I am contemplating making are so small you probably won't notice most of them. I do like to keep the collection plate on the altar during the prayer of consecration as this emphasizes the concept of offering the fruits of our labors to the Lord. I will also look for a larger priest's host for the 10 a.m. service so that it is more visible when held up at the end of the prayer. These are mainly symbolic changes, but symbols are an important part of the liturgy.

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I am planning on meeting with the lay pastoral care team and the welcoming group. Both of these meetings are mostly to get an understanding of how they see their jobs. We will review procedures so I can better understand what they do and how I can support them.

I thank you for all the support you have given me, and that you are giving to the church. I need to especially thank Dave Stein and Pastor Manisha for their help these past couple of weeks. The youth program that Pastor Manisha supervises and the cantata performed by Dr. Cho and the choir and church musicians appear to demonstrate the excellence of the programs in place at this church. I am sure if we keep up work like this, St. Stephen's will have no problem attracting an excellent priest.

**Associate Rector's Report** Pastor Manisha provided the following report.

**Welcome, Father Walt!** Bless you all for giving St. Stephen's (and me!) an interim. Father Walt is a wonderful and practical leader, full of wisdom and grace. I could not be happier. God and the Vestry are good.

- **Pastoral Care:** I have been so impressed with our lay people and the clergy who have been on call. There are 11 lay people who are assigned two to three days a month. They have been very useful and wonderful in the care for the congregation. Deacon Liz and Father Maxwell were great in doing visits when I could not. Father Walt wants to continue this program and he will meet with the lay people to determine how to proceed with this ministry.
- **YACYM:** YACYM has been amazing in picking up all of my dropped balls while we were waiting for the interim. As a result, our ministries are humming smoothly.
- **Number of events:** We have had many wonderful activities and events in this parish. Perhaps too many. I say this being the one who is most guilty of over-scheduling. However, I have heard from two staff members and a couple of parishioners that they feel that there is so much going on, we are not getting participation in the way we have before. I am not sure if this is true, but it always good to take some time to discern what is furthering the mission of the church and what is no longer serving a purpose. One example: our children's Christmas play has fewer students involved this year. Our beloved director has suggested wisely perhaps having the play every other year.
- **Confirmation:** It looks like we will be confirming the faith of eleven young people and one adult. We will be receiving one adult, too. YACYM has planned an exciting Confirmation Dinner program and it should prove to be a wonderful weekend for our confirmands.
- **The Chain and Facebook:** I am sure I am stating the obvious, but our new chain and Facebook page have been fabulous and powerful. Liz Sinkovich has been doing a wonderful job of caring for the chain. She is extraordinary in her diligence and faithfulness. Mike O'Neill has been a fabulous contributor to

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Facebook. I would like to suggest to Member Development/Communication give him this ministry to develop.

- **Discretionary Fund needs:** Every month, at least \$600 is being given away to families in need. Last month, it was double that. Could the Vestry discern whether it is possible to have a budget line item for these needs? So far we have been able to cover all our needs all year long without having to have money from the budget.
- **Mission Trip:** I was asked and am delighted to be working with the Diocese to help with the planning of the next mission trips. The 2012 trip is going to be to the Emrich Center and it is our hope in 2013 to go to the Dominican Republic.
- **Lenten Devotions:** Pastor Paul Walters of Lutheran Church of the Master and I are writing a devotional for the 40 days of Lent. We are hoping to get wide church participation.
- **Confirmands want the other video:** At confirmation class, we were talking about church and I showed the young people a great video about Reasons People Don't Go To Church. Their first response: where is the video we made for St. Stephen's? It was a surprising response and I thought, "They are excited about what we are doing here!" What buzz we have already!!!!
- **Vestry at its finest:** I have been very humbled and impressed with all of your work so far. I have loved how you have stepped up to be more visible, more vocal and more loving to your church community. You have lessened the anxiety tremendously. Do not doubt the power and authority you have been given to keep us focused on the joy of being God's people. Again and again, you have demonstrated that a response to people's fears is to be the bearer of good news: I have heard you say in your own ways, over and over again, God with us, Emmanuel! (End of written report.)

In addition to the above report, Pastor Manisha presented resolutions that IRS requires vestries to approve prior to each new year regarding housing allowances and reimbursement for clergy expenses.

### Resolution for 2012 Accountable Reimbursement for Rev. Walter LaBatt

RESOLVED THAT St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Troy, MI, in 2011 and 2012 will maintain an ACCOUNTABLE REIMBURSEMENT PLAN by which the Rev. Walter LaBatt, Interim Rector, may submit expenses for business mileage and other professional expenses as defined by IRS rules to the Parish Treasurer and be reimbursed for the same up the amount of \$2,000 or as otherwise provided in the Parish Budget. Any part of this amount that remains unspent as the end of the year may not be remitted to the employee.

### Resolution for 2012 Housing Allowance and Accountable Reimbursement for Pastor Manisha Dostert

LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the HOUSING ALLOWANCE provided to the Rev. Manisha Dostert, Associate Rector, in the year 2012, and in subsequent years,

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be \$28,000, in accordance with IRS rules. This amount may be amended with Vestry approval prior to any increase in the amount. Any part of this amount not used for housing purposes as defined in IRS rules is regarded as salary and is subject to income tax and possible penalty.

RESOLVED THAT St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Troy, MI, continue in 2012 to maintain an ACCOUNTABLE REIMBURSEMENT PLAN by which the Reverend Manisha Dostert, Associate Rector, may submit expenses for business mileage (up to \$1,500), cell phone usage (up to \$720), education (up to \$1,000), professional development and other professional expenses (up to \$1500) as defined by IRS rules to the Parish Treasurer and be reimbursed for the same up to the total amount of \$4,720 or as otherwise provided in the Parish Budget. The associate rector may carry over any unexpended education funds or professional developments funds to accumulate for use in succeeding years up to three years. Unused amounts of funds for mileage or cell phone usage will not be carried over or remitted to the employee.

RESOLVED THAT out-of-pocket HEALTH CARE COSTS incurred by the Rev. Manisha Dostert, Associate Rector, or her dependents during the year 2012 may be reimbursed upon the presentation of suitable documentation to the Treasurer up to the amount of \$2,500 or as otherwise provided in the parish budget. "Out-of-Pocket" refers to deductibles, co-pays, and other medical expense not covered by any insurance provider or other sources of medical coverage. Unused amounts remaining in this category at the end of the year may not be supplied to the employee.

**Don Ingersoll moved, seconded by Roy Waters, that the above resolutions be approved as submitted. Motion passed without dissent.**

**Parish Survey Update:** Deane Blythe said that Dave Stein has scored 110 surveys and has a few more to do. Dave wants to know if the Vestry thinks this is enough. After a discussion of the response rates by demographic group, the Vestry's sense was that we have a good representation, and that we can move on to our analysis. Frances Hammond said that once we complete this quantitative step, we will need to flesh out the results with focus groups.

**Need New Vestry Members:** Deane reminded the Vestry that we need at least four new Vestry members next year. So far, two have come forward indicating they would run. Vestry members agreed to approach possible candidates.

**2012 Budget:** Deane Blythe provided a draft budget for Vestry review, and highlighted the changes made since the last Vestry review in November. Specifics related to Fr. Walt's contract were added, and the music budget was raised to the full amount requested. We also added \$1,000 for the costs related to our delegates to convention. Our budget total is now \$488,580.

Roy Waters asked how much our pledges totaled. Deane said they were around

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\$280,000-ish, which is higher than they have been historically. Generally pledges don't come close to what we actually receive, but pledges this year are directionally favorable.

Deane reminded the Vestry that salary adjustments were to bring folks close to the midpoint of the market range for each position. The Finance Committee is not seeking raises for those that are already at that level.

After a discussion about whether to budget for rector and associate rector discretionary funds, the Vestry supported continuing our practice of not budgeting for them. We can change our minds later if doing so becomes necessary. Fr. Walt noted that the amount that have been passing through our discretionary funds are unusually high. We run more through it than churches with over twice our attendance. He suggested leaving our process alone because we can't be sure how folks would react to having an amount in the budget.

The Vestry did not suggest any other adjustment to the draft budget. Deane said that the Finance committee would take one more look at it as the year-end numbers solidify. A final draft will be presented at our January meeting with a recommendation for the Vestry to support its passage at the congregation's Annual Meeting.

**Interview Team Selection Process:** We didn't receive any criteria from Canon Gray other than that we should have about 12 or 14 on the team representing a cross-section of the congregation. The Team shouldn't have more than 3 Vestry members and the Senior Warden should not be one of them. Canon Gray also told us not to issue a broadcast for people interested in serving, as doing so often brings out people with "an agenda" which can complicate the discernment process.

Vestry members passed along the names of folks who had mentioned to them an interest in serving. These names were recorded as volunteers. The Vestry then brainstormed names of "non-volunteers" they thought would be good representatives of mission areas and demographic segments of the congregation. Frances Hammond agreed to send an email to these folks (with addressees hidden) saying essentially, "Your name came up as someone who might be a good candidate for the rector interview team. Would you be interested in serving? Saying yes is no guarantee that you will be selected. We have a limited number of slots and need to ensure a cross-section of mission and demographic groups. At this point we are just building a big list of candidates." This email would also lay out what they would do, (receive resumes, make calls to boil the list down, visit finalists, and make a recommendation to the Vestry).

**Narrative Questions for Our Profile:** Deane noted that at our last meeting we didn't come to closure on how best to develop and harmonize answers to the 9 questions provided by Canon Gray. We agreed that it is best to do all 9 questions even if only 5 are required.

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After a discussion about process, we all agreed to take a stab at any questions for which some thought occurred to us, and to send them to all other Vestry members for their consideration, tweaking, rewriting or whatever. The expectation is that we will be able to build on each other's thought until we get good drafts on all 9 questions. When we offer comments or original ideas, we should "reply to all" so we can keep the momentum going and the ideas flowing. We also agreed that Mike O'Neil would be a great addition to this effort because of the writing skills and insights he has shown by his contributions to our Facebook page.

Frances Hammond agreed to send out the questions to us all to get the process rolling. Fr. Walt will review our final drafts as a candidate would, and, to ensure that we are accurately capturing and representing ourselves.

**Saturday Services:** Fr. Walt reported that he and Dave Stein talked to the attendees of last Saturday's 4:30 p.m. service to discuss options for future services. They found that the Saturday service is the only service several can attend for various reasons. Therefore, it seems important that we continue it. It was agreed that Pastor Manisha would continue to do 2 services per month as she currently does (perhaps with some occasional help from Fr. Walt). On other Saturdays, Deacon Liz will do an evening prayer. We might also use our Eucharistic ministers for this role if they get the necessary training. So, we will continue to cover Saturday services, but not necessarily have a Eucharist every Saturday. This was OK with the Saturday attendees. We will prepare a schedule and make it know to the parish. This will start the second week in January.

The Vestry was satisfied with this arrangement. Frances Hammond suggested that we look at it again in a few months to see how it is working from all perspectives and make adjustments if desirable.

**Annual Reports for all ministries** are due to the Office by January 9<sup>th</sup>. A checklist has been sent to each of us. If another copy is needed, ask the office. They can also provide electronic copies of last year's reports, which are often helpful to drafters.

**Bishop's visit:** Fr. Walt reminded us to try to attend the meeting with the Bishop at 9 a.m. on January 8. He added that we should be sure to wear our nametags, and encourage the congregation to wear their nametags that day too.

**Adjournment:** Roy Waters moved, seconded by Mark Dutil, that the meeting be adjourned. Motion passed without dissent. Fr. Walt closed the meeting with a prayer at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:  
Don Ingersoll – Clerk

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### Action taken subsequent to the December 13, 2011 meeting via email voting:

Moved by Deane Blythe, seconded by Don Ingersoll, that the following resolution be approved:

#### Resolution for 2012 Housing Allowance and Accountable Reimbursement for Fr. Walter LaBatt

**LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the HOUSING ALLOWANCE provided to Fr. Walter LaBatt, Interim Rector, in the year 2012, and in subsequent years, be \$6,000, in accordance with IRS rules. This amount may be amended with Vestry approval prior to any increase in the amount. Any part of this amount not used for housing purposes as defined in IRS rules is regarded as salary and is subject to income tax and possible penalty.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**