

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Vestry Meeting  
2023 - monthly meeting #4  
Date: November 28, 2023

Draft: Note that words/ideas needing clarification are highlighted below: line 192

Present (virtually by Zoom):

Rev. 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  
Christopher Plankey  
Wendy Webster-Coakley

Regrets:

no one

Meeting began at 7:00 P.M.

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

A Reading from Isaiah 30:15a, 18

*Thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength. Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for the Lord.*

A Prayer for Quiet Confidence, BCP 832

*O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Josie Ellis, Warden's Report:

Vestry Retreat Recap

Nina recapped what was in her report.

The Vestry retreat: What I heard (among other things!)

We value/identify as people who:

- \* are interested in supporting and extending the reach of the ministry of Table
  - \* welcome and engage the communities within our walls (with better signage & more involvement in the mission of the groups using the building)
- everyone realized that we needed to recap the white board comments

Rev. Nina Pooley noted that C Perry suggested we needed to think about how we would communicate what are realizations and plans were.

Josie Ellis went and retrieved the white Board notes from the Vestry Retreat. They were a bit hard to read in their present form.

Mission and Ministry side of what is important at St. Stephens. We are known for St. Stephen's Table...how do we extend that?

Josie Ellis : our mission is touching those who come by St. Stephen's. Can we sum up a decent next step for revamping our space, and our welcoming, to ensure communicating how others may know the lives that we are touching?

Wendy Webster-Coakley was moved by the question: "Who would miss us if we were gone?" It was a *Wonderful Life* moment [referring to the 1946 movie by Frank Capra, starring James Stewart]. It wouldn't just be those inside our doors, but also those impacted by our efforts.

Chris Perry. Don't we want to focus on how we can extend or expand what we do, same or new missions, within our resources so we only do things well?

Josie Ellis: That is the crux of the issue. As a leadership team, do we know where we want to put our energy efforts? Or do new things, like a prison ministry?

Jim Alden. Wwe keep coming back to the [St. Stephen's] Table. Food insecurity is such an air raid siren. People are hungry, and it is getting worse. I love Chris Plankey's idea of a food van. possibly there we could have the greatest impact.

Rev. Nina Pooley. I hear from many people, this past 1-2 years, that saying "all are Welcome at God's Table" is very powerful to many. It resonates it with me. I hear the welcoming to St Stephen's Table as well. We are grounded in that ministry.

John Culver. This reflective process should be part of our being. Vestry needs to do this all the time.

Wendy Webster-Coakley: I heard on NPR [radio station] that one third of MA families are food insecure. In Western MA 41% of families are food insecure!

Suzanne White: at Paint and Sip, families hunkered down at their tables, eating. They were very hungry eating the take-out from downstairs!

Chris Perry asked about food pantries in Pittsfield?

Jim Alden. There are many.

Rev. Nina Pooley. We work with South Community Food Bank. They serve 1000 families per week!

Chris Plankey, we don't want to duplicate others' efforts.

Josie Ellis: South Street is short on funds, they purchase food, and are short.

Craig Reynolds: food pantires are massive efforts and require infrastructure.

Josie Ellis: Chris Plankey's point is that we feed people who need to eat now, who don't have the ability or effort or facilities to fix food for themselves.

Rev. Nina Pooley: Some people don't have the capacity to feed themselves, even if they have the raw ingredients.

John Garinther: the delivery of ready made meals is a niche, which is not being filled.

Josie Ellis: Elder Services does "meals on wheels" from their own services.

Suzanne White. Yes, but only for the home-bound elderly.

Rev Nina Pooley: We can identify from our Table guests those who take food to their neighbors. Trial and error, we could ask them.

Craig Reynolds: We may be expanding our own idea of what the Table's mission is. Especially bothering me was during the pandemic when we stopped in-house meals here, and started to see others pick up meals for self and others.

Chris Perry: information from attendees: who need things from us that the attendees are aware of? They have the information.

Craig Reynolds: We have collected some information from Table attendees. Some days we run out of food.

Jim Alden: are we equipped to do more? Is Dan aware of these issues?

Craig: yes, he generally knows what we are thining about, but nothing new, specific. He is on-board with increasing 70-75 meals up to 110 120 meals on a Tuesday. Sl different on a Friday.

Josie: we are not at capacity of meals.

Craig Reynolds: it depends on what we add to the current system.

Rev. Nina Pooley. In the past, using the Western MA Foodbank was harder for Dan, resulting in poorer quality meals. We no longer get food from them, we purchase food directly ourselves, so there is less waste. It is more expensive dollar-wise, but less administrative stuff involved. Dan gets better deals and food quality shopping himself. We are happier and feeding people better food.

Josie Ellis: Finance team needs to consider Table costs. Do we need more resources?

John Garinther: do we have a cost per meal?

Rev. Nina Pooley: yes we could figure that out.

Craig Reynolds: Rhere are lots of things we could do to be more effective with Table. Lots of folks would welcome that. Part of our next chapter. During COVID we got into "Let's just get the meals out the door."

Chris Perry: Do we want to respond to increasing demand, or to market ourselves and seek greater demand for the Table?

What are the other missions in competition with Table.

Chris P new mission. We are already invested in BIC (Berkshire Immigrant Center).

Rev. Nina Pooley: I wrote that we should be already engaged with the communities that are part of us, like BIC, because we value their mission.

Craig Reynolds: also the refresh of downstairs and the back entrance foyer is for the 12-step groups.

Wendy. Ready to move on. Specifics to follow.

### Feedback on new initiatives

Welcoming Initiative.

Kids Own Space (Kidzone) is loved by the kids. They look forward to coming into the sanctuary and sitting in “their” space. Please let us know if you’ve received any positive or negative feedback.

Craig Reynolds: do we want to bless that space? Nina does a good job with that.

Wendy Webster Coakley, the kids should be involved with that.

Chris Perry: regarding the coffee hour at the entrance, my impression is that we have fewer partakers. Have we attracted any new people?

Craig Reynolds: there have been a a few grumbles.

Chris Plankey: I heard the start of negative feedback, I couldn’t pursue it. It was an error not to tell the choir that we were moving the back pews there.

Rev. Nina Pooley: The music Director was told ahead of time. We didn’t ask permission, since they weren’t using the third row back there anyway.

Josie Ellis: Keep in mind that this (Vestry) is the leadership group.

Suzzane White: are we calling it the kidzone, kids’own space, playground? Everyone liked “Kid’s Own space”

### Go & See 2023

Our next meeting is Wednesday, November 29 at 5 PM. We’ll use feedback from the Vestry Retreat to frame some action plans at this meeting

### Foyer/Dining Room refresh

Choices of flooring and carpet tile have been made with Leah Luszinski. Josie will be in contact with Leah for timing and next steps.

### Vestry Elections

Josie Ellis: We have one additional space to fill and inquiries are being mad Also, John Garinther accepted the position of Co-warden (YAY!!) beginning 2024 and Caleb Harmon accepted the position as a Vestry member filling John Culver’s term.

## II. Minutes from previous meeting

### Clerk Report

#### a. corrections

Rev. Nina Pooley. No confirmation happened in the spring, Yes the reference was to the act of confirmation class.

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

Motion by: Josie Ellis

Seconded by: Jim Alden

unanimous approval.

## III. Old Business

Action Items from Previous Meeting> These have all been accomplished prior to today.

1. Action: Sign up here for the November 3 Paint & Sip event if you are able.
2. The property committee will make a plan for the moving of the furniture for the "Prayground"
3. We took a field trip during the meeting to the Sanctuary to view areas to be potentially altered.

## IV. Committee Reports and New Business

### Financial report (Suzanne White)

The main focus this month of the meeting was to review the 2024 preliminary budget. The Proposed 2024 Budget monthly spreadsheet with a column, at the far right (V) with proposed budget. Still need answers on some things. Not looking pretty, projected deficit is about 144-145 k deficit next year. With the number of pledges from this year's ingathering, so this won't actually be the deficit.

Josie Ellis: there were increases in some expenses.

Suzanne White: We have 59 pledges, last year this timetotalling 132 k vs now 152 k. More Pledges will come in.

This current year we projected a 104 k deficit, but ended only having an 82 k deficit, as of now.

Josie Ellis: The budget is a guideline.

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

Heating System Repairs - We have non-emergency repairs scheduled for Friday, December 1st at 8 a.m. John Garinther to call Laureyns to figure out which parts they have, which parts they are waiting on, which repairs will be made, etc.

Heating System Upgrade - Micheal Laureyns has been collecting information from Sarah regarding our gas and electric rates and usage. He has also been assembling drawings to show the locations of all equipment involved in the various options of our feasibility study. This step brings our final report one step closer to completion. Once it's complete, our committee will organize a meeting with church leadership to discuss our various options as presented within our HVAC study.

Stained Glass Window Protection - All the protective external glass is in place. Work still needs to be done on the clerestory windows. John Garinther is to contact Iovan to have him join us at one of our upcoming property committee meetings for a progress report.

Front Lawn Signage - Members of our committee will appear before the Zoning Board of Appeals on December 13th. We anticipate this is just a formality, and we will be granted a variance to locate our new sign on the land in front of our church that does not technically belong to us. The sign itself is complete and paid for. Once we get permission to install it, our sign company will install it as soon as possible. This could happen soon as long as the ground is not frozen. We still owe for installation. Once our new sign is installed, our committee is interested in seeing what it will involve to take ownership of the parcel of land between our church property and East Street.

Foyer and Dining Room Refresh Project - The wardens and Nina have selected the flooring to be used in both the foyer and dining room. Leah has been communicating with Scott's Carpet One, the flooring contractor.

Storm Window Closure - Only a small number of storm windows remain open on the upper floors. We suspect windows are being opened a bit here and there to help equalize temperature swings due to heating swings up there.

Reviewed and updated Issues list. Completed items have been marked as "closed". Any new items have been added. Highlights from this month: 1) our committee worked alongside other volunteers to relocate some pews and other furniture in our effort toward being more welcoming which involves hosting coffee hour inside the front of the church along with the development of a Kidzone in the NW corner of the sanctuary 2) the men's room toilet on the first floor has had the flushing mechanism replaced

### **Stewardship** (Wendy Webster Coakley)

#### Pledge Update

Ingathering Sunday took place on Nov. 19. As of Nov. 27, 59 pledges had been received totaling \$152,675, which compares favorably to last year at this time, when 63 pledges had been received totaling \$148,618. Let's keep it up!

Last year there were 89 donors.

This year we lost a few donors between 2022 - 2023.

Wendy's to-do's. Peaceful planning has helped people ways consider that they can help St. Stephens with end-of -life planning. We will add that stuff to the website, and promote it to people.

Wendy thanked the people on Stewardship Committee for their contributions.

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

These were covered in the updates on Initiatives above.

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

The Vestry retreat: Here is some of what I heard (among other things!)

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- \* are interested in supporting and extending the reach of the ministry of Table

- \* welcome and engage the communities within our walls

(with better signage & more involvement in the mission of the groups using the building!)

### Saturday Evening Worship:

Attendance numbers are UP - and our clergy team is more than willing to keep serving. Given those two factors - I've scheduled our team to continue through August 2024. Our team: Revs. Dave DeSmith, Tom Damrosch, Bill Loutrel, and myself. With services on the second and fourth Saturdays at 5pm, each of us will serve four times. We're still not sure how to handle those Saturdays during the winter when there's challenging weather. Who makes the call about church, and how do we let people know?

Josie Ellis: Does the Website have the ability to put on an alert as to cancellation of a service? There were 13 attendees on Saturday. Should the Priest in charge that night make the call if weather is an issue: that it is not safe to venture out? Can we have a phone alert? Make the decision by 3 PM.

Rev. Nina Pooley. We need to find out ways to keep the Birthday cards going. Joan Morrow used to do this, so it is an important legacy to keep going. Debbie Stillman wants to keep this going.

Craig Reynolds: and it is a major part of her legacy and in her obituary. And the knitting palooza!

### Pastoral Care Team:

Our current team includes - Bill Frazier, Angie Moon, Claudia Curry and Debbie Stillman.

I've recently invited three people to join us - and they've accepted! Our newest

members: Sara Garinther and Liz Trapani (primarily as LEVs), and Sue Smith (primarily for hospital visits).

### Other Issues

Wendy Webster Coakley: the New England Bell Ringers, December Tenth concert came out, but how are we getting this out into the community? They might see our gorgeous church inside, if they come to the Concert!

Rev. Nina Pooley: Joy [Mullen, the Music Director] and Sarah [the Church Administrator] were looking into running an advertisement.

David Nevin and Jim Alden: both said that they will send out the information about the concert on their various social media accounts.

Rev. Nina Pooley. There is on piece of new administrative stuff. We have to approve the lay licenses of everybody. We have a list.: LEV, LEM, safe church training.

Motion offered by: Rev. NinaPooley

Motion: to approve the list of licensed members from advent 2023 to advent 2024

Seconded: several at once

In Favor: all present

Opposed: none

Abstained: none

The motion was passed unanimously.

### **Action Items from this Meeting:**

None

### **Next Meeting scheduled:**

1. Vestry Meeting December 19, 2023 via zoom
1. January 28<sup>th</sup> is set for the Sunday Annual Meeting

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

*Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen*

**VI. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:45 P.M..



