

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2022

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

Absent: Paul Smigelski

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting on Zoom at 7:02 p.m., beginning with a prayer.

Jon Ewbank moved to accept the January minutes; Jeff Wengrovius seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Senior Warden's Report

David Kennison updated Vestry on the imminent departure of Fr. Matt Stromberg, former rector. Last month, Matt's wife April was granted a week's extension for leaving the rectory (original date February 18 moved to February 25). According to David, April has asked her husband to vacate by no later than February 20 (this Sunday) so that she will have time on her own to collect her things and clean the residence, leaving it in the condition in which they found it.

Fr. Matt has been interviewing for an interim rector position in the Philadelphia area. If he is hired, the job will begin after Easter. Matt will be able to live temporarily at the Spiritual Life Center in Greenwich while he goes through the process of finding new living quarters in Pennsylvania. David helped Matt pack up the contents of his office and the boxes await pickup in Cranmer Hall. Earlier this week, Matt received his last paycheck from St. George's. He will drop off his rectory keys to either David or Brian Taylor.

Former Sextons

There have been no more communications with Sondra and Jeremy Kravetz since their departure on January 4. A few items of correspondence meant for them have arrived at the church, but we have no forwarding address on file.

Job Descriptions for George Soltysiak and Liz Catala

Rich Unger has drafted job descriptions for the sexton and cleaner roles. David will finalize the descriptions with Rich soon. The employees can then officially review and agree to their respective job descriptions, so their performances can be measured properly going forward.

Sadly, George is in poor health due to a fall injury and a recent surgery. While he recovers, his friend Tommy Sarchioto is helping by doing odd jobs around the campus as needed. This temporary arrangement is far from ideal, and we don't expect to continue it long-term.

Gilded Age Scout Visit

There have been no further inquiries from the production staff of the Julian Fellowes TV series *The Gilded Age*. Some scenes for the second season of the show are being filmed in Troy.

Upcoming Services and Supply Clergy

In the absence of a rector, St. George's has no plans for a Lenten lecture series such as we have enjoyed in past years. We do have Fr. Richard Lehmann committed to serving as supply clergy throughout Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday on March 2. We will have Stations of the Cross featured on Friday evenings, time to be announced.

We will celebrate St. George's Day on May 1. The Schenectady Pipe Band have agreed to participate.

Dr. Taylor will present a Choral Evensong on May 15.

Review of Annual Meeting and 2022 Objectives

David reiterated the three main goals for St. George's as announced in our Annual Meeting last month:

- Rector search
- Financial audit
- Church property assessment

Further information on each of these topics appears under "New Business" below.

Updated COVID-19 Policy

Since the New York State mask mandate expired February 10, St. George's no longer requires that face coverings be worn at worship. The Diocese of Albany Standing Committee has asked each parish to form its own policy. Our policy is that masks are

recommended but not required. The choir will wear masks while they are singing in procession and may remove them when they are singing from the loft.

Diocesan Convention 2022

The Albany Diocese Convention will be held June 3, 4, and 5, at the Silver Bay YMCA Conference Center.

Junior Warden's Report

Jon Ewbank recently inspected the empty sexton apartment in St. George's House. An apparent roof leak has resulted in mold forming in the bathroom ceiling. There is also evidence of second leak in the ceiling of one of the bedrooms, and several holes in the drywall need repairing. The entire apartment requires painting and other basic maintenance. Except for the leaks and mold, however, these other issues can be addressed gradually over time, as we have no immediate plans for the apartment to be occupied. The thermostat for the building has been relocated to Brian's apartment, and while we cannot turn off the heat altogether, we now have better control of the temperature. Jon will get someone to investigate the source of the leak(s) and obtain estimates for roof repairs.

Treasurer's Report

Jeff Wengrovius stated that with 13% of 2022 behind us, we already have received 22% of our anticipated pledge income for the year. Expenses are more or less on target, with no unexpected outlays so far. We have been able to pay ahead on altar guild supplies, insurance, and some utilities. Gas and electric costs have risen steeply, and we will undoubtedly exceed our budget on those commodities. Our maintenance budget is also in jeopardy of being overspent, with a recent purchase of a pallet of ice melt crystals.

Jeff has prepared a "Guide to Reading our Financial Statement" which he provided to the Vestry. This document is a work in progress and comments are welcome.

Jeff asked Vestry to comment on whether we should continue using pledge envelopes. It's not a huge expense (~\$300 annually) but parishioners are increasingly paying electronically so he is questioning whether we should continue the use of the paper-based tracking technology. Vestry agreed that we should look more closely at this practice, with a goal of possibly phasing the envelopes out for 2024.

Another anticipated change for St. George's will be the transition of our checking account from Trustco Bank to Scotia 1st National Bank. Jeff says he has not been satisfied with the relationship with Trustco. He is still finalizing the details with the new bank but expects to proceed with making the change. Scotia 1st National has a branch on Erie Boulevard (right around the corner from Trustco).

Community Liaison Report

Rich Unger had no Stockade updates to share. Residents are keeping a close eye on Mohawk River levels.

Book Club/ALM/Garden Club/Great Hall Cleaning

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

ALM and Garden Club are on hiatus.

The Great Hall cleaning effort has been moving ahead quite successfully. A team worked on the kitchen earlier this afternoon and all appliances now appear to be functioning satisfactorily. There will be another "dumpster-filling party" on February 21, beginning at 1 p.m. A layer of old linoleum will be removed from the large east-facing room on the second floor. For safety, we will inspect it before proceeding to assure that asbestos does not pose a hazard.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes commented that her budget for refreshments will easily be expended on coffee hour basics with little remaining for special luncheons. She would like to reinstitute the practice of having a jar for monetary contributions on conspicuous display during coffee hour. She has tentative plans for a pancake breakfast to be offered after church on Sunday, February 27. Details to be announced.

Communications

Lynn Paska informed Vestry that pictures and captions are now up on the website for the annual parish meeting and the initial search committee meeting with Mother Elizabeth.

The deadline for the March issue of the *Georgian Report* is Friday, March 4. Early submissions would be appreciated.

Archives

Sean Albert had no updates.

New Business

Rectory Residence Extension?

Father Matt had inquired of David whether he might be allowed yet another extension of his residence in the rectory. While we are sympathetic to our former rector, we don't see the logic of allowing him to stay in residence any longer than the already agreed-upon interval. The parish needs closure, and he needs to begin the relocation process. Sandee made a motion that the request be denied; Debbie Lambeth seconded it. The motion was carried unanimously.

Rector Search Meetings and Roles

Our rector search must begin in earnest. Vestry agreed that we should add another monthly meeting to the schedule for the express purpose of focusing on the many tasks related to the effort. These meetings will be on the first Thursday of each month. We also agreed that in-person meetings should resume, and that they should begin at 6:30 p.m. instead of 7. For each meeting date, Jon is willing to set up a Zoom link to accommodate anyone who is unable to attend in person, and/or in the event of inclement weather.

Meg has offered to act as chaplain of the rector search, and Jeff has volunteered to coordinate a parish survey. David has agreed to be the search committee chairperson. Jeff made a formal motion to nominate the above-named individuals to those roles. Jon seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. Jeff asked Sandee to assist him on the survey preparation, and she agreed. He may also recruit another individual for that subcommittee.

Church Property Evaluation

David outlined his thoughts regarding the stated objective of surveying the status and utility of each of the parish's five buildings this year. The near-term goal is to gather data and create a long-term action plan for repairs and/or changes in occupancy. He has asked Jon to head up the effort, and Jon agreed to tap Rich for assistance, as Rich has

deep knowledge of the issues. Another individual who is not on Vestry may also be recruited for the committee. Lynn moved that the committee be formed as described above. Sandee seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor except one member who abstained from voting.

External Audit

The audit planned for 2022 will be performed by professionals, supported by a committee of Georgians who are not directly involved in the financial workings of the parish. Thus, David cannot be on the committee nor can Jeff. David does believe that Jon Pearson (a former treasurer and current advisor) is suitable to lead the effort, however. He would like to see Jon assisted by Ralph Polumbo and Paul Smigelski. Jon Ewbank made a motion that the above-described committee be launched. Rich seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Old Business

Solar Proposal

Sandee has consulted with her daughter, Shannon Hartz (who works for Kasselmann Solar), regarding the community solar farm proposal put forth by the NOCO Energy Corporation. Shannon feels that the company and proposal are legitimate but cannot opine as to whether it would be the right move for St. George's. If we do want to consider the addition of solar power in any form, we would need to research it more fully and seek a variety of proposals. Jon moved that we table the discussion for now. Jeff seconded the motion, and all voted aye.

2022 Programming and Outreach Still Needed

David repeated his inquiry about 2022 programming plans. What can we do to promote engagement within the congregation and the community?

David also continues to request that a member of Vestry volunteer to head up outreach for the church. It isn't fair to Alice Polumbo that we continue to rely on her to coordinate the entire effort. We should have a new committee head and build on the work that Alice has done.

Adjournment and Next Meetings

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m. Upcoming meetings will be as follows:

- 6:30 p.m., March 3—Rector Search Committee
- 6:30 p.m., March 17—Regular Monthly Vestry Meeting

Both are projected to be in-person meetings in Cranmer Hall (with Zoom backup available in the event of unsafe travel conditions).

Respectfully,
Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk