

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Vestry Meeting  
2023 - monthly meeting # 7  
Date: July 25, 2023*

Approved with **emendations** August 21, 2023  
Additional **emendations** September 1, 2023

Present (LIVE, in-person!):

Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley, Rector  
Craig Reynolds, Co-Warden  
Josephine Ellis, Co-Warden  
Suzanne White, Treasurer  
William O'Neill, Assistant Treasurer  
Dr. J. Christopher Perry, Clerk  
James Alden  
John Culver  
John Garinther  
David Nevin  
Wendy Webster-Coakley

Regrets:

**Christopher Plankey**

Meeting began at 7:00 P.M.

**I. Opening Prayer offered by Rev. Nina Pooley**

As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he sends us beyond our circles and comfort to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God with our lips and with our lives. We go to listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love with God and one another.

Let us pray:

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Paula Morey: update on BIO, Berkshire Interfaith Organization.

BIO is in the process of rebuilding. Hiatus during COVID, which halted projects. What type of governance do we need now that leadership disbanded itself after discussion, new leadership is born, a team, rather than officers.

First item is to find lead organizers. Rev. Lauren Canon, is a temporary leader.

Only wanted to do it for 6 mos., second half of 2022, assisted by Wendy Crom (spelling?), the previous organizer for BIO. Wendy is a consultant. Four people lead. This really requires meeting in-person. We work on social justice issues, a way forward, how to work on issues related to their needs. Must be winable issues. Highlights of Lauren's leadership. "Yes I/m 4," 4 ways to get a driver's licence, prior to the election. We lead the efforts in this county, helped the voter petition pass. Had a stand-in at Park Square and at polling stations. The referendum item Passed! Undocumented adults can apply for drivers' licenses. Work isn't done, though.

Lauren left for different career. Sean Manion, community organizer in Brockton, will be the organizer. He is young, vibrant. Wendy will help introducing him to leaders in BIO. He also does fund-raising and grant-writing. We had listening sessions. What are the top issues going forward?

1. Transportation, improving BRTA scheduling & routes.
- 2.. Housing, scarcity of affordable housing in area.
3. Social justice and inclusivity.

Executive Counsel: includes groups that are members (originally 17 groups.)  
Cathedral of the Beloved.

Many churches and 2 schules (synagogues)

Each group pays a yearly fee. Each group has a delegate to our Exec Council.

Technically all of the congregation at each church are members and can participate.

St. Stephens: delegates: Paula, Susan Wjostasik (spelling?) . Susan stepped back. Paula is still the treasurer. There is one employee including benefits. We utilize a payroll company.

Volunteer areas. Every other year a *Micha* event, our big fund-raising event. Each group sends one volunteer to this banquet. Usually at the [Crane] stationary factory. Catered. Expensive. Takes a lot of help. Other events include house-parties (for friends with money), a presentation with information on how important the support is.

Tech support. None of us have that skill and could use tech support. We need help to develop a newsletter, as we had good ones in the past. Need a new treasurer, as Paula would like to step back. Eventually like to hire a clerical office assistant.

Office is at 175 Wendall Ave: The Unitarian Universalist (UU) church, an office on the second floor.

Initially at BIO: the main issue was food insecurity. We wanted to address it and make a systemic change. Worked with local representatives to present at at State House in Boston to thank legislators for giving more buying power to food pantries, an extra \$2 million.

We also drove immigrants to ICE appointments in Hartford or NYC. We don't have enough volunteers for this now. BIO has a budget around \$200,000.

BIO awards Recognized Joan, **Craig**, Gwen, Bill Fraser, Chris Plankey

Question from vestry member: What are you asking of the Vestry?

Ans: Help us find delegates and volunteers.

Josie: Maybe you/we could do a BIO coffee hour to chat people up.

Everyone thanked Paula for her commitment and years of service to BIO. Apparent Consensus. This is not an action item, just an informational session. Paula would like St. Stephens to be a champion in BIO, but maybe the new person will get things going.

Wendy Webster- Coakley: the new leader should come and present to us, preferably around a particular campaign...get a result and then allow them to walk away.

Rev. Nina: it is not our job to find a person for BIO. But we will supply a platform that BIO can make a pitch. At present there is no great central idea that draws people in to join BIO. Once an issue comes up, people can get involved in it.

Josie: I am glad that we heard what is going on with BIO. And thanks to Paula.

Warden Josie Ellis:

Go and See Latest Update.

Craig Reynolds and Jim Alden: We met with United Way. They are a convener of organizations, not a provider of services. They did like the idea of doing something more on food insecurity. They work closely with Berkshire Bounty, in the food arena. They had started a lunch program for kids when COVID shut down the schools.

Josie has a meeting with the Executive Director of the Christian Center in Aug. We want to know what are the gaps in what they do.

Rev. Nina: Rev. Joel at ZION Luthern church said they are developing a kitchen.

Josie Ellis: thinking about our own welcoming process. If we feel connected, how do we connect with parishioners and new people. We have an uptick of new faces. We used to have a welcome kit, if we got their address, we'd send it. We keep saying that there is a lack of connection between people: everyone is busy.

Rev. Nina: how do we get people to transition from coming here to being "in," a member of the group. The name tag.

Josie Ellis: should we do a push to wear names tags and get new individuals to wear them too, if they have them?

Jim Alden: tells a story about talking to a new person, Kathleen.

Rev. Nina: we need not to worry about being overly friendly. Can this group (Vestry) do more of that, if so, other people will. We are generous humans, but a bit shy.

Craig Reynolds re: the name tag thing. I talked with someone at Lemonade on the

lawn. After we chatted, he said "Thank you Craig." He feels he knows me because he knows my name [Craig wore his name tag].

Rev. Nina: you want people to get to know the people (congregation), not just the priest, because they will be less likely to wander off (i.e. stop coming). People don't want to leave, once they made the move to come here.

Josie Ellis: do we need to do a welcome program?

Rev. Nina: for the VPODs: we have lots of new faces. Ask them: want a name tag? Talk to us. We want to meet you.

Welcoming: How do we connect? With Vestry, with visitors, with parishioners

1. Chris Perry & John Garinther presented their walk out West St..

## **II. Clerk Report: Minutes from previous meeting**

### **a. corrections**

1. Josee Ellis noted a Typo: "Leo" is "Leah"
2. Second page near Suzanne name's "flooring" occurred twice, near Is there asbestos.

### **b. Minutes approved(as corrected).**

Motion by: Jim Alden

Seconded by: Suzanne White

## **III. Old Business**

### Action Items from Previous Meeting

(Rev. Nina to Property Committee): lets find out how much of the floor has asbestos in it, then make a decision.

Everyone agreed.

(Josie Ellis to all) Think of a new name for "the First Order" quarterly newsletter for next meeting. Everyone: let's re-imagine the newsletter purpose and content.

## **IV. Committee Reports and New Business**

**Financial report** (Suzanne White) and Bill:

Approving the audit.

Suzanne white: finance meeting on this topic. Sarah does a lot of things, many responsibilities. One is that she has the spare safety deposit box key. She would prefer someone else have this task. Maybe the treasurer should have the key. Suzanne White will henceforth hold that key.

Josee Ellis: we have few things in the safety deposit box. The idea is to have the key be separate from the church, in case of fire. The deed to the property is in our safe in the church.

The annual Audit has been reviewed and corrected. We wrote a doc that said the audit was done, corrected and send it to the Vestry and Diocese for approval, as stated in the folder.

“We accept the financial audit”.

In favor of accepting the audit document as corrected?

Motions:

The Finance committee asked for the treasurer to hold the saftey deposit box key

Motion by: Jim Alden

Secoded: someone

In Favor: all

Opposed: none

Abstained: none

**Stewardship** (Wendy Webster-Coakley)

Jim Alden has agreed to join the Stewardship team, with Leah, Phil, Al Symmonds, and Rev. Nina *ex officio*. Zoom noon meetings.

Thank the Stewardship members for their patience.

Moving ahead with the personal planning meetings (funeral, wills, health care proxies etc.). Low key, dovetails with stewardship meetings. Bill O’Neill has organized it.

**Property Committee** (John Garinther, Chris Plankey)

John Garinther:

Stained Glass is all done on Allen St.

We have some hidden stained glass pieces, disassembled in the basement.

Asbestos. Had a meeting with environmental people, they looked at the areas needing attention. He estimated for the foyer mitigation at 12-16k. Not sure if asbestos is in the tile, or the mastic below. Mitigating the Dining room would be very expensive. They don’t do the testing. They just get rid of it.

John Garinther: I think the best thing to do is to cover it. Sealing can be as safe. Only unsafe when you disturb it. We would have to seal the space to mitigate it. Foyer. They want to add a thick layer of plywood, then squares of wood or vinyl, which will

make the floor higher. May end up with a lip at the side.

We do need to keep a record of the spots that are tested and proven to have asbestos. In case of future disruptive renovations.

John Garinther met with Harm Reduction at BHS (Berkshire health Systems). The gave us 2 sharps boxes. And showed us a NaloxBox [nasal naloxone for opiate overdoses]. We will also mount a Biohazard box [for needle disposal by drug users]. Harm Reduction Team will collect them. If there are needles on the gorund, don't pick them up and they will come and collect them.

**James** Alden: John suggested a label on it: put used needles here.

Someone(?): Should we have one by the Allen St. Aleway, and one by the front memorial garden.

**Josie** Ellis: should we have motion detector lights?

John Garinther: Rev. Nina, **Josie** and I and Don Phipps will finish the design of the sign out front.

About \$6 k for the sign, installed A parishioner donated 3 k toward the effort.

John: we should reorient the sign closer to East St. So it is more visible. Roy is going to city hall to see if we need a permit to move the sign. It will be larger and closer to the street.

**Wardens' Report** (Craig Reynolds, Josie Ellis),  
no questions

**Rectors Report** (Rev. Nina Pooley)

John had a question about Adult education: it is not 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sundays. But the dates are correct. Not when sunday school and coffee hours are scheduled.

**Action Items from this Meeting:**

VPOD should say something about geting to meet us, and say something about names tags.

Our action item for next meeting:

1. new name for quarterly newsletter

2. for John Garinther:

talk to Property Committee re motion-sensor lighting in the alleyways  
also talk to BHS for signage and phone number on sharps container.

**Next Meeting scheduled:**

1. Vestry Meeting August 22<sup>nd</sup> by zoom, 2023, 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday. In person.  
In winter time we will meet by zoom, dark and cold. Hybrid is an option.

**V. Closing Prayer offered by Rev. Pooley**

May the god who formed all things in love, draw us near to god's own hear.  
Empower us to...live the way of love and participate of the resurrection and  
healing..lifegiving. Amen.

**VI. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 P.M. by unanimous consent.