

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2021

Present: Sean Albert, Jon Ewbank, Meg Hughes, Sandee Hughes, David Kennison, Debbie Lambeth, Lynn Paska, Paul Smigelski, Rich Unger, Jeff Wengrovius

Excused absent: Carol Gaige

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting at 7:06, opening with a prayer. He then shared the sad news that parishioner Connie Todt has passed away. Connie was a fun, warm, and hard-working person, who will be greatly missed. Her funeral will be in Glenville.

Lynn Paska moved to accept the October and November minutes, Debbie Lambeth seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Senior Warden's Report

David Kennison reviewed the terms of Father Matt Stromberg's resignation, which was accepted by the Vestry on November 18. We have agreed to grant him three months of salary, health insurance, health savings account deposits, and use of the rectory. His pension deposits and car lease stipend have ceased. Fr. Matt surrendered his keys (except for one for the rectory) and a church credit card on December 5.

Former sextons Sondra and Jeremy Kravetz are still in residence, pending a legal eviction. The court issued an eviction warrant on October 15, but Ideal Legal (contractor) failed to deliver it to the Sheriff's office until December 6. The police have made unsuccessful attempts to serve the warrant, but we do expect it to be accomplished by the end of the year. The delays have been particularly frustrating, as we are seeing malicious and destructive vandalism within the Great Hall, and suspect (but can't prove) that Jeremy is the culprit. David will speak with the Sheriff's Department tomorrow.

Upcoming Services and Supply Clergy:

December 19—Morning Prayer, Advent Lessons & Carols, Greening of the Church.

December 24—Mass to begin at 9 p.m., Fr. Peter Schofield officiating. Carols to precede the service beginning at 8:30 p.m.

December 25—Mass to begin at 11 a.m., Fr. Thomas Papazoglakis

December 26 (St. Stephen's Day)—Morning Prayer, Christmas Lessons & Carols

January 2—Fr. Richard Lehmann

January 6 (Epiphany)—Fr. Thomas Pettigrew, Rector of Church of the Holy Cross, Warrensburg, Mass at 7 p.m.

January 9—Fr. Richard Lehmann

January 16—Fr. Peter Schofield

January 23-30—Fr. Richard Lehmann

February 2 (Candlemas)—Fr. Dale Van Wormer, Rector of St. Matthew's, Unadilla, and St. Paul's, Sidney

February 6 and beyond (including Ash Wednesday on March 2)—Fr. Richard Lehmann

Annual Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting has been scheduled for January 23 after church. Volunteers are needed to provide a light lunch. Four terms are ending: Paul Smigelski, Lynn Paska, and Richard Unger (all first-term Vestry members and eligible to be reelected) and David Kennison (partial term as Senior Warden). All agree that continuity is essential for our Vestry right now, and those eligible have assented to run for reelection. The candidates needs to be posted in the bulletin, and nominations from the congregation are still an option.

Rector Search

Mtr. Elizabeth Papazoglakis, Diocese of Albany Transition Officer, will meet with Vestry soon after our Annual Meeting. At this meeting, which could take two or three hours, she will review the search process with us. We will then need to generate a variety of documents, including an Episcopal Church Deployment Office questionnaire, parish profile, assessment of strengths and weaknesses, and what we want in a rector. We would like to schedule the meeting with Mtr. Elizabeth as soon as possible, and begin work on the documents in the meantime. Jeff Wengrovius has a previously-used parish survey that we should look at and update.

Key Management and Urgent Maintenance Issue

Vestry is responsible for control of keys for all church properties. We need a better process for key sign-outs and Jon Ewbank has volunteered to take charge of this as part of his Junior Warden responsibilities.

Another issue needing immediate attention is the fact that a storm window at St. George's House (choirmaster's residence) fell out of its frame on December 7. The wood frame was rotted due to lack of maintenance.

Junior Warden's Report

Jon Ewbank acknowledged that numerous “old business” tasks remain incomplete, primarily due to the lack of funds. He is working on a prioritized list (with estimates) for repairs to be addressed in the coming year.

As mentioned in the Senior Warden’s report, a storm window in the master bedroom of Brian Taylor’s apartment was destroyed when it fell from its casement and crashed to the sidewalk below. The window itself is still intact, but there is only one pane of glass now between Brian and the cold of winter. Jon is soliciting estimates for repair/maintenance. He will have all of the windows of St. George’s house surveyed for repair as well. Rich Unger noted that any replacement windows must have wooden casements to comply with Stockade Historical District requirements.

Treasurer’s Report

Jeff Wengrovius reports that church finances are in a good position to carry us through the end of 2021. The recent major electric work was covered by insurance and all bills are paid. In other good news, pledge income is over budget.

Final 2022 budget tweaks have been completed and the budget reviewed with David and other ministry leaders. Jeff made a motion that Vestry vote to approve the budget and Rich Unger seconded the motion. David opened the floor for questions.

Sandee Hughes had an inquiry about the hospitality budget. She isn’t fully aware of what is meant to be paid for out of that category, and how she can track the expenses. Jeff advised Sandee to ask him directly for updates, and if something gets charged inappropriately it can retroactively be moved to another budget line.

Rich suggested that it would be helpful to clarify, perhaps with footnotes, what items are paid out of specific budget lines. Jeff wasn’t in favor of adding footnotes to the budget, but is open to creating a support document that lists out the expenses that are generally charged to each budget line.

Rich also asserted that we shouldn’t put forth a budget that isn’t balanced. If we are running at a deficit, we should either reduce expenses or find additional income somewhere. Jeff’s response to that is that we could easily balance the budget by preemptively taking endowment principal, but that he is loath to do so. Jeff would prefer that we go into the year resolving to find ways of reducing costs wherever possible—without disrupting the services of the church, of course—but knowing that we might ultimately be forced to tap endowment principal. It’s a safety cushion that we hope to use only as a last resort.

David called for a vote to approve the budget. The motion carried with a majority vote of “ayes” and only one “nay.”

Community Liaison Report

Rich Unger relayed the wishes of the Stockade Association Board of Directors that the St. George’s Church Vestry and congregation enjoy a very Merry Christmas and blessed New Year. In other Stockade news:

- The annual Schenectady County Historical Society and YWCA Festival of Trees is underway and will be open daily through December 23, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$6 for adults; children under 12 are free.
- The Schenectady County Historical Society has one more holiday stroll through the Stockade, on December 18, 6 to 9 p.m. The admission fee of \$11 includes light refreshments and the opportunity to view the Festival of Trees display before and after the walking tour.
- The annual Stockade Neighborhood tree lighting ceremony on December 5 at the Front and Ferry Street Circle was a huge success with mild weather and more people in attendance than any could remember.

ALM, Garden Ministry, Book Club

Meg Hughes reports that Alice Polumbo recently reached out to the three facilities formerly served by the Assisted Living Ministry (ALM) to ask whether they would like to resume the program. She did not receive any responses.

Garden Ministry is on hiatus for the winter.

The book club will resume its schedule of meeting on the third Sunday of alternate months in 2022. On January 16 we will discuss the Niall Williams novel *This is Happiness*. The book for March is *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman, and the book for May is *Harlem Shuffle* by Colson Whitehead.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes notes that the coffee hour refreshment sign-up sheet continues to be posted, but few volunteers have stepped up to support this effort. Brian Taylor has been setting up the coffee on Sunday mornings and taking all the dishes back to his apartment to put through the dishwasher. We should relieve him of that cleanup duty. Sandee also noted that Brian is going to be absent on a couple of Sundays after Christmas.

Food is being arranged for a light lunch on Sunday for the greening of the church.

Food will also be needed for a reception after Christmas Eve Mass (finger foods, sweets, punch, etc.) and Sandee will create a special sign-up sheet for that event.

The Hospitality Ministry seeks suggestions for assuring the success of future gatherings, including adult forum (presentations during coffee hour) which may be making a comeback. We need to set a date for a core group of volunteers to put the finishing touches on the kitchen reopening, once Liz Catalan (housekeeper) has done what she can to clean it.

Committee Lists

Sandee Hughes and Jon Pearson have compiled committee lists based on sign-up sheets and other sources. The lists need to be reviewed, and descriptions added of what each committee does and necessary training, if applicable. This is a work in progress. Vestry are asked to read through the lists and send changes to Sandee.

Communications

Lynn Paska reports that content pertaining to our former rector has been deleted from the website, including the photo that was included on the Vestry page.

The *Georgian Report* for December is on the website, with hard copies in the narthex, and a PDF emailed to parishioners. The next newsletter will be in March. Lynn will announce the specific deadline as we get closer to the date.

Lynn and Bob Paska are also tackling the updating of the parish email list.

Archives

Sean Albert filed a report about efforts to organize old church files. There continues to be an overwhelming amount of shredding to be done, and he would also like to digitize the architectural plans and store them properly. Suggestions welcome.

In new business, Sean suggested Monday, January 17, 2022 (Martin Luther King Day) as a time to examine the contents of the vault for historical documents.

Pastoral Care

Jim Wingate and Ann Duff visited Helen Parker, Charlie Stamm and Aileen Caruso-Smith on December 7. All received Communion and were given a poinsettia. On December 10, they picked up Nancy Angus in Guilderland and took her to Queensbury to see her sister and brother-in-law, Judy and Gene DeLong. On the 13th, they delivered poinsettias to (but were unable to visit) Carole Civalo and Connie Todt. They enjoyed a nice visit with Stella Schultz and gave her a poinsettia.

Jim has sent out 58 Christmas cards to parishioners.

New Business

Vestry is anticipating a busy year ahead. Projects that need tackling include:

- 2022 programming plans—What do we want St. George's to do and be? We should be compiling a list of plans for the coming year (e.g., cleanup days, dinners, Bible study, community outreach).
- Cleaning out the Great Hall classrooms. Barb Wengrovius has started the work but we need to form a team. The kitchen is also a mess. Liz Catalan will begin working on it, but here also, it needs to be a team effort.
- Outreach expansion. This was once a vibrant program under Alice Pumbo, but has fallen off in the past couple of years. How do we get it reenergized? We need Vestry oversight and volunteers. David urged Vestry to think on it and come back with some commitments.
- Maintenance of parish Facebook page. Brian and Meg are willing to work together on it and others are urged to participate. Meg doesn't have the account password and Brian also does not know it. He is signed in as an administrator under the old password but he can't get new login credentials without knowing the old ones. He agreed to press Matt for the details.

Adjournment and Next Meeting

Debbie moved to adjourn the meeting at 9 p.m. Sandee seconded and all approved. The next regularly scheduled Vestry meeting will be at 7 p.m. January 20, 2022.

Respectfully,

Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk