

## **St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes**

**March 17, 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

Guest: Jon Pearson

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting on Zoom at 6:39 p.m., beginning with a prayer.

Lynn Paska moved to accept the February minutes; Carol Gaige seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

### **Senior Warden's Report**

David Kennison confirmed that Fr. Matt Stromberg vacated the rectory on February 20, and is currently living at the Spiritual Life Center, where he may remain until March 30. April Stromberg moved out February 24, with a good deal of assistance from some Vestry members and other Georgian friends.

David also updated Vestry on Liz Catala, our part-time cleaner. She has a full-time job and another part-time job. Working at St. George's is a challenge for her on top of other obligations. She agreed to continue cleaning for us a little longer, and Bob McCloskey claims he has convinced her to stay. In the meantime, however, David has been in touch with a potential replacement, a married couple who are bonded and insured and specialize in cleaning churches. Perhaps we can contract with them to do a deep clean of the rectory, and possibly arrange for them to continue cleaning our other buildings longer-term, if we can make it work within our budget.

In other staff news, George Soltysiak has indicated that he might want to leave St. George's employ because his income level was forcing a reduction in his housing benefit. Vestry agreed that it might be best for George to move on.

*Parish Register Records*

David recently discovered that Baptismal, Confirmation, Marriage, and Burial records have not been recorded properly in our parish register books since Fr. Matt began as rector. This information must be recreated from other available documents, such as bulletins, newsletters, and whatever additional records Bob or Brian may have, and entered into the record.

### *Upcoming Services and Supply Clergy*

Current programming includes services Wednesdays at 9 a.m. and Fridays at noon. Stations of the Cross are also being held at 5:30 p.m. on Fridays during Lent. Also on the schedule:

- The Annunciation, noon, Friday March 25—Fr. Thomas Pettigrew
- Palm Sunday, April 10—Fr. Richard Lehmann
- Maundy Thursday, April 14—Fr. Richard Lehmann; Altar of Repose until 12 midnight
- Good Friday, April 15—Fr. Richard Lehmann
- Easter Vigil, April 16—Fr. Richard Lehmann/festive reception in GH
- Easter Day, April 17—Fr. Richard Lehmann/light reception?
- St. George's Day, May 1—Fr. Richard Lehmann, Pipe Band is scheduled
- Choral Evensong, May 15—Benefit for YWCA
- Ascension Day, May 26—Thursday (guest clergy?)
- Pentecost, June 5—Fr. Richard Lehmann

### *Vestry Teams*

- The Rector Search has been launched and preparation of a parish survey is in process. We will have separate Search meetings on the first Thursday of each month until a rector is called.
- An Audit Committee has coalesced, to consist of Jon Pearson, Ralph Polumbo, and Paul Smigelski.
- A Building Committee is forming. It will be led by Jon Ewbank and include Rich Unger and another at-large volunteer.

### **Junior Warden's Report**

Jon Ewbank had no report. He is in peak season with his full-time employment, which has precluded him from performing his volunteer duties as Junior Warden.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Jeff Wengrovius offered a brief report. According to Jeff, our expenses and income are fairly well balanced at this time, but cash flow is tight. We recently took \$2,800 of accumulated endowment interest from General and approved Restricted funds.

Jeff announced that his son Sam is now paying \$50 a month for the use of the large rummage room in the Great Hall, which he is using to store used books.

Our National Grid bills continue to be worrisomely high. The heat has been reduced in Cranmer and the Great Hall (notably in the vacant sexton apartment).

We are in the process of moving St. George's checking account from TrustCo to Scotia 1st National Bank. We anticipate the transition to be complete by mid-summer.

## ***Endowment Fund Report***

Jeff yielded to former treasurer Jon Pearson for an informative update on our endowment funds, both Restricted and General. We currently have over \$3 million altogether in these funds. In 2021 we used virtually all the interest available to us, including earnings from the Howe Lecture and Education funds, as approved by Vestry. We were also forced to take \$46,500 in principal from the general fund to replace the Great Hall boiler.

Some of the funds have unspent interest that we could look at using. Notably, there is now approximately \$14,000 of interest in the Mission Fund. The Columbarium Fund has been building up for several years, but that fund is intentionally held to pay for future columbarium (burial) boxes.

A question was raised about the Pew Rent fund. Just as it sounds, this pot of money was originated a century or more ago when parishioners paid for the privilege of seating in the church. As Jon explains, we are not constrained from using the income of this fund on any church maintenance needs (and indeed, we have used it in the past), but if we tap the principal we are obligated to use it literally to repair the pews. There are no current plans to do so, but it is helpful to know that we have a fund for that purpose.

Jon noted that 2021 was a good year in the stock market. Overall we realized almost 11 percent growth on our endowment holdings. That's good, since this year the market has been on less sure footing, and Jon expects continued uneven (but not disastrous) performance ahead.

### **Community Liaison Report**

Rich Unger had filed a brief report via email. The Stockade Association met this evening and presented the New York Canal Corporation an award of appreciation for their ice-breaking project which has helped avoid Mohawk River flooding.

The Association plans to continue hybrid meetings (both in-person and Zoom). For the past few years, St. George's has exchanged monthly meeting space for free advertising in the Stockade Spy. Because our Great Hall lacks a wifi connection, however, the Association will not be using our building for general meetings. If and when we can arrange Internet service for the Hall, we will let the Association Board know, so that we can continue the practice of accommodating the meetings in exchange for free publicity.

Notable upcoming Stockade events:

- Stockade Neighborhood Sidewalk Sale – June 4, 2022
- Annual Stockade Art Show – September 10, 2022
- Semi-annual Stockade Walkabout (selected open houses) – September 24, 2022

### **Garden Ministry/Book Club/Great Hall Cleaning**

Meg Hughes spoke about the hard work of the Garden Ministry and how greatly the church grounds are appreciated by our Stockade neighbors.

Book club continues to be a popular coffee hour activity. Upcoming books for discussion include *Harlem Shuffle* by Colson Whitehead; *The Book of Hope* by Jane Goodall; *Bloody Mohawk* by Richard Burtleth; and *The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell* by Robert Dugoni.

Meg has coordinated a successful series of Great Hall cleanup sessions, with great support by David Kennison, Jon Ewbank, Bob and Lynn Paska, Rich Unger, Sandee Hughes, Jeff and Barb Wengrovius, Mother Lisa Schoonmaker, and Debbie Lambeth.

The Sunday School furniture still needs some weeding out and refurbishment. Meg will seek volunteers to make this a fun activity. Meg has also been coordinating the refreshing of our GH bulletin boards, which have been neglected for the past couple of years.

### **Hospitality Committee**

Sandee Hughes reiterated that the Great Hall and kitchen have been well scrubbed by many volunteers, so that we now have some useable space. Volunteers may continue to sort through kitchen equipment and either sell or discard items we can't use.

Several parishioners now know how to use the new dishwasher. (Note to anyone cleaning up after coffee hour: The glasses and cups need to have the rims wiped with a sponge as the dishwasher doesn't dissolve lipstick or chapstick prints.)

Sandee gratefully noted that Brian Taylor had been doing the coffee hour dishes for the last many months. He continues to manage the coffee maker, but Sandee and a few others are now ready to learn his process, so that the task doesn't always fall on him.

The pancake breakfast on February 27 was a big success. Many thanks to all who contributed food, cooking skills, serving, and cleanup...as well as to the dozens of eager participants who enjoyed consuming the free breakfast.

Rich remarked that the large refrigerator in the kitchen has been plugged in once more, but has virtually no food in it most of the time. He sees it as an energy hog and suggested locating a smaller refrigerator for regular use in the Great Hall. Meg noted that we do have a home-sized unit upstairs in the sexton apartment. Consensus seemed to be that we should relocate it to the GH kitchen as the apartment is not in use.

### **Communications**

Lynn Paska informed Vestry that pictures and captions are now up on the website for the pancake breakfast. The March *Georgian Report* has been printed and emailed.

### **Archives**

Sean Albert will work with Bob Paska and Debbie Lambeth on Saturday to do some more shredding of old documents. Paul Smigelski offered a suggestion that Sean look into getting a cloud-based storage solution for the church's digital records (examples: old bulletins, Vestry minutes, etc.). Sean agreed to look into it.

### **Outreach**

Paul Smigelski volunteered to step up as the Vestry outreach coordinator. His Vestry colleagues praised Paul for taking the initiative. He welcomes our ideas and support and will seek parishioner input as well.

**Adjournment and Next Meeting:**

Paul moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m. and Lynn seconded the motion. Our next meeting opportunities are as follows:

Rector Search—Thursday, April 7

Regular Vestry—Thursday, April 21 (Easter Week)

Both will be in-person meetings (barring unforeseen circumstances) at 6:30 p.m. in Cranmer Hall.

Respectfully,

Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk