

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes November 16, 2023

Present: Carol Gaige, Meg Hughes, Sandee Hughes, David Kennison, Lynn Paska, Fr. Thomas Pettigrew, Paul Smigelski, Rich Unger, Jeff Wengrovius

Absent (excused): Sean Albert, Jon Ewbank, Gloria Kishton

Father Pettigrew convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. in the Shaw Lounge, offering a brief prayer. He asked whether there were amendments to the October minutes. Sandee Hughes moved that the minutes be approved; Carol Gaige seconded the motion. It carried unanimously.

Father Pettigrew's Report

The Rector reported on his recent attendance at an annual Diocesan Priest Retreat, where he was pleased to assist with liturgical aspects of the program. Other activities that have kept him busy include the Loaves and Fishes program and finalizing the scheduling of our Christmas services. He has also visited Jamie Taft at the Schenectady Center. Office hours for Fr. Tom are currently Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays until noon, although that is subject to change. No firm date has yet been defined for Father's Institution here at St. George's.

Senior Warden's Report

Church Boiler

Senior Warden David Kennison updated Vestry on the final steps in the lengthy process of replacing the large boiler that heats the church. One last task is the installation of new thermostats with new wiring. Steps must also be taken to manage condensation from the steam heat that is being piped into the church. We recently learned that five steam traps have been damaged by corrosion. The cost of repair is not yet known.

David reports that \$1,000 worth of our boiler contractor's copper pipe has gone missing from Cranmer basement. An inquiry to the local scrap yard may yield information. We are concerned that a guest attending a meeting in an otherwise secure section of Cranmer gained unauthorized access to the basement. David recommends the installation of a locked door at the top of the basement stairs.

The Rectory

A handyman inspecting the rain gutters at the Rectory has identified some serious issues with the roof. Vestry inspected photographs of the damage. As indicated later in these minutes, Vestry desires an expedited response to the problem.

Ceiling Repairs

David presented Vestry with a detailed summary of the quotes that have been submitted by two painters for work in the church and sexton apartment. The least expensive alternative for the church appears to be restoring/painting only three of the worst spots on the ceiling that are clearly the result of water damage. That option would cost us \$19,000 (of which \$12,800 is the expense of the scaffolding).

Some on Vestry spoke strongly in favor of painting the entire ceiling. Only doing part of the job is seen as “penny wise and pound foolish.” It won’t eradicate the many smaller spots of flaking paint, and there is no expectation that new paint will somehow blend with the old, which is 20 years old and has been subjected to weekly applications of incense smoke.

The same vendor (Jim Hope) who quoted us \$19,000 for the partial job would charge us \$55,310 to do the entire sanctuary ceiling. A quote from another vendor for painting the full ceiling was \$78,000, so it’s not like we think Mr. Hope’s estimate is too high. Unfortunately, however, our 2023 budget was sapped by boiler expenses and other unexpected costs, and we are going into 2024 at a deficit. No matter what we spend on painting the church ceiling, we will need to tap the endowment fund.

In addition to getting the three worst spots on the church ceiling fixed, Vestry would like to have the sexton apartment ceiling and walls repaired. Jim Hope quoted us \$5,350 to do that work, bringing the total up to \$24,350. Some of that expense will be covered by our insurance, Church Mutual, but their adjuster deemed a settlement of \$15,789 to be suitable. David has been in touch with Church Mutual and they have agreed to keep the case open and consider our actual quotes, which exceed the settlement offered.

While all on Vestry would prefer to see the entire sanctuary ceiling restored, we can see that our current budgetary situation doesn’t allow for that. We are reluctant to turn to parishioners now and ask for additional donations as it was just a year ago that we pleaded for money for the boiler.

Church maintenance is an expensive ongoing obligation and unexpected costs will continue to arise. Endlessly digging into the endowment fund is not the solution, as each time we diminish that pot of money it decreases the income we can derive from it.

We have often spoken of kicking off a capital campaign and seeking grant money to help us preserve our historic buildings and grounds. In the meantime, the ceiling repairs can't wait. Until we can generate enough income to do a comprehensive job, we are constrained to limited repairs. David moved, and Jeff seconded, that Vestry engage Jim Hope to undertake the "three spot" repair job at a cost of \$19,000. Seven Vestry members voted aye, carrying the motion. There was one dissenting vote.

Three-Phase Power to Church Organ

David informed Vestry that the three-phase breaker panel and meter panel have been installed. On Monday, November 20, church power will be shut off for the day so National Grid can complete the wiring job. Cranmer, St. George's House, and the Great Hall will continue to have power and the heating to the church is not expected to be affected.

Junior Warden's Report

Jon Ewbank was unable to attend the meeting. His report contained bullet points on the items already in David's report above. He also noted that there are corrections needed to the choir loft railing recently installed. Negotiations are underway with the carpenter who did that work.

Jon met with three pest control providers on November 9, two of which have proffered quotes for service to the Great Hall and to the entire campus. Vestry briefly reviewed those numbers but took no action as we would like to have Jon on hand before a decision is made.

The Asset Management Committee (AMC) had prepared a detailed report of their recent work, which Jon boiled down to a few highlights for Vestry's review.

- The committee recommends issuing a contract to John Flowers for repair of the St. George's House west windows at a cost of \$3,900. This expense has already been approved by the Vestry.

- AMC members are still seeking bids for installation of the pass-through door between St. George's House and the Great Hall.
- Vestry is urged to initiate the process of establishing a Capital Fund Campaign to kick off in 2025. AMC further recommends that an action committee be formed to pursue church preservation and historic site grants available from various governmental and private funding sources. Fr. Tom is eager to meet with the AMC and begin the planning process.
- Various AMC recommendations for the 2024 budget will be passed to the Finance Committee for consideration.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Jeffrey Wengrovius was pleased to announce that 98% of expected 2023 pledge money has been received. With sustained generous giving through the remainder of the year, we should easily meet our goal for pledge income.

Jeff says that the transition to Power Church software is now complete, noting that Bob McCloskey has spent many hours on this task.

The endowment fund is garnering interest that will likely be spent for the church ceiling project. Jeff noted that negative variances are affecting several budgetary areas, including: security alarms, cleaner's salary, property maintenance, office supplies, telephone and internet, insurance, advertising, music, and waste removal.

The finance committee has almost completed the 2024 budget, which will be shared with Vestry once the committee has completed that task. Jeff warns that a significant drawdown of endowment principal is projected for 2024.

Once again Jeff noted that Church Mutual has considerably raised our deductible levels for 2024. He believes that installing power generators for the church and Great Hall might prompt the insurer to reduce our deductibles.

Outreach

Paul Smigelski reports that SICM food donations continue to be strong, averaging 260 pounds per month. The October donation was 376 pounds. This puts the total at 2,974 pounds and we have exceeded our goal for the year. We have line of sight to 3,000

pounds which is 1.5 tons. The final collection for 2023 is December 17th. Many thanks to Carol Gaige for transporting the food.

December 10 is our next quarterly donation for the YWCA emergency shelter. Paul thanks all who have contributed. This ministry supports women and children who have escaped from an unsafe environment and arrive with nothing. At this time, the YWCA tells us they are in most need of personal hygiene items such as shampoo, conditioner, menstrual products, etc. David Kennison/Gloria Kishton are facilitating this ministry.

Fr. Pettigrew led a group of Georgians on October 21 to volunteer at the diocesan supported Loaves and Fishes ministry housed at St Francis Mission, the old Grace and Holy Innocents Church on Clinton Ave. All who are interested in this hands-on ministry opportunity are encouraged to contact Father at rector@StGeorgesSchenectady.org.

Fall Choral Evensong on November 12 was attended by more than 60 people and Kim Siciliano offered an informative presentation about the work of the YWCA NorthEastern New York.

Community Liaison

Rich Unger informed Vestry that the annual Stockade tree lighting is scheduled for 5 p.m. December 3. Rich and Suzy will coordinate the hosting of a reception following the tree lighting in the Great Hall, with Stockade residents contributing all food and paper goods. Georgians are encouraged to attend. Fr. Pettigrew asked Rich to submit a blurb on the event for the Sunday bulletin.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes reminded Vestry of some important hospitality opportunities left in 2023. She welcomes suggestions and offerings of support and food for the following:

- Greening the church, December 17—Lunch will be provided for those who stay after Mass to help decorate the church for Christmas.
- Christmas Eve services—Most of the food is donated by parishioners and sign-up sheets will be available as we get closer to the day. Two receptions are planned. Light refreshments will be available following the 5 p.m. Mass, and a more elaborate spread of sweets and savories will be laid out for attendees of “Midnight” (10 p.m.) Mass.

A thorough cleaning of the dish cupboard is warranted and will occur after pest control services are completed. Sandee seeks volunteers to help remove all dishes for sorting, cleaning, and reorganization. She hopes to have this project finished before the installation festivities.

Communications

Lynn Paska reports that pictures of four recent church events can now be viewed on our website: the Society of Mary luncheon; Fr. Tom signing his employment agreement; All Soul's Day Mass; and Choral Evensong with combined choir of St. George's and St. Stephen's.

Lynn would like to have the winter *Georgian Report* published by Christmas Eve. Everyone's cooperation in getting copy to her by the deadline of Friday, December 1 will help her achieve that.

Membership Ministry

Carol Gaige had nothing new to report. She has been otherwise occupied but is eager to return to her goal of updating parishioner data in Power Church.

Garden Ministry

Meg Hughes and other Garden Ministry volunteers looked forward to a luncheon hosted by Brian Taylor in their honor on November 17.

The onset of cold weather spells the end of regular gardening duties, but the restoration of old plaster nativity figures is now underway. Meg, with help from Sandee Hughes and Barb Wengrovius, is mending the statues. On December 6 from 4 to 6 p.m., several parishioners will gather in the Great Hall for a festive "paint and sip" event to complete the project.

Archives

Sean Albert had no report.

Acceptance of Committee Reports

Rich moved that Vestry accept the above reports. Sandee seconded the motion and all voted aye.

New Business

Consideration of Meeting Dates

Gloria Kishton had inquired about changing the regular schedule for Vestry meetings going forward. She and Rich have occasional conflicts for Thursday evenings due to Stockade Association events. It appears that there is no other weekday evening for which no conflicts exist, however. Further discussion was tabled.

Interim Procurement Policy

Fr. Pettigrew submitted a draft Procurement Policy that he worked on in cooperation with the wardens and treasurer. The document spells out processes for managing vendors, obtaining quotes, and requesting purchases. Input is welcomed but Father asked for a motion to put the policy into use on an interim basis. Jeff made such a motion; Sandee seconded it; all approved.

Rectory Gutters/Roof Repairs

As outlined in the Senior Warden's report above, some roof damage was recently discovered at the Rectory. Jeff made a motion that repairs be undertaken as expeditiously as possible, with the expectation that the cost should not exceed \$1,000. Rich seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Old Business

There were two items of old business on the agenda:

- The date of Father's Institution is still TBD.
- A plan for the church ceiling repair was discussed earlier in the meeting (see Senior Warden's report above).

Adjournment

Vestry adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Next Vestry Meeting—6:30 p.m., Thursday, December 21

Respectfully,
Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk