

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
2023 - monthly meeting #3
Date: March 28, 2023*

Present (virtually by Zoom):

Craig Reynolds, Co-Warden, Josephine Ellis, Co-Warden (by Zoom), Treasurer, William O'Neill, Assistant Treasurer, Dr. J. Christopher Perry, Clerk, James Alden, John Culver, John Garinther, David Nevin, Christopher Plankey, Rev Nina Pooley

Regrets:

Wendy Webster-Coakley, Suzanne White

Meeting called to order at 7:05 P.M.

I. Call to Order, Opening Prayer offered by Rev. Pooley

Reading from the Gospel of John. "Here is the Lamb of God...Teacher, where are you staying, Jesus,; come and See"

Opening prayer.

Clerk Report

II. Clerk Report: Minutes from previous meeting

a. corrections

Josie: Rev. Nina's name misspelled.

Clerk: correction made, thank you.

b. Minutes approved (as corrected).

Josie called the **Motion to approve**

Jim Alden seconded

Motion approved to accept the minutes as corrected.

Rev. Nina Pooley: to the Clerk: The reports are there (in the Goggle Doc folder) so that you can be present.

III. Old Business

Josie Ellis:

read Craig's draft of the "Go and See in 23" next steps. "The elevator speech". Your thoughts on what Craig put together?

Chris Perry: didn't have time to read them. Mea culpa. I am saying this because confession is good for the soul!

Anonymous. I also didn't read them.

Rev. Nina Pooley: Monday we had a "Sacred Ground" meeting. One aspect that has developed: for our 11th session, what are you going to do about it, what have you learned, personal and systemic insight into racism. What are we going to do, address things? One thing, the group will meet again in April, possibly fold it into "Go and See in 23": who can we ask, what can we learn. Restorative justice is something we are interested in. Not a stand-alone "silo" event. Maybe we will do some racial justice work.

David Nevin: as a person in the pews: what are we doing and what is the expected outcome from doing this? The "Go and See in 23" part.

John Culver. A lot of people may not understand systemic oppression, and may not understand why we need to address it. We need to address that.

Rev. Nina Pooley: Sacred Ground group: how do we restore justice? What do we need to ask, what to know, and how to figure out how to address what to do? There model should fit in with "Go and See in 23".

For our purposes, we need to be even more clear. Trying to figure out what is next, post-pandemic. What is God asking us to do in the neighborhood?

Bill O'Neill. He reviewed some comments in the write-up. Then stated that we should be clear about who we should interview. We are an eclectic congregation with lots of different people.

John Garinther. The plan and resulting outcome need to develop. I am not sure what we are doing. There is apparently a core team. Are there going to be other people who we bring in.

Josie Ellis: Asked: why we started down this road? It will give us a foundation. Craig Smith wanted to give a significant amount of money to the church and pitch the church to get matching funds, building momentum to give. What church doesn't love that! But (Rev.) Nina, Craig and I wanted a focus. To speak clearly how we are going to realize these gifts, otherwise, we'll just spend it on stuff: roof repair, new boiler, etc. How can we utilize this gift and other gifts that would set St. Stephen's on a path of what we are to do. Craig's gift led to discussion among (Rev.) Nina, Craig Smith., Josie and Craig Reynolds. We need to dig deeper. Hidden team [sic, i.e., yet to be enumerated] and the core team of 10 people that will ask those questions. The Vestry is 100% a part of that.

Chris Perry. Described Baptist Church's meals program which serves people like in a restaurant and makes people feel special. How does this include social activism and the religious idea? We'll discover the big idea behind aims by doing individual actions.

Rev. Nina Pooley. The underpinnings are what we need to articulate. We don't have the answer, because we are not yet sure what the community needs. I went to Naloxone training, just Ken and I showed up. They were excited to see us. We got double packs of naloxone, and had interesting conversations. We were from St. Stephens. No down side to interacting. People can feel special, dignity, like Chris said.

Craig Reynolds. That is the plan, it is a process.

Jim Alden. We aren't recruiting, selling anything, just getting out of the building. I just joined Pittefield Beautiful (the volunteer group that gardens public places). I was thinking about this, I have no agenda, but it will get me out on the streets to assigned spots. A face in the neighborhood. I will be open to listening. We are listening, it's scary.

Josie Ellis: It's a listening campaign. How are we clear to the Parish, or to this group? I know [listening campaign] Sounds political

Chris Perry: yes, like you are going to run for office! (Joke)

David Nevin. Talked with a parishoner coming back from Wilbraham: where is the light and where does it shine? The light reveals the shadows, where we haven't looked yet, and need to understand.

If there is nothing concrete about why we are doing this and what will come out of it, others won't understand.

Craig Reynolds: we are in another transition (post-Covid), fruits of our efforts will be like the those from the search for a new rector. Fruits of this effort will be a specific direction for the Parish.

Chris Perry: offered to talk to two agencies which he was connected with through donations from a family fund. He offered to go and using two hats (the Parish, and his family Foundation), listen to what the leaders tell about the needs in the communities they serve. May offer some ideas for what St. Stephens could do.

John Culver yes, like anything new, it will be trial and error

Chris Plankey: I don't talk much, I come across curt and brash in meetings. I may even seem negative in some ways. I care about St Stephen's deeply. I'm a business student, I look at things in black and white. Things that don't change fail. If we operate in a deficit every year, we're going out of business.

Change doesn't mean change for no reason. It means should we change, do all the things we've always done them as we did before?

I was on the profile committee. I read these older parishprofile statements. They

mentioned all these ministries that don't exist anymore. Why did they end? The energy died off. Currently, in my opinion, our current energy level is low. I'd love to see new ideas, in our parish and beyond our parish, and people finding things they really want to participate in.

A lot of places do some things, even better than we. He mentioned the Baptist Morningside church's meals program.

I thought Craig Reynolds put something together that was very well done. The plan is the *process* of how we do what we want to do. It is premature to share a vision with the Parish, we don't have it yet.

Quickly, if you are new on this committee, don't worry if you feel out of place. We need someone who doesn't fix on how it was always done. Timing? There is no single organization that hasn't been changed by the pandemic, the great resignation, working at home, psychological isolation. So this is the time to explore this (meaning Go and See in 23) .

John Garinther. Let's consider the inverse of this process: if we continue to look inward, we could spend a lot of money on selfish reasons and for a dwindling community (i.e. Parish size). We have to go out and look for what we can help others with, and they help us with.

Craig Reynolds. I appreciate everyone's input, thoughts. Before we lose the thread. I wanted to mention what Chris Perry said: great idea, if you are comfortable, good entree into the process. John [Garinther] talked about iteration, John Culver talked about failing and learning, and Chris Plankey talked about getting out and looking in the community, and David [Nevin] about looking at the shadows. I am tempted to warn about sacrificing the good for the perfect, and we should just move forward without being perfect.

Josie Ellis. Talks about who is interested and excited. Should this group be the core team? I don't want to make this assumption. Let us know if some of you want to be part of the 10 core. We will keep this group fully informed of each step in any case.

Bill O'Neill: happy to be part of this, and wear two hats. Happy to be part of this.

Jim Alden: talked about a couple who picked up litter in the same area for a year. Others recognized them. Then a restaurant invited them in for coffee, networked. I am looking forward to Looking and See, when I do my gardening.

Rev. Nina Pooley: I might invite, we haven't decided this yet. Brendon Dillon has talked about reaching out and overtly welcoming the LGBT community. He has had harder times elsewhere in the greater community. Caleb talked about disappearing SNAP benefits for families, post-COVID, families that are living hand-to-mouth. He wants to connect various community groups around this problem.

Josie Ellis: What I propose, if you feel called to be part of the group, make up the questions, let (Rev.) Nina, Craig and I know. You all have first rights of refusal to be in if you want to be part of the core. To David's and Craig's point, it may be messy, maybe finding a way to get the parish on board. Okay next step.

David N. and John G. Yes

John Garinther. We're spending a lot of money on the building.

Chris Perry. Should I go ahead and meet with the two agencies or wait until the idea is formulated more?

Josie, Craig, said and (Rev.) Nina nodded: go ahead.

Action: Chris Perry will meet the two agencies' heads a report back.

IV. Committee Reports and New Business

Financial report (Suzanne White)

Josie Ellis: Suzanne White (Treasurer) Finance report. Josie didn't make the Finance meeting. Noted that the new graphs are great.

Craig Reynolds, there is a need to clarify some categories on the graphs. Making them all bars, not lines.

Josie Ellis: Leah originally made those charts at someone's request. New Treasurer, new graphs. They help you see things at a glance: expenditures and income.

Property Committee (John Garinther, Chris Plankey)

John Garinther. Nothing in particular. We are planning April 15th Saturday AM, a work day around the property.

Bill O'Neill, 15th in the morning is Margot's ordination, also in the morning.

Rev. Nina Pooley: I guess we will divide ourselves: property and ordination.

Stewardship (Wendy Coakley)

Deferred.

Wardens' Report (Craig Reynolds, Josie Ellis),

Josie: I did get a question from Sarah today: are we doing an Easter egg hunt this year? I told her that I hadn't planned on it. We don't have a ton of kids this year. We could

do packets for kids in attendance, like (Rev.) Nina did last year.

Craig Reynolds: volunteers are needed for kids paint-and-sip. Someone is going to take pictures and grab their information, where they want their pictures sent. An hour shorter 11-2 than last December. It is April 22nd. Like last time. We submitted a grant to the Diocese to get some money to get young families in the building. Grant application.

Chris Perry will ask (daughter) Christiana to volunteer again.

Josie: would our youth group want to participate as well?

Rev. Nina Pooley: the youth group's other service is the following week. Backpacks for foster care kids.

Also this year's Pride Festival, we are going to be a presence like last year.

Rectors Report (Rev. Nina Pooley)

Rev. Nina Pooley: the Bishop's invitation to meet with Vestry. Might want to meet at 9 A.M., before church. Other possible times: 23rd April. It is a Sunday school Sunday. We could ask him to zoom instead on 4/18 at 3 PM, or 4/19 Wed at 2 or 3 PM., which were offered by his secretary.

Purpose: the bishop likes to check in with the leadership, how things are going. Usually every other year.

We are going to renew our lay licenses. We are behind on the them: eucharistic visitors, safe church training "LEM's" lay eucharistic ministers, and "LEV's" lay eucharitic visitors.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday April 25th 7 P.M. (6:45 social exchange).

Action Items:

1. Chris Perry will meet with two agency heads and report back.
2. Other vestry members should contact Craig or Josie if you want to be on the core team.
3. Contact Rev. Nina Pooley if you want to be a LEM or LEV.
4. Rev. Nina Pooley will send out notice about the meeting with the Bishop.
5. Let Wendy Webster Coakley know that we didn't meet with Canon Rich Simpson.

V. Closing Prayer offered by Rev. Pooley

Rev. Nina Pooley closed with a prayer,

Nina: one of my favorites. From the African Prayer Book, Desmond Tutu attributed it to Augustine of Hippa. All shall be amen and alleluhia...

VI. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: at 8:30 P.M.