

Minutes of a Regular Meeting
of the Vestry
of St. James's Episcopal Church
September 24, 2018

A regular meeting of the Vestry of St. James's Episcopal Church was held on September 24, 2018, pursuant to proper notice of time and place. Vestry members attending were Mrs. Louise Bald, Mr. Arthur Brinkley, Ms. Melinda Davis, Mr. Jim Goggins, Mrs. Kathe Hetzer, Mr. T.A. Hickman, Mr. Dave Johnson, Dr. John Mahoney, Mr. Trey Sibley, Mrs. Beth Skidmore, Mr. Michael Smith, Mrs. Laura Strickler, Mr. Michael Whitlow, and Mrs. Annie Witthoefft. Mr. Ralph Cummins, Mr. Scott Hurt, Ms. Erin Jewett, and Ms. Karen Stanley were absent. Also attending were staff members the Rev. Dr. John McCard, Ms. Suzanne Hall, Mrs. Anita Lisk, and Mrs. Poconna Thiel. Dr. McCard served as chair, with Mrs. Lisk serving as secretary.

Dr. McCard apologized for abruptly postponing the regularly scheduled meeting the week before, but felt it was prudent due to the tornados in the area. Motions to adopt the agenda and approve the Minutes from the August 21, 2018 regular meeting were made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

RECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. McCard reported the following:

- 1) The monthly "Pies & Pints with the Rector" gathering continued to be an opportunity for parishioners to casually meet with him, with around 20 participating in September.
- 2) The recent "Q&A with the Rector and Wardens" Sunday Forum was well attended.
- 3) Ten people recently participated in an introductory workshop about the Stephen Ministry. Dr. McCard will meet with them to discuss St. James's adopting this pastoral ministry.
- 4) The 25th anniversary of the fire will be in July 2019 and Dr. McCard intends to recognize the date with a celebration. He announced that Rabbi Scott and Beth Ahabah are eager to be involved.
- 5) Dr. McCard said that he wants to work on re-branding and redesign of the website.
- 6) An announcement regarding personnel changes, including the hiring of a new Facilities Manager and extra Sunday and pastoral clergy assistance, will be emailed to the parish soon.

A discussion followed, exploring the questions brought forward at the recent Sunday Forum and related to the state of the Church in relation to meeting the expectations of our parishioners. Members of the Vestry expressed particular concern about how to meet the challenge to help people connect spiritually to the church and to build community, citing the need for "entry points" into open and inclusive small groups. The Adult Christian Formation Committee has made significant changes to several elements of the formation programming, and continues to work on how best to help parishioners develop their spiritual lives. There is recent research by Forward Movement being reviewed by the Committee, and the changes in the Wednesday night program are responsive to this challenge. Members of the Vestry also expressed a sense of urgency surrounding this work.

In addition, the challenge of taking care of Sunday School, Youth Group, and other leaders was discussed. Some expressed concern that members of the leadership are often kept away from Christian Formation opportunities by their responsibilities. Mr. Whitlow concluded the discussion by reminding the Vestry of Dr. McCard's initial focus on three points from the Search Committee survey – Developing Relationships; Building Community; and Healing. He recommended having Forums several times during the year to keep people up-to-date and to hear feedback, particularly on progress in meeting expectations regarding support of Adult Christian Formation.

SENIOR WARDEN REPORT

Mr. Whitlow again commended the Vestry for their work and asked those who had anything to add to the Work Plan to track it in the Google Sheets document so all could reference it.

Mr. Whitlow remarked that he and Dr. McCard are planning to meet with representatives from the Children's Center to discuss collaboration, particularly in regards to fundraising.

Mr. Whitlow also commented that any discussion of the church's budget needs to include more of the theology of stewardship and why giving money to the church is different than other charitable donations. Budget discussions need to educate, inspire, and connect people to how their support of the church contributes to Christ's work in the world through St. James's. It was suggested that stewardship may need to consider both a theological focus on the budget, noting the purpose of giving and spending, as well as a traditional budget, focused on the line items on which the gifts provided are spent.

JUNIOR WARDEN REPORT

Mrs. Strickler reported that there are many buildings and grounds projects currently underway in this time of transition between Facilities Managers. The Strategic Buildings & Grounds Committee will reconvene soon to continue their efforts to prioritize and estimate future needs, according to the reports prepared by Huff Morris and Engineers Plus, and develop a thoughtful approach about how to proceed doing them.

Dr. McCard thanks Mrs. Strickler, along with former Junior Warden, Matt Harper, and Bill Gregory, for their time and efforts to review resumes, interview, and hire the new Facilities Manager.

OLD BUSINESS

Strategic Stewardship Report

Mr. Johnson encouraged the Vestry to formally adopt the Strategic Stewardship Report, as presented at the August meeting. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept the recommendations of the Strategic Stewardship Report.

NEW BUSINESS

Executive Committee membership policy

Mr. Johnson distributed the following policy for who serves on the Executive Committee:

The Executive Committee shall be chaired by the Rector and shall include the Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Finance Chair, and Stewardship Chair.

The Rector may also appoint select “at-large” members to the Executive Committee from those currently serving on the Vestry.

The Executive Committee shall serve as advisors and counselors to the Rector and, when necessary, act on behalf of the Vestry as a whole.

On a motion made and seconded, the policy was unanimously approved.

Newcomers Process

Dr. McCard reported that he, Mrs. Streever, and Mrs. Lisk have restructured the newcomers’ process for those who visit and are interested in joining St. James’s. Based on the approach taken by St. Martin’s in Dallas, a two-part class will be offered several times a year, on a Wednesday night and a Sunday morning. The class will cover the expectations for those who wish to become members and invite them to commit to a way to get involved in a ministry of the church. Samples of materials from St. Martin’s were distributed. Mrs. Bald encouraged using the same type of materials for current members to reaffirm and recommit themselves to St. James’s.

FINANCE REPORT

Mr. Hickman distributed the monthly report, noting that August was a difficult month, primarily because of buildings and grounds expenses for the multiple projects being addressed before Mr. Presson left the Facilities Manager position. Although revenue was doing well, loose plate offerings are below expectations. While the church’s history indicates that the final three months of the year brings in significant cash, Mr. Hickman said that capital reserves from the Endowment Fund may have to be used in the interim, or perhaps a draw on the line of credit.

Mrs. Bald expressed concern about plans to repay the loan and Mr. Hickman said that he is studying the best way to do that, including a possible capital campaign. Mr. Whitlow commented that the three ways to address paying off the bank loan was through stewardship efforts, buildings and grounds, or making hard choices about staff and/or buildings.

Ms. Davis recommended regularly publicizing monthly revenues vs. expenses to be completely transparent to the parish.

Mr. Johnson commented that, while St. James’s is not in distress, its members are capable of providing additional support for the church programs and facilities to match or exceed the levels in our current budget.

Mr. Hickman noted that quarterly statements will be mailed at the end of the month and should generate revenue.

Stewardship

Ms. Hall distributed the current Annual Giving status report, noting that the campaign materials had recently been mailed.

OTHER

Dr. McCard asked the Vestry note the upcoming events listed on the reverse of the Agenda, particularly noting Servant Sunday on September 30. Mr. Sibley encouraged members of the Vestry to sign up for their preferred ministry in advance.

The attendance report for July and August was distributed.

Dr. McCard drew attention to the Richmond Times Dispatch opinion article written by Ms. Stanley.

Registrations for the Oberammergau pilgrimage is scheduled for August 10-20, 2020 are underway.

Wednesday night “Fellowship Dinner & Study” has been slightly re-vamped and will begin on October 3. Dinner will be served in Valentine Hall at 6:00 p.m., and those interested will remain in Valentine Hall for the study from 6:45-7:30. The October series will be themed “Cradle to Grave: Introduction to Lifelong Growth in Christ.” Fellowship Dinner & Study will resume on November 28 with a three-part series on “The Poetry of Advent & Christmas.” Evening Prayer will be offered on Wednesdays at 5:30 in the Chapel, regardless if there is a Fellowship Dinner & Study that night.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned with a benediction by Dr. McCard at 6:50 p.m.

Anita Lisk
Secretary

Approved:

Rev. Dr. John McCard
Rector

Michael Whitlow
Senior Warden