

Minutes for Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2020, Vestry meeting

**Zoom Meeting of St. Stephen's Parish Vestry
Pittsfield, Massachusetts
Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2020, at 7:15 p.m.**

Present: The Rt. Rev. John Tarrant, interim rector; co-wardens Tom Dillon and Erin Sullivan; Wendy Coakley, Leah Luczynski, Mark Miller, Angie Moon, Louise Penney, and Chris Plankey.

Absent: Valerie Andersen and John Culver.

Valerie Anderson - canoeval4@gmail; Wendy Coakley - wendycoakley72@gmail.com; John Culver - culvie229@gmail.com; Tom Dillon - tdillon45@hotmail.com; Leah Luczynski - leah@leahinteriors.com; Mark Miller mark@berkshire.net; Angie Moon - amoon@pittsfield.net; Chris Plankey - chris@djchrisplankey.com; Louise Penney (communicate through Tom); Erin Sullivan - esullypede@gmail.com

Meeting Begins at 7:22 with a prayer by John T.

July Minutes Approved on a motion by Louise seconded by Wendy.

Interim Rector's Report: (a) Everything not confidential that concerns the Vestry should go through Sarah Morrison. (b) Inside, "in-person" services on Saturday at 5 and Sunday at 8 and 10 have collectively garnered just over 40 people each weekend since beginning on Aug. 1. There is "contact cleaning" between services, and pews are ribboned for social distancing and so no one occupies the same pew used within the last seven days. Meanwhile, the services continue on Facebook, live and to participate in later, with some organ music provided by Joy Mullen. The indoor services are about 40 minutes long, without singing. Participants wear face masks, which are available for those who forget, but in two weeks only one person has. "We may be the first in the Berkshires to have indoor services." After approval from the Diocese, communion resumed at our in-person worship on Aug. 8. Small plastic bags are placed in pews in which worshipers who take communion may dispose of the kits that contained the bread and the wine. (c) "We will continue to expand" in the building including offering a Sunday nursery, which may come in September. (d) "Reality is our friend," John says, and we need to respond to the current circumstances the pandemic has brought even when inconvenient in general and in specific ways. (e) A group of greeters will be recruited for this transitional period, at least two per service. (f) Offerings are not taken via passed baskets, but plenty are located near the entrances. (g) Parishioners and others wishing to attend indoor services must pre-register. Agreeing with Tom about glitches in the registration process, John says it will become a problem only with the approach of the capacity attendance of 50 for each service. (h) John is still working on accommodating participants in the 12-step programs, which were put on hold in March. (i) Everyone's thrilled to have BARC cleaners back, even if there's less for them to do, and they are equally happy about being back. (j) Beginning Sept. 8 Kids 4 Harmony strings players will practice at St. Stephen's on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 to 6:30, temporarily, until they can return to their usual location at Morningside Community School.

(k) John says it's wonderful having the Rev. Jenny Gregg doing Cathedral of the Beloved at St. Stephen's, now with associate pastor Sloan Letterman, previously of Second Congregational Church Pittsfield. (l) John asked for Vestry approval for a letter supporting the establishment at First United Methodist Church of a shelter for homeless people; on a motion by Tom seconded by Wendy, members approved the letter, a draft of which John had sent out by email. (m) John says he is exploring having the large shrubs removed from the east side of St. Stephen's main entrance.

Treasurer's Report: Leah goes through the following, which she previously emailed to members:

REVENUES AND EXPENSES FOR PARISH THROUGH JULY 31

REVENUES

Actual Income (budgeted and unbudgeted): \$278,319.89*

Budgeted Income: \$250,194.58

(Over budget by \$28,125.31, or 11.2%)

Pledge Income

Actual Pledges (Plate and Pledge Payments) Received: \$157,712.37

Budgeted Pledges: \$166,203.92

(Under budget by \$8,491.55, or 5%)

*The Diocese gave us assistance due to coronavirus of \$30,981.76. This is accounted for in the above income total.

EXPENSES

Actual Expenses (budgeted and unbudgeted): \$218,472.58

Budgeted Expenses through July 31: \$250,194.58

(Under budget by \$32,000 or 12.8%)

Revenue/Expenses as of July 31: net positive \$59,847.31

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Leah notes that the parish is no longer receiving coronavirus money from the Diocese, which amounted to about \$31,000. Without the help from the Diocese, revenues for the first half of the fiscal year would be under budget by about \$3,000. On a motion by Louise seconded by Erin, Leah's report was approved.

Stewardship: (a) Leah, a Stewardship Committee member, said it is coordinating with Dan Moon in planning an Oct. 17 drive-through harvest dinner with which Vestry members will help. (b) Members are putting together designs for new brochures and pledge cards, which will be handed out to people picking up the meals and mailed to others. (c) Plans are under way for a Nov. 1 In-Gathering. A binder is being compiled with descriptions of each parish ministry. John said the theme will be "Singing the Lord's Song in a Time of Change and a Time of Challenge." (d) Next meeting of the committee will be Sept. 8.

Profile Committee: No updates. Chris, liaison to the committee, says it had received lots of positive feedback for its work assembling the parish profile for the search for a new rector.

Search Committee: Wendy, liaison to the Search Committee, says it has met twice since our last Vestry meeting, on July 26 and Aug. 9, by Zoom, to map out critical areas for discussion based on the Profile Committee's summary of what St. Stephen's is expecting in its new rector. At the suggestion of member Chris Perry, the committee will not have a series of questions but rather "conversation starters." "We have a lot of ground to cover with candidates," she says. Therefore, to save time that would have been spent on introductions, she is preparing a committee backgrounder for the candidates, including brief bios and a head shot of each member. She notes that Francine Hills' account of what it's like to be a candidate was the inspiration for this idea. Next meeting will concern the mechanics of the interviews, including how to respond to candidates' anticipated questions. Candidates will likely visit Pittsfield and St. Stephen's, but owing to coronavirus pandemic considerations, people from St. Stephen's will likely not be doing much visiting of candidates' parishes. The committee hopes to target early November for the first interviews. John says even "if things go absolutely smoothly, you may still run into Christmas," which could delay the process.

Communications and Vestry/Parish Contacts: Steps are under way to maximize optimal communication between the Vestry and parishioners. The monthly newsletter, The First Order, will be put together in such a way that particularly newsworthy items won't be inadvertently slighted. Same with the weekly email blast. And both will remind parishioners that Vestry meetings are open to parishioners, with instructions about how they can sign up to monitor them via Zoom or telephone, with help from administrator Sarah Morrison.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, Sept. 15, at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Mark Miller