

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
2023 - monthly meeting #12
Date: December 19, 2023

Draft Note: there are sentences/ideas needing clarification highlighted below

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: None

Meeting began at 7:03 P.M. by Zoom.

I. Opening Prayer offered by Rev. Pooley

Opening prayer:

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Prayer from Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community (Belfast), by Padraig Ó Tuama

*Jesus, you shared peace
around a table of anxiety,
peace with the bread, peace with the wine,
peace in the face of the uncertain,
peace in the place of pain.
May we share tables of peace
in places of pain,
sharing food and friendship
and words and life.
Because you came to a fearful world*

*and found your place
around those tables.*

Amen.

7:05 P.M. Discussion

Josie Ellis:

Go and See moves into "Doin' more in 2024" (was this the phrase Suzanne came up with?)

Discussion of plan and commitment

- What do we want to present to the Parish
- How would our parish think about *Go & See*.

Craig Reynolds. I read recently about saying something in a meeting, limiting one to 3 sentences. I cannot, but I can show you in the Warden's Report. What we have come down to.

1. The [St. Stephen's] Table is important to us
2. The Building is important, where a lot of our activities reside.

They are ripe for refresh and renewal. We need resources and people. A fund-raising campaign is needed, but it is not a capital campaign. The needs are pressing. We do not need or desire to jump into a traditional capital campaign with all the aspects of that.

A metaphor for what we are thinking of is an "every member canvas". We'll be in touch with everybody and ask for additional donations. It can be a 1-5 year time frame for giving. We will iron out these details. Funds and efforts will go to big things like the HVAC system, a refresh of dining room and first floor (we still need some cost estimates). Finally expanding the Table's efforts, which will also need more volunteers or human capital.

We need to get Vestry members on board. Is this a good idea. Can you support it as a parish leader and a parishioner? Support = (Time, Talent, Treasure). We do not want to go forward if there are hesitations, concerns among leadership. It is a big ask and change.

Rev. Nina Pooley. We told the parish last year that we were going to do *Go and See*. Now we know we are going to support the building and all the existing ministries, Table and others in the building [i.e, non-profit tenants].

Had we picked a new ministry, we would have to find extra money. So we are saying that we have to do these things for the building. Expanding St. Stephen's Table will take time and evolve. This will then require increased funds from every member. We will ask everyone, talk with them, let others ask questions.

We have learned that we are not adding anything outside the current missions.

Wendy Webster Coakley. She describes what the local country club does vis a vis periodic assessments for improvements. Assessments are less than the annual dues.

Everyone will understand the need for refreshing HVAC, but refreshing the dining room may be harder for others to understand.

Craig Reynolds: yes this topic has come up. The 12-step groups are an act of hospitality. One parishioner has said that they are a bit disappointed that our space at St. Stephens is the most disheveled in town. St. Stephens has a solid sense of gathering (post-COVID). In the past our gatherings have had good turnouts, e.g. chili cook-offs. COVID put us off our game and we fell out with the dining room. Re-energizing it is important.

The expansion of St. Stephen's Table is an ongoing discussion. It is ripe for experimentation. What works and doesn't. Possibly a return to in-person dining, using the dining room. One vision is having both of them happen. It would require more human capital and money. Increased security, mental health resources. If we don't refresh it, are we abandoning it.

John Garinther. Craig, is it a consensus that the kitchen is adequate as is?

Craig Reynolds. Some aspects of the kitchen need attention, particularly the flooring. Dan is pretty comfortable with it in general. The stove is temperamental. Yes, Dan's sense is that we don't need to pour a lot into the kitchen. For context, the dining room refresh will be dwarfed by the HVAC expense. The last dining room refresh was 1999 .

Chris Perry: Are there a range of estimates for the campaign?

Josie Ellis: we do not have a number yet, because there is a lot we don't know yet, especially about the HVAC system, whereas the dining room might be 50-100k. The HVAC might require up to 1 million, but we don't really know yet.

Chris Plankey. Yes we don't know, but we should have pictures up on our website showing what the refreshes would look like. Also the space could be rented.

Josie: Agile. We need to bend and flex with our estimates around the needs. We will listen to the Parish. Will there be enthusiasm for bringing meals back into the dining room? We might increase funds for what is needed: security, mental health resources. If we say to Dan, we are planning to double the capacity for what we serve, then he may say he needs additional kitchen features. So, our next step is to have that question and discussion with Dan.

Chris Plankey. Part of *Go and See*, HVAC will be a massive number. How important is it for us to maintain the second and third floor? Yes we value those ministries, but those floors are expensive. Do we want to ask our HVAC consultant options after the initial report? Can we separate the expense by floor for the building. Each floor could have its own fuel bill. Also, we need to refresh the upper floors. They don't present

well. We need to make sure that our money is well spent, and our facility sustains itself.

Josie Ellis. We have to pay for the HVAC. Our backs are a bit against the wall. Right now we don't have a plan.

Chris Perry: there are too many unknowns now.

Craig Reynolds: we do know that we have to do it.

David Nevin: for a lot of people it will be a scary project. We never adjusted the heating system. But we need it to function to carry out our mission. We should tie it into mission every time

Josie Ellis: Yes HVAC is not sexy.

Chris Perry: Josie, just say that the new HVAC design is really HOT! [multiple groans are heard]. We need to fix the HVAC like we would for a leaking roof. If not, the building dies.

John Garinther. You are asking people to commit to pay for something over 5 years. Do people sign on to a commitment? "Will I have that money over 5 years?"

Josie Ellis. We want to tell the Parish: your Vestry is totally financially committed to this.

Rev. Nina Pooley. It is very similar to a stewardship campaign. The card will say how much a person will give each year over X number of years. Then we have to sell that.

John Garinther. It would be over and above the pledge, right?

Rev. Nina Pooley. Yes. We have a finite group of people that we are raising the money from. Most of us don't have that amount.

Jim Alden. One could pay all at once or over time. I had been in a capital campaign once that took three years. It is critical to do it over time to make the amount. It's all tax deductible.

John Garinther. Can we have a fire wall so it isn't used for other things?

Rev. Nina Pooley. Yes. It'll have its own account. In the past, we had had a separate treasurer and account at St. Bart's (Falmouth, ME).

John Culver. Can we ask others who use our facilities to contribute?

Josie Ellis. Full circle to this group. Questions:

1. Are you behind the concept of an every member canvas, versus saying to the parish that we need to use the endowment to pay for the HVAC.?

Rev Nina Pooley. It would be hard to take from the endowment without knowing how much we need to take.

Suzanne White. It would be devastating on the endowment. From the *Go and See* meeting: it is on parishioners' shoulders. Once others know, some will be spontaneously contributing. Yes we will have to use the endowment unless we can talk to everyone .

Jim Alden, we do have a fund-raiser at *Go and See* who came prepared with great questions. Jim, I may not have gotten your meaning correct, please emend as needed.

Suzanne White. Anyone can come join *Go and See* and see what we are thinking.

Josie Ellis. Yes, nothing is secret.

Sarah gets inquiries every month about others who want to use our building.

Wendy Webster Coakley. Is it possible to find some matching gifts? It makes people feel more inclined to stretch gifts.

Rev. Nina Pooley. Craig [Reynolds? Smith?] would love to have the names of the top ten pledgers, but we don't do that. He would be happy to talk to each. Craig was involved in the last capital campaign.

We'll need a team of people who are asking for money, not just Craig.

Then there will be team of volunteers who do the work.

Then a group that will develop materials for the campaign, and market and conduct the campaign.

Chris Perry: Josie do you want to cap the discussion off with an action item?

John Garinther. Campaign or endowment? I think touching the endowment is too risky. Using all the endowment is out of the question.

Josie Ellis: Are we ready to make a campaign?

Suzanne Whitw. We can also go to others who use the building. It is important not to use the endowment, not even as a match. We are working with about a 120k deficit next year, yes on top of this year a ~100 k deficit this year. I agree we definitely need to do

fund raising.

Motion:

Chris Perry moved that:

“The *Vestry* agrees that we should design a *Refresh Initiative* to further the mission of the Church. We agree that the wording of this motion will be polished with the intent keep the aim the same.”

John Culver seconded it.

Alternate motion. Josie Ellis proposed that:

“The *Vestry* support the fund-raising effort of the *Go and See Initiative* of refreshing our building, making it hospitable for participants.”

The alternate Motion passed unanimously.

II. Minutes from previous meeting

We will postpone this as Chris didn't add it to the folder.

III. Old Business

Action Items from Previous Meeting

none

IV. Committee Reports and New Business

Financial report (Suzanne White)

The 2024 Budget is in the folder. Column V has the proposed budget for each line item. We don't yet know our 2024 pledges. At the very bottom of the column: preliminary deficit is 144,831. Now it is down to 123,680, and we may tweak it further. We are in better shape than we thought we would be. Let me know if you have any questions or you can email me them.

January 14, we will vote on-line to approve the budget, then get it to Sarah for our annual report.

Josie Ellis: we'll have our Finance meeting on the 15th and have the vote afterward. Building and salaries are where most of it goes. We are finalizing the numbers.

Property Committee (John Garinther, Chris Plankey)

John Garinther. The City approved our signage. We may need to wait for the spring thaw to get it in.

We had a good meeting with Iovan about the windows. Everyone should realize that we got a 135k grant, but that 180k was what everything is estimated to cost. It may

decrease slightly. We will make up tens of thousands of dollars.

Chris Plankey. That is good

Josie Ellis: I want this group to vote on the proposal from Leah Luczynski for the flooring from Scott's Carpet ONE. To update it with weather resistant wood-like material. We have to strip the vinyl from the floor.

Ceiling about 21,000; flooring about 35,000

Motions:

Motion by: Josie Ellis:

Motion:

I move that we begin the refresh with the quotes from Leah for floor and ceiling.

Seconded: Suzanne White

In Favor: all

Opposed: none

Abstained: none

The motion passed unanimously

Stewardship (Wendy Webster Coakley)

We have a few new pledges. Sarah thinks that we will meet or exceed last year's level of pledging.

Last Sunday I gave my talk so we'll see if more pledges come in.

Suzanne White. Because there is one less Sunday in 2024 that will decrease the amount received of weekly pledges.

Wardens' Report (Craig Reynolds, Josie Ellis),

Craig Reynolds. We are looking for feed-back.

Chris Plankey. Having some kind of meal after the *Annual Meeting* is a good idea.

Craig Reynolds. It has worked well in the past.

Josie Ellis. I agree. January 28th, Committee reports need to be to Sarah by the 16th.

Wendy Webster Coakly. It is exciting about saving 2500 on the IT [Information Technology] contract.

Rev. Nina Pooley. In the next newsletter, we could include pictures from the annual meeting, and some things from the reports.

Josie Ellis. It will take Sarah quite some time to pull the newsletter together after the *Annual Meeting*. Not just a rehash of the annual report.

Rev. Nina Pooley. We should aim for end of February before Easter, which is at the end of March.

Jim Alden: Joan Morrows' ministry of the birthday cards, Debbie Stillman and I are going to take that on. We'll meet next week. We'll figure out a system together, tag team or help with others. The ministry is important to both of us. I don't want it to stop. I've never been in a church that did this. I want to honor Joan.

Chris Plankey: I appreciate it. My kids save these cards.

Rectors Report (Rev. Nina Pooley)

We will have offertory baskets on Christmas eve.

Everyone: Yes.

Jim Alden will be at the 8 PM Service with Chris Plankey.

Nina will leave Sunday the 14th for a few days, and will be away in January

Action Items from this Meeting:

none

Rev. Nina Poole. Chris Perry wanted to know what to do if Synagogues needed a space. We will just offer if they need it.

We should have a statement in the paper: an attack on anyone's worship is an attack on everyone's worship. We will speak out and stand up for a better place to live. To all people of good will.

Jim Adlen said that he would like to discuss security.

Rev Nina Pooley noted that we have discussed this in previous vestry [last year].

Next Meeting scheduled:

Vestry meeting, January 23, 2024 (via Zoom)

V. Closing Prayer offered by Rev. Nina Pooley

Holy One, you hold both heaven and earth in a single peace. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of this world's anger and sorrow; give peace to your Church, peace among nations, peace on your earth, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

VI. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: __.

Summary of Motions passed:

1. “The *Vestry* [will] support the fund-raising effort of the *Go and See Initiative* of refreshing our building, making it hospitable for participants.”
2. We [will] begin the refresh with the quotes from Leah for floor and ceiling.