

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2022

Present: Sean Albert, Jon Ewbank, Carol Gaige, Meg Hughes, Sandee Hughes, David Kennison, Debbie Lambeth, Lynn Paska, Paul Smigelski, Rich Unger, Jeff Wengrovius

Absent: None

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting on Zoom at 7:05 p.m., beginning with a prayer of supplication from the Book of Common Prayer, asking for a blessing of Vestry and its work.

Rich Unger moved to accept the December minutes; Jeff Wengrovius seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Senior Warden's Report

David Kennison informed Vestry that he and April Stromberg had been in touch regarding the end date of Father Matt's salary and benefits, including use of the rectory. April sought an extra week of access to the rectory, to coincide with her school vacation time. Her request was made very graciously and she was granted the extension, for which she was extremely appreciative. The official move-out date has now been moved to February 25.

The eviction of former sextons Sondra and Jeremy Kravetz occurred without incident on January 4 and the locks have been changed. The living quarters need work. There is an apparent leak from the roof that has ruined the bathroom ceiling.

The thermostat in the sexton apartment will soon be moved to Brian's apartment for more efficient control of heating in the complex.

David noted that Rich Unger has drafted job descriptions for George Soltysiak and Liz Catala. David will review them in February.

Upcoming Services and Supply Clergy

- January 23 and 30 – Fr. Richard Lehmann

- February 2 (Candlemas, Presentation of Our Lord) – Fr. Dale Van Wormer, Rector of St. Matthew’s & St. Paul’s, Unadilla & Sidney
- February 6-27 – Fr. Richard Lehmann
- Ash Wednesday and beyond – Fr. Richard Lehmann

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting on January 23 will be held in church instead of the Great Hall, due to COVID-19 protocols. The agenda will be brief: (1) voting, (2) State of the Parish, (3) financial review. Parishioners may attend in person or via livestream.

Rector Search to Begin

Vestry looks forward to meeting with Mtr. Elizabeth Papazoglakis on January 30 at 12 noon in the Shaw Lounge to kick off the rector search. She will review the search process with us, including the documentation (e.g., parish profile, what we seek in a rector, etc.) and other prep we will need to accomplish. We should also prepare a parish survey and hold a parish-wide discussion.

Gilded Age?

David advised Vestry that John Hutchinson, a location scout from the new Julian Fellowes TV drama series “The Gilded Age” is interested in looking at St. George’s as a potential location. The scene to be filmed would be an Easter service set in 1883. Vestry felt that our property would serve well for this purpose, and approved moving ahead with a visit by the scout.

Junior Warden’s Report

Jon Ewbank noted that the following projects are still incomplete:

- Reinstallation of Cranmer House stair railings.
- Hallway retiling – project on hold pending funding.
- Refasten gutter strap on northeast corner of the church building.
- Repainting of the sanctuary ceiling.
- Estimates on parking lot renovation.
- Repairs to the rear door of Cranmer House.
- Replacing office air conditioners.
- Repairing rectory garage door opener.

- Correcting light fixture/switch issues in Rectory downstairs bathroom and 2nd floor bedroom.
- Replacement of floor polisher/buffer.
- Establishment of routine maintenance of boiler systems
- Repair of leaks in Brian's apartment – bathroom and bedroom
- Repair of damaged/missing storm window to Brian's bedroom window. Chris Peters has inspected the damaged bedroom window of Brian's apartment. An estimate and repair are pending. Rich asked that he be looped in on any building modifications so he can help assure that they are done in compliance with Historic District guidelines.
- Reestablish key control over all property locks.

Treasurer's Report

Jeff Wengrovius and Bob McCloskey worked diligently to close the books for 2021. This entailed reconciliation and review of all 2021 income and expenses reviewed in detail. Seven expenses accrued in 2021 have been carried over into 2022 due to checks not being cashed.

Jeff notes that the number of pledging units is low (with only 19 responses) yet still we have \$76,700 pledged for the year, as many have stepped up their contribution amount. Six of 11 Vestry members have pledged. Jeff encouraged the remaining members also to register their giving plans.

Our most recent gas/electric utility bill was \$3,600, the highest ever. We hope that expense can be better controlled now with the sextons moved out and better management of the thermostats.

Jeff has not had the opportunity to complete a list of budget income and expense line-item assignments as requested last month by Rich and others on Vestry. He is working on a brief PowerPoint presentation for the Annual Meeting, which he will distribute to Vestry in advance.

Community Liaison Report

Rich Unger had nothing to report. The Association has not met since before Christmas.

Book Club

Meg Hughes reports that the club will discuss *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman on March 20.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes notes that coffee hour and other gatherings using the Great Hall have been canceled until the COVID-19 spread begins to lessen. Our next possible events would be Easter and St George's Day.

The cleaning of the Great Hall kitchen got off to a great start on December 29. Hopefully this can resume soon. We also still need to have people trained to use the new dishwasher.

Communications

Lynn Paska informed Vestry that the website now features a picture and caption on Fr. Thomas Pettigrew's Epiphany Mass at St. George's.

The deadline for the March issue of the Georgian Report is Friday, March 4.

Archives

- Sean Albert notes that a January 17 meeting of the archive sorting team was canceled due to COVID-19 concerns, weather issues, and illness. A new date will be set when circumstances allow.
- The SEFCU branch in Niskayuna has a shredding bin available to the public. Sean would like volunteers to take a box or two per week to be disposed securely. The material to be shredded consists of outdated financial records and outdated pledge records examined by Rich Unger, David Kennison, and Bob Paska. Bob Paska has offered to review and mark boxes before they leave our campus for shredding.
- Outdated bulletins. Do we want or need to save outdated bulletins from the 1990s?
- Storage of architectural drawings and the conversion of these documents to a digital format need to be considered.

Outreach/ALM

(The following report was received from Alice Polumbo.)

There was minimal community St George's outreach activity in 2021. One particular bright spot, however, was renewed, invigorated support of Schenectady inner City Ministries food pantry, located at 839 Albany Street. Monthly collections were presented for blessing via the "little red wagon" before being delivered to the food pantry. 1,532 pounds of personal care items and non-perishable food was donated. In addition, at the November 14th Choral Evensong, an address was given regarding food pantry operations by food pantry supervisor Tom Schofield. On that occasion one-half of monetary donations received were dedicated to the food pantry, netting them \$257.

St. George's was prepared to support SiCM's annual summer lunch program the week of August 16 to 20 at Wallingford Park, 5th and Congress Streets. Unfortunately, a COVID exposure forced a program wide shutdown that week.

Georgians once again took part in the annual Salvation Army holiday Bell Ringing campaign. On Saturday, December 11th, Jamie Taft, Rich Unger, Bob and Lynn Paska, Jean Greenspan, Jon Pearson, David and Anne Kennison, Tarik Wareh, and Sean Albert could be spotted ringing the bell throughout the day at the Eastern Parkway Market 32.

St. George's assisted living ministry (ALM) remained on hiatus through all of 2021.

Pastoral Care

(The following report was received from Jim Wingate and Ann Duff)

For our committee, 2021 was very much like it was for the rest of our country and the world, a series of starts and stops, hopes and fears, promise and disappointments. From January through April we were basically restricted to phone calls and cards. Visitations were not allowed or simply too dangerous for all involved. We worked hard to phone those we normally visited in person to check on how they were doing and to try to keep their spirits up. For some that meant a check in once a month. For a couple it meant follow-up calls as their frustration with isolation was evident. By May we were all vaccinated and society opened a bit. We started trying to make visitations but had to remain very flexible as nursing facilities changed policies for visits on a weekly, daily or even hourly basis. Yes, hourly. We once got clearance at 10 a.m. for an afternoon visit but when we arrived at 1 p.m. were told a case of COVID had been discovered and they

were now closed. While we continued our normal visitation process, in reaction to the isolation felt during this pandemic we added lunch dates and even a ride of some distance that allowed a family visit bringing joy to all. In early December prior to the Omicron spike we were able to make our annual poinsettia deliveries.

2020 was also a year of losses. The first was Shirley Fahey who we had visited for many years at the Daughters of Sarah. She was always so glad to see us and comforted by receiving Communion. Rodgers Cheeks was one of the people we kept track of by phone. We were able to visit him in the hospital shortly before his passing. His daughter told us how much he enjoyed the calls and discussions we had. Long time parishioner Dottie Kennison was another major loss last year. During one of our last visits with Dottie she told us how she always felt at peace after receiving the Blessed Sacrament. We miss seeing her when we visit Kingsway.

The numerical summaries below do reflect what 2021 was like. Actual visits and Communion received were down but the effort to make these visits was much greater. Phone calls were not only more numerous but they were longer and more important. The card ministry sent about the same number of cards.

As always, the committee appreciates all parishioners who have helped us keep track of those who might need our services. I am especially thankful for Ann Duff's dedication to this ministry and her flexibility and willingness to adjust to all the twists and turns scheduling have taken this year.

Visitations (homes, hospitals, nursing facilities)—51

Communion received—44

Telephone calls—70

Cards sent (birthdays, anniversaries, Easter, Thanksgiving, cheer, get well, Christmas)—375

New Business

Extension of Rectory Usage?

Paul Smigelski, who maintains a friendly relationship with Matt Stromberg, confirmed that our former rector has part-time work and is searching for employment as a priest. (Note: Any on Vestry who are approached for a reference may speak about Matt's

capabilities in a general way, but should refer questions about his official clergy status to the Albany Diocese.)

Paul made a motion that we extend Matt's living arrangement until June to enable him to remain geographically close to April and the children. We could ask him to cover the cost of utilities. Paul also believes that it is in the interest of the church to have someone living in the home and maintaining it rather than having it empty.

David seconded the motion and opened the floor for discussion. Vestry were not generally in favor. A few commented that our priority must be cleaning and completing needed repairs to the rectory in preparation for the next occupant. Some noted that an extended residency may not necessarily be a positive factor for Matt himself. As for the building being empty, we can ask Sexton George Soltysiak to check it on a daily basis to assure that the furnace is working and pipes, windows, etc. remain intact.

The motion was put to a vote. One voted in favor, one abstained, and nine voted nay. Motion denied.

Solar Proposal

Bob McCloskey has received an inquiry from NOCO Energy Corporation, a family-owned and operated corporation based in Tonawanda, NY (a suburb of Buffalo). NOCO is participating in NYSERDA's NY-Sun program wherein companies may invest in a "solar farm" and thereby enjoy a reduction in electric costs. The proposal from NOCO was short on details and promised only a rebate of "up to 10 percent."

If St. George's wishes to pursue an energy strategy that includes solar power, there are many avenues we could follow. Vestry feels that the matter bears further study, and sought to table the idea pending more information. Sandee Hughes's daughter, Shannon Hartz, is employed in the solar industry and will try to learn more about NOCO in the meantime.

Outreach Needed

David asked for a volunteer to head up outreach efforts for the church. We currently have limited relationships with local charities (specifically, SICM and Salvation Army) and we should bolster our efforts, both for the good of both the church and the community. Jeff indicated a willingness to assist from a financial perspective, but Vestry refrained from making any commitments. This topic will be revisited.

Old Business

David urged Vestry to focus on any 2022 programming plans that seem appropriate. What can we do to foster fellowship within the parish? Jeff noted that Foyers is ongoing (but in a limited capacity due to COVID-19). The status of the pandemic makes it hard to plan, but we should begin coming up with ideas. One possibility would be a high-visibility outdoor activity (either for churchgoers only or something at which Stockade residents are welcome) but nothing was decided.

The cleanout of the Great Hall is on hold due to high COVID-19 transmission rates, but prospects are encouraging, and Meg Hughes promised to announce some new dates for volunteering very soon.

Adjournment and Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m., per a motion made by Jeff and seconded by Lynn. The next regularly scheduled Vestry meeting will be at 7 p.m. February 17, 2022.

Respectfully,
Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk