

Bethesda Episcopal Church
Saratoga Springs NY

Minutes: Vestry Meeting
Wednesday, April 29, 2015

Vestry

Mark Claverie
Darren Miller (excused)
Paul Ruzicka (absent)
Mary Withington
Geoff Delbridge (excused)
Gordon Boyd
Catherine Berheide
Mark Griffin
Jane Agee
Geneva Henderson
Sara Manny

Clergy

Dean Marshall J. Vang, Interim Rector
Peter Sweeney, Deacon

Treasurer

Anne Van Acker

Call to order: Dean Vang called to order the regular meeting of the Bethesda Episcopal Church Vestry at 7:00 PM on March 25, 2015 at the Church on Washington Street. (Note: meeting was begun in the church while Ms. Agee set up for the vestry photograph; after devotions, previous minutes approval and the taking of the photograph, meeting was resumed in the parish hall at 7:20)

Devotions: Ms. Berheide began the meeting with devotions.

Previous meeting minutes: Mr. Boyd moved that minutes from the previous meeting be accepted, seconded by Ms. Manny, unanimously approved. Ms. Henderson thanked the vestry for its timely editing suggestions.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Van Acker reported that, according to this month's financial statements, we have a serious income problem, stemming from unexpectedly low pledge and plate. Expenses are still within budget. She is checking to make sure that all deposits for April so far are in and accounted for, we're currently showing pledge and plate income of approximately \$14,578.00 for the month of April, which includes Easter income. Last year our pledge and plate for the month including Easter was around \$30,000. This is of huge concern and she strongly recommended that the Stewardship committee start coming up with tactics to address this. Mr. Boyd expressed the necessity of consolidating contact information and getting systems in line so we can think about the capital campaign. Dean Vang expressed that a drastic fall in income seems to be a systemic problem through the diocese.

Administrative Assistant Search: With our current financial status, it appears we cannot afford to hire a full-time administrative assistant. Lynn's last day is the end of May and, while she will be willing to lend a hand now and then, she is no longer willing to act as a full time volunteer and, as she has already long overstayed the period for which she had originally agreed to volunteer, she has our deepest thanks for her time served. Mr. Griffin urged a leap of faith in hiring a new administrative assistant, pointing out that a disorganized church office would likely only lead to further loss of income. The overall feeling, however, seemed to be anxiety about adding such a large expense when our income seems so unreliable. Dean Vang said he would like to meet with the executive committee about this issue.

Interim Rector's Report: Dean Vang distributed the list of commission assignments and reminded the vestry that chairs of these commissions are urged to add members of the congregation to their committees. He also reminded the vestry that some commissions might involve handling confidential information so members should be chosen accordingly. He has received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the new vestments and the new red set should be here in time for Pentecost. He expressed thanks to Ms. Withington and Ms. Van Acker for helping clean out and sort through the older vestments. Those we have chosen to dispose of will be sent to Africa. Ms. Withington moved to approve the donation of usable vestments to churches in Africa. Mr. Boyd seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Deacon's Report: Seven of the confirmation classes are now complete, and a new student was added two weeks ago, bringing the total to five. Deacon Sweeney reported that the blood drive was a success, surpassing our goal (we had a goal of collecting 24 units and collected 27). We also attracted 7 first time donors. The Red Cross would like us to host two blood drives a year. Deacon Sweeney will be meeting with parents of teens in May to discuss the mission trip. Mary Eddy has moved to a new building (323 Victoria) in Wesley. She is doing very well and in high spirits.

Home of the Good Shepherd Litigation: Ms. Withington reported that Mark Lansing, Esq., of the firm of Hiscock & Barclay, attended the preliminary conference and was very encouraged by the questions being asked by Judge Thomas Nolan. The case is proceeding forward with a schedule for pretrial discovery, including paper discovery, depositions and appraisals. A Note of Issue/Certificate of Readiness must be filed by April 29, 2016, and if not resolved, trial dates will be established. As there is litigation also pending concerning the Homes in Wilton and Moreau, the matters may all be consolidated with the Malta litigation. We continue to provide high quality care for our residents.

Building Projects: Mr. Boyd reported that storm-water runoff may be a problem with all of the construction on Washington Street, as the current storm pipe is ceramic. Usually applicants to the planning board get stuck with these sorts of expenses for improved infrastructure. The architects and building committee are also discussing possible necessary change to the configuration of the entryway. Parking remains a complication. We will need to escrow \$8,000-\$10,000 to retain an engineering firm to study traffic flow. It will also be important to get the church listed on the national registry of historic properties in order to help with grant eligibility. We have been approved for a \$1,500.00 condition assessment grant which opens the door for other grant possibilities. Saratoga National seems very keen and has been provided with our financial model. There may be a possibility of getting renters to finish their own spaces in the NPH, thus reducing costs. Mr. Boyd has also been investigating the possibility of getting a loan from the Episcopal Church Building Fund for purposes of restoration; this would come with a favorable interest rate and the diocese would guarantee the loan. Likely, however, restoration will have to wait until after the NPH is built. Ms. Henderson expressed concern about bits of the church that are close to failure (such as the sewage pipes) and Mr. Boyd clarified that immediate concerns will be addressed earlier. Dean Vang expressed thanks to Mr. Boyd for his dedication and hard work on this project.

Parish History: Mr. Boyd reasserted the intention that proceeds from the Parish History be deposited in the endowment and urged that this be done with the \$5,500 of memorial contributions. These proceeds would then be used for construction and furnishing of the library and parish archives in the NPH. We should send out another outreach letter for donations. We can use this project as a model for fundraising for other ministries.

Endowment Committee: Ms. Henderson relayed that she had been requested by Vernon Hinkle to move that David Harper be appointed treasurer of the endowment committee by the Vestry. After some discussion about whether or not this was actually necessary, Ms. Henderson prevailed and moved to appoint David Harper as treasurer. The motion was seconded by Mr. Claverie and passed with unanimous approval.

Communications: Ms. Henderson reported that she has gotten a church Facebook page up and running with the help of Ms. Agee, who provided excellent photographs. Ms. Henderson would like to have three people with administrative access to the FB page so that we are not again put in the position of losing access due to the departure of the FB administrator. Mr. Boyd suggested Stuart Armstrong as the third, and this met with general approval. Ms. Henderson expressed that the goal of the communications committee will be to facilitate communication between the governing bodies of the church and the congregation, so her main focus for now is the updating and maintenance of the FB page, as well as working on getting a newsletter together. There is not currently a program in place for creation and distribution of a newsletter, so Ms. Henderson is going to have to start from scratch, which may take some time. The FB page is a good venue in the meantime.

Vacation Bible School: Ms. Henderson recently attended VBS training, which went well. Dates for VBS will be 6/29-7/3 and Christ Church is currently registering volunteers. Teen volunteers will get community service credit and adult volunteers will get to build character.

Building Maintenance: Mr. Claverie reported that the kitchen waste pipes in the parish house are functioning again. Tom Remington is looking into purchasing a push-mower.

Nursery: Deacon Sweeney and Ms. Manny reported that lack of consistent nursery care is leading to mothers getting stuck in the nursery alone. We should look into hiring someone or at least putting together a schedule for volunteers.

Convention Delegates: Mr. Boyd has volunteered to attend the convention. Mark Claverie and Landon Moore will also attend as representative of the parish. Mr. Moore is seriously weighing the option of joining the priesthood, so this will be a good opportunity for him. Ms. Withington moved to approve Mr. Boyd, Mr. Claverie and Mr. Moore as delegates for Bethesda. Ms. Manny seconded the motion and approval was unanimous.

Expenses: Mr. Claverie moved that Dean Vang's expenses for the month be approved. Mr. Griffin seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

Closing: Ms. Henderson moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Boyd seconded the motion which passed unanimously.