

**Bethesda Episcopal Church Vestry Meeting  
January 11, 2023  
Saratoga Springs**

**Attendance:** Fr. Charles Wallace, Priest in Charge  
Darren Miller, Senior Warden  
Sara Manny, Junior Warden  
Karen Finkbeiner, Treasurer  
Mark Claverie  
Laura Kszan                    via Zoom  
Marcia MacDonald  
David MacVane  
Holly Sofarelli  
David Wilder  
Ann Bullock, Clerk

**Absent:**            Steven Rucker

**Opening Prayer**

The regular meeting of the Bethesda Episcopal Church Vestry was called to order at 7:05pm on Wednesday, January 11, 2023, by Fr. Wallace

**Devotions:**

Fr. Wallace offered devotions.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of November 16, 2022, were unanimously approved as corrected. (M MacDonald, movant; D MacVane, second)

**Priest-in-Charge Remarks:**

We got through Christmas quite well: about 350 in attendance at all services, which is about 120 more than last year. Our attendance is generally increasing slowly. Some who attended Christmas services have returned and each week there are people who are new. We finished the year in the black for which we are grateful.

**Churchwardens' Report:**

**Junior Warden:** S Manny

About 55 pledge cards have been returned and the pledged amount is nearly \$200,000. Pledges continue to arrive. Noted there are many reasons that individuals choose not to pledge but give in any case.

**Senior Warden:** D. Miller  
Nominating Committee

Committee, including D Robinson, J vanderVeer, Fr Wallace and Darren have approached several individuals who have agreed to serve. They will be voted on at the Annual Meeting.

Reminder that the Vestry members should sign conflict of interest letters in the future.

**Treasurer's Financial Report:** K Finkbeiner, Treasurer

K Finkbeiner sent report noting that We finished 2022 with better than expected Operational financial performance. November giving was much higher than usual, which had eliminated the deficit we had run all year. December giving was also exceptional, over \$60K, and that has increased our Net Income (vs the deficit we ran through Oct) and given us good coverage for the first months of 2023.

Our expenses continued to underrun overall. Inflation-driven items were over budget, but those overruns were more than offset by the significant savings in Office Staff costs. Overruns included change in benefits and other inflation-affected expenses. Church building expense, including utilities, exceeded budget. Some organ related program expenses for maintenance should be charged to the Griffith Fund. For Budgeting, we will want to leave the expense as operational as the Balance in Griffith is down (as all investment accounts were in 2022), which will drive lower 2023 income.

There were no invoices due in 2022 outstanding at the end of the year. The result is that we finished the year very strongly.

**Budget discussion:** Creating the Operational budget, started with Full Year 2022 Actuals. To the extent that 2023 would be different from 2022 figures were adjusted. In expense, the adjustments are:

- Change in Benefits
- No paid office staff - this is a key assumption as the staff has agreed to continue to volunteer for the next year and there are individuals who are willing to fill in as needed. Each volunteer gives three to four hours weekly; the office is open three days per week (Tues to Thurs.) Bulletins have already been completed through Palm Sunday; messages are checked throughout the day (whether in-person or remotely); and the system runs very smoothly.
- Allowed more fee hours, we under-ran our Organist fees in 2022
- Building maintenance expenses include some allowance for building repairs needed
- No web redesign
- New Diocesan assessment per Elaine.

For all items other than the Assessment, the 2022 line item after adjustments was increased by 4% for inflation. (Note: 4% is on the high side of the December Fed outlook, but the Fed said the risk to the outlook was more to the upside, and if inflation comes in a bit lower on our specific spending we will have little 'buffer' in the budget.) Office expenses include rent which is expected to increase owing to the new owner of our building. The Assessment figure is not yet fixed, but the figure used is expected based on our income.

Discussion and agreement to increase in the rector expenses by \$10,000 to allow for necessary repairs and upkeep of the Rectory. This will reduce the operating income (surplus) to \$10,000.

In Income, the other/special envelope income was lowered slightly Year to Year, and the dividend assumption also was also reduced (Note: we do not have the estimate on the

dividend yet but we know it will be lower due to lower investment values.) The figures then are backed into the P&P number required to provide a \$20K surplus at year end. This considerably exceeds the usual pledge figures, making us even more reliant on gifts, often end-of-year, outside of pledging (leading to uncertainty in income). This cash flow requires us to keep a tight budget as the giving deficit at the start of each year rapidly spends down any apparent excess at the end of the year.

D Wilder observed that there is no allowance for income from any use of the vacant lot beside the church as discussed with Bonacio Construction.

Discussion and agreement to increase in the rector expenses by \$10,000 to allow for necessary repairs and upkeep of the Rectory. This will reduce the operating income (surplus) to \$10,000.

Discussion and unanimous agreement that the Budget with the \$10,000 adjustment in Rector's expenses be offered at the Annual Meeting for consideration and approval by the Parish.

### **Commission Reports:**

#### **By-Law Amendment:** D Wilder:

Amendment is structured to comply with Religious Corporation Law. Pursuant to Religious Corporation Law, the Vestry must recommend to the Parish at the Annual Meeting that this amendment be adopted and, upon vote by the parish to approve the amendment, the change becomes official at the next Annual Meeting. The Bylaws are somewhat unclear as to who actually is a voting member of Vestry. That is, there is a question as to whether the Treasurer and/or Clerk are voting members. Recently, the Treasurer and the Clerk have been elected Vestrymembers before being appointed to the position.

Motion to recommend that the proposed amendments to the Bylaws be presented to the Parish to be voted at the Annual Meeting (D Miller, movant; D Wilder, second.) Motion passed by unanimous vote of the Vestry.

D Wilder raised a question concerning indemnification by the Church of the members of Vestry in the present Bylaws. The amount of the indemnification needs to be examined to determine whether there is a reasonable limit based on Diocesan insurance coverage. (Note: The Bylaws generally should be reviewed and revised, as necessary.)

#### **Building Report;** M Claverie

Met last week with Shannon Brown from Waite and with Sano Rubin to go over the punch list; generally complete. The roof work is almost entirely complete. The fire stairs are finished and actually quite attractive—further there is a credit to us for not painting the stairs. The stone is in place and the storm door is complete. Clerestory windows to be completed when weather permits.

The lectern will be back in the spring (not sure if it will be done by Easter.)

Maybe able to contract with a mason now retiring from Sano Rubin to do some of the masonry work still required.

Sprinkler needs to be recharged with antifreeze to finish the fire inspection. Plan going forward to have the fire inspection in January to avoid the disruption at Christmas.

There is a sprinkler in the bell tower that needs to be evaluated and repaired.

With many thanks to Mark Claverie for his time and attention to the ongoing repairs and maintenance, as well as the major projects for which he has taken leadership.

**New Business:** none

**Next meeting: 15 February, 2023 at a location to be determined**

**Blessing and Adjournment**

Blessing by Fr. Wallace

Meeting was adjourned at 8:38pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ann C. Bullock, Clerk