

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes October 19, 2023

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

Absent (excused): Jon Ewbank

Father Thomas John Pettigrew convened the meeting with a prayer promptly at 6:30 p.m. and David Kennison immediately requested that the first order of business be the official signing of the contract between St. George's Episcopal Church and our new Rector. Fr. Pettigrew and David each signed the document with a flourish of ceremony as high-spirited Vestry members acclaimed the historic moment (some hastening to record it on their cellphones).

The regular meeting resumed, with Fr. Pettigrew inquiring whether there were any amendments to the September minutes. No concerns were voiced and Meg Hughes thanked Sean Albert for stepping up as clerk of the previous meeting in her absence. Sandee Hughes moved that the minutes be approved; Carol Gaige seconded the motion. It carried unanimously.

Father Pettigrew's Report

Fr. Tom advised Vestry that the Diocese will consecrate Bishop-elect Jeremiah Williamson of Colorado Springs on February 24 at the Cathedral in Albany. Father has been asked to help coordinate Bishop Williamson's transition, specifically, in the acquisition of appropriate liturgical items such as vestments, crozier, mitre, pectoral cross, etc. Some of these things may be gifts from individuals or parishes, or they may be purchased by the new Bishop of the Diocese.

We still don't have a date for the institution of Fr. Tom as our new Rector, as we have been holding off in the hopes that the new Albany Diocese Bishop could be present. We may still wait for the official consecration, which would push our institution to March 2024 at the earliest. We may have an option of performing our ceremony earlier with Bishop-elect Williamson in attendance prior to his own consecration. Fr. Tom will explore that possibility when he meets with him for transition planning in one week's time. It is also important to note that St. George's is on the brink of initiating a major interior paint job that would temporarily fill the sanctuary with scaffolding. It would not be ideal to schedule our Rector's celebratory institution during that interval.

Fr. Tom has appointed Carol Gaige to head up a newly created membership committee. We will be kept apprised of this important work, which will entail outreach to folks who have worshipped with us in the past and may appreciate hearing the latest from St. George's. Carol is excited about serving in this capacity. She will use an office in Cranmer Hall as her base of operations and be trained on the use of Power Church so she can update the membership data that is used for mailings. Father noted that his own office hours are currently Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings. He is working on getting the landline telephone set up with voicemail instead of having incoming calls ported directly to Administrative Assistant Robert McCloskey's personal cellphone.

Among other tasks Fr. Tom has handled, he has updated the church's fee schedule for weddings and funerals. Vestry received a draft. Once final, this information will be put on our website and shared with area funeral directors. Similarly, the Great Hall rental agreement is in need of updating.

Father notes that several parishioners have volunteered to assist with the Loaves and Fishes free lunch program on Saturdays in Albany. He is also encouraging participation in the upcoming Salvation Army bell-ringing. Our church's liaison for the effort is Jon Pearson. There will be a kickoff breakfast at 7:30 a.m. Thursday, November 8 at the River Stone Manor. The St. George's table still has a few slots open at the cost of a \$50 donation.

At the conclusion of Father's report, Vestry briefly paused the agenda to convene in executive session for discussion of a private and confidential business matter.

Senior Warden's Report

Church Boiler

Senior Warden David Kennison advised Vestry to dress warmly on Sunday. The new boiler is installed but cannot be fired up until the correct professional is on hand next Monday.

The Rectory

A few final tasks will be addressed by Fred Leger, who continues to recover from surgery.

Ceiling Repairs

We have one quote for repair/repainting of the ceilings in our sanctuary and St. George's House, and we continue to seek other bids. David has been in touch with Church Mutual and they have agreed to extend our claim indefinitely while we handle these projects. We stand to receive an additional \$5,657 if not more.

Three-Phase Power to Church Organ

The three-phase power lines to our organ aren't routed through the main breaker in the church, creating an unsafe electrical situation that must be remedied. David has researched several approaches. He learned that stepping down to one-phase power isn't feasible and it's not possible to add new three-phase wires without taking out the old. The original estimate for this rewiring was \$40,000, but Jack Guarneri & Slingerland Electric have managed to get the cost discounted to \$31,000. Treasurer Jeffrey Wengrovius asserted that this work is too important to be delayed and moved that we approve the expense. David seconded that motion and all present voted "aye." Jeff will report back on the budgetary area that will bear this unexpected expense. He believes we have sufficient untapped interest from the endowment account.

Low-temperature and Water Sensors

In the interest of helping the church avoid damage due to cold weather and/or flooding, our insurer Church Mutual will be supplying us with two sets of sensors. David will install them in the church and the Great Hall.

Web Site and Social Media

Our website has not been updated since January 2021 and needs some refreshing. Lynn and Bob Paska have some photos available and are ready to assist. On an occasion when we have particularly good attendance, they would like to capture a photo illustrating a full church. Fr. Tom will work with Jon Pearson to update the site.

We also need to find a way to regain administrator control of our Facebook page. The password has been lost and we may need Fr. Matt to reset the password using his original login credentials.

Junior Warden's Report

Jon Ewbank's report listed several tasks being handled by David and the Asset Management Committee. He also noted that the new railing for the choir loft has gone to the contractor for staining/varnishing.

Jon sought input from Vestry regarding the level of pest control we feel is appropriate to address cockroaches in the Great Hall kitchen and mice in the Sunday School room

upstairs. Pest control can be pricey so we would like to see four levels of bids for the management of both rodents and insects:

- across the entire campus one-time only;
- across the entire campus monthly;
- solely the Great Hall one-time only; and
- solely the Great Hall monthly.

The ideal solution would be something that involves the least possible amount of toxicity to humans and the environment. Sandee Hughes noted that we will need to be scrupulous about the re-cleaning of cooking/eating surfaces post-application.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Jeffrey Wengrovius has closed the Trustco bank account. Our liquid funds are now all in 1st National Bank of Scotia.

The transition to Power Church software is nearly complete, with many hours spent on this work. Power Church has been in continuous use for all income and check printing, but not for day-to-day tracking of expenses. A parallel accounting was produced for October but Jeff felt it needed further review before being presented to Vestry.

As noted above in the discussion of new wiring needed to run the organ, our endowment interest is growing and Jeff foresees no need to extract principal from RBC for the remainder of 2023.

Vestry has received a 2024 "pencil" budget. Jeff noted that the draft budget allows for an increase in the music budget to include a repair to the Zimbel stop (an organ setting used in the playing of baroque music). The next step is to review the budget with the Finance Committee, along with a discussion of staff salaries and the transition to Power Church.

Father remarked that he would like to see a slightly different approach to the budgeting process in the future. Instead of canvassing the ministry leaders for their budgetary requests, he thinks it would be better to start with the Finance Committee, which would assign funding levels, which could then be adjusted if Vestry and ministry leaders felt they weren't appropriate.

Jeff floated the idea of obtaining portable generators for our campus to help assure that power outages during cold weather don't result in expensive damages. This proactive step might help us convince Church Mutual that our deductible levels could be lowered. (They have been significantly raised for 2024.)

Outreach

Paul Smigelski reported that SICM donations continue to be strong, averaging 260 pounds per month. June, July, and August saw significant giving of over 300 pounds each month. The September donation was even higher at 380 pounds. This puts the total at 2,607 pounds and we have surpassed our goal for the year. We could conceivably reach one-and-a-half tons of donated food by year-end. Next collection is November 12. Thank you, Carol Gaige, for handling transportation of collected goods.

December 10 is our next quarterly donation for the YWCA emergency shelter. Paul appreciates all who have contributed and David Kennison and Gloria Kishton particularly for support of this ministry, which assists women and children who have escaped from an unsafe environment and arrive at the Y with nothing. The need is great and is ongoing. At this time, the YWCA tells us they are in most need of personal hygiene items such as shampoo, conditioner, menstrual products, etc.

As stated above in Fr. Pettigrew's report, St. George's is participating in Loaves & Fishes, a soup kitchen ministry by the Diocese of Albany at St. Francis Mission in Albany. This is an opportunity for hands-on ministry to the most vulnerable in our communities, including children. A sign-up sheet is available in the back of the church.

The Fall Choral Evensong is scheduled for November 12. It will be a joint venture with the choir of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church of Schenectady, and a fundraiser for the YWCA. Paul and his wife Louisa are offering to sponsor the advertising for this event, and Paul will work with Gloria Kishton on that. He also indicated a willingness to underwrite the cost of the reception afterward.

Asset Management Committee Report

Rich Unger made a report on behalf of Jon Ewbank (committee chair), Sean Albert, Gloria Kishton, and himself. Rich explained that the committee exists to pursue a set of previously approved projects with costs to be disbursed from account 5088—Planned

Improvements.

In addition to providing several updates, Rich requested that Vestry authorize \$500 for repair of Great Hall exterior walkway lighting to be charged to account 5088. This will reduce the amount available for parking lot sign repair/replacement from \$1,789 to \$1,289. This request was approved by unanimous consent with no motion necessary.

Rich had noted at last month's Vestry meeting that the outdoor entryway lighting for the Great Hall needed repair before the dark evenings of fall and winter rendered the entry unsafe. Two electrical contractors were consulted and the work was completed on October 16 for less than \$500.

Image360 will quote the cost to repair or replace the wooden parking lot entrance sign on Green Street. The committee hopes there will also be enough left in the account to add one or two smaller onsite signs that will harmonize with the large sign.

Work has yet to be completed on St. George's House (windows, first floor ceiling, and second floor door to Great Hall). A replacement storm window has been ordered from Viscusi's Aluminum Products, Inc. for \$480 and should be delivered within the week. John Flower will install it and restore the other windows on the street side of St. George's House after October 30. The committee expects this work to cost less than the \$6,525 quote by Chris Peters (originally hired to do the work but released from his contract due to unsatisfactory workmanship). Mr. Flower will also provide a quote for installation of a second floor portal between the Great Hall and St. George's House.

Additional contractor quotes for painting of the ceilings in the church and St. George's House are expected very soon. Gloria persisted in outreach to one firm that had declined to quote for the paint job due to a misunderstanding of our terms. We already have a quote from Mid-State but it will be good to have others from which to choose.

The Asset Management Committee has been a vital force in the preservation of our campus. No specific dollar amount has been named yet for budget line 5088 in 2024. Members of the committee will be working with Fr. Tom, Jeff, and the Finance Committee to arrive at an appropriate figure that will enable the good work of this team to continue next year.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes is appreciative of Kevin Decker and Wendy Madelone, who supplied a

delicious luncheon honoring the feast of Our Lady of Walsingham after church last Sunday.

Sandee had two action items for discussion:

- 1) working with Jon Ewbank to obtain quotes for appropriate pest control (see summary in Junior Warden Report above); and
- 2) Brian Taylor has requested money from the Hospitality budget to help defray the cost of two or three Choral Evensong receptions and a special Cornish tea next year. Unfortunately, the hospitality budget is underfunded as it is and relies greatly on parishioner contributions. Brian's initiative is laudable, but is there a different budget line to help underwrite such events? We can encourage greater generosity by parishioners who attend Sunday coffee hour, but that isn't a solution to the larger issue.

Communications

Lynn Paska advises that pictures are up on the website for the St. Francis blessing of the animals, and the luncheon sponsored by The Society of Mary.

She has set a December 1 deadline for the winter *Georgian Report* and asks that all contributors be timely with their copy. Receiving articles promptly will enable the Paskas to have the newsletter roll off the presses by Christmas Eve.

Membership Ministry

Vestry were pleased to receive an update on this important new ministry being headed up by Carol Gage. She will be working closely with David and Fr. Tom to update the Parish Rolls. If anyone knows of any address changes and/or "Friends of St. George's" who have fallen off our radar, please get that information to Carol. She will have a base of operations in the Cranmer Hall offices where she will be trained in the use of Power Church. She's currently using her cellphone to pursue Membership Ministry activities, but hopes to have access to the church's landline in the office soon. In addition to telephone outreach, Carol looks forward to helping Fr. Tom draft a written communication that will go out via U.S. Postal Service.

Garden Ministry

Meg Hughes thanked her fellow Garden Ministry workers (Joyce Cockerham, Jean Greenspan, Gloria Kishton, Suzy Unger, and Barb Wengrovius) for adhering to the

group's motto of "leave it looking better than you found it." Often their efforts include trash removal and other less glamorous tasks, so messes left behind by hired workers can be irksome to these devoted volunteers.

The members do their work for the love of their church, and regularly chip in materials they purchased themselves or brought from home, saving St. George's considerable money. Meg noted that when she completes her second Vestry term in 2024 she will happily continue as a member of Garden Ministry but not as the sole leader of the team. She is confident that the camaraderie she has fostered among the gardeners will serve to keep the momentum going.

Archives

Sean Albert has researched acid-free storage systems for the preservation of some old St. George's documents. He requested an amount not to exceed \$100 for an archival box large enough to store old deeds. This proposal was quickly approved by unanimous consent.

Sean also remarked that it is time to close storm windows all around the campus. He suggested that we regularly select a day and assemble a few volunteers to accomplish this task in the fall, and similarly schedule a day in the spring to reopen them.

Adjournment

Vestry adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Next Vestry Meeting—6:30 p.m., Thursday, November 16

Respectfully,
Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk