

Minutes for Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2020, Vestry meeting

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

Present: Rev. David DeSmith, bridge rector; co-wardens Tom Dillon and Erin Sullivan; Valerie Andersen, Wendy Coakley, John Culver, Leah Luczynski, Mark Miller, Angie Moon, Louise Penney, and Chris Plankey.

Valerie Andersen - 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 7:19. David reads Madeleine L'Engle's poem "First Coming" (a copy is at the end of these minutes) and adds a prayer of his own. There is a brief check-in by members.

Bridge Rector's Report: (a) David says remote worship is going well. (b) Christmas services have been announced and preparations are coming along nicely. David salutes Chris Plankey and Bill Frazier as "awesome ." (c) In this Covid era pastoral care is being done not in the hospital and not in people's homes. David is sending Christmas cards and enclosing copies of Madeleine L'Engle's "First Coming." (d) There is "drop-by communion." (e) Pandemic is adding stress for some families. "If school was a problem it's an even worse problem." (f) He describes Bert Boos and Sarah Morrison as "amazing," "awesome." (g) Weather permitting, there will be a Christmas party for the cleaning crew on Thursday, Dec. 24. (h) Church office will close at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 23. (i) Angie notes that St. Stephen's Table will have early pick-up on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Licenses Renewed: Vestry did a "blanket renewal" for Eucharistic ministers and Eucharistic visitors. Valerie suggests that with "all these rules and regulations" the diocese suggests St. Stephen's have a compliance officer. After Tom says he thinks we have a policy but perhaps not an officer, Valerie says she will be that officer but will check with Bill Frazier to check whether he is currently performing in that capacity. On a motion by Valerie seconded by John, Vestry accepts her offer. John notes that when the parish had church school, church school teachers had to be licensed. All staff and volunteers have to be up to date on the license requirements. Louise notes that years ago Bill was in effect the parish's compliance officer. Included in the regulations is how churches are safe places.

Annual Meeting Date: John Tarrant had suggested we move the date from January to Feb. 14 or 21, 2021. The meeting will be held virtually. Erin will check with the diocese on whether one

(or both) of those dates would be legal. There is the possibility of a video of 2020 at St. Stephen's; Angie suggests it could be the stewardship video minus the soliciting part.

Property Committee: (a) SANCTUARY LIGHTS: An order was placed, and they have arrived. Installation can begin starting in the middle of the week of Dec. 20. Chris says he will be in touch with Bill Carter, who has been working on the project with Ram Electrical Services of Adams. It's possible they'll finish work on it after Christmas. A positive factor is that no one will be in the sanctuary between Christmas and New Year's. Another factor is that vocalists are scheduled to come in, some Christmas decorations will be going up, and remote worship taping is scheduled for Wednesday. (b) KITCHEN: Leah says Al and Lois Symonds' son, an architect, has to check with his employer to be involved in the improvement project. Then he will be able to meet with Leah, likely in the new year. She described this stage of the project as exploratory.

Stewardship: (a) The Stewardship Committee met last week. Valerie, the chairman, says that, so far, pledged dollar amounts are down from last year. Leah notes that a lot of people wait to send in their pledges. Val will write an article for First Order about stewardship. She will get out thank-you notes. "It's too early to panic yet," she says. This year has been unique because of Covid. Wendy volunteers to coordinate targeted outreach for people who have not responded. Val says there are confidentiality issues. David suggests there be a general calling list of parishioners, not only for stewardship, to be divided up among Vestry members. Angie says it would work out to about 40 parishioners per member. David says he'll check.

Finances: As treasurer, Leah gives a quick summary of the last month's figures and says she will email them out right after the meeting. Here they are (as she emailed them):

REVENUES

Actual Income (budgeted and unbudgeted) through November 30, 2020 - \$395,629*

Budgeted Income through November 30, 2020 - \$393,163

(Overbudget by \$2,466 or approx. 0.6%)

Pledge Income

- Actual Pledges (Plate Offerings and Pledge Payments) Received through November 30, 2020 - \$232,899

- Budgeted Pledges (Plate Offerings and Pledge Payments) through November 30, 2020 - \$261,178

(Underbudget by \$23,186 or approx. 9%)

*The Diocese gave us assistance due to COVID-19 for a total of \$30,981.76. This is accounted for in the above income total.

EXPENSES

Actual Expenses (budgeted and unbudgeted) through Nov. 30, 2020 - \$328,670

Budgeted Expenses through Nov. 30, 2020 - \$393,163

(Underbudget by \$64,493 or approx. 16.5%)

Also, members approved a suggestion that we pay \$10,000 back to the endowment from the savings account rather than the usual \$5,000 we pay back every year, because this year we have extra money in the savings account. Leah agrees that the parish will also earn more interest by having the money invested rather than sitting in the savings account. Approval comes on a motion by Tom seconded by Mark.

New Rector Update: After David leaves the meeting, Erin gives Vestry an update on details about the new rector. Here's an abbreviated version of part of it:

“The salary for the rector will be \$90,000 per year. A portion is to be designated as a housing allowance, and the Vestry will adopt all necessary resolutions to comply with with IRS regulations providing a tax deduction for this allowance. The congregation will also pay full pension benefits through the Church Pension Group. ...

“The congregation agrees to reimburse the rector for the cost of health insurance coverage through her husband’s plan, up to \$9,334.88 annually in 2021, and the amount shall be increased accordingly in subsequent years.”

Erin says the new rector can decide how to divide the components between salary and housing expenses.

On a motion by Valerie seconded by Angie, Vestry approves a \$90,000 compensation package. On a second motion by Angie seconded by John, Vestry approves reimbursement for the rector’s family’s health insurance of up to \$9,400 annually.

It is noted that the parish isn't picking up the tab for the health insurance for the entire family of the new rector, just for the increase the family will incur by adding the new rector to spouse's existing family plan. The rector candidate was the one who offered this solution. If the parish were to pay for a family plan for Nina's health insurance, it would pay \$35,076. Leah says the savings will be more than \$25,000, or roughly equal to paying the Cleaning Crew for a year.

Erin says every year the Diocese sends out guidelines for cost-of-living increases. She also says Rich Simpson, canon to the ordinary, explained how St. Stephen’s is now a Category 3 parish but will return to Category 4 status.

Approval of Minutes of October and November Meetings: Done on a motion by John seconded by Tom.

Next Zoon Meeting: Tuesday, Jan. 12, at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Miller

<https://mbird.com/2019/12/first-coming-by-madeleine-lengle/>

“First Coming,” a poem by Madeleine L’Engle. From *The Ordering of Love: The New and Collected Poems of Madeleine L’Engle*.

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!