

**St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes**  
**May 25, 2023**

Present: Sean Albert, Carol Gaige, Meg Hughes, Sandee Hughes, David Kennison, Gloria Kishton, Lynn Paska, Paul Smigelski

Absent, excused: Jon Ewbank, Rich Unger, Jeff Wengrovius

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting with a prayer at 6:25 p.m. in the Shaw Lounge.

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

**Senior Warden's Report**

*Rectory Repairs/Cleanup*

Senior Warden David Kennison reports that our cleaner, Fred Leger, has been hospitalized. We will be praying that Fred has a full and rapid return to wellness. He is an amazing employee and nice guy. Numerous small jobs still need to be completed at the Rectory.

*Church Boiler*

At long last the church boiler parts are ready for installation. Delays by the original supplier (Peerless) forced us to cancel that order, and a new order was placed with Burnham Boilers. The unit we ultimately received was of higher value than the original, but the manufacturer gave us a discount so that the cost was the same as originally projected.

David and Jeff Wengrovius met with our contractor Jack Guarneri of Indoor Weather Control on May 23. The total cost for the church boiler replacement has mounted to \$152,000, of which the purchase of the boiler itself accounted for \$48,000. Other expenses included related parts and labor, including \$14,000 to keep the old boiler limping through the winter months.

We owe Jack \$60,000 now, and another \$30,000 at project completion. There are other factors that could drive the final cost up. The Cranmer House boiler also must be inspected for repair needs. At such time as the Cranmer House boiler does need replacement, it will not be as costly as the church boiler job, as the two units share many parts in common and those have just been replaced.

### *Bishop Candidates and Election Date*

Four candidates have been announced as finalists for the Bishop of Albany Diocese:

- The Reverend Scott Garno, Rector of Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, Delmar, NY
- The Very Reverend Neal Longe, Rector of Saint Ann's Episcopal Church, Amsterdam, NY
- The Reverend Geoffrey Ward, Rector of Saint Christopher's Episcopal Church, River Hills, Wisc.
- The Reverend Jeremiah Williamson, Rector of Grace and Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, Colorado Springs, Colo.

The Election Convention will be held at Cathedral of All Saints, September 9, and St. George's will send the same delegates that we have already chosen to attend the June 10 Diocesan Convention (David and Anne Kennison and Bob Paska). Note: The Election Convention is on the same day as our Stockade Art Show Café.

### *Rector Search News From Around the Diocese*

- St. Andrew's, Albany, had two candidates. One was eliminated and the other withdrew. They are now looking for another interim rector.
- St. Stephen's, Schenectady, has called Mtr. Jane Brady-Close as its interim rector, effective July 2. She was previously the interim at St. Andrew's. She will be moving into the St. Stephen's rectory.
- Mtr. Elizabeth Papazoglakis, our Diocesan Transition Minister, will return from a three-month sabbatical on June 4.

### *Activities Calendar*

Pentecost – May 28

Trinity Sunday – June 4

Corpus Christi – June 11

### *Advertising*

St. George's placed two *Daily Gazette* advertisements to promote the May 21st Choral Evensong. We also took advantage of a free *Gazette* announcement and purchased a new banner which was hung on the iron fence along Ferry Street. Gloria Kishton's efforts on the promotion are greatly appreciated. We had a total attendance of 28 and some of the visitors remarked that they had come because of the ads.

Vestry discussed other means of promoting our special services. There are a few choral groups in the area that sell advertising space in their event programs. We should also maintain ties with other local worship communities to raise awareness of St. George's activities.

### *Upcoming Clergy*

David is scheduling supply clergy for July and (loosely) August. We hope to have a new Rector in place by September.

### *Church Mutual Required Repairs*

Bob McCloskey has been coordinating improvements to our properties required by our insurance company, Church Mutual. Status is as follows:

- Emergency lighting & signs – done at a cost of about \$3,500
- Handrail to Choir Loft – contract placed, in process
- Handrail to side door of church – rail ordered, parishioner installation
- Parking lot pothole repair – some work was done but the job does not justify the \$4,200 price tag. Vestry asked that payment be withheld pending a discussion with the vendor and possible further work on the task.
- Clear brush behind Great Hall – partially done, still needs work. There are many small overhanging trees that could be cleared with chainsaws and hauled away in a pickup truck.
- GH kitchen range hood – requirement withdrawn

Roof repairs are needed on the church, St. George's House, and Cranmer Hall. We have received two quotes but no decisions have been made yet. One vendor (Battenkill) has yet to quote and asked for photos of the damage. Gloria Kishton may be able to prevail on a neighbor to use a drone to take some pictures. The Church Mutual adjuster inspected the damage on May 24 and believes we may get some insurance money.

### *Alarm Systems*

A question was raised about the alarms in each of our five buildings. Are they fully functional? We need to be up to code on smoke and carbon monoxide detection at a minimum. David will assess the situation. The Great Hall and church have security systems that will alert the fire department in case of emergency. Cranmer Hall and the Rectory were fitted with the same feature but that remote alert capability was turned off a few years ago to save money.

## **Junior Warden's Report**

Jon Ewbank was out of town due to a death in the family and had no report.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Jeffrey Wengrovius was also absent but filed a report. He thanks all who have participated in cleaning up the Rectory backyard, in particular Halsey Brown, who mowed all three levels of the yard and is willing to continue to do so every two weeks, resulting in a huge money savings for the church.

### *Use of Restricted Endowment Money for Boiler Expenses*

We have already taken \$20,000 of endowment principal this year and need an additional \$90,000 for the boiler. As discussed briefly at the April meeting, the auditors last year encouraged us to simplify and/or eliminate restricted endowment funds that don't have a clearly stated intention. Jeff is now proposing we tap the restricted endowment as described by the following motion, which Sandee Hughes read aloud:

"To liquidate the principal and accumulated interest from the restricted Pew Rent and Education funds and transfer said money to our general fund to pay for church boiler expenses. Any remaining money to be used for roof repairs."

Pew Rent was a fund established many decades ago and there is no documentation as to its stated purpose. The Education Fund was established by a previous Vestry with funds left from the 250th anniversary celebration. We are entitled to use this money as needed. The total of the two is about \$113,000.

Sean Albert seconded the motion and all present voted "aye." Motion carried.

### *Audit Recommendation Re: Power Church*

Sean inquired about progress on the transition of our bookkeeping system out of Excel and back into Power Church. This was recommended by the auditors and encouraged by Vestry (refer to February Vestry minutes). We would like an update and hope that the Finance Committee (Jeff, David, Jon Ewbank, and Jon Pearson) can provide one.

## **Community Liaison Report**

Rich Unger was absent, no report this month.

## **Garden Ministry**

Meg Hughes reported that she (with help from Jean Greenspan and herbs donated by Gloria Kishton, Suzy Unger, and Barb Wengrovius) has completed the installation of an herb garden at the Rectory. She reiterated praise of Halsey Brown for his heroic lawn-mowing, and mentioned several others who supported the resurrection of the Rectory lawn over the past five weeks. In addition to Jean, Gloria, Suzy, Barb, and Halsey, she had help from Sean Albert, Jon Ewbank, David Kennison, Bob Paska, Jon Pearson, Paul Smigelski, and Rich Unger.

The more visible areas of the churchyard are looking spectacular, and Gloria and Suzy have done painstaking work along Ferry Street to assure that weeds are eliminated and sidewalk cracks remediated.

## **Hospitality Committee**

Sandee Hughes informed Vestry that a June-September coffee hour sign-up sheet is now ready. Each of us is encouraged to commit to bringing goodies on a Sunday.

For the past few summers, coffee hour has shifted to the Great Hall entryway to take advantage of our garden and good weather. However, the trend has also been for people to pick up a beverage and food and move into the dining area where more seating is available. Sandee would like to continue holding coffee hour in the Great Hall proper as it simplifies set-up and accommodates parishioners who prefer to sit and socialize for a bit as they enjoy refreshments. If anyone wishes to take their snack outside, it will still be an option for them.

## **Communications**

Lynn Paska advises that pictures of the May crowning on May 14 and the Choral Evensong, May 21 are now up on the website.

The deadline for the summer *Georgian Report* is Monday, May 29.

## **Archives**

Sean Albert hasn't turned up much of value in the way of historic documents and fears some key records were discarded over the years. He hopes that David and Chris Henry can cooperate to open the safe in the office. David has the combination and Chris knows the sequence of turns. Sean also has a tentative plan to meet with Gloria on June 16 to brainstorm avenues of documenting important church history, perhaps with support from the Schenectady County Historical Society.

## **Outreach**

Paul Smigelski advises that SICM donations continue to be strong, averaging 200 pounds/month. At this rate we will reach 2,500 pounds by year-end. The next collection is June 11, which is also the date for donations of pillows and bedding for the YWCA.

On May 21, Mike Saccocio from Schenectady City Mission gave a well-received speech at our Choral Evensong, which took in approximately \$580. The church will be giving \$300 of the proceeds to the City Mission. Paul thanked Gloria for the advertising which looked fantastic online.

## **Pastoral Care**

Jim Wingate and Ann Duff continue their good work of visiting homebound parishioners. They have visited Jamie Taft in the Schenectady Center for Rehabilitation on a couple of occasions, and recently delivered to Jamie a stuffed toy that had been signed by many Georgian well-wishers.

## **New Business**

### *Suggestions by Gloria Kishton*

Gloria offered a number of suggestions for improvement that she is willing to support, hopefully with assistance of others on Vestry.

- Purchase of a portable sandwich board to replace the heavy, crudely carpentered model we currently have. The cost would be about \$60 and that would include panels that are easily changeable. David offered to buy the sign and asked Gloria to provide him a link.
- Can we sketch out an annual advertising schedule for Gloria to help her prepare in advance of important events that should be promoted? She will work with Brian Taylor and anyone else who wishes to have input.

- The sidewalk on Green Street continues to be in very poor condition due to tree roots that are buckling up the concrete. We are responsible for the sidewalk itself but can't accomplish any meaningful repairs without the cooperation of the City, which is responsible for the trees. Gloria hopes to use an online City feature called "See Click Fix" that can be used anonymously to report hazardous issues. Once the tree roots are eliminated, she knows of a local handyman who might be capable of demolishing and removing damaged sidewalk sections and pouring new concrete.
- With reference to the latest Asset Management Committee Report (below), Gloria is willing to try her hand at repainting the blue background of the sign in front of church. The carved gilt lettering is still in good shape and with a hard paint roller she may be able to apply an even finish without harming the rest of the sign.

### **Asset Management Committee Report**

Rich Unger was absent but he had compiled a report on the activities of the Asset Management Committee (AMC) over the past month.

A contract has been signed with West End Iron Works to repair the St. George's House porch railing at a cost of \$2,100.

As stated in the Senior Warden Report above, two quotes have been obtained for roofing repairs and Church Mutual has made an inspection.

We are waiting on estimate from Olsen Sign Company to repair/restore St George's church main sign and parking lot sign. We have estimates from Pendleton Sign Company but believe them to be too high. Gloria and Rich have discussed ways that our repair work on the parking lot sign might reduce some costs.

Marylin Kaplan, Preservation Architecture NY, has been consulted regarding an evaluation of needed and recommended repairs to the church. Ms. Kaplan is an architect specializing in restoration, repair, and improvement of historic structures, including churches. She also specializes in evaluating structures for improvement needs and cost reports necessary for applications for state, federal and private grant programs.

An Evaluation and Needs Assessment Report will identify all repairs needed, with preliminary cost estimates. This type of report would be required for any major grant application we may pursue. It could also be used as the basis for a capital campaign for church property restoration.

Members of the Asset Management Committee will follow up with Ms. Kaplan to discuss in more detail report preparation and grant application possibilities and needs. Among several grant programs we may want to consider, here are three:

- New York Landmarks Conservancy's Sacred Sites Program
- Partners for Sacred Places (partnering with Nation Trust for Historic Preservation)
- Historic Preservation Grant Program (NY Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation)

### **Adjournment of Regular Vestry**

Vestry adjourned its regular meeting at 8:20 p.m. and reconvened briefly in executive session to discuss next steps in the rector search process.

Upcoming meeting dates:

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

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

Respectfully,

Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk