St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
Date: June 30, 2026

Present (in the Sears Room):
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
James Brennan
Christine Furcinite Reynolds
Leah Luczynski
William Morey

Regrets: Caleb Harmon, Anne Williams

Meeting began at 7:04pm

I. Opening Scripture and Prayer (Rev. Nina)

Verse of the day, Psalm 116:12-13
What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

Voice of the day, Roberto Clemente
Any time you have an opportunity to make a difference in this world and you don't, then you are wasting your time on Earth.

Prayer of the day
Servant God, you give in abundance and in every circumstance. May our offerings to the world do the same. Amen.

Rev. Nina gave us a pastoral update on Caleb Dillon Harmon, with his permission.

II. Clerk Report: Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting
Motion by David to approve the previous minutes. Al seconded. All in favor. Bill abstained. Previous minutes approved in-person.

III. Old Business
Action Items from previous Meeting:

1. John to other bookkeepers to compare with Breezy. OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS = "OTE"
2. Nina to other clergy on other bookkeepers. OTE
3. John to Josie on job description for parish administrator minus the bookkeeping duties. OTE
4. Al and Chris Perry to meet with Sarah on job description for parish administrator. OTE
5. David to share 2 potential retreat dates with Christine and Bill to nail one down. DONE
6. Vestry members are encouraged to bring back their ideas by our next meeting for special initiatives the parish might explore while Nina is on sabbatical. ON AGENDA
7. VPODs to host supply clergy each week during Nina's sabbatical, and announce the closing hymn each week. WILL DO
8. John to Zoom next vestry meeting. OTE

IV. New Business

a. **Sabbatical Approval Vote** (Nina+)

<u>MOTION</u>: made by David to approve Nina's sabbatical during the months of Aug. Sept. Oct. with a $2500 reimbursement applied from the diocese. Jim B. seconded. All in favor. The motion passes.

b. **Inform Parish of Sabbatical** (Nina+)
After it was first announced at the end of the June 28th service, we discussed more formal ways we plan to inform everyone in the parish of Nina's sabbatical. Weekly blast, upcoming Sat. and Sun. bulletins, etc.

c. **Vestry Retreat** (John, David, Nina+)
The 2026 vestry retreat is scheduled for Saturday, July 18th at St. Helena's Chapel. Everyone plans to attend. We briefly discussed the agenda (pray, eat, walk, meet). Our main business involves creating teams to spearhead special sabbatical projects the parish will engage in while Nina is away.

Some projects were identified/teams formed:
John: tiny library
Leah + Chris Plankey: care kits for the homeless
Jim: collecting prayers

Other ideas were discussed: Could an "essentials box" be movable? Put out on table days? Parents night out: work with parents/children who are known to us (for liability issues). Craig Reynolds' summer reading ideas–everyone reads their own books and gathers to share their favorite parts. Or a “non-book book club” or a “silent book club” (Hot Plate is doing this).

ACTION: Vestry members to continue to think on this and to bring their ideas/projects to the upcoming vestry retreat.

d. **Bishop Howell’s Input Regarding Stewardship Realty** (Nina+)
After talking with Nina about our dealings with Stewardship Realty, Bishop Howell revealed our diocese was already working with them on a number of their properties. Nina was encouraged not to sign a contract or submit any payments to them. We explained we already had. Bishop Howell’s intention was to see if she could get us a better deal. She subsequently got back to us and let us know we’d be getting a $1000 refund check from Stewardship Realty. She said we’ll pay no more than any other parish in the diocese.

e. **Administration Hiring Team** (John, David, Nina+)
A hiring team has been assembled to fill the parish administrator position opening up upon Sarah’s retirement on Nov. 1st. The team consists of Josie Ellis, Leah Luczynski and Craig Reynolds. They met for 2.5 hours and outlined the parameters for the Parish Administrator’s position:

1) We are hoping to hire an office administrator who will work 30 hours/week, (7.5 hours/day four days a week), with a pay range of $ 22 - $25/hour, plus benefits. This will include bookkeeping.
1b) Should we be unable to find someone qualified to do the bookkeeping, the hours and benefits will be reconfigured to allow us to hire that out.

2) Under this configuration, the office will be open 3 days a week, with the fourth day being reserved for more involved work.

3) Administrative support staff member (Bert) will work for 6 hours a week - 3 hours a day, 2 days a week. (One of those days needs to be Thurs. to cover bulletin printing.)

3b) We would like to take this opportunity to revamp the counting procedures, as approved and overseen by the audit team.

Background:
The parish office currently has a total of 36 hours of coverage (though 15 hours are doubled up): Sarah: 21 hours; Bert: 15 hours

This position reconfigures those hours and provides a day when the office is "closed," for the administrator to do more involved, uninterrupted work. At 30 hours a week, we are required to offer benefits (per General Convention), and as a church, it's a justice issue.

Timeline: The hiring team is "sprinting" - hoping to fast track this search to the best of their ability and hire before Aug 1. They hope to have the new hire start in September, allowing time for training while Sarah is still here. (If they are unable to finalize a hire in that short timeframe, they will have me zoom in for an interview from sabbatical, and hire as soon as possible.)

We plan to revamp the counting procedures and are asking the audit team to take that on, both revamping it and overseeing it. The parish administrator as second counter, with a member of the audit team, or another person chosen and trained by the team.

Some observations/discussion: It was quickly pointed out this will raise our deficit by ~$10,000 a year. We've been discussing this for many months and there has been lots of talk about what we might do to fill the position but no action taken. The time to act is now. When we reduced our office hours/saved on administrative costs, that was at Sarah's request. It wasn't because we determined we couldn't sustain the expenditure. The hiring team has examined our need and is hiring with that in mind. Can one candidate do it all in 30 hours? Can we find one candidate capable of doing both the administrative and bookkeeping duties? These are the questions we've been asking for months. Now, the time has come to find out. If we can't, we will revise the position/our ask.

V. Committee Reports

a. **Treasurer's Report** (Chris Perry)
The report includes:

- A brief budget summary for the last few months
- An update on our new accounts at Lee Bank including the formation of our money market account with Fidelity
- An update from the audit team
- An update on the discussion about bookkeeping and bill-paying including details about the newly formed hiring team and their progress/plan
- A summary of leadership's request for the finance team to summarize our financials in a budget presentation within a month

Chris Perry explained the audit team is done and asked Al to summarize their auditors' report. Al explained what it is, why we do it, etc. It took 3 members around 45 hours. He spoke about what's in the report. They found no fraud, no missing funds, some delayed accounting. Some discussion on how to tweak future procedures/opportunities for improvements. The audit team will handle this. No questions were asked of the report. The audit team was thanked for their hard work.

ACTION: Chris Perry and Sarah Morrison to connect on some things identified in the auditors' report relating to the rector's discretionary fund.

No questions were asked of the treasurer's report.

b. **Property Committee** (Chris Plankey)
The property committee failed to provide the vestry with their written report ahead of this meeting. Chris Plankey immediately made the report available in the vestry folder and encouraged vestry members to read the full report after the meeting. The report includes :

- our pursuit of programmable thermostats
- the actions we are taking (or will soon take) related to our recent security assessment
- an update on what we are doing to correct our failed exterior stairs in our east alley
- the finance committee is considering amending their plan to devise a formula to calculate rent that could be applied to our various spaces to not only include heating costs, but also electricity costs
- the need for a roof repair due to a missing ridge cap over the section of roof over the organ/choir, and how we learned about it
- a summary of miscellaneous repairs throughout the building
- some projects for the committee related to special projects the parish might explore during Nina's upcoming sabbatical

Chris Plankey explained the property report was done and apologized for not sharing it ahead of time in the unusual fashion. He took a small amount of time to explain the steps we have taken to address the roof repair detailed in the report as that issue is urgent.

No questions were asked of the property report.

c. **Wardens' Report** (John)
The report includes:

1. information about the new interim Safe Church training including our unique praesidium academy registration code
2. a summary of recent and upcoming Parish events
3. a Stewardship Team Update, including plans to focus their 2026 efforts on legacy giving.
4. "Finding the Gap Team" update, including plans to reignite that work. Key members have been busy with stewardship efforts.
5. "Horizons Team" update, including a 4-page detailed summary of the results of its May survey
6. Safety/Security Assessment update, including visible changes to the facility that are slowly rolling out plus upcoming work to provide minor "security training" for specific groups here at church
7. Facility utilization assessment update including info on an upcoming meeting on June 3rd with a rep from Stewardship Realty and our newly reduced cost from $7000 to $4000 to now $3000
8. 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. *Rationale:* The online audio and continued reliability of our sound system need to be improved.
   - Balcony Ceiling Repair - *Rationale:* the ceiling is falling. The project is back to square one after a contractor we met with twice turned out to not be a viable option.
   - Rear Alleyway Staircase rebuild - *Rationale:* failed City inspection.

John specifically asked if anyone had any questions about the results of the Horizon's team most recent survey in May. We discussed actions we plan to take based on what we learned from the results of the survey. These include: Deciding how we'll share the financials, and fast. Can we post a Realm summary? We plan to summarize and present the financials in a simple way, and often, to satisfy most parishioners, and for those that want to do a deep-dive we'll post more detailed numbers too.

<u>ACTION</u>: Chris Perry to post basic numbers/monthly summaries on the website.

No questions were asked about the wardens' report.

d. **Rector's Report** (Rev. Nina)
The report includes:

- dates and details for: Season After Pentecost, Creation Season, Last Weeks after Pentecost, Advent

- sabbatical information: dates, funding, supply clergy, where Nina is going, the need for vestry approval/clerk to sign the form, etc.
- the liturgies covered during our three months of sabbatical have been approved by Bishop Howell: Season after Pentecost, Creation (including the Creation lectionary options), and Season Celebrating Belonging to God and One Another. Nina is currently working on sending out the liturgies and lectionaries for each week to each supply clergy along with their VPODs name and contact info
- Nina will furnish us with a care and feeding of supply clergy memo and circulate that to you, as well as add it into our vestry folder
- a detailed report on the team assembled to hire our parish administrator. All but the last paragraph in IV.e. (above) is lifted directly from Nina's report.

Nina explained she submitted the worship booklets for our next 3 worship seasons to Bishop Howell and they were approved. Bishop Howell is very happy with them.

No questions were asked of the rector's report.

VI. Action Items from this Meeting:

1. Vestry members to commit to either spearhead or join one one of the teams spearheading the special initiatives the parish will pursue during sabbatical, and bring their ideas/projects to the upcoming vestry retreat.
2. Chris Perry and Sarah Morrison to connect on some things identified in the audit report relating to the rector's discretionary fund.
3. Chris Perry to provide basic financial summaries to be made available monthly on our website.

VII. Next Meetings scheduled:

- Vestry Retreat: July 18, 2026, 10am-3pm, at St. Helena's Chapel
- Vestry meeting July 28, 2026, 7pm in person in the Sears room

VIII. Closing Prayer:

Closing Prayer: Romans 15:13
May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace
in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:24pm

End of Minutes.
Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Plankey, Clerk

Addendum
APPROVAL OF THESE MINUTES

Minutes approved in person at vestry retreat on July 18, 2026
Motion to approve by David Nevin on 7/18/2026, seconded by Jim Brennan on 7/18/2026
In favor: all but 1 present
Opposed: none
Abstained: Anne WIlliams
Minutes approved in person on 7/18/2026