

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2022

Present: Sean Albert, Jon Ewbank, Carol Gaige, Meg Hughes, David Kennison, Lynn Paska, Jeff Wengrovius

Excused Absent: Sandee Hughes, Paul Smigelski, Rich Unger

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting at 6:31 p.m. in the Shaw Lounge, beginning with a prayer.

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

Senior Warden's Report

Staff Updates

Senior Warden David Kennison reports that he has reached out to Helping Hands Cleaning with a draft agreement and task list but has not heard back yet. Vestry were saddened to hear that Sexton George Soltysiak is experiencing serious health issues. For the time being, George wants to continue to work. He has promised to give the church notice if he becomes too ill to continue his job duties.

Parish Register Records

David is working on the parish record book with support from Dr. Taylor and Bob McCloskey.

New Diocese Policy on Supply Clergy

The Standing Committee has released a policy stating that supply clergy cannot serve at any one parish more than twice a month. St. George's had a previously agreed-upon schedule with Dean Marshall Vang, extending into September (see below). It remains to be seen how the schedule will be affected by the Standing Committee's new policy.

Upcoming Services & Supply Clergy

June 19 and 26—Fr. Marshall Vang

July 3—Fr. Peter Schofield

July 10—Fr. Marshall Vang

July 17 and 23—TBA

July 31—Fr. Peter Schofield

August 7 and 14—TBA

August 21 and 28—Fr. Marshall Vang

September 4, 11, 18, 25—Fr. Marshall Vang

Baptism on Ascension Day

On Ascension Day, May 26, Fr. Thomas Pettigrew celebrated Mass and baptized Tucker Devis Ceci, the newborn son of a Schenectady family who were unable to have their child baptized in their own churches because both parents are not of the same faith. The family sent a very nice thank you card and donation to St George's.

Diocesan News

Our delegates to the Diocesan Convention June 3-5 learned that the Christ the King Spiritual Life Center is in serious financial trouble. There is a strong possibility that the center may be sold and/or closed.

There were two major resolutions that came out of the convention, both statements of policy that conflict with current national Episcopal Church canons:

- Resolution #7 sought to redefine the term "marriage" by eliminating the phrase "between one man and one woman." The measure failed. Laity supported it, but clergy did not.
- Resolution #8 was designed to assure that clergy within the diocese be either in a heterosexual marriage or not sexually active. An edit in the proposal led the way for it to be passed without any specific restrictions on sexual orientation, simply stipulating that clergy be "married, celibate, or abstinent."

The clergy salary schedule for 2023 reflects an increase of 7%, and St. George's full diocesan assessment for 2023 will be \$37,058. Because the assessment is based on parish expenditures, it is actually lower than the assessment for 2022. Like many other churches in the diocese, however, we have not always paid the full assessment.

Brian was elected to sit on the Cathedral's Great Chapter for a three-year term, with two terms possible.

Leasing of Great Hall Classrooms

David has reported back to Realtor Karen Zalewski-Wildzunas that we have approximately 3,000 square feet of classroom space available for lease. There is no longer any specific rental offer on the table, however, and Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas stated that the best way to pursue one would be to list the space with her.

Junior Warden's Report

Jon Ewbank has prioritized the list of pending maintenance projects and hopes to resolve the following tasks prior to onset of winter:

- Establish routine maintenance of boiler systems
- Replace (as needed) office air conditioners
- Repair leaks in the St. George's House bathroom and bedroom, and repair or replace a broken storm window
- Identify need for sexton's apartment roof repairs and obtain quotes
- Repair the rear door of Cranmer House

Next in priority are the following projects that he hopes to accomplish in 2023 prior to the arrival of a new rector):

- Reestablish key control over all property locks
- Repair/refurbish rectory as needed (including repair/replace garage door opener, repair/replace lighting issues in 1st floor bathroom and 2nd floor bedroom)

Project to be undertaken in 2024 (and beyond) as our budget allows will include:

- Great Hall hallway retiling
- Repainting of the sanctuary ceiling
- Parking lot renovation
- Replacement of floor polisher/buffer

Treasurer's Report

Jeff Wengrovius reports that our expenses and income are currently well balanced. Summertime is slow for spending. We have accumulated interest of about \$7,000 in the endowment fund that may be tapped for expenses. He does not foresee a need to take any endowment principal this summer.

One area targeted for expense reduction is copier costs, which ran significantly over budget for the past six months. The problem appears to be excessive use of color printing, which costs 4 cents per sheet as opposed to .5 cents for a black and white page. David agreed to look at ways to reduce copier expenses.

Jeff asked Vestry whether they ever refer to the Excel spreadsheet that he circulates each month. Several Vestry members commented that they do. Meg Hughes noted that she appreciates how Jeff has created an area at the end of the spreadsheet where ministry spending is summarized for easy reference. She wonders if the spreadsheet can be modified to carry over column headers to the current page view (when scrolling on a computer). David and Jon advised that this can be done within Excel, either by Jeff and/or the end users on their own computers.

For All the Saints Capital Campaign, Revisited

Vestry discussed St. George's support of the Cathedral Capital Campaign. On May 21, a majority of Vestry members had voted in favor of the following motion made via email by Sean Albert:

"...That we authorize a donation from our 2022 operating budget to the Cathedral's "For All the Saints" Capital Campaign in the amount \$1,000 to be used to match any donations received in special collections taken on Sunday, May 29th and Sunday, June 5th, and at the parish meeting on June 5th.

- The \$1,000 authorized by the Vestry ("the matching funds") will come from unused funds budgeted in 2022 for rector's salary or rector's benefits or rector's discretionary funds.
- St George's budget for 2022 will be amended to include a new line item titled, "Cathedral's 'For All the Saints' Capital Campaign," which will itemize the expenditure.
- The \$1,000 donation of matching funds will be made even if the special collections fail to meet the sum of \$1,000.
- The \$1,000 donation of matching funds will be a cap on the amount of money provided by the general fund, even if the special collections amount exceeds \$1,000."

The dates mentioned in the resolution have elapsed without any concerted effort to seek parishioner donations for the campaign. Jeff inquired as to the need for doing so. Soliciting and matching parishioner donations adds unnecessary complication to the church's bookkeeping process. He moved to amend the above resolution by eliminating the "matching" aspect and simply making the \$1,000 donation out of the church's Missions Fund. Carol seconded the motion and all voted in favor. We can still encourage parishioners to give on their own, but they are free to do so either through the church or directly to the Cathedral, and it will not impact the church's \$1,000 contribution in any way.

Community Liaison Report

Rich Unger was absent and filed no report.

Garden Ministry/Book Club

Meg updated Vestry on Garden Ministry's use of the space previously dominated by the Yellow Submarine parade float. A load of mulch was delivered there on June 3 and the members of Garden Ministry have been making good use of it. Meg gratefully acknowledged the efforts of Suzy Unger, Debbie Lambeth, Barb Wengrovius, and Gloria Kishton in keeping the churchyard looking presentable. Debbie's departure from the Stockade is a loss for Garden Ministry.

Book Club

Book club is on track for a July 17 meeting to discuss "The Book of Hope" by Jane Goodall. Pattie Wareh has agreed to take over as the head of the club. Meg is stepping down from the role after 8 years.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes filed a report advising that she would like to relocate coffee hour to the entranceway of the Great Hall as we have in years past so that participants can enjoy the church's gardens and some sunny weather. Sandee notes that the coffee hour sign-up sheet still has slots available.

Sandee and Meg served egg bakes, coffee cake, and strawberry shortcake at the rector search parish update held June 2. The meal was well received.

Communications

Lynn Paska announced that the church's website now has pictures of the diocesan convention, Ascension Day Mass/Baptism, and the June 11 ceremony for renewal of wedding vows by Jonathan and Meredith Ewbank.

We have a new tab on the website entitled "Transition: Searching For A New Rector," which is currently populated by our Parish Profile and Transition Timeline. Additional information will be added as the rector search continues.

The *Georgian Report* is a work in progress. Lynn hopes to publish it before the end of the month.

Archives

Sean Albert had no updates.

Outreach

According to a report filed by Paul Smigelski, St. George's has once again assented to participate in the SiCM annual lunch program. Alice Polumbo will learn more at a training session on Wednesday, June 22. Our assignment will be the week of August 15 to August 19 at Wallingford Park, 5th and Congress Streets, from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. A sign-up sheet will be placed in the church. Two volunteers per day are preferable. Vestry members are urged to volunteer for time slot and/or encourage other Georgians to participate in this service opportunity.

Pastoral Care

Jim Wingate and Ann Duff have recently visited Homer Kerr, Aileen Smith-Carusso, and Charlie Stamm. They attempted an outreach to Carole Civale (mother of Fr. Larry Civale) but were unable to connect.

New Business

Debbie Lambeth's resignation from Vestry as of June 2, 2022 required a vote of acceptance. Jon voted to accept; Jeff seconded the motion; and all present voted with regret to accept. Vestry discussed whether to name a temporary successor but agreed

that, because of business underway, it might be advisable to wait until Annual Meeting in January to fill the post.

Brian Taylor had recommended that St. George's donate \$200 to the YWCA, because a fundraising Choral Evensong scheduled in May was cancelled due to Covid exposures. Meg moved that this suggestion be carried out. Lynn seconded and the vote carried with one abstention. Jeff agreed to make the donation out of budget line 5271 (line 61 on the spreadsheet).

Old Business

Audit Committee

In Paul Smigelski's absence, Jeff made a report on progress towards our external audit by Cusack & Co. There was a Zoom meeting by Jeff, Jon Pearson, and Jason Merra of Cusack on June 7. Jason agreed to furnish Jeff with materials to help him and Bob McCloskey prepare for the audit. We currently expect the audit to be completed in mid-August. Jason will work closely with Jeff and Bob to investigate a few agreed-upon fiscal practices, and file a final report in September. Jeff says that he and Bob are working hard to prepare and are feeling confident.

Asset Management Committee

Jon Ewbank presented Vestry with an initial report by the Asset Management Committee. This team, previously known as the Buildings Subcommittee, consists of Jon Ewbank, Richard Unger, and Sean Albert. They met on June 8 to begin planning the best methods for managing the church's physical assets, specifically:

- The church building, Cranmer House, St. George's House, the Great Hall, the garden, the wrought iron fence, and the parking lot.
- Major equipment inventory includes the four boiler systems, the church organ, and the carillon
- A list of so-called minor equipment including (but not limited to) computer/audio/video systems, refrigerators, stoves/ovens, dish washers, washers/dryers, water heaters, window air conditioners, snow blower, and lawn mower

The committee established the following tentative near-term task list:

- July 21—Update the Property and Conditions Surveys
- August 17—Prioritize maintenance and repairs including estimates for the remainder of 2022

- September 15—Prioritize maintenance and repairs including estimates for 2023

Longer-term steps to be undertaken by the committee in 2023 and beyond will include:

- Trend analysis and estimation of future congregation size, revenues, and maintenance costs
- Identification of estimated 10- and 20-year maintenance cost by building.
- Identify reasonable property management options (retain, rent, sell, etc.)
- Evaluate benefits/costs for three options
- Select Asset Management Plan
- Initiate Strategic Building and Property Management Plan
- Develop 3-6 year rolling Long-Range Strategic Capital Budget Plan

Jon observed that, in the past, funds allocated for the purchase and repair of assets have generally been spent in response to emergency/urgent need, rather than within the framework of an organized management plan that allows for preventive maintenance. He and others on the committee see value in having adequate funds set aside for a more proactive approach, with possibly even a “rainy day fund” that we could build upon, enabling the church to tackle otherwise prohibitively expensive tasks down the road.

Jeff countered that the notion of carrying over budgeted money from one year to the next is not in keeping with our current accounting practices. He doesn’t know where the church could find additional dollars to support the type of asset management that Jon and his team have in mind, other than within our endowment funds. Our endowments are our savings account, Jeff remarked. We shouldn’t take money out of them until or unless we need to.

Still, all present felt that Jon’s points were valid, and greatly appreciated the responsible manner in which his team has sketched out next steps. With some large-ticket improvements on the horizon, we can all see the need for a dedicated fund and possibly a capital campaign. The Asset Management Committee has laid the groundwork for St. George’s to strategize ways of financing projects of broad interest that will enable us to continue serving the community for decades to come. Jeff agreed and commented that it would be a good idea to create a new capital campaign account.

Parochial Report

The Parochial Report was submitted April 29 but a hard copy with some financial data corrections needs to be printed out and signed.

Upcoming meeting dates:

Rector Search—6:30 p.m., Thursday, July 7

Regular Vestry—6:30 p.m., Thursday, July 21

Adjournment

David moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. Carol seconded and all approved. As has been our custom over the past few meetings, Vestry joined hands in a circle for a final prayer of benediction by our Senior Warden.

Respectfully,

Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk