

*St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
Date: July 28, 2026*

Present (in the Sears Room):

John Garinther, (Senior) Co-Warden
David Nevin, (Junior) Co-Warden
Al Symonds, Assistant Treasurer
Christopher Plankey, Clerk
James Brennan
Christine Furcinite Reynolds
Leah Luczynski
William Morey
Anne Williams

Present (via Zoom):

Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley, Rector
Dr. J. Christopher Perry, Treasurer

Regrets: Caleb Harmon

Meeting began at 7:02pm

I. Opening Scripture and Prayer (Rev. Nina)

Verse of the day: Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Wisdom: Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall

Our struggle is practical. It's high and holy, but it's right down here on earthly ground. So let's fight the good fight of faith. Let's do what we have to do, and know why we're fighting the battle.

Prayer of the day:

God, we are your hands and feet in this world. Let the site of our works become as distinct as holy ground. Amen.

II. Clerk Report: Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting

Recap as reported in the addendum to the June 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

III. Old Business

Action Items from previous Meeting:

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

IV. New Business

a. Retreat Review (Wardens)

Chris Perry offered an update on his project to formulate pew cards. Louise Penney has agreed to join him in this effort. An old pew card was found in a cabinet in the Sears Room which could serve as a starting point for formatting, ideas for content ect.

Nina mentioned our existing banner ministry and pointed out that a new banner has been ordered.

Leah and Chris Plankey asked some questions and shared some information about their We Care Kits idea. It was suggested they be in contact with Becky Crane at Cathedral and Erin Forbush at ServiceNet to discuss the list of items we should (and should not) include in the bags. The starting source of funds is \$250 approved to be withdrawn from the rector's discretionary fund. It was suggested parishioners wishing to support the project can be invited to help pack and distribute bags, or donate money to the discretionary fund.

b. Hiring Team Progress Report (Leah)

Leah reported 68 applicants thanks primarily to a \$498 ad spend on Indeed which brought in 60 of the 68 applications. 15 applicants meet the financial background criteria. The hiring team plans to interview 4 to 6 candidates. They are sending blanket emails to acknowledge receipt of applications, and are sending rejection emails to the applicants that are not hired. They are using a point system to rank applicants by what's most

important: financial background vs. website design vs. bookkeeping experience vs. payroll. This rubric decides which of these considerations weighs most heavily.

c. **Lot Discussion Proposal (John)**

We discussed the importance of the lot survey being proposed as it ties into the work needing to happen to replace the staircase in the east alley of our facility. The survey ties into previous discussions as well:

1. city engineers don't know who owns our front lawn, we had a tough time when installed the new sign on our lawn a few years back which included having to appear in person during a meeting at city hall since our original permit was denied
2. Don Phipps has spent countless hours researching historical documents and ambiguous property lines and historical markers names in old deeds
3. The property committee was ground to a halt a few years back when the church tasked us with exploring what it would take to make the front entrance handicap accessible.

The property committee proposed we hire Hill Engineering to conduct a plot survey and put forth a \$5,000 proposal for vestry approval.

MOTION: By Chris Perry to approve the expenditure for a plot plan by Hill Engineering. Seconded by Al Symonds. All in favor. None opposed. The motion passed.

d. **Safe Church Training/Certification List (Nina+)**

A spreadsheet was shared that summarizes who in our parish has safe church training, the type of training they have, whether it is current or expired, etc. Nina spoke to the difficulties related to the diocese when it comes to keeping track of licenses (LEM, safe church etc.) which makes maintaining a spreadsheet like this more challenging than it should be. Sometimes we don't receive the certificates we should, which makes it harder to know who was trained, who is current, etc. Some questions were posed: How do we know who at church needs to take which training? Which trainings are required for Sunday Funday, Vestry, home visitors, etc. Is there a list of who needs to take what? Should/could there be?

e. **Sabbatical Readiness Discussion (Nina+)**

Nina took us through the steps she's taken to prepare us for her leave during her upcoming sabbatical. She organized a Google Drive folder with everything we need including:

1. The schedule for all supply clergy for every service during that time period (we recently found out we are still in need for Aug. 16th after our coverage for that date and at least one other notified us they cannot do it). Nina already found coverage for the other date(s) that person was on, but has not yet found anyone for Aug. 16th. We'll make it work. Maybe worship at Zion that day?
2. We refreshed the responsibilities of vestry members each week during sabbatical to make sure supply clergy can get in, know what they're doing, have no questions, etc.

V. Committee Reports

- a. **Treasurer's Report** (Chris Perry)
A copy of the report appears below:

— start of report —

Monthly Finance Committee Minutes
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
J. Christopher Perry, M.D., Treasurer
Al Symonds, Assistant Treasurer

July 26, 2026

Members Present: Chris Perry, Treasurer, Al Symonds, Assistant Treasurer,
Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley, John Garinther, Sr. Warden, Don Phipps,
Regrets: Josie Ellis

Minutes prepared by Chris Perry

July 1, 2026 for June 2026: Budget Summary

I. Budget

Brief summary of the Month of January through June 2026.

Remember, we have two new columns in the Budget spreadsheet.

Column T: This displays the percentage, either side of 100%, of where we expected to be for the year-to-date. Don Phipps created this.

Column U This is for expenditures only. It is the also a to-date calculation of (how

much was expended/the total amount expended), expressed as a %. This allows us to see how much of our total budget expenditures are attributable to this line item or category.

On the income side, we took in \$18,346.67 for the month which is less than all previous months, Nonetheless, we are still \$23,715.34 or 12% ahead to-date of what we thought our income would be. Part of this surplus is due to i) having donations to St. Stephens Table \$9,392 ahead of schedule, and ii) having pledges \$22,217 or 20% ahead of schedule. However, Pledge income falls off in the summer, and it is beginning to show. We have already seen some regression from early in the year in the monthly income figures, as expected.

On the expenditure side, operating expenses for May were only \$34,790, which is the second lowest of the first 6 months this year. Thus, we are \$6,245 or 3.276% over budget for what we expected to spend by this time of year. Many expenditure categories, such as salaries and benefits, are invariant. However, property expenditures were low this month. In a discussion with Chris Plankey, it seems there are a number of upcoming fixes which we have not yet found estimates from contractors, so this category is expected to rise over time. However, it will also require decisions as to what expenses are capital improvements and what are maintenance. Whichever is decided, it will still be the same cost: either from the budget, or savings/endowment.

Taken together, the deficit this month was (\$16,443), and year-to-date (\$30,329) or (12.43% annualized) over budget. This is actually better than where we expected to be (\$47,800) by the end of June, but the year is only half over!

II. New issues.

We currently have \$50,000 in the Fidelity Investments Money Market account. We will see what it earns when the July 31 statement is available.

There are some budgeting issues raised by Sarah. In particular she added a item in Realm monthly "budget analysis" under "income" reflecting \$30,000 borrowed from Savings. After brief discussion, it was agreed that this is not income, but a reflection of the Savings and Cash balances, and should not be included in the budget. Only at the end of the budget year do we make up the budget deficit by withdrawing from capital

or endowment, and we already have a budget line for that.

Action: Al will discuss this with Sarah.

There was a brief discussion of potential areas of saving expenditures. Suggestions included the following.

1. Commercial refrigerator maintenance review. Action: Chris Perry and John Garinther will inquire about service personnel who could do a maintenance check on the refrigerators.

2. Isolate power consumption in the kitchen, so we can track the cost of the kitchen. The question is whether our old refrigerators are efficient or not. The Property Committee will consider this.

3. Chris will continue to monitor gas prices with Aaron Porchelli. He had sent an estimate to consider locking in. Chris Perry pointed out that with crude oil at about \$100/barrel, and with gas and petroleum prices being correlated, and with summer gas usage high, we should wait to see over the next several months if gas estimates come down. After some discussion that course was accepted.

Rev. Nina Pooley discussed moving the Rector's Discretionary Fund account to Lee Bank, where we have our other accounts. It was agreed that this would be distinct from the Parish's accounts and not connected to them. After discussion, we agreed that there should be an additional signatory to the account, the unlikely case that the Rector was unable to access the account.

Action. Nina will check to see if there is a Diocesan policy on this. Also she will plan to go to Lee Bank to sign for a new account. Chris Perry offered to make the introduction to The Customer Service person who has been so helpful to us.

We made a quick review of potential upcoming Property Committee expenses which will show up either as maintenance (repairs) or capital expenditures.

- a. Property line survey, possibly 5k
- b. Replacing the rear staircase, if the survey shows we have enough land to do so. No estimate as of present.
- c. Roof repair. Mahan Roofing will give an estimate shortly for replacing broken slates, and replacing the missing ridge cover over the choir and altar.
- d. Balcony ceiling repair. No contractor responding to our requests at present, but possible estimate is around 15k. Low urgency.

Stewardship Realty. In discussion with the new Bishop, through her good

offices we received a discount from our original estimate (10,000 down to 7,000).

There is no new information from Finding the Gap team: using the classroom for art studios to rent or from the organization 18 Degrees about possible use of our space for one of their programs.

Cost of space initiative.

Don's Phipps Report on the cost of the spaces in our physical buildings is a helpful document to help with seeing what our facilities cost us per room.

John Garinther wanted to see a hypothetical example of a potential space to be rented. How much is our basic carrying cost for that space would inform our charge per sq ft.

Example 3rd floor sq ft: 1300 sq ft of the total building 20,000 sq ft = .065 of total.

a. our 2026 budgeted utilities for the whole property is = \$ 37,230 x .065 = \$ 2,420

b. blanket insurance is \$ 26,313 x .065 = \$ 1,710

c. total costs (sum of a+b) = \$4,130

d. cost per sq ft = \$ 4,130 / 1300 sq ft = ~ \$ 3.20 / sq ft (rounded from 3.178)

e. Examples of rooms on the 3rd floor:

170 sq ft (\$ 544 ann. Or \$ 45 per month)

280 sq ft (\$ 896 ann. Or \$ 75 per month)

Everyone thanked Don for his prodigious efforts in producing the document that allowed these calculations.

— end of report —

No questions were asked of the treasurer's report.

- b. **Property Committee** (Chris Plankey)
A copy of the report appears below:

— start of report —

Property Committee Meeting Minutes
21 July 2026

I. Attendance

Meeting began at 10:06am with participants: Roy Sutton, Don Phipps, Chris Plankey, and John Garinther (chairperson). Regrets: Al Symonds.

II. Clerk report: Minutes from previous meeting

Previous Meeting Minutes

1. Corrections: none.
2. Approval of previous meeting minutes. Motion by Sutton to approve. Garinther seconded. All in favor. Minutes approved unanimously.
3. Action items from previous meeting:
 - a. Garinther to contact surveyor/engineer. Done.
 - b. Plankey to replace float in toilet on 3rd floor. Not done.
 - c. Garinther and Plankey to install light in memorial garden. To be scheduled.
 - d. Garinther and Plankey to install door stopper on chapel door. Done.
 - e. Committee to discuss work related to special sabbatical projects. In works.

III. Review of old business:

- A. Review Property Action Items Spreadsheet - [here](#)
- B. Utility Cost Project - In addition to calculating heating costs associated with renting space, Don Phipps added electrical usage to the equation by assessing the difference in our electricity usage in 2024 (when BIC was here) vs. 2025 (when they weren't). Don shared the document with us for feedback/suggestions for improvement. Some additional formatting was identified. Don will present his findings to the finance committee soon.
- C. Rear Exterior Staircase Plan - We met on site with two contractors who both said our first step is to have an engineer draw up plans for a redesign of the stairs in our east alley. That work is dependent on a land survey being conducted to determine where our property lines are. It doesn't make sense to invest in engineering costs or construction before we can be certain the work won't be rejected because of an issue with easements, etc. Hill Engineers quoted us around \$5k for a land survey of our property. The wardens and Nina are discussing this to determine if this expense is warranted.

- D. Security Assessment - There are many action items related to this project. Some are done, some are underway, some have yet to begin. Many of those items are listed in the spreadsheet linked in III. A. above (items 117-120).
- E. Examine Toilet in 3rd Floor Men's Room - The float needs to be replaced.
Action: Plankey. Note: Peter tries not to be there on Mondays and Fridays.
- F. Install Light in Memorial Garden - **Action: Plankey and Garinther** to get this scheduled.
- G. Roof Repair - The entire ridge cap is missing on the peaked roof over the choir area. We learned this thanks to some drone photos we received from someone related to the film crew that worked in our building recently. We met with and received a quote from a roofer who does slate work, but they are uninsured. We decided we would seek a second quote. We plan to contact the same slate roofing company who executed our emergency roof repair in January 2026. **Action: Plankey** to contact Mahan Slate Roofing Co. in Agawam, MA.

IV. **New business:**

- A. Lot Survey - see details pertaining to the land survey in III. C. above.
- B. Front Lawn Landscape - We have been tasked with removing most of the bushes and other vegetation from the front lawn and memorial garden. We are scheduled to begin this work Tuesday, July 28th. We have discovered an abandoned bank safe in those bushes. We are trying to figure out how we'll have it removed.

V. **Adjournment**

1. Date of next meeting: Wednesday, 19 August 2026, 10am in the Sears Room.
2. Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 11:33am

Respectfully submitted by:
Chris Plankey

— end of report —

No questions were asked of the property report.

So that vestry members can be informed and prepared if approached by members of our church community, Chris Plankey spoke briefly about the clean

up of the front lawn which occurred that morning and involved stripping out all the landscaping in the front lawn. We learned the wardens have a prepared statement going out in tomorrow's email blast.

Leah pointed out the property report features a link to a spreadsheet the property committee maintains to keep track of their day-to-day tasks. The link is broken due to the hierarchical structure of Google Drive and the different privacy settings for different folders within it. We discussed a workaround moving forward so vestry can see the spreadsheet if they want it to check it out.

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

A copy of the report is included below:

— start of report —

Wardens' Report

July 2026 Meeting

John Garinther, David Nevin

Vestry Housekeeping/Reminders

Safe Church Training

The newly designated Interim Safe Church Officer is Rev. Dr. Molly Scherm. She has restructured the training to include prerequisite on-line training at Praesidium Academy before the typical Integration training with the diocese can occur. The Praesidium Academy training is self-directed learning, which means you can start/stop at your leisure. There have also been some changes made to the core curriculum for integration training.

Please visit the diocesan website section under [Safe Church Training](#) to understand more about the training, who is required to take it, and the new schedule.

The Praesidium Academy registration code for our church is:

reg-diowmass-413-ststephenspittsfield

Past and Upcoming Events

- July 7, Tuesday, 5:00 PM, **Knit & Sip**, Guild Room
- July 18, Saturday, 10:00 AM, **Vestry Retreat**, St. Helena's Chapel
- August 2, Sunday, 10:00 AM, **Zion Lutheran Church Visit**, Sanctuary

- August 2, Sunday, 11:15 AM, **Labyrinth Walk**, Auditorium
- August 4, Tuesday, 5:00 PM, **Knit & Sip**, Guild Room

Vestry & Parish Business

Sabbatical Projects

During the Vestry Retreat held on July 18, the following sabbatical projects were initiated:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| • Newcomers Welcome Packets | Leader: Chris Perry |
| • Essential Items Packets | Leader: Chris Plankey |
| • Little Free Library | Leader: John Garinther |
| • Hearing Impaired Support | Leader: Jim Brennan |

Stewardship Team

No significant activity to report this month.

Finding the Gap Team

No significant activity to report this month.

Facility Utilization Assessment

The Property Assessment contract under Stewardship Realty is on-going. Stewardship Realty has agreed to provide a preliminary draft of the final report to the vestry; the timing of that release has not been determined.

Horizons Team

No significant activity to report this month.

Safety/Security Assessment

No significant activity to report this month.

General Property Information

The following are current or pending projects that the Property Committee is requesting or reviewing:

- Facility/Equipment quotes:
 - Rear Alleyway Staircase rebuild
 - **Rationale:** Failed by Building Inspector for 2nd year in a row.
 - The two contractors we met to replace the staircase (East Coast Refinishing, Jim Stockley) both require a lot survey before we can continue to ensure they do not go beyond our property footprint. A

proposal from Hill Engineering (~\$5,000) for the survey is pending approval by vestry. A lot survey will be helpful for several circumstances to confirm property boundaries.

- Roof Repair
 - **Rationale:** Roof ridge cap over the altar/choir area has been blown off by weather; several slate roofing pieces are broken and not providing sufficient seal against rain.
 - Mahan Roofing, which completed the leaking dormer repair over the winter, has been contacted to provide a proposal.
- Balcony Ceiling Repair - **Back to square one**
 - **Rationale:** the ceiling is falling.
 - The proposal does not include scaffolding; the contractor requested the church provide that; we've decided to look for another contractor.

— end of report —

No questions were asked about the wardens' report.

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

The report includes:

- dates and details for sabbatical and continuing education
- updates on some issues related to the pastoral care team, what they are currently working on, and the chain of command for issues that will arise while Nina is away
- more detailed sabbatical information including a link to the list of supply clergy by date, a pastoral care coverage document and a VPOD cheat sheet
- some information on sabbatical funding. Nina's Sabbatical Application for grant funding was approved by the diocese. She will submit receipts and be refunded by them. That may be the best approach for the parish funding of her sabbatical as well? But if the finance team has other suggestions, they are encouraged to share them. Nina's understanding is reimbursement doesn't come across to the IRS as income.
- Follow up on vestry's request for a bio from supply clergy: Nina sent out an email to each of the supply clergy describing the vestry would love to share a two sentence "bio" about our visiting

clergy - one sentence of introduction and one sentence that is more "fun" (they can include what they are reading or like to read, favorite hobbies, pets' names, whatever they want to share). They might even send along a photo if they have one. The information will be shared with the parish the week before their Sunday, in our online newsletter.

No questions were asked of the rector's report.

VI. Action Items from this Meeting:

1. Vestry members are asked to review their Safe Church training and make sure they are up-to-date.

VII. Next Meeting Date: August 25, 2026, 7pm in person in the Sears room.

VIII. Closing Prayer:

Closing prayer: Ephesians 3:20,21

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:30pm

End of Minutes.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Plankey, Clerk