

**St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes**  
**February 16, 2023**

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

Excused: Gloria Kishton

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting at 6:32 p.m. in the Shaw Lounge and read a prayer for divine guidance of Vestry's deliberations.

Sandee Hughes moved to accept the January meeting minutes; Lynn Paska seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

**Senior Warden's Report**

*Rectory Repairs*

David updated Vestry on the restoration of the Rectory. There are still cracks in the dining room floor to be filled, after which three coats of polyurethane will be applied. Water damage has been discovered on the front, interior wall (small study and living room). Fred Ledge is removing damaged plaster, repairing, and repainting. We are hopeful that the issue will not recur now that the exterior has been properly sealed.

*Boiler and Plumbing Repairs*

There is no update on delivery of the remaining parts of the new church boiler. The old one is hanging in there (with daily checks and a weekly blow down). It also needed new steam traps recently, at a cost of about \$2,000.

In the Great Hall, a broken pipe flooded the Library on Sunday, February 5. A variety of shortcomings led to this mishap. Jack Guarneri fixed the immediate issue but more should be done. The heating system is too close to an uninsulated exterior wall. As a stopgap measure, some spray foam insulation has been blown in but the pipes should be moved away from the wall by a couple of inches. Another necessary repair is the replacement of a downspout on the Green Street side of the Hall. As it is, water is freezing on and infiltrating through that exterior brick wall, with mold forming inside as a result. Fred is working on remediation of the mold issue.

*Issues at Other Local Episcopal Churches*

St. Paul's, St. Stephen's, and Christ Church are all experiencing severe budgetary issues and are cutting back, perhaps being forced to close (particularly in the case of St. Paul's). Vestry agreed that it is important for St. George's to be seen as a viable alternative for all Episcopalians in Schenectady. We recently hosted a joint Candlemas service with the choir from St. Stephen's and it was very well received. We hope to do more such activities designed to welcome others to worship here. Our Rite I format may be unfamiliar to those accustomed to Rite II, but we feel that they might warm up to it and/or (when we have a new Rector) we could expand the variety of Mass styles offered here.

### *Upcoming Activities*

- After Mass on Sunday, February 19, parishioners will be invited to enjoy a free pancake breakfast prepared by Sandee Hughes, Meg Hughes, and Barb Wengrovius.
- Our Lenten series this year will consist of Sunday evening potluck suppers followed by Stations of the Cross.
- David has managed to locate supply clergy for all but one Sunday between now and the end of June. Three new priests have been added to the rota: Fr. Peter Schellhase, Rector of St. Michael's Colonie and priest-in-charge at St Boniface, Guilderland; Fr. Jason Radcliff, head of school at Augustine Classical Academy; and Fr. Paul Hunter, who has led services here in the past. We will be seeing less of Fr. Peter Schofield, as his time will be devoted to Christ Church, which is losing its rector as of Easter.
- A Choral Evensong will be scheduled for this spring. (Note: A Choral Evensong on February 12 raised \$275 for Things of My Very Own and \$275 for St. George's.) The spring event should be vigorously promoted throughout Schenectady and the Diocese to assure a good turnout.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Jeffrey Wengrovius announced that 23% of anticipated pledge income for the year has already been received, noting that we have exceeded our 2022 pledge amount with more than \$100,000 pledged. He also shared the sad news that Alice and Ralph Polumbo, generous givers and active church volunteers, are moving out of the area.

The transition of our checking account from TrustCo to First National Bank of Scotia is underway, with an initial \$15,000 deposit made.

Cleaning expenses are over budget due to the many hours Fred has been putting in to get our buildings into shape. In the future, Jeff will split these hours between two budgetary lines: cleaning/maintenance (line 5435) and building repairs (line 5422).

Boiler/heating expenses continue to barrage the budget. We are also faced with some costly upgrades being mandated by our insurer, Church Mutual. Some of these expenses might be avoided on the basis that they are incompatible with our historic structures and/or irrelevant to actual usage of the facilities. For example, we have no sprinkler system in the Great Hall kitchen. As our activity in that area is largely limited to small-scale, low-risk food preparation, a commercial fire-suppression setup seems out of proportion.

Other recommendations that are admittedly appropriate include the eradication of brush adjacent to the Great Hall in an alleyway off the Green Street sidewalk, and repair/replacement of our parking lot, which is buckled and sagging. That will be a very costly project.

Jeff concluded his report with an overview of some recent accomplishments:

- 2023 envelopes available to all. Most have been picked up.
- 2022 tax contribution statements all sent.
- 1099's sent to supply priests.
- Financial data for parochial report prepared.

### **Community Liaison Report**

Rich Unger announced that the Stockade is planning a community recycling day for April 22. This would be an opportunity for the church to offload old electronics and paper for shredding. Rich will keep us informed as details become available.

### **Garden Ministry/Book Club**

Meg Hughes had no updates on either ministry.

### **Hospitality Committee**

In addition to managing the usual coffee hour schedule and the upcoming pancake breakfast, Sandee Hughes has been polishing old silver tea service pieces and storing them in a manner that will prevent them from getting tarnished again.

## **Communications**

Lynn Paska advised that pictures from our Annual Parish Meeting in January have been posted on the website. Her deadline for the spring *Georgian Report* is Friday, March 3.

Anyone who would like his or her individual Vestry picture retaken may meet with Bob Paska in the Shaw Lounge on Sunday, February 19 after Mass.

## **Archives**

Sean Albert inquired about uploading old electronic files to the cloud, and whether he should discard church bulletins dating back to the 1990s. Paul Smigelski remarked that we have access to considerable cloud storage by virtue of our Microsoft subscription, and this should be our first line of defense for protecting old files. David is currently holding a lot of old documentation on USB drives and these should be uploaded. David will touch base with Sean about what to do with duplicative paper documents.

Sean also wondered about opening the office vault to assess its contents for historical significance. David has the combination but hasn't been able to get the safe open. He believes that Bob McCloskey may be able to work it properly.

## **Outreach**

Paul Smigelski reviewed two recent outreach accomplishments: 1.) the fund-raising Evensong which netted \$275 for Things of My Very Own; and 2.) 345 pounds of food collected for SICM. With the Polumbos leaving the parish, Paul will need assistance in maintaining the SICM food collection program. Carol Gaije volunteered to be the person who delivers the food each month. Paul thanked her for stepping up and remarked that he will help her load her car each time.

## **Pastoral Care**

Jim Wingate and Ann Duff reported on recent visits with three elderly parishioners. They also recently called on Jamie Taft, who remains in serious condition at Albany Medical Center. Jamie reportedly will be moved to a rehabilitation center in the near future.

## **New Business**

### *Review of Audit Report*

Vestry has had adequate opportunity to review the report issued by Cusack and Company on December 15, 2022 at the conclusion of their financial audit of the church.

This report highlighted some minor errors and offered some easily-accomplished tasks to shore up the safety of our accounting. It also suggests that our bookkeeping system should not be primarily Excel, but recommended instead a more robust platform such as Power Church or QuickBooks. Jeff acknowledged that there is merit to that suggestion and announced that he and Bob intend to transition to Power Church. This will entail some expense and training, and a lot of effort.

Jeff moved that Vestry accept the report and Jon Ewbank seconded the motion. It was passed unanimously.

### *Upgrade of Web Security*

Vestry revisited an issue that was brought to our attention last year by Mark Rose of Groupiehead, via Jon Pearson. The concern is that our website is http:// and not https://, meaning it isn't secure and some search engines may accordingly make it difficult for users to access the site. The cost to fix this shortcoming would be \$255 annually. There was some skepticism regarding the necessity of the upgrade, and a general agreement that we should test using our home computers before incurring the expense. Jeff will look at the budget to see if there is any way he can pare back on telephone expenses to free up money in the budget line that would be tapped to make the security upgrade. We will reconvene on the issue at our March meeting.

### *Asset Management*

There was no formal Asset Management Committee update, but Rich Unger stated that he would like to do some trend analysis on church membership and income over the past few decades. David may be able to muster recent parochial reports to help with this effort. He will also confer with Jon Pearson, who has tracked financial data for many years, and get back to Rich on it.

### **Adjournment of Regular Vestry and Reconvening for Search Committee Discussion**

There being no further regular business before the Vestry, the meeting was adjourned and reconvened for the purpose of discussing next steps in the rector search process. We have three finalist candidates whom we would like to visit in their current parishes. Two are within the Diocese and one is located a considerable distance away. Ideally we will have three different Vestry members visit each one. Paul stated that he will be traveling for business in the vicinity of the candidate who is not local, and he may be able to work in a church visit at that time. There were no immediate volunteers for any other visitation duties, and a suggestion was made that we each indicate offline what

our preferences would be. One member begged off from travel duties altogether, citing personal health issues, and another stated that a busy schedule and family obligations preclude him from supporting the effort. David will reach out to the remaining members to assess willingness to participate in rector candidate visits.

The Vestry concluded its work at 7:54 p.m., ending the evening with a prayer.

Upcoming meeting dates:

Rector Search—6:30 p.m., Thursday, March 2

Regular Vestry—6:30 p.m., Thursday, March 16

Respectfully,

Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk