

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
Date: May 26, 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
Anne Williams
James Brennan
Leah Luczynski

Regrets: Caleb Harmon, William Morey, Christine Furcinite Reynolds

Meeting began at 7:03pm

I. Opening Scripture and Prayer (Rev. Nina)

Scripture: Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Opening Prayer: Pentecost Prayer by Joan Chittister, OSB (adapted for our use)

The Holy Spirit embodies the life force of the universe, the power of God, the animating energy present in all things and captured by none. On this great feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit of God, I invite you to pray with me:

May the Gifts of the Holy Spirit
bring fire to the earth
so that the presence of God
may be seen
in a new light,
in new places,
in new ways.

May our own hearts

burst into flame
so that no obstacle,
no matter how great,
ever obstructs the message
of the God within each of us.

May we come to trust
the Word of God in our heart,
to speak it with courage,
to follow it faithfully
and to fan it to flame in others.

May the Jesus
who filled women
with his Holy Spirit
fill the world and the church
with new respect
for women's power and presence,
and for the voice and wisdom of those on the margins.

Give me, Great God,
a sense of the Breath of Spirit
within me as we:
(State your prayer intention / hope for our work and parish, either silently or aloud.)

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

II. Clerk Report: Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting

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

III. Old Business

Action Items from previous Meeting:

1. VPODs on duty on May 3, 10, and 17 to announce the Pentecost Pop-up event and encourage parishioners to participate. DONE.
2. John to figure out if we need a permit for the Pentecost Pop-up event. PERMIT NOT NEEDED.
3. Our Finance Team to take a closer look at Zion's annual report. STATUS UNKNOWN.
4. John to talk to Josie Ellis about creating a job description for our parish administrator. ON AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING.

IV. New Business

a. **Bookkeeper Discussion** (Nina+)

Nina recommends we get serious about reframing this position, as we're about to have to hire Sarah's retirement replacement. Sarah will stay on through Nina's sabbatical; but would like to be retired soon thereafter (definitely before Dec.). Now is the time to reconsider the costs/expectations of the office staffing and ways to do this work efficiently and cost effectively. Nina plans to speak with Joel Bergeland and other area clergy to ask about their current admin situation, as we explore options/possibilities. It makes sense to pull together a SMALL hiring team, and to get this going before Nina goes on sabbatical (perhaps even hire someone before she leaves, to start in mid-Oct so Sarah can train them).

Discussion ensued. Will the bookkeeper we hire work on-premise? In a space away from the office to increase efficiency/reduce distractions? Should we consider a retired person looking for 5-6 hours a week? We agreed we should not and instead should look for a small agency for a more long-term solution likely to be more responsive and reliable. Does another Episcopal church have someone who might want to pick up hours? There are a few bookkeepers on North St. Should we look at them to compare to Breezy Bookkeeping? The audit team offered to step in and look at the books/numbers if needed during this upcoming period of transition. Sarah wants to be done Oct. 1 but agreed to stay on until Nina's sabbatical ends. If we roll bookkeeping out of the administrators position, what's left? Out of the duties that remain, what can we prioritize vs. all that we'd like to have done? Might we look at an employment agency? Perhaps *Indeed*?

ACTION: John to other bookkeepers.

ACTION: Nina to other clergy on bookkeepers.

ACTION: John to Josie on job description without bookkeeping duties.

ACTION: Al + Chris Perry to meet with Sarah on job description.

b. **Vestry Nomination Ideas** (Nina+)

Two at-large members needed for 2027. Leah and Caleb are coming to the end of their terms.

c. **Vestry Retreat Date Options** (John, David and Nina+)

After comparing our calendars, we landed on Saturday, July 18th or Sunday, 19th. Lunch at St. Helena's?

ACTION: David to share those two dates with Christine and Bill in order to nail one down.

- d. **Pentecost Pop-up 2026** (Nina+)
Postponed from May 24th to May 31st due to rain.
- e. **Parish Sabbatical Plans** (Nina+)
What small efforts (in terms of lift and time) can we invite people to join in, which may impact the community (ours and/or the greater community)? Create deeper connections within the parish? Give people a chance to get involved in something that isn't a heavy lift? Contribute something to the community?
 - [labyrinth walk](#) and healing prayers are both steps in the right direction
 - [Tiny library](#) outside on the church lawn?
 - [collecting prayers](#) - collecting prayers from the community, which are prayed on Sundays. Team would create it, maintain it, and make sure the prayers get included on Sunday.
 - [Creating a prayer](#) - box. This is something a little different - allows people to create their own prayers.
 - Essential Items Blessings box - deodorant, feminine hygiene, small packs of tissues... (Zion has a small one, there's a larger one in [Great Barrington](#)) - though this is more a small food pantry)
 - Create welcome packets for visitors - might want to tailor to a) those vacationing b) those who are 'shopping' for church. These should be fun to brainstorm for, and to create and sustain. For vacationers: a St. Stephen's bookmark and a recommendation for a good bookstore, a note about favorite restaurants, and other favorite local places... For those who are "shopping" for a church: something more 'choose us' - contact information, a serious, but FUN top ten reasons we go to St. Stephen's list, hope to see you soon note...

Chris Plankey shared an idea about organizing an effort to prepare and distribute care kits for the homeless.

ACTION: Vestry members are encouraged to bring back their ideas to our next vestry meeting.

V. Committee Reports

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

- A spreadsheet for the month and year
- A budget summary for the month of April
- A summary of our first four months report on the operating budget
- 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 exploring separating these roles from that of the parish administrator's functions.

Chris Perry explained the audit team is almost done. They will provide a report we will review and see if we have any questions. No questions were asked of the treasurer's report.

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

The property committee report includes information on:

- Our pursuit of programmable thermostats
- Our exploration of why our new boiler feed tank periodically overflows onto the floor of the boiler room
- the actions we are taking (or will soon take) related to our recent security assessment
- An update on what we plan to do about the exterior stairs in our east alley which recently failed city inspection for the second time
- the finance committee is working on a formula to calculate rent that could be applied to our various spaces and have been hard at work gathering data, reviewing past utility bills, measuring spaces, crunching numbers, etc.
- The full results of our recent building inspection by the city
- Plans to install a light in the memorial garden
- Plans to begin to empty the costume room
- A summary of miscellaneous repairs throughout the building

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 directing us to a full report available on our website
5. "Horizons Team" update
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
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:* noted by building inspector; will fail MA state inspection.

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
- Rev. Nina petitioned our newly elected bishop for her permission to utilize the liturgies we're accustomed to pray in the coming months/seasons and to defend our practice of offering Open Communion. Our liturgies were approved.
- Other things of note including: weekly "deeper well"s, monthly labyrinth walks, starting up healing prayers again (on a monthly basis to start), the stewardship team is focusing on legacy giving for the month of "Generosity June"
- Nina's sabbatical dates: the 3 months of Aug. Sept. and Oct., including lots of ideas for special initiatives the parish might explore while Nina is on sabbatical (see item IV. e.), plus the full schedule for sabbatical clergy coverage for every Saturday and Sunday worship service while Nina is away

ACTON: Nina explained the VPOD each week will "host" the supply clergy by contacting them directly that week. Teach them how to get in, see the altar, answer their questions, etc. VPODs to announce the closing

hymn each week.

No questions were asked of the rector's report.

VI. Action Items from this Meeting:

1. John to other bookkeepers to compare with Breezy.
2. Nina to other clergy on bookkeepers.
3. John to Josie on job description for parish administrator minus the bookkeeping duties.
4. Al and Chris Perry to meet with Sarah on job description for parish administrator.
5. David to share 2 potential retreat dates with Christine and Bill to nail one down.
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. See ideas in item IV. e.
7. VPODs to host supply clergy each week during Nina's sabbatical, and announce the closing hymn each week.
8. John to Zoom next vestry meeting.

VII. Next Meeting scheduled: June 30th, 2026 at 7pm in person and on Zoom.

ACTION: John to Zoom next vestry meeting.

VIII. Closing Prayer:

Concluding collect

Living God,
eternal Holy Spirit,
let your bright intoxicating energy
which fired those first disciples
fall on us
to turn the world again.
Hear this prayer for your love's sake.
Amen.

(A New Zealand Prayer Book, Collect of the Day for the Day of Pentecost, Year C)

Closing Prayer: Pentecost Prayer

God of power,
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,
may the gifts of your Spirit
be our goal and our strength,

now and always.
Amen.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:47pm

End of Minutes.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Plankey, Clerk