

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Vestry Meeting  
Date: January 27, 2026*

Present (via Zoom):

Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley, Rector  
John Garinther, (Senior) Co-Warden  
David Nevin, (Junior) Co-Warden  
Dr. J. Christopher Perry, Treasurer  
Al Symonds, Assistant Treasurer  
Christopher Plankey, Clerk  
Anne Williams  
Christine Furcinite Reynolds  
James Brennan  
James Alden  
Leah Luczynski

Regrets: Caleb Harmon, William Morey

Meeting began at 7:02 p.m.

**I. Opening Scripture and Prayer (Rev. Nina)**

*Scripture: Acts 20:32*

And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified.

*Wisdom: by Hannah Keziah Agustin,  
posted by Sojourners, posted on Jan 15, 2026*

In the monastery, I was radicalized to believe again - that mercy abounds for the hurting, that faith is available to the unbelieving, and that justice is coming. I needed God to give me the eyes to see it and the hands to work for it.

*Prayer:*

Faithful God, rekindle our belief in a better world, as well as our unmistakable place in beholding and building one. Amen

**II. Clerk Report: Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting**

Approval of previous minutes: Approved by email; see previous meeting addendum.

### III. Old Business

Action Items from previous Meeting:

1. On the security report: Jim Brennan agreed to report back with items relating to personnel, property committee to report back with items related to the physical plant. [Done](#).
2. David, Al, and Chris Perry to agree on the format, frequency, and distribution of financial summaries offering at-a-glance looks at our finances to the vestry and beyond. In the works.
3. Nina to communicate with Sunday Funday teachers to determine how to keep teachers from being forced to miss annual meeting. Done.
4. Appropriate groups (listed in December's minutes) to communicate on programming for annual meeting. Still happening.
5. Determine who wants to help be part of the team that gets more people involved (item V. d. 5). No volunteers for this yet.

### IV. New Business

a. **Basic Brunch** (David + John)

A basic brunch was planned for Sunday, January 25th after church. We had a snow day. The new date is Sunday, February 22nd.

ACTION: Rev. Nina to report new date to the office.

b. **Revote on Endowment Withdrawal Amount** (Chris Perry)

MOTION: by Chris Perry

"The previous motion brought to the Vestry at the December 2025 meeting, and voted on by email following the meeting, to withdraw \$114,451 from endowment is modified as follows. The motion is to approve the withdrawal from the Parish's endowment the amount of \$134,451, which now includes \$20,000 from the Peek-Bell Rector's Housing Fund, which was previously omitted.

Seconded by: Al Symonds

In favor: all

Opposed: none

Abstained: Chris Plankey as a non-voting member

The motion passes.

c. **Organize Volunteer Ministries Presentations** (David)

David Nevin sought a volunteer to organize this. Christine Furcinite Reynolds graciously volunteered to schedule 1 ministry to present each week during the announcements.

Some additional thoughts:

1. Leave out recruiting more crucifers, we have plenty right now
2. Nina's report asks what other groups? Chris Plankey suggested Sunday Funday "helpers".
3. Nina suggested some of our longest serving members can be asked to come out of regular rotation and be placed on a list as substitutes to welcome opportunities for new members to join and participate. Example: Lay readers? Safety concerns were cited.
4. Other groups? Altar guild? St. Stephen's table? Coffee hour?

d. **Stewardship** (Jim Alden)

There are 81 pledgers for \$223,337 in total pledges, compared to last year's 79 pledgers totalling \$202,000. 65 increased their pledge. 14 decreased. Stewardship meets this Thursday to prepare for annual meeting. There is still talk of a capital campaign, maybe for 2027? But hopefully for something related to mission, not facility upkeep.

Jim gave an update on his card project. He tracks Pittsfield home sales as listed publicly in the newspaper and mails an average of 12 handwritten cards each week welcoming the owners to the community on behalf of St. Stephen's. He is 150 cards into his voluntary one year commitment. He credits Susan LeBourdais with the idea. Vestry members were made aware of this effort so we may respond appropriately should we learn first-hand this brought someone through our doors.

**"Finding the Gap"**

This discussion was born of Stewardship and somewhat relates to our "Go and See" efforts of 2 years ago. In light of the recent opening of the "The First" and the Pearl St. Shelter, how can we find our niche? What remains "undone" by others? Let's ask them. Where do "they" see the gap? A continuation of our "Go and See" effort, but now is a different time.

e. **Annual Meeting Agenda**

Elements that will remain the same: will be scripted, will include updates from the treasurer, property committee, Rector and warden(s). Elements that will be new this year: will include highlights from the vestry retreat, stewardship will be involved, and there'll be a summary of the recent parish survey. There is much interest by newer vestry members in the data presented at the vestry retreat last summer. There was a short, general discussion about the data set representing downward data trends in Christendom in the West. The conversation was highlighted by Chris

Perry who shared an inspiring anecdote about rising numbers at Zion Lutheran and Al Symonds shared his observations of new faces appearing each week in our own pews.

ACTION: Committee heads and ministry leaders to submit annual reports to Sarah by January 29th.

f. **VPOD Assignments** (David + John)

ACTION: Vestry members are encouraged to sign up for 2 -3 slots. [here](#)

g. **Security Assessment Update** (John)

We recently received a 130-page professional security assessment report from Andrew Hoffman. We produced a [spreadsheet](#) of recommendations. Most of what we recommend can be accomplished without paid professionals. Our estimated investment will total ~\$15k. The property committee will begin immediately with the low/no cost items. We will come back to the Vestry for approval on things relating to higher expenses. No one objected to this approach. Will these expenses appear as a line item in the budget?

Jim Brennan graciously researched and made recommendations related to personnel/staff/volunteers. He mentioned the biggest things are: staff drills, fire drills, practice sessions for emergency situations, deescalation training/ drills, etc.

ACTION: Jim Brennan to Andrew Hoffman on complimentary training opportunities Andrew oversees. Rev. Nina has said from the beginning Knesset Israel reports this was among the most useful elements of Andrew's services.

h. **Stop the Bleed Training**

There is a free training at Knesset Israel on February 10th at 5:30 p.m. Vestry members are encouraged to attend. The more of us who know how to respond in an emergency situation, the more lives are saved.

i. **Immigrant Support Forum**

Rescheduled to Sunday, January 31st, 2-4pm, Trinity Lenox. This seems particularly important at this moment. Nina plans to be there and hopes several of us can be.

## V. **Committee Reports**

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

The report includes:

- Details on the 2025 balance sheet pertaining to the end-of-year endowment withdrawal and larger non-budgeted expenses including ~\$14k for emergency heating repairs and \$15k for roof repairs
- A review of the 2026 Budget
- Logistics of switching banks, including keeping track of all automatic transfers/automated withdrawals
- An idea to separate operational and capital monies
- A discussion of what the finance committee plans to include in the annual report

Chris Perry presented the 2026 Budget. No questions were asked.

MOTION: by Chris Perry to approve the 2026 budget as presented.

Seconded by: Al Symonds

In favor: all

Opposed: none

Abstained: Chris Plankey as a non-voting member.

The budget is approved.

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

The report contains updates on:

- Recent emergency heating repairs totalling ~\$14k
- sanctuary sound system upgrade, including a temporary solution to greatly improve the online experience, to be implemented in February
- Details on proposals being considered to get the steel fire escape up to code
- Details on a proposal we are leaning toward accepting to repair the ceiling over the balcony
- The roof leak has been repaired, and the roofer recommends additional, very costly, preventative work be done. We are not acting on his recommendation.
- Elevator slide guide replacement scheduled for Jan. 21 (routine maintenance, the elevator is fine)
- Committee's recommendations for physical plant relating to recent Security Assessment by Andrew Hoffman
- Plans to downsize our dumpster as a cost-saving measure

- Plans to install exterior lighting over the Memorial Garden in the spring
- An update on getting our chemical treatment system for the boilers up and running

No questions were asked of the property report.

c. **Wardens' Report** (John)

The report includes:

1. Requirements for Safe Church training and dates for upcoming sessions.
2. A summary of recent and upcoming Parish events
3. A Stewardship Team Update: including summary of pledges to date and a link to a folder containing all the 2025 campaign documents as well as documents related to stewardship activity throughout the year
4. Horizon's Team update, including a summary of the results of the recent parish survey
5. A summary of the actions the church plans to take in light of our recent safety/ security assessment
6. information on the recent facility utilization assessment meeting with Haiko Cornelissen, who is a leader at STEWARDSHIP REALTY LLC. This company assesses church properties and proposes actions that can help the church to take advantage of its underutilized space.
7. General Property Information - The following are current or pending projects that the Property Committee is requesting or reviewing:
  - Sound System Upgrade estimate - \$5,000 estimate - **proposal pending**. *Rationale:* The online audio is currently very poor.
  - Exterior staircases repair or rebuild. - information on the proposals related to this and how they compare. *Rationale:* The Choir Room exterior staircase has failed a mandated state inspection due to degraded steel and a significant amount of rust. The alleyway exterior staircase has failed the city building inspection also.
  - Roof repair - \$15,000 **contract completed early this month**. *Rationale:* Active water intrusion. (now repaired)
  - Balcony Ceiling Repair **\$4,500 proposal received**. *Rationale:* the ceiling is falling. Property committee is communicating with the vendor with an eye toward accepting their proposal

No questions were asked about the wardens' report.

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

The report includes:

1. Dates and details for: Season after Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter Sunday, Season of Eastertide, Pentecost Sunday, and Season After Pentecost, including all related ecumenical efforts planned to date.
2. Rev. Nina's personal schedule, including plans to take the week following Easter off. April 6-12 with clergy coverage on April 12.
3. ICE and Immigrant Support - Bishop Fisher held a Zoom meeting Tuesday, Jan 27 to discuss ICE and all that involves. Vicki Ix included this link to a [protest toolkit](#). Nina shared her notes [here](#). There is a meeting at Trinity Lenox related to this on January 31st, from 2-4pm. Nina plans to be there and hopes several of us can be. Anne Williams shared [Melt the ICE](#) Protest Knitting Project and our knitters are on board.
4. Adult Ed for Lent - details for in-person and online opportunities thanks to David Nevin, Craig Reynolds, Louise Penney, and Rev. Nina.
5. Mission and Ministry - details on "Finding the Gap". A date is currently being voted on to have as many of us as possible to meet with other local organizations (ServiceNet, COTB, Zion, BIC, the Sherriff's department feeding program).
6. Update on Rev. Nina's delayed continuing education from 2025. Involves taking select Tuesdays as "reading days". So far, she's taken two. She shares what she's read and what she plans to read.

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

1. Jim Brennan to contact Andrew Hoffman on free training for our staff and volunteers.
2. Vestry members to sign up for VPOD slots.
3. Rev. Nina to share new Basic Brunch date with office.
4. Annual reports to Sarah Morrison by January 29th.

**VII. Next Meeting scheduled:** February 24, 2025 at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

**VIII. Closing Prayer (Rev. Nina)**

Insistent God, by night and day you summon your people: So stir us with your voice and enlighten our lives with your grace that we give ourselves fully to Christ's call to mission and ministry. Amen.

**IX. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:31 p.m.

**End of Minutes.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Christopher Plankey, Clerk

**Addendum**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by email to approve minutes by Leah Luczynski on 2/6/2026

Motion by email seconded by Jim Alden on 2/6/2026

In favor: all who replied

Opposed: none

No response: 3 members

Abstained: Christopher Plankey as a non-voting member.

Minutes approved by email on 2/13/2026