

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

Present (in person in the Sears Room):

Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley, Rector  
John Garinther, (Senior) Co-Warden  
David Nevin, (Junior) Co-Warden  
Christopher Plankey, Clerk  
Christine Furcinite Reynolds  
Leah Luczynski  
James Brennan  
James Alden  
William Morey

Regrets: Dr. J. Christopher Perry, Treasurer; William O'Neill, Assistant Treasurer;  
and Caleb Harmon

Meeting began at 7:02 p.m.

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

*Scripture: Psalm 42:8*

By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

*Wisdom: The Rev. Pauli Murray, "Dark Testament, Verse 8" (1970)*

Hope is a song in a weary throat. / Give me a song of hope / And a world where I can sing it.

*Prayer of the day: (Verse and Voice, Sojourners, June 2, 2025)*

God of steadfast love, in a world where many still sing through weariness, let your enduring song of hope rise in every heart longing to be seen, embraced, and free to sing in the fullness of who they are. *Amen.*

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

Motion to approve by email on June 7, 2025 by Christine Reynolds.

Motion seconded by email on June 7, 2025 by James Alden.

In Favor: all

Opposed: none

Minutes unanimously approved by email on June 12, 2025.

Abstained: Christopher Plankey as a non-voting member.

### **III. Old Business**

Action Items from previous Meeting:

1. Nina and wardens to discuss possible vestry retreat. On agenda for today's meeting.

### **IV. New Business**

#### **a. Meeting Minutes Approval**

After some discussion, we agreed to stay with the current, two part process of approving the minutes by email. One week to submit any edits/requests for changes to be made. A second week to offer your approval of the corrected/amended minutes. The minutes will be filed in the folder for the same month they present. The minutes shall contain an addendum showing how/when the minutes were approved.

#### **b. Financial Audit Approval**

In preparation for this meeting, the vestry reviewed the audit documents, including the audit certificate, the 2024 internal controls questionnaire, 2024 review of expenses, 2024 review of discretionary checking, and all other supporting documents prepared by our internal audit team. Christine Reynolds asked a question about the increased cost for our networking services. The number is significantly higher than it had been. John asked if there are any clear action items to be taken based on the results of the audit. We discussed if there can/will be any clear assignment of those action items to individuals.

MOTION: to approve the audit report. Made by William Morey. Seconded by David Nevin. All in favor. Abstained: Chris Plankey as a non-voting member.

FORMAL RESOLUTION: The vestry gives thanks to our internal auditors, Don Phipps, Al Symonds, and Stephanie Talanian, for the vast amount of expertise and effort in executing the 2024 financial audit.

#### **c. Stewardship Update**

John Garinther explained the financial goal for the capital campaign has been reduced to \$150k. The project to install ceiling fans in the sanctuary proved to be a no-go. The solar project has been put on hold for no reason other than there are too many unknowns to include it in the upcoming campaign.

#### **d. Vestry Retreat Discussion**

We agreed on a date for our upcoming vestry retreat: Sunday, July 13th.

ACTION ITEM: location and time TBD by wardens and Nina.

At its core will be a conversation about the “big picture”. Nina has met twice with Canon Steven Wilco about where she believes we are, and what we feel we need to consider at this stage in our congregation's life and mission. Nina has some metrics we'll be discussing. We will discuss financial trends, our impact on the community and the strategy for our physical building. We agreed the timing works out for a conversation about our building given BIC's absence. Our current position is one where the numbers are still strong in terms of people, dollars, etc. It was verbalized that the capital campaign is focused more on the building than the people.

e. **Office Bookkeeper Option**

We are considering hiring a professional, part-time, bookkeeper to assist Sarah with her work. We intend to ask the auditors for their thoughts/feedback. While Bert has some bookkeeping experience, the learning curve with Realm is steep and we want to ensure we do not lose touch with it. The vestry is asked to think about bookkeepers they recommend. A name will be brought back to the vestry for approval. How might Sarah or Bert's hours be impacted? Are there duties that volunteers can take on to take things off of Sarah's desk?

ACTION ITEM: Vestry members are asked if they know any bookkeepers they can recommend?

f. **VPOD Sign-Up**

Vestry members are being scheduled for VPOD duty for Aug. 2025 through Feb. 2026.

ACTION ITEM: Vestry members are expected to visit the spreadsheet linked in the June Agenda and commit to 2 to 3 dates.

**V. Committee Reports**

a. **Treasurer's Report** (Chris Perry)

No report submitted this month.

b. **Property Committee** (Christopher Plankey)

No questions were asked of the property report.

Old business includes:

1. An update on the status of our heating system upgrades.
2. An update on installing large fans in our sanctuary. We will not be moving forward with this project.
3. A status report of our project to update the sanctuary sound system.
4. An update on getting our exterior staircases inspected.
5. An update on our spring to-do list.
6. An update on the balcony clean up, including plans to purge the balcony of all pews.
7. An update on our Sanctuary roof leak.
8. An assessment of our new cleaning crew.

New business:

1. A discussion on programmable thermostats.
2. A discussion about our heating system maintenance contract.

- c. **Wardens' Report** (John Garinther, David Nevin)  
No questions were asked about the wardens' report.

The report includes:

1. vestry housekeeping reminders, including upcoming Safe Church training
2. a summary of recent and upcoming Parish events including Berkshire Pride Festival.
3. an update on the development of our St. Stephen's Table 501(c)3 "Park Square Meals."
4. Stewardship Team Update:

The Stewardship Team is currently meeting every 2-3 weeks. Susan LeBourdais is the Chairperson. The team is working toward the launch of a capital campaign to raise funds for specific projects:

- \$70K – Dining Room/Foyer refresh (recover endowment draw)
- \$60K – Boiler Condensate Tank and Boiler Digital Control System
- \$15K – Steinway piano refurbishment
- \$5K – Sanctuary sound system upgrade

The newly focused (and reduced) campaign goal is \$150K. See item IV. c. (above).

5. An update on our 2024 Financial Audit. Report artifacts were reviewed ahead of the meeting and the vestry voted to approve the report. See item IV. b. (above).
6. General Property Information - The following are current or pending quotes that the Property Committee is pursuing:
  - Boiler BFT quote - \$37k - APPROVED
  - Boiler Control System upgrade quote - \$25k - APPROVED
  - Sanctuary Ceiling Fan installation quote
    - Cross Beam Load Analysis - \$5,500 - APPROVED
    - Ceiling Fan Material - cancelled
    - Ceiling Fan Installation - cancelled
  - Steinway Piano Back Action Overhaul (dampers) quote - \$2K - APPROVED
  - Steinway Piano Keyframe Action quote - \$11K - APPROVED
  - Sound System Upgrade estimate - \$5k - quotes pending
7. Information on a summer/fall vestry retreat, including the agenda. See item IV. d. (above).

d. **Rector's Report** (Nina+)

A request was made to flesh out some details of the Summer Book Club. Will books be provided by the Parish? Should participants purchase them themselves? etc.

The report includes:

1. Nina's upcoming schedule and other liturgical events.
2. Information on Pop Up choir.
3. Information on summer Book Club.
4. Information on Short Summer Sermon Series and the schedule for what the focus will be for each of 5 Sundays starting June 29th.

5. Information on Nina's vacation from September 23 through October 13th and details on clergy coverage for those 3 Sundays.
6. An update on Nina's plans for sabbatical. Nina is waiting to hear from either or both Bishops but she has been assured we are on the list for diocesan funding.
7. Information about our upcoming vestry retreat.
8. A link to an online version of our most recent parish directory.

**VI. Action Item from this Meeting:**

1. Nina and wardens to decide time and location for vestry retreat.
2. Vestry members to sign up for VPOD slots for Aug. 2025 through Feb. 2026.
3. Vestry members are asked to suggest bookkeepers they recommend.

**VII. Next Meeting scheduled:** July 24, 2025 at 7 p.m. in person.

**VIII. Closing Prayer**

Be present, merciful God, and protect us through the silent hours of this night so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world may rest in your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**IX. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:27 p.m.

**End of Minutes.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Christopher Plankey, Clerk

**Addendum**

Approval of these minutes by email: on July 14, 2025

Motion by email to approve minutes on July 8, 2025 by Nina+

Motion by email seconded by Leah Luczynski on July 8, 2025.

In favor: all

Opposed: none

Abstained: Christopher Perry. Christopher Plankey as a non-voting member.

Minutes approved by email on July 14, 2025.