

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
Date: March 24, 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
Leah Luczynski
William Morey

Regrets: Caleb Harmon

Meeting began at 7:03 p.m.

I. Opening Scripture and Prayer (Rev. Nina)

Scripture: John 13:34-35

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Wisdom: adrienne maree brown (sojourners 2/10/26)

If the goal was to increase the love, rather than winning or dominating a constant opponent, I think we could actually imagine liberation from constant oppression. We would suddenly be seeing everything we do, everyone we meet, not through the tactical eyes of war, but through eyes of love. We would see that there's no such thing as a blank canvas, an empty land or a new idea - but everywhere there is complex, ancient, fertile ground full of potential.

Prayer: God who is love, widen our own capacity to love so that our actions are an echo that reflect you. 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. Vestry members asked to sign up for VPOD slots, to update the information in their contact info file, and to watch Vestry 101 on March 3rd. Done.
2. Rev. Nina et. al. to explore reinstating Chris Plankey as a voting member. After a full year as a non-voting vestry member, the vestry conducted an online vote and voted unanimously to reinstate Chris as a voting member.
3. Anyone who is interested can locate and review the vestry handbook on the diocesan website. Complete.
4. Vestry members are encouraged to reply asap to an upcoming email seeing their vote to approve the parochial report. Report is submitted.

IV. New Business

a. **Stewardship Realty Fee Approval** (John + Nina+)

John and Nina explained what Stewardship Realty does, how we got in touch with them, etc. They work with churches with large amounts of unused space with the goal of turning them into economically self-sustaining facilities. Their work involves a complete assessment of our facility and ministries paired with geographically-focused research to determine options for how we can best accomplish this (or even rule it out as a possibility). Their deliverable is a formal, written report. Their fee is \$10k. At Nina's request, they agreed to reduce their fee from \$10k to \$7k.

MOTION: By John Garinther to submit the \$7k fee to Stewardship Realty so they can begin their work. Seconded by David Nevin. All in favor. None opposed. The motion passes.

ACTION: Executive team to contact Stewardship Realty.

b. **"Finding the Gap" Initiative** (Rev. Nina and the wardens)

Stewardship organized a discussion on February 25th with leaders from local organizations ServiceNet, COTB, Zion, BIC, the Sheriff's Dept. and 18 Degrees. Our goal was to learn from their perspective where there are gaps with the hope that we may identify a niche we are called to fill for the local community.

To continue this work, Stewardship has organized 2 upcoming meetings related to this. The first is on April 21 at 7 p.m. in the Sears Room. This is a

discussion with Zion Lutheran Church leadership about the model used to fund and develop The First. This is our opportunity to ask questions about their strategy and how it might apply to any actions we take to utilize our facility more effectively.

The second is on April 30th at 7 p.m. This is a follow-up to our March 10th Finding the Gap meeting. We will review action items and determine next steps.

ACTION: Vestry members: be present at these meetings.

- c. **Approval of Annual Meeting Minutes** (Rev. Nina)
After being given a chance to review the annual meeting minutes in preparation for our vestry meeting, Nina made a motion that we accept the annual meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by David. All in favor. None opposed. The motion passed.
- d. **Safe Church Training - Praesidium Academy** (John)
After a break from offering it, the diocese has begun offering interim Safe Church training. Initial training is done through a combination of 4-8 self-paced online training modules followed by a 90-minute scheduled training via Zoom. Recertification is done similarly, but with less modules and a shorter Zoom training.

ACTION: Recommended for all vestry members. Recertification is due for those that have not received training within the last 3 years.

- e. **Bishop Consecration Invitation**
Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield. April 25th at 10 a.m. A limited number of tickets are available.

ACTION: Vestry members are encouraged to let Nina know if they'd like to attend.

- f. **VPOD Schedule**
There was an agenda item to review the schedule and request any open slots be filled. We discovered the only open slot was Easter and agreed there should be no VPOD announcements that day. Vestry members on Easter are encouraged to greet.

V. Committee Reports

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

The report includes:

- summary of financials for February 2026 including a detailed look at income and expenses
- information about property space and costs including putting a plan in motion to calculate the square footage of our spaces which will be important information for calculating any future rent payments, should rooms be rented
- pricing information as it pertains to renting space to artists in our area

Chris Perry offered a summary of his report. No questions were asked.

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

The property committee report includes updates on:

- boiler 2's recurring alarm being fixed
- our plan to begin performing blowdowns on the boilers as often as possible (ideally daily) in order to lower TDS
- recent improvements to online sound
- getting the exterior stairs by the choir room repaired
- meeting with a contractor to repair the balcony ceiling
- facility improvements related to our security assessment
- meeting with a contractor to discuss options for how to
- get our wooden stairs in the back alley to pass inspection

Chris offered a quick update on the meeting with the contractor we were considering for the balcony repair. We decide that vendor is no longer a viable option. We are back at square one with the repair to the balcony ceiling. No questions were asked of the property report.

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

The report includes:

1. information about the new interim Safe Church training
2. a summary of recent and upcoming Parish events
3. a Stewardship Team Update: including details about "Finding the Gap" and where they will focus their efforts in 2026
4. Horizon's Team update, including a summary of the results of the "essay portion" of the parish survey following annual meeting. The next survey will come out in April.

5. information about an upcoming training after worship on April 19th related to our recent safety/security assessment.
6. a heads up we will be asked to vote on the expenditure related to our facility utilization assessment by Stewardship Realty LLC.
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 steel staircase repair - \$22,300. *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 also failed the city building inspection. We do not have a cost estimate for these stairs yet.

- Balcony Ceiling Repair **\$4,500 proposal received**. *Rationale:* the ceiling is falling. UPDATE: The property committee was communicating with this vendor with an eye toward accepting their proposal, but has decided not to move forward with this vendor.

No questions were asked about the wardens' report. Jim Brennan spoke and offered some notes about the upcoming security/emergency training on April 19th.

ACTION: Vestry members: be present at the security training on April 19th.

ACTION: Jim Brennan to be in touch with Andrew Hoffman.

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

The report includes:

- Dates and details for: Lent, Holy Week, Easter Sunday, Season of Eastertide, Pentecost Sunday, and Season After Pentecost, including all related ecumenical efforts planned to date.
- Rev. Nina's personal schedule, including plans to take the week following Easter off. April 7-13. David DeSmith will cover April 12th. Nina has jury duty starting April 14th.
- Details on the consecration of our new bishop
- A more detailed explanation of interactions with Stewardship Realty along with a recommendation to engage in their services.

VI. Action Items from this Meeting:

1. Executive team to contact Stewardship Realty
2. Vestry members to be present at security training after worship on April 19th.
3. Vestry members to be present at meetings in the Sears Room at 7 p.m. on April 21st and April 30th
4. Vestry members to achieve Safe Church training or recertification.
5. Vestry members to notify Nina asap if they'd like to attend the bishop consecration on April 25th.
6. Jim Brennan to be in touch with Andrew Hoffman concerning training on April 19th.

VII. Next Meeting scheduled: April 28, 2026 at 7 p.m. in person.

VIII. Closing Prayer:

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:10 p.m.

End of Minutes.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Plankey, Clerk

Addendum

APPROVAL OF THESE MINUTES

Motion by email to approve minutes by J. Christopher Perry on 3/30/2026

Motion by email seconded by email by Al Symonds on 3/30/2026

In favor: 11 responded by email

Opposed: none

No response: 1 member

Minutes approved by email on 4/4/2026