

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
Date: February 24, 2025*

Present (virtually by Zoom):

Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley, Rector
John Garinther, (Senior) Co-Warden
David Nevin, (Junior) Co-Warden
Dr. J. Christopher Perry, Treasurer
William O'Neill, Assistant Treasurer
Christopher Plankey, Clerk
Christine Furcinite Reynolds
Leah Luczynski
James Brennan
James Alden
Caleb Harmon
William Morey

Regrets: none

Meeting began at 7:03 p.m. by Zoom

I. Opening scripture and Prayer offered by Rev. Pooley

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.

A Word of Wisdom: from Lyvonne Briggs, "31 Liberating Quotes From Christian Women"

We are human expressions of the Divine. We are not territory to be conquered. We are God's good Creation, meant to be cherished.

Opening Prayer:

Creator, thank you for calling us by name and reminding us that we are valued, cherished, and not mere territory, but beloved beings in your sight. *Amen.*

II. Clerk Report: Minutes from previous meeting

[January 28, 2025](#)

Motion by: John Garinther

Seconded: David Nevin

In Favor: all

Opposed: none

Abstained: Chris Plankey as a non-voting member

III. Old Business

a. Action Items from Previous Meeting:

1. Chris Perry will submit the letter about Bishop Budde, with the last line added.
2. VPOD sign up link on agenda
3. Suzanne White will clarify budget questions and meet with Chris Perry, then send the budget around for final approval within a week.

The above items were completed or otherwise marked resolved.

b. Approval of [minutes from Annual Meeting](#).

Motion by: John Garinther

Seconded: James Alden

In Favor: all

Opposed: none

Abstained: Chris Plankey as a non-voting member

IV. New Business

a. **New Member Orientation**

John Garinther led a presentation designed to inform new vestry members on their roles and responsibilities. It laid out the roles of the Rector vs. the Vestry, the Vestry structure, member expectations, commitments, responsibilities, etc.

b. **ICE Policy**

In the face of recent federal policy changes, Nina developed and explained St. Stephen's Safe Church Policy: What to Do if ICE Comes. This involves notifying staff, visitors, and parishioners of the new policy through a combination of education, producing printed materials to be on hand and readily available throughout the building, and signage. It identifies private vs. public spaces in our building and marks them with clear signage. Our signage will be translated into different languages to make the messages clear to everyone who moves through our spaces. There have been no issues at any churches in our state and we do not anticipate any issues, but we are trying to be prepared and stay ahead of this.

c. **VPOD sign-ups & Point of Contact**

John Garinther explained to Vestry members how to incorporate themselves into the VPOD rotation and update their contact information.

d. **New Treasurer's Report**

In preparation for taking over as treasurer, Chris Perry met with the outgoing treasurer and assistant treasurer, Sarah in the office to see how she operates and handles day-to-day fiscal issues, and the finance committee focusing on the 2025 budget development. He suggests it may take about 20 to 40 separate actions to get us on a trajectory of lowering the deficit over a few years.

When it comes to budgeting, he stresses the importance of separating an operating from a capital budget. We currently have an informal separation, but it needs to appear within the spreadsheets. We will essentially end up with 2 parts to our budget, each showing income and expenses. This is a normal accounting practice. The benefits to this will assure capital donors their donations will be used for the purpose they specify and the funds aren't commingled with operating expenses.

He suggests we move a portion of the money from our low-interest savings account (containing capital donations and excess money from our checking that we don't spend right away) to a high-yield money market fund. He estimates we are losing out on an extra \$2025 a year in interest, or 2.4% of our budget deficit. He plans to bring this idea to the Finance Committee for their consideration.

He spoke of our requirement to conduct an annual audit. We have two options: form an internal audit committee or hire a CPA. Nina asked our area deans to look into the parish audit to see if they have anything more finite to look at in order to focus our parish audit and they will be discussing this at the next deans' meeting. She also shared the 2025 Diocesan Convention dates are November 14th and 15th.

V. **Committee Reports**

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

Work is moving forward to update the heating system. Bill Morey asked to hear more about our \$60k estimate to update the boiler. We currently have \$37k worth of work contracted for the spring, with another estimated \$12k worth of work to follow. We acknowledged our initial

\$12k estimate is likely understated. Our new estimate for that portion (updated boiler controls) is \$23k, hence the \$60k total estimate. We will receive the proposal for the updated boiler controls soon and will update when we know more.

Additionally, items are being corrected from our last building inspection. Actions are being taken to improve the sound quality of our live-streams. See full property report for more.

- b. **Stewardship Committee** (no formal report submitted this month, see related info in item V. d. below)
- c. **Finance Committee** (no formal report submitted this month, see item IV. d. above)
- d. **Wardens' Report** (John Garinther, David Nevin)
No questions were asked about the report.

The report shares:

1. upcoming Safe Church training
2. instructions and resources for incoming vestry members
3. a summary of recent and upcoming events, including our Fat Sunday LUV U a LATTE event on March 2nd and upcoming Lenten Study: Exploring the Psalms
4. the draft application for the St. Stephen's Table 501(c)3 Team and names potential board members associated with it
5. general property information including an update on BIC ending their lease and a summary of major property expenses.

A stewardship team has been assembled with an eye toward making stewardship a year-round mission versus a fall pledge campaign. The team is led by Susan LeBourdais with support from Craig Smith and includes Jim Alden, Leah Luczynski, Al Symonds, Josie Ellis, and John Garinther. Their work has begun with their kick off event LUV U a LATTE.

- e. **Rector's Report** (Nina)
A question was answered clarifying the details about Ash Wednesday services. Nina had a question she was seeking Vestry input on but decided to push it to our next meeting.

The report includes updates on:

1. Nina's upcoming schedule and other liturgical events including the details of Holy Week.
2. Madeleine McKeon has joined the board for St. Stephen's Table 501(c)3
3. Nina stepped back from serving as co-chair of the diocesan Beloved Community Commission as that commission has now joined the Diocesan Social Justice Commission. Bishop Fisher has asked her to serve as the Diocesan Representative to the Province One Becoming Beloved Community Network. Which means her diocesan responsibilities now include: Bishop's Search Committee - Transition team member; Diocesan Social Justice Commission - Team member; Province One Becoming Beloved Community Network - Diocesan Representative
4. St. Stephen's Response to ICE. Nina clarifies our response is developed in consultation with: Mass Council of Churches, Mass Attorney General's office, Downtown Campus Clergy group, Diocese of Western Mass Social Justice Commission, and our Bishop.

VI. Action Items from this Meeting:

- a. Vestry members instructed to sign up for VPOD slots.
- b. Vestry members instructed to update contact information.

VII. Next Meeting scheduled: March 25, 2025 on Zoom.

VIII. 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.*

VII. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:35 p.m..

End of Minutes.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Plankey, Clerk

Addendum

Approval of these minutes:

Motion by email on March 10, 2025 to approve minutes by James Alden.

Motion by email on March 10, 2025 seconded by John Garinther.
Minutes unanimously by email on March 10, 2025.
Opposed: none.