

1 *St. Stephen's Episcopal Church*
2 *Vestry Meeting*
3 *2023 - monthly meeting #9*
4 *Date: September 26, 2023*

5 Present :

6 Rev. Nina Pooley, Rector
7 Craig Reynolds, Co-Warden
8 Josephine Ellis, Co-Warden
9 Suzanne White, Treasurer
10 William O'Neill, Assistant Treasurer
11 Dr. J. Christopher Perry, Clerk
12 James Alden
13 John Culver
14 John Garinther
15 David Nevin
16 Christopher Plankey
17 Wendy Webster-Coakley

18 Regrets:

19 Meeting began at 7:01 P.M.

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

21 Opening:

22 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much
23 fruit because, apart from me, you can do nothing. You did not choose me, but I chose
24 you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. - John 15:5, 16a

25 Let us pray:

26 Generous Giver, you pour forth your extravagant bounty without measure upon your
27 whole creation: Teach us such generosity, that the fruits of our spirits and the works of
28 our hands may build your commonwealth of blessing. Amen.
29

30 Josie Ellis, Warden: Field Trip to our church Sanctuary.

31 I want us to look at what coffee hour could look like in the Sanctuary. What
32 would it look like, would we like it? We can see what pews to move, spaces to make,
33 electrical outlets, etc..

34 Rev. Nina Pooley and The Vestry then walked to the back of the Sanctuary
35 centered around the Baptismal Font. Two "Radical Welcoming initiatives" were then
36 described and explored by the group.
37

38 (1) Everyone looked at the entrance to the sanctuary to imagine what it would
39 look like and what it would entail to make the space suitable for for having the coffee
40 hour there in lieu of the Guild Room.

41 Many of the vestry made suggestions, but because of the rapid exchange, the
42 Clerk was unable to identify each individual's contributory comments. Some comments
43 suggested moving out 2-3 rows of pews on either side of the Baptismal Font.
44 Apparently there is no finished flooring under the Font, so it seemed impractical to
45 move that. The rear of the Sanctuary was compared to the entranceway (Foyer and pre-
46 Sanctuary area where the Greeters stand prior to the Service). If the coffee hour were
47 served in that latter space it might get crowded and make it harder to exit the church
48 for those not participating.

49 Chris Perry stated that he was not happy with the idea of changing the Sanctuary
50 and putting the coffee hour in the back of the Sanctuary, as it is a holy space without
51 distractions designed to enhance the spiritual experience of worship at church. He
52 compared the new idea to the set-up at Mt. Zion where the Sanctuary contains both the
53 chairs arranged amphitheater style facing the altar, with other tables and non-worship
54 related furnishings - including their coffee hour - around it. He stated that it feels more
55 like a meeting space and less like a place to pray, worship and connect spiritually. He
56 stated that there should be other ways to try to have newer worshipers connect with
57 those longer-standing members.

58 Rev. Pooley acknowledged the above comments, and stated that this is just one
59 suggestion as to how to get people to feel more comfortable with staying after church.
60 Presently not many newer members make the decision to go into the Guild Room for
61 coffee hour. Rev. Pooley and others looked again at the Foyer and pre-Sanctuary as a
62 possible venue for coffee hour. Considerations were discussed, such as wheeling the
63 coffee and desserts in at the end of the service, and avoiding being disruptive. We did
64 this last year on one occasion following the gathering-in service at the end of
65 Stewardship season.

66 (2) Rev. Pooley then made another suggestion to make it easier for families with
67 very young children to sit with faster access to restrooms and areas outside of the
68 Sanctuary. The area where the acolytes pews are (currently unused) in front to the left
69 of the pulpit could easily be made into a family friendly area. With quick access to the
70 restrooms and Guild room if children needed attention.

71 Some concerns were raised as to whether families would feel on view up front, as
72 opposed to in the back where the current family pews are.

73 Someone suggested that if we try this, we should arrange to have a couple of
74 families primed to be the first to try it. Then we could learn if it had the desired effect as
75 opposed to having the families feel on-view.

76 Josie Ellis: Newsletter names

77 There was a tie between two titles...[clerk comment: verily I say unto you, 'tis a

78 tale of two titles.]

79 1. Red Door Quarterly at St. Stephens

80 2. St. Stephens __ Offerings or Quarterly.

81 Variation: St Stephens Fall offerings

82 David Nevin suggested having the title vary with which season: fall winter, spring etc.

83 Josie Ellis: a lot of us would probably be contributing to the newsletter, through the
84 committees: what are we doing, looking forward to doing.

85 Discussion of the two possibilities

86 A decision made for Winter fall summer Fall offering

87 Fall offerings: St. Stephens Quarterly Newsletter

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

89 July 26, 2023 twice-amended minutes (Chris Perry)

90 Minutes approved unanimously

91 August 25, 2023 minutes (Wendy Webster-Coakly)

92 a. corrections

93 1. No changes were suggested

94 b. Minutes were approved, without corrections .

95 Motion by: Josie Ellis

96 Seconded by: John Garinther

97 minutes approved unanimously (Chris Perry abstained, as not present)

98 **III. Old Business**

99 Action Items from Previous Meeting (to be supplied by August meeting scribe)

100 Rev. Nina Pooley needs speaker suggestions for Creation Sundays

101 In the Clerk's absence, Josie will circulate the August minutes

102 Look at Newsletter names and suggest some.

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

104 **Financial report** (Suzanne White/ Bill O'Neill)

105 Suzanne White: there may have been a data breach due to a scam call back in
106 August. It had to do with the electric bill. Eversource had a data breach, but probably
107 no problem.

108 Suzanne White reported to the Finance Committee that there had been 3
109 omissions which she has since corrected.

110 Suzanne White noted our IT infrastructure and the situation with Otis Elevator.

111 To be discussed under Property

112 **Stewardship** (Wendy Webster-Coakley)

113 Wendy Webster-Coakley: we will launch *Refresh and Restore the Spirit* on Oct 22.
114 We will offer a light meal either eat in/take out for attendees and distribute pledge
115 cards to new people especially. "All who take communion are welcome to pledge as
116 you are members of the church." VPOD messages: we can deliver the meal and a
117 pledge card.

118 Campaign marketing for 1 month, provide weekly updates. This will help make
119 the case for our needs.

120 Chris Plankey said this is a good idea: tell people what things cost the parish.

121 November 19, will be in-gathering Sunday. Nina will pull 3 pledge cards and
122 give a prayer blanket on the spot.

123 "Peaceful Planning" launched by Bill O'Neill last week: on wills. We tried to
124 record it. The Oct 1st presentation is on Powers of Attorney and Guardianship.

125 Wendy Webster-Coakley will be attending a workshop session on stewardship

126 Wendy Webster-Coakley said she had a wonderful committee!

127 Josie stated that these actions were very timely.

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

129 Our application for placement of the sign was rejected due to where we planned
130 to put it. We still have to submit a permit and pay a fee. It is a formality to the Board of
131 Appeals. Prior to submitting our request, we didn't see the sign ordinance which is 30
132 pages long. Our sign is ten feet tall and 8 feet wide. It will have concrete feet.

133 Boiler repair started Monday, second one. We are waiting for a part.

134 Asbestos testing came back negative. Amazing!

135 We have an AED (automated electric defibrillator) which was donated. Where to
136 place it was discussed. Main suggestion was to have it in the hallway so that both the
137 church and other tenants in the Parish Building would have access to it.

138 Craig Reynolds suggested placement at the far end of the first floor landing, so it
139 isn't visible from the side door.

140 Chris Plankey suggested having a camera on it, so if it were removed, we could
141 see who took it.

142 Someone mentioned that the Narcan box looked great. Chris Plankey noted that
143 someone had already taken some of them, and they needed to be replenished.

144 The HVAC modeling report is still delayed, as noted by a funny note from the
145 contractor rationalizing the delay. Craig noted that this is important as it will be
146 expensive.

147 Chris Perry noted that "HVAC people tend to vent frequently and run hot and
148 cold." The group groaned collectively.

149 **Wardens' Report** (Craig Reynolds, Josie Ellis),

150 1. please give potential names for nominations for vestry. Here is the status of some
151 current vestry persons.
152 1. John Culver is departing after 6 years of devoted service. And is not eligible to
153 run.
154 2. John Garinther is finishing his first term, and could have two further terms
155 3. Craig Reynolds is leaving his position, as he has served as warden for the
156 maximum time allowed.
157 Craig Reynolds noted that it is important to have wardens roll off on different
158 years, to guarantee a retention of knowledge in the wardens position.

159 2. Craig requested that we do the *Doodle poll* for a 3-hour vestry retreat in October or
160 November. It will probably be here in the Auditorium with snacks and sandwiches. We
161 will talk about the big issues, especially regarding a big capital campaign.

162 3. Submission date for the newsletter Oct 16.

163 Chris Perry suggested that the Quarterly newsletter might contain personal
164 contributions by parishoners, such as essays or reflections.

165 Chris Perry and John Garinther suggested that people include pictures of the
166 contributors to help everyone recognize.

167 Josie Ellis brought up a conversation with Chris Perry about asking people to supply
168 pictures of deceased individuals to go out with the announcements to the parish of
169 deaths in the parish.

170 Rev. Nina Pooley noted we could have an in Memoriam section of the newsletter with
171 pictures, but that we are the last to get a picture in the immediate aftermath of a death.

172 4. Craig Reynolds: the Finance Committee recommends to the vestry that we terminate
173 our contract with Otis Elevator, as we have a contractual relationship. There is no
174 penalty for early termination.

175 Chris Plankey ask which company will we move to?

176 Craig Renolds: it has been awhile since we got information on the other two
177 companies. Maybe it needs to be updated.

178 John Garinther believes that Otis also wants to get out of the contract.

179 Motions:

180 There was a Motion by: Craig Reynolds

181 Motion: that we serve notice to terminate our contract with Otis Elevator as of 90 days
182 from October 1st.

183 Seconded: this was the Property committee's recommendation, no second needed

184 In Favor: unanimous agreement.

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

186 1. Louise Penny emailed Rev. Nina Pooley that she can't start Adult Ed in Advent. Rev.
187 Mark Britt hasn't replied yet, either.

188 There are only 2 Sundays in Advent 10th and 17th that we can do this (Adult Ed).

189 2. The Campus of downtown churches are meeting after October 10.

190 3. 10 people have signed up for Confirmation classes in October.

191 The Bishop is confirming individuals at St. John's in Williamstown.

192 4. Celtic Worship is on the back burner.

193 5. Josie Ellis wanted to note that Sarah, our office administrator, has taken on a lot of
194 things. She (Josie) cc'd Sarah on an email about re-naming Sunday School as Sunday
195 Funday...sort of a joke. Next Calendar, however, Sarah changed the name of Sunday
196 School to Sunday Funday!

197 6. Rev. Nina Pooley noted that we are doing an exceptional private baptism in
198 November for someone with a very unusual situation, where the private baptism is the
199 only thing that makes sense.

200 **Action Items from this Meeting:** (Chris Perry, Clerk)

201 1. Please give names for potential names for nominations for vestry to Craig.

202 2. Do the Doodle Poll for a 3 hour vestry retreat in October or November.

203 3. Submission date for the newsletter is an Oct 16 deadline.

204 **Next Meeting scheduled:** October 24, 2023 (in person)

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

206 *Source of life and blessing,*
207 *of garden, orchard, field:*
208 *Root us in obedience to you*
209 *and nourish us by your ever-flowing Spirit that,*
210 *perceiving only the good we might do,*
211 *our lives may be fruitful,*
212 *our labor productive,*
213 *and our service useful,*
214 *in communion with Jesus, our brother. Amen*

215 "The Lord grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end."

216 **VI. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: at 8:57 P.M..