

## **St. Stephen's Vestry Meeting October 12, 2021**

The meeting began at 7:15 and was held via Zoom.

**Present:** Craig Reynolds, Rev. Nina Pooley, Leah Luczynski, Erin Sullivan, Valerie Andersen, Angela Moon, Wendy Webster Coakley, Chris Plankey, Mark Miller, Louise Penney, and John Culver

**Welcome/Call to order and opening prayer:** Erin called the meeting to order and Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley opened with a prayer.

**Clerk report:** An action item to create a document that identifies our leadership and vestry needs and recommendations for possible parishioners to ask to step into leadership roles was created and many names have been added.

As a follow-up from the last meeting Leah spoke to Sarah Morrison about the status of Berkshire Immigrant Center paying rent: how often do they pay and are they paying on time? They pay every 3 months and they are caught up.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mark moved and Craig seconded and the Vestry accepted the minutes to be approved for the September meeting.

**Treasurer's Report:** Leah Luczynski :

- a. Leah will have numbers by the end of the week from Sarah.
- b. Finance met on the 4th of Oct. and talked about a restriction that was placed on the income St. Stephen's receives from the Beattie trust . The restriction was made by the Vestry in 1989 and limited the use of funds to the purchase or enhancement of musical instruments (including the organ). We are having trouble spending available funds under the current restrictions. Louise spoke

passionately about the quality of the musical liturgy and wanted to make sure that this fund was still able to be used to enhance the music and arts. Val moved to use the Beattie income for non-operational enhancements of the mission and ministry of St. Stephens. John seconded and the motion passed.

- c. In September, the finance committee met with Steve Hasbrouk, who performed the audit. The finance committee asked his advice about capitalizing big budget items. They talked about getting professional CPA advice, in terms of general best practices and specific questions as they arise. Don and Josie (past treasurers) have history with that. It would be useful to have some advice. The budget and assets can be confusing and difficult to get a good handle on to look at next steps moving forward. Erin shared that her nonprofit with a much bigger budget has a 1 page budget summary. It would be nice to simplify it so everyone could better understand it. Nina shared that the diocese should have best practices for Episcopal churches. So before we seek outside resources, we should check our diocese resources. Erin questioned if the software program spits out so much detail and could it “spit out” a simpler report. Leah shared that the summary is just one page and she can share that. Some members of the finance committee like to see the detailed full report. Erin feels like we should have a really good understanding of the finances so we can be as responsible as possible. Sometimes the reports are not clear to the average person who doesn’t have time to study it.

a. Nina is going on vacation in November (she has to take 4 weeks a year) So the vestry meeting will be on a different date next month. (Nina actually worked a few days during her last week of vacation) She is going to Hilton Head to see her sister and nephew turning 10.

b. There are several meetings going on about Afghan refugee resettlement.

Maxine Stein from the Western Massachusetts resettlement office in Springfield shared that we might have 60 people who will be relocated in this area. They have not received special immigrant visas; they have had to move too quickly to get the special visa. They are referred to as parolees only because they have had to leave their country very quickly. They will get the status they need eventually and work papers. Maxine hopes to hire two people to be representatives to help them. These representatives will have a Pittsfield office and hope to put the office at St. Stephen's. Nina thinks they might pay something to offset the cost of heat/utilities. We are partnering with Zion on this endeavor. Nina met with the area Council of Congrgations about this as well. The council is looking for parishes to create teams of 5-7 leaders to help the families from Afghanistan to get settled in the community and meet their needs. Louise shared that the Jewish community had many structures in place when we were looking at supporting Syrian refugees. We might be committing to helping families for 2 years.

c. The next season of worship is the **Season of Belonging (to God and One Another)**. It will be from Oct 17 - Nov 21. ( Advent will begin Nov. 28th and we will use the

traditional BCP liturgy for Advent.) The next **Compline/Evening Prayer for the Healing of the World** will be on Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm, held on Zoom from Oct 20 - Nov 24.

- d. Nina continues to meet with the Visioning Team and shares that they are a great group.
- e. The Sacred Ground course is being put on hold for now as we did not get enough people to sign up.
- f. Nina is Hoping to Re-Invent our approach to Pastoral Care:

Bill Frazier, Sharon Billetter, Jeff Pringle, Claudia Curry and Mary Gilman are names that Nina thought of in the pastoral care core group; as well as Jim Cawse and JD Herbert as part of the healing prayer team. The lead team would meet monthly - and be in touch about emerging pastoral needs. This team would oversee the areas/circles of concern, and there would be team members to address each area.

1) Crisis response ( pastoral response, as well as activating meals/rides... other needs.

2) on-going/long term pastoral care

3) healing prayers during worship

**Warden's report:** Craig Reynolds/Erin Sullivan:

- a. There was much detailed discussion about the stained glass window upkeep and repair at the property meeting committee.
- b. That meeting also served to introduce and consider a new organizational structure for managing property issues. Joan Evans would head a committee that

focused on the day-to-day upkeep of the building while a separate committee (leadership to be determined) would work on larger, longer-term projects such as the windows, roof issues, foundation concerns, etc.

- c. Thank you to the small but determined work crew accomplished quite a bit on Saturday morning, October 2. Projects included cleaning up the front walkway, trimming bushes, and taming the small forest that was growing in the back alley. Many thanks to John Garinther, Don Phipps, Christine Reynolds, Pete Rousseau, and Roy Sutton for their hard work. [Pictures](#) on the website.
- d. Many thanks to Mark Miller for penning a press release announcing the Bishop's visit and Celebration of New Ministry. The Berkshire Eagle carried the announcement in the October 9 issue of the paper on page 2 and [online](#).
- e. The new video and sound equipment purchased last month under authorization from the Vestry has been used successfully for a few weeks now. Sound and video quality have improved significantly. At the same time, we're still relying on some of Ken Pooley's personal equipment each week (not to mention his time and expertise!) The purchase of another two cameras and cabling (estimated cost: \$700 total) would allow us to end our dependence on Ken's equipment. Once those elements are in place, Ken will begin to train others to run the live stream effort.

**Other Business:**

**Property report:** Chris Plankey: Property committee talked about the stained glass window project and the project has many steps that are happening and moving

forward. The warden's report included other news from the September 28th Property committee meeting.

**Stewardship:** Valerie Andersen: A meeting of the stewardship committee was held a few weeks ago. The word cloud will be revealed on the 17th. Some parishioners are scheduled to speak about what St. Stephen's means to them in church. The Harvest dinner is where pledge cards and a brochure will be handed out. The Vestry members asked to come on the 23rd at 3:00 to help. Leah made trifold brochures and pledge cards. Remember to please order dinner if you have not yet. Pledges can also be accepted through Realm. Stewardship will speak before announcements. Chris has videotaped some people as well for a video that will be available to view on 10/23..

**For the Good of the Parish:** Val asked about the dining room and what is going to happen with next steps. (We had discussed during previous Vestry meetings the desire to improve the dining room aesthetics) Craig said that Cathedral is working on a collaborative vision for Pittsfield feeding programs and the visioning team is meeting and discussing steps to take.

We will meet with the Bishop on Thursday, October 14 at 7:00. If we have questions to ask of him, we can. He may ask us questions about St. Stephens leadership.

Chris Plankey is the parishioner being recognized by B.I.O. this year.. The parish applauded and was very supportive of this. Congratulations, Chris!

**Nominating Committee:** Erin Sullivan: We should have about a third of the vestry rolling off at a time, ideally. Some folks were reelected when they could have

been off; due to Covid and so many changes in the parish. There is a 6 year term limit. We need an assistant treasurer. Nina stated that we should have 12 vestry members plus the rector. John will finish his next two years. Louise will not finish her 2 years. Mark Miller will move off and not finish 2 more years. Val will be moving off Vestry as well as Stewardship. Erin will be moving off. The vestry moving off will join a nominating committee.

**Action items:**

1. Check the diocese resources for finance best practices
2. Inform the trustees of the Beattie fund of the change that was voted on.

**Closing:** Nina+ closed with a prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 by Erin Sullivan

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Moon