

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2022

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

Excused Absent: Sean Albert

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting at 6:36 p.m. in the Shaw Lounge, reading two prayers for Vestry.

Sandee Hughes moved to accept the July minutes; Carol Gaige seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Senior Warden's Report

Staff Updates

Debbie Rickson and Fred Ledge of Helping Hands Cleaners have started work and are doing a terrific job of ridding the church and other buildings of built-up grime.

Clergy Updates

Our July 31 Mass was dedicated to the memory of Fr. Lehmann. Some on Vestry generously contributed to the flowers for that Mass. David sent photos to Fr. Lehmann's widow, Christine, and she was very grateful. Six from St. George's attended the funeral at Christ Church, Ballston Spa, on August 6. The committal and interment of ashes will be at 5 p.m. August 20 St. Andrew's, Scotia.

We will continue to have Fr. Marshall Vang as our celebrant twice a month through November. Diocesan rules designed to alleviate the shortage of clergy prevent us from having him at the altar every Sunday. Fr. Vang has been approached by St. Stephen's to be their interim rector, but he has not committed to it.

A number of parishioners have wondered why Fr. Matt Stromberg's Facebook profile and God in Comics podcast site continue to state that he is the rector of St. George's, as he resigned more than nine months ago. David has contacted the Diocese Standing Committee for assistance in getting the oversight fixed. He would have addressed Matt directly on the matter, but the former rector has not been amenable to conversations with the senior warden. David was recently obliged to ask Fr. Matt to remove some stored belongings from church property and the interaction did not go well.

Diocesan News

As part of the search for a new bishop, a Diocesan Profile has been drafted and will soon be released. Estimated timeline for calling a new bishop is now the end of 2023.

Staff departures and other indications point to operational difficulties at the Christ the King Spiritual Life Center in Greenwich. We wonder if the center will be closed and diocese business moved back to Albany, where it logically should be. Unfortunately, such a move would be tricky because the diocese has divested itself of key real estate in the capital city.

Stay tuned for information on the Safe Church program. We will be asked to implement training and screening guidelines here at St. George's to assure that all are protecting the safety of children and vulnerable adults.

St. George's Rector Search

Vestry completed work on the Parish Profile July 20, but the Office of Transition Management still has not posted the information online for potential new rectors to see.

Upcoming Services & Supply Clergy

- August 21—Morning Prayer
- August 28—Fr. Marshall Vang
- September 4—Fr. Jonathan Beck
- September 11—Fr. Marshall Vang
- September 18—Fr. Jonathan Beck
- September 25—Fr. Marshall Vang
- October 2—Fr. Marshall Vang
- October 9—?
- October 16—?
- October 23—Fr. Marshall Vang
- October 30—?
- November 6—Fr. Marshall Vang (All Saints' transferred)
- November 13—Fr. Marshall Vang (All Souls' transferred)
- November 20—? (Christ the King/Choral Evensong)

- November 27—?

Fall Activities Calendar

- September 10—Stockade Art Show Café
- September 18—Start-Up Sunday/Ministry Sign-up
- September 24—Stockade Walkabout
- October 2—Blessing of the Animals (St. Francis' Day Oct. 4)
- October 9—Field Trip to Johnson Hall and lunch at Partner's Pub, Johnstown
- October 16—Book Club meeting
- October 30—Outreach Forum
- October ?—Stewardship Campaign kickoff? (Need campaign coordinator)
- November 13—Choral Evensong
- November 27—1st Sunday of Advent
- December 24—Christmas Eve Midnight Mass
- December 25—Christmas Day

Junior Warden's Report

Jon Ewbank updated Vestry on some major planning achievements by the Asset Management Committee (consisting of Jon, Rich Unger, and Sean Albert). The group has escalated efforts to prevent further degradation to church assets and to improve the curb appeal of our campus as we proceed with the rector search. The following projects are imminent:

- Repair of constantly running toilet in Choir Room bathroom. Jon to handle.
- Replace water heater in St. George's House. Jon to investigate whether we can purchase and get delivery/removal of old heater for the \$1,000 budgeted.
- Replace Rectory garage door opener; \$500 budgeted.
- Repair Church and Cranmer House boiler issues identified in annual inspection.
- Repair, prime, and paint front façade of Rectory. We have a contractor, Nicholas Plowman, and a budget of \$10,000. Rich will work with Gloria Kishton (parishioner, artist, and principal officer of the Schenectady Heritage Foundation) to finalize color selections, and pursue approval by the Stockade Historic District Commission in September. Mr. Plowman can proceed with his prep work in the meantime.

- Complete restoration of the front doors to the church. Chris Peters will do the work. The doors will be removed, cleaned, sanded, sealed, painted, reframed, and rehung. All brassware will be polished and clear-coated, and the threshold will be replaced. Budget, \$7,000.
- Chris Peters will also perform needed repairs to St. George's House. The budget is \$6,000 and work includes restoration of a second floor radiator, repair of a first floor plaster ceiling, and remediation of broken/aging window frames facing Ferry Street.

The following projects are pending budgetary support and are targeted for completion in 2023:

- Swett and Swett Welding, Inc. to replace wrought iron and railing of St. George's House porch. Estimate, \$4,000.
- Chris Peters to scrape, sand, seal, reglaze, and repaint the windows on each side of and above the front door of the Church. Estimate, \$9,500
- Repair/repaint front of church sign and replace parking lot sign. Estimate, \$8,000. Pendleton Sign and Graphics to handle.

Three major projects are pending funding, which may need to be raised via a capital campaign funds and/or historic building grants:

- Clean, repair and repaint wrought iron fence and gates along Ferry Street.
- All work and materials required to repair, strengthen, and align roof ridgeline.
- Scrape, clean, seal, reglaze and repaint windows on north and south sides of the church.

At the end of Jon's report, Rich chimed in with what he has learned about the process of obtaining a grant from the National Fund for Sacred Places. Competition is stiff but it is worth pursuing. The first steps would include filing a letter of intent and working with an architect or structural engineer to prepare an estimate. We would also need to raise matching funds ("new money") for any grants awarded.

Treasurer's Report

Jeff Wengrovius reports that expenses and income are well balanced. With no rector salary to pay, we find ourselves in a good cash position. The budget ledger has been updated with changes approved by Vestry last month designed to support some critical church repair and maintenance needs.

Meg Hughes remarked that \$400 from the sale of the old parade float may be shifted from Garden Ministry to an area of greater need, specifically, the waste removal budget. No motion or vote was needed. Jeff will make the change.

Jeff laid out his expected budget process through the end of the year:

August: Ministry leaders (for music, altar guild, gardens, buildings, and hospitality) have been asked to submit their 2023 budget requests by September 1.

September: Search Committee needs to estimate the timing of resumption of Rector salary/benefits, and get a better idea of the 2023 search expenditures. September will also be a good time to estimate 2023 endowment income. Jeff hopes to present a "pencil version" of 2023 budget at the September 15 Vestry meeting.

October: Jeff will have at least one discussion of the budget with the Finance Committee. Vestry will have an executive session to finalize 2023 salaries. A revised pencil version of the budget will be available for review.

November: A semi-final budget will be presented for discussion and, if needed, further input will be sought from the Finance Committee. Data from the 2023 Stewardship Campaign should be available.

December: Final 2023 budget will be presented for approval.

Audit Update

Jeff is sending copies of the church's general ledger, endowment report, and other supporting documents to Jason Marra of Cusack & Co., and will find out when the audit will take place. It is expected to be done in the next few weeks.

Community Liaison Report

Rich had no monthly report but reiterated that the Stockade Art Show will be on September 10 and the Stockade Walkabout (selected open houses) will be September 24.

Garden Ministry

Meg urged Vestry to begin seeking a successor to Sexton George Soltysiak, so that George will have time to transition duties to the new person. We should also be prepared to raise the sexton salary to attract a suitable candidate.

Book Club

Prompted by the current reading selection, "Bloody Mohawk," Meg has suggested a field trip to Johnson Hall in Johnstown, NY, the 18th century home of an early St. George's sponsor, William Johnson. The trip will be via carpool after church on October 9. Plans call for a lunch break at Partner's Pub, to be followed by a tour of the house and grounds.

Jon Ewbank relayed a suggestion by Sean Albert that the book club arrange to have a "Little Lending Library" somewhere on the church grounds.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes filed no report.

Communications

Lynn Paska would appreciate all submissions for the quarterly *Georgian Report* by Tuesday, September 6. The only exemption is Joan Pearson's article on the Stockade Art Show Café, since that event doesn't take place until the 10th.

A picture of the Marian display from Mass on August 14 has been posted on our website. Thanks to the creator, Chris Henry, and the photographer, Alice Polumbo.

Pastoral Care

Ann Duff and and Jim Wingate have visited Charlie Stamm and Aileen Caruso-Smith. They again tried to visit Carole Civale but without success. Ann and Jim each received nice notes from Homer Kerr's daughter, saying that the outreach from St. George's had meant a great deal to him in his last years.

Jim will be contacting a few parishioners we haven't seen for a while, including Bill Stanton and the Forshaws.

Archives

Sean Albert filed no report.

Outreach

Paul Smigelski reports that the following volunteers assisted with the SiCM lunch program this year: Ann Duff, Ralph and Alice Polumbo, David and Anne Kennison, Tarik Wareh, Sharon and Jerry Trant, Carol Gaige, and Bob Lammerman.

Donations to SiCM's food pantry now total 1,283 pounds.

Vestry briefly discussed the school supplies/backpack program, and agreed it is probably too late to undertake for this year. A better bet might be to collect winter hats, gloves, scarves, etc. Carol Gaige spoke in favor of that, or possibly collecting socks and underwear for school-age children.

New Business

Dr. Taylor Request Re: Laundry Access

Choirmaster Brian Taylor has inquired about ways to simplify his access to the washer and dryer in the Great Hall. As it is, he has to go outdoors, unlock doors, and climb stairs to reach it. There is a spot in the basement to add laundry machines, but another solution would be to install a door in the wall between the second floor of St. George's House and the Great Hall. Jon will look into the cost of creating the new passageway.

Sexton Replacement

The Vestry discussed Meg's assertion that it is time to recruit a new sexton. Nobody is opposed but the hope is that we can get through lawn mowing season with the current setup. Meg wondered if we could get the sexton apartment back in shape and offer it as part of the reimbursement of a new employee. There are pros and cons of doing so. We have not had good results in the recent past when making housing an enticement for the sexton. Still, if we can find the right person, it is a bonus for the church to have a maintenance professional onsite. No action was taken on the issue of the apartment. David will begin inquiring of other churches and of our cleaning professionals to see if they have suggestions for appropriate sexton candidates.

New Vacuum Cleaner

The new cleaning people have asked the church to obtain a new vacuum cleaner. The ones we have are shot. Jeff moved to approve the purchase of the Shark vacuum that they recommended. Lynn seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Old Business

Sean Albert was absent but had asked that Vestry revisit two motions tabled at the last meeting. One sought an annual donation of \$2,400 to SiCM. After some discussion, Vestry agreed that it was not a good policy to specify that the donation be annual, as we can't know for sure what the church's budget or relationship with SiCM will look like in succeeding years. Jeff made a motion that we give SiCM a \$1,500 donation to SiCM this year, out of line 4235, the Mission Fund. Carol seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Sean's other tabled motion had called for the formation of a three-person Standing Budget Committee. This matter was not taken up for a vote. All present agreed that Jeff's proactive and transparent efforts to shape our 2023 spending plan, and his close working relationship with the Finance Committee, make this new subcommittee unnecessary.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Vestry adjourned at 8:30 p.m. with a blessing.

Upcoming meeting dates:

Rector Search—6:30 p.m., Thursday, September 1

Regular Vestry—6:30 p.m., Thursday, September 15

Respectfully,

Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk