

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2024, at 4:30 pm

Present: Roy Tripp, Cheri Thayer, Jim Phelps, Susan Grimes, David Whitworth, Nicole Passeggio, Lewis Tabb, Bob Hydorn, Kathlyn Gray and Cheryl Gaillard.

1. Call to Order and Opening Prayer: Roy called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and opened with a prayer.
2. Approval of Consent Agenda: Vestry voted to approve the agenda as presented.
3. Approval of Minutes of the November Vestry meeting: Vestry voted to approve the December 18, 2023 minutes as presented.
4. Reports from Parish Committee Liaisons:
 - a. Outreach and Mission: Nicole – After some discussion about a Sneaker Program for The Complete Student, it was decided to report the Vestry concerns to the committee so that it could be considered in making their decision on participating in the project. Full report attached.
 - b. Building and Grounds: Jim noted that a mystery donor had delivered several cases of water to the front porch at church. Full report attached.
 - c. Congregational Care: Kathlyn – Report attached.
 - d. Christian Formation: James – No report.
 - e. Parish Life: Susan and Bob – Nicole inquired about Shrove Tuesday, February 13th. It will be held inside the church with cooking set up outside. Ash Wednesday service is being moved to 12:30pm to accommodate the Sacred Grounds class. No other report.
 - f. Endowment Committee: Jim reported that an additional \$850 had been added to the Endowment account due to a bank adjustment. The balance is now above \$250,000. The Endowment Committee voted unanimously to approve and recommend to the Vestry that grants be made at a “prudent spending rate” of 4% or \$8,268 for 2024. Bob made the motion to accept the recommendation and Cheri seconded. Full report attached.
 - g. Worship and Rector's Report: Roy reported that the bells have arrived. There is a plan to have a Blessing of the Bells during each service on 2/11, Christ the King Sunday. Nicole noted issues again with the live stream. Roy was aware and adjustments were made, and the instruction sheet updated. Future plans could include adding four drop down microphones and a camera facing the congregation. Full report attached.
5. Treasurer's Report: Lewis - Report attached.
6. Budget – Lewis reported a slight adjustment of \$96 in the 2024 budget to cover the employee match after the raise for Carter and Julie. Bob commented that he did not agree with the Latino Ministry line being removed from the budget and wanted to keep the door open to provide future funds. There was

discussion on the history of funding the ministry. It was noted that funds could be provided from the rector's discretionary fund, or the O&M budget as needed.

Lewis reported that for the past two years, the operating surplus was allocated equally between the general endowment and the savings account (money market). Lewis recommends this year that we allocate the surplus in thirds to the endowment account, savings account and for an operating reserve. Bob made a motion to accept that recommendation with a second from David. The Vestry approved the motion.

Kathyn made a motion to accept the 2024 budget as presented. Nicole seconded the motion. Bob was opposed. The 2024 Budget was carried with one no vote.

a. Legal fees related to lawsuit: The \$6,160 bill for legal fees was not received until 2024 which makes a small loss in the 2024 budget. Lewis had no concerns about this.

b. Commitment to Voorhees (HBCU): Cheri reported that there was a decision made in 2017/18 to give ½ of 1% of the Operating Revenue to Voorhees and Sewanee. Voorhees has a strong relationship with the Episcopal Church; is located within and supported by our Diocese. Sewanee is associated with 28 dioceses, and we are one of four in our diocese that provide financial support. Cheri recommended that we review the decision each year on continuing support. Nicole made a motion to provide support to both Voorhees and Sewanee for 2024. Bob seconded the motion, and the Vestry approved the motion unanimously.

c. Commitment to Sewanee Theological Department: See above.

7. Old Business

a. Annual Meeting – Cheri and Roy: Cheri recommended that we use a voice vote for the Vestry Elections and if no objection from the congregation that the governance documents be voted on in a block of three. The Secretary of State form requires a count of yes and no votes so Vestry members will assist in the count.

b. Facilities Planning Update – Cheri reported that Don Altman is preparing a Request for Proposal to send out to five firms. The request will be for a rendering of the building, site planning, building size options, etc. This information will be important to have moving forward for discussions with the parish as well as the Town of Port Royal.

8. New Business

a. Vestry Transition after Election (1/28) – Cheri: There will be a Commissioning of new Vestry members at 9am on 1/28. A short Vestry meeting will follow that service where Wardens will be elected. The Senior Warden is recommended by the Rector and then both Senior and Junior Warden are voted on by Vestry.

b. Ministry Fair – Cheryl reported that she had spoken to Roy and Cheri and rather than rushing to have the Fair in February it made more sense to do it on Pentecost Sunday where we already have plans for one service and the green will provide plenty of space for the picnic and the Fair. Cheryl will work with Roy and Cheri on the planning.

9. Visioning Together – None.

10. Going Around the Table – the meeting was concluded by individuals sharing thoughts and significant events.

11. Roy closed the meeting with prayer at 6:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Gaillard

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach and Missions

Submitted by Nicole Passeggio

There was no O&M Committee meeting in December.

Via email, the committee discussed supporting a used sneaker drive spearheaded by a 9th grade student at The Complete Student. Plans are underway for a collection process to be discussed with the Vestry.

Buildings and Grounds Committee

Submitted by Jim Phelps

- The wreaths have been taken down and the Nietert's have removed the church banner. Thank-you Jack and Chris for this annual exercise.
- For safety reasons, in the future exterior wreaths will be positioned next to the front doors and a ladder will not be used.
- Hardware in the Center bathrooms has been securely attached to the walls. Thank-you George for completing this work and contributing a picture to complete the job.
- The exterior side of the front doors to the church are weathered and need to be refinished. This job will likely entail sanding down to the base wood and applying fresh coats of stain and/or varnish by a third-party painter/carpenter. Thank-you Dave for taking the lead on this project.
- A reminder, it is the responsibility of the 11:00 am service VPOD to shut down the church and Center after the Sunday service. That includes, but is not limited to, turning off all ceiling fans, turning off all lights, setting all thermostats to recommended temps, placing rope across exterior walkway, and locking all doors in the church and Center. VPOD duties are detailed in the booklet in the VPOD basket found in the Center closet.

Congregational Care Committee

Submitted by Kathlyn Gray

There has not been much change since the last report. All ministries seem to be functioning well.

Prayer Ministry -nothing new to report.

Card Ministry – Gale Swann could use a few new volunteers.

Meal Train – nothing new to report.

Altar Flowers – Mary Bryan would like more volunteers.

Transportation Ministry – awaiting our first approved volunteer application from the Diocese. We're excited about this new ministry.

Christian Formation

Submitted by James Tetler

No report.

Parish Life

Submitted by Susan Grimes

No report.

Endowment Committee

Submitted by Jim Phelps

- The Endowment Committee met on Wednesday, January 10, 2024.
- The balance of the endowment investment account with SSGA on December 31, 2023 was \$246,215.89. This represents a YTD 2023 investment gain of approximately 10.8%/\$24,083.43. There is an additional \$2,989.06 in the endowment's checking account for a grand total of \$249,204.95.
- As required in the Endowment and Investment Fund Policies and Guidelines-Spending Policy, the Endowment Committee recommends vestry approval of a "prudent spending rate" of \$8,300/4.0% for 2024. The "prudent spending rate" is noted as between 3.0% and 5.0% and based on the average quarterly value of the fund since inception. Vestry approval is requested.
- The next meeting of the Endowment Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, February 14th.

Rector's Report

Submitted by Roy Tripp

Thus, a new calendar year begins and with it, a transition from Christmastide to the Season of Epiphany. Epiphany: a season of light filled with insights, revelations, and discoveries. What do you hope to find?

- Our Christmas services were outstanding. The music and liturgy were inspiring. Thanks to members of the Flower Guild, the grounds and the church were colorful and festive. My thanks to our staff, choir, and every member. Attendance was over 150 (not that I'm counting) for the three Christmas services. These numbers do not reflect those who viewed online.
- The first Roaming Rector group met this week kicking off another season of coffee and conversation. Our first God-On-Tap gathering will be on Thursday, February 25, Smoke House BBQ in Port Royal. We begin at 6 PM.

- Lent is fast approaching. Ash Wednesday, February 14, will include two services of Holy Eucharist with the imposition of ashes. There will be a service at 12 noon and 5:30 pm. Awaiting word as to how and where we will have a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.
- There will be two educational opportunities during Lent: Tom Miller will offer a 4-part series exploring the history and theology of the Early Church. Tom has done extensive research on these subjects and brings a lively and engaging outlook. His class will be Tuesdays, at 10 AM in the St. M Center. Ken Kraft and I will hold forth with a 6-part Inquirer's and Confirmation class on Wednesday evenings, beginning Feb. 21 at 6:30 PM. The class will follow a soup supper at 6:00 PM. One need not attend the class to come and enjoy the meal.
- This week, I attended the first of several Zoom meetings to begin the planning for this year's Diocesan Convention. We are the host deanery, and the convention will be held on Hilton Head Island, Thursday November 21st through Saturday, the 23rd. Opening night Eucharist and reception will be held at All Saints, Hilton Head and the remaining sessions and worship will be at the Sonesta Resort. We are putting together a 10 - person planning group to coordinate the event. Theme and keynote speaker are yet to be announced.

Don't forget the Annual meeting will be on Sunday, January 21, following the single service at 10:00 AM.

Our Vestry Retreat will be held at Camp St. Christopher, Friday and Saturday, Feb. 9th and 10th. Canon Andrea McKeller, of the Bishop's Staff will be our facilitator.

Many thanks to each of you and special thanks to Susan Grimes and David Whitworth (our departing members) for all your help and dedication as we journey together in faith.

Treasurer's Report

Submitted by Lewis Tabb

The most notable item is the shortfall in pledge receipts versus budget. I am surprised at this but also of the opinion that much of the shortfall will be covered as soon as the pledge statements go out, which should be today as well. Non-pledge receipts are above budget for several reasons; we have a couple of members who do not pledge but are regular significant contributors, we have some new members who made contributions in 2023 and have pledged for 2024, and we simply were above budget for almost all the year. Therefore, revenues exceeded budget by a comfortable amount. I have become more aggressive in the last couple of years in budgeting pledge receipts as our shortfall has been lower than the average for churches.

Expenses remained well controlled, so we experienced an operating gain of \$32,000, equally because of excess revenue and controlled expenses. This is about half the operating surplus in 2022 but very close to that of 2021 and 2020, the Covid and recovery years. HOWEVER, as mentioned elsewhere, the results do not include the legal fees we incurred in defending against the Corsaro lawsuit. The bill has been received and will be paid in February; \$6160. As covered in the budget memo, this will reflect a small operating loss in 2024; however, I have made no adjustments to the 2024 budget as this expense applies to 2023. The impact of this is that our actual surplus for 2023 was approximately \$26,000.

The balance sheet remains strong with ample reserves. You will note the prepaid pledges on the liability side of the balance sheet. This is money received in 2023 for 2024 pledges. The money is included in the operating account balance and on January 1, the prepaid amount will disappear as it is taken into 2024 receipts.

The past two years, we have allocated our operating surplus approximately half to the general endowment and half to our “savings account,” the money market account. This year I am recommending that we allocate about one-third each of the adjusted surplus to the endowment and the savings account, retaining one-third for an operating reserve. For simplicity, let’s say \$9000 each to the endowment and savings account. The 2024 budget is tight because of a reduction in the number of pledges although the amount pledged is up. I hope that additional pledges will come in during the year and we will have more budget flexibility as the year moves forward. We have some additional expenses in 2024 related to beginning a rector search, some technology improvements and possible expenses associated with facilities planning, so I think it prudent to retain some funds for non-routine expenses.

#End#