St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
Date: August 25, 2026

Present (in the Sears Room):
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
Anne Williams

Regrets: Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley, Rector (on sabbatical), Caleb Harmon

Meeting began at 7:00pm

I. Opening Scripture and Prayer (David Nevin)

Verse of the Day:
Romans 12:2 - Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Wisdom: Martin Luther
I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.

Prayer of the day:
Come, O Spirit of God, and make within us your dwelling place and home. May our darkness be dispelled by your light, and our troubles calmed by your peace; may all evil be redeemed by your love, all pain transformed through the suffering of Christ, and all dying glorified in his risen life. Amen.

II. Clerk Report: Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting
Corrections: none
Motion to approve: by William Morey
Seconded by: David Nevin
All in favor. None opposed. None abstained. Motion passes unanimously.
July minutes approved in person on August 25, 2026.

III. Old Business

Action Items from previous Meeting:

1. Vestry members to review Safe Church Training and make sure they are up to date.

IV. New Business

a. **Vestry Nominations** (David Nevin)
Leah, Caleb, and John are cycling off.

ACTION: Members are asked to put forth names they think should be approached to fill positions.

b. **Administrator Search Activity** (Leah Luczynski)
Leah reported 76 applicants who applied were narrowed to 15 or 16 and divided into 2 rounds. The first round are the best equipped. The next round are less so. Interviews were arranged for 6 individuals. None showed. Some canceled, cited "too little pay," "too many hours," etc. Then it was onto 6 more. 3 signed up. 1 was interviewed so far, went well enough. 2 more to be interviewed this week. Approx. pay is $22-26/hr. Is the bookkeeping skillset still as high a priority? Training for Realm instead? Someone asked about cover letters: just 3 out of 76 submitted one. Someone asked if we looked into MassHire: Josie did. Sarah's last day is October 29th.

c. **Sabbatical Project Progress** (John)

Little Library (John Garinther, Christine Furcinite Reynolds, Bill Morey)

They checked with local libraries but those don't do much to establish or support little libraries. But they did offer a link to a website with kits. Lenox Town Library offered a link to the same site with the kits as the the Athenaeum did, but otherwise they don't get involved with establishing stocking, checking, etc. (although the Lenox Town library did some of this with the one outside St Helena's in Lenox. The property committee identified the best kit (a composite one requiring little to no maintenance with the best mounting method available–one that's flexible in case we want to relocate it). The cost is about $600. How to pay? Approach the parish?

Welcome Packet (Chris Perry, Louise Penney)

An old welcome was found in a cabinet and an old PDF was sent over by

Don Phipps. What would a new one look like vs. the old ones? Make sure it fits in the existing slots in the pews. Get a preliminary design together. Make an announcement to see if there's more interest among others to get involved? Include testimonials? Consider using feedback from the surveys that were recently done? Someone suggested including a link to video testimonials?

We Care Kits for the Homeless (Chris Plankey, Leah Luczynski)

Some lists are organized with some items they'd like to include, including cost estimates and places to purchase them. Plan to contact Erin Forbush at The First and Becky Crane at Cathedral.

Church Programming for the Deaf (James Brennan)

There is perceived interest locally. Federal grant money is available but requires a deaf individual be involved in the decision making and grant writing process. Jim plans to try to locate a deaf individual to be involved.

Deaf priests are pretty rare. They might use the money to write their sermon and then pay an interpreter/signer. How might we use any grant money we are awarded. And how often? Once per month? Twice monthly?

Labyrinth Project (Anne Williams)

Happy with it at the moment. Walked it at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco last week. Thought about how we can promote ours more? Got some ideas for a new blurb, drawings, etc. for the table stationed at ours.

ACTION: Anne to see about submitting announcements concerning the labyrinth and prayer shawls ministries.

d. **Roof Repair Proposal** (Chris Plankey)
The vestry reviewed a $17,500 proposal from Mahan Roofing to replace a missing ridge cap and approx. 150 slate tiles prone to leaking. The proposal was recommended and put forth by the property committee. If accepted, the work could begin in the fall.

MOTION: Made by James Brennan to accept the proposal and approve the funds. Seconded by Al Symonds. All in favor. None opposed or abstained. The motion to accept the proposal passes unanimously

e. **Safe Church Training** (David Nevin)
Vestry members are reminded and encouraged to keep up on their safe church training. How can we keep track of who has it? Who needs it? Visit the website. Anne commented the process is not a short one, but mentioned it's helpful to schedule the date for the Zoom meeting at the end, and work backwards from that date to ensure you make the time to complete all the required modules.

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
August July 23, 2026

Members Present: Chris Perry, Treasurer, Al Symonds, Assistant Treasurer, John Garinther, Sr. Warden, Don Phipps, David Nevin (Jr. Warden)
Regrets: Rev. Dr. Nina Pooley (on sabbatical),

Minutes prepared by Chris Perry

August 1, 2026 for July 2026: Budget Summary

I. Budget
Brief summary of the Month of January through July 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 $40,345 for the month which is third highest of

the 7 months YTD. We are still $31,383 or 14% ahead to-date of what we thought our income would be. All income categories are above expectations. Of special note is that pledges are $24,943 or 19% ahead of schedule. Of course, Pledge income may fall off in the latter part of the year. Also we have received 3 of our 4 annual distributions from endowment, even though only 7 out of 12 months have passed, so this category which is ahead, will normalize (i.e., decrease more toward what is budgeted) over the next two Months.

On the **expenditure** side, operating expenses for May were $40,971, which is slightly lower than the average month. Thus, we are only $626 over budget for the month. For the year we are less than 2% over budget compared to what we expected to spend by this time of year. Many expenditure categories, such as salaries and benefits or parking, are invariant. However, property expenditures were low this month. In a discussion with Chris Plankey and John Garinther, it seems that there are a number of upcoming repairs (e.g., slate roof repair) 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 ($626), and year-to-date ($6,572) or 2% (annualized) over budget. This is actually better than where we expected to be ($55,767) by the end of July, but we await more needed property expenses and the onset of fall and winter related expenses!

Sarah added a new category to income this month. She put in a line "Borrowed from Savings." after discussion it was agreed to eliminate this, as it is really a reflection of our checking account cash flow and is not true income, and it already shows up on the Savings and Checking statements. Otherwise it appears to inflate our actual income. Therefor we agreed to delete this item.

Old Business

1. *Fidelity Money Market Savings account*. This account was funded with $ 50,000 in early July, taken from the 100,100.00 we had transferred into Lee Savings account. For the month of July the Fidelity account earned 86.00 in interest. This is a yield an annualized yield of 4.13%.

2. *Beacon and Lee Checking accounts*. Sarah and Chris Perry have been in discussion about when and how to close our Beacon Checking account. For July and August to-date, we have continued to pay bills out of that account. When it is below $6,400.00, we will close it and move he remaining funds to Lee checking. In the meantime, Sarah is ordering Lee Bank checks for subsequent bill payment.

We also have the ability to pay recurring bills by EFT from Lee Bank checking.
Al Symonds and Sarah have devised a form for this, so two administrators of the checking account can sign authorizations,, to keep a clear audit trail.
As of this moment, Chris Perry (Treasurer) is the only one making on-line transactions in the Lee accounts. Plan is to add Al Symonds.

New Business.

1. *Safety Deposit Box*. Do we need a safe deposit box? There was some discussion about what is in our safety deposit box, and whether we need one.
Plan: Al Symonds will discuss with Sarah, what is in it? We can then bring this back to the Finance Committee to consider options.
consider selling the bond, keeping docs in the cloud and closing the box.

2. *Capital Budget and non-recurring items.*
We reviewed the spreadsheet output that Sarah sends along each month for the prior month. Chris Perry brought up the problem that we have no current way of tracking month-by-month changes in these.

The members agreed that it would be better were we to have a spreadsheet that showed the figures month by month, just like the Yearly Operating Budget.

Plan: before we create one, Al will meet with Sarah and go over how the material comes in from Realm, and find out whether there already is a spreadsheet with this information on it.

At 12:35 P.M., the meeting was adjourned, allowing Don Phipps to go watch the Indy auto race around Washington, D.C.

—end of report—

No questions were asked of the treasurer's report.

Chris Perry said we are doing better than anticipated. We've received 3 distributions from the endowment. Pledges are up. Expenses are down. Finance is eager for Stewardship to start their efforts. Chris pointed out how helpful it would be to find a way to generate reports that track Realm on a month to month basis and wonders if we can do better with that?

David Nevin asked when the checking account will be fully moved as he can't write checks right now.

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

—start of report—

Property Committee Meeting Minutes

19 August 2026

I. Attendance

Meeting began at 10:05am with participants: Roy Sutton, Al Symonds, Don Phipps, Chris Plankey, and John Garinther (chairperson).

II. Clerk report: Minutes from previous meeting

Previous Meeting Minutes

1. Corrections: none.
2. Approval of previous meeting minutes. Motion by Sutton to approve. Phipps seconded. All in favor. Minutes approved unanimously.
3. Action items from previous meeting:
   a. Plankey to contact Mahan Roofing Co. Proposal received.
   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. Committee to discuss work related to special sabbatical projects. In works.

III. Review of old business:

A. Review Property Action Items Spreadsheet - here

B. Rear Exterior Staircase Plan - The lot survey deposit has been transmitted to Hill Engineers.

D. Roof Repair - We received a proposal from Mahan Slate Roofing Co. in Agawam, MA for $17,500 to replace the missing ridge cap and approx. 150 slates prone to leaking. We signed the proposal and the work is scheduled for this fall. The proposal will be brought forward to the vestry for approval. The signed proposal has already been transmitted to the contractor but can be cancelled at any time with no repercussions.

E. Security Assessment - There are no new actions to report on the portions of this work that are considered underway. We began discussing new elements of this project that were added to our agenda under new business below.

IV. New business:

A. Security Assessment

1. Wall Mount First Aid Kits - We plan to install these are trying to decide which ones to buy and where we'll mount them. Possible locations include: in the main hallway on the first floor, in the main church, and in the kitchen. We looked at some kits and discussed if we have any nurses in our midst we can invite into the conversation to lean on their expertise.

2. Walkie-Talkies - We plan to buy some walkie-talkies to enable emergency communication throughout the building. Possible locations for these include:
    a. main office
    b. sexton pew in main church
    c. Sunday Funday classroom
    d. choir pews
    e. organ
    f. middle shelf of main altar (where Nina stands)
    g. choir room

    Action: Plankey to research and make recommendation to the group.

3. Panic Buttons - The church possesses 3 wireless panic buttons that are tied into our security system, and one which may be hardwired at the organ console. The 3 wireless ones reside in the main office (1 at Bert's desk, 1 at Nina's desk, and 1 at Sarah's desk). It has been many years since these have been inspected or tested. We plan to confirm they all work and will relocate the wireless ones to locations in our facility where they will serve us better in emergencies. Possible locations include:
    a. middle shelf of main altar (where Nina stands)
    b. within reach of the sexton present at every Sunday service
    c. main office

    Action: Plankey to contact Lee Audio & Security.

4. AED Training - We have an AED located in our main stairwell, yet none of us feel comfortable using it. We discussed training, and will try to figure

out how to make this happen.

B. Freezer/Refrigeration Efficiency - Discussions have been underway to try to determine the efficiency of the commercial fridges and freezers operating in our kitchen and kitchen annex for Table. The first step is to assess their power consumption. **Action: Plankey** to loan his *P3 P4400 Kill A Watt Electricity Usage Monitor* for this purpose.

C. Costume Room Clean Out - On behalf of our committee, Roy sent out an email inviting theater groups (including Berkshire Theater Group, Shakespeare & Co., THS Theatre Dept., PHS Theatre Dept., Town Players, Barrington Stage, and others) to contact the main office to arrange a visit at their convenience to tour our costume room. We will donate anything they are interested in. We will retain (so have relocated to the empty office across the hall) the 3 wise men costumes (which are the most recent costumes we've actually used) and at Joy's request, our collection of children's choir robes.

V. Adjournment

1. Date of next meeting: Wednesday, 16 September 2026, 10am in the Sears Room.
2. Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 11:25am

Respectfully submitted by:
Chris Plankey

—end of report—

No questions were asked of the property report, but did generate some discussion about AED training, courtesy of the American Red Cross and through some training videos made available through the website of the manufacturer of our AED device. John Garinghter mentioned he was working with JD Hebert right now to nail down a date for in person, on site, AED training.

Chris Plankey mentioned the roofing contractor let us know today he can start our repair project on September 4th. Our report generated some

c. **Wardens' Report** (John)
A copy of the report is included below:

—start of report—

Wardens' Report

August 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

- Sept 1, Tuesday, 5:00 PM, **Knit & Sip**, Guild Room
- Sept 5, Sunday, 11:15 AM, **Labyrinth Walk**, Auditorium
- Sept 8, Tuesday, 5:30 PM, **Jazz Vespers**, Zion Lutheran Church

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

The fall pledge campaign for stewardship is approaching quickly. Susan LeBourdais has agreed to chair the committee this year and will be organizing a kick-off meeting in

early-to-mid September. Current members are Susan LeBouradis, Josie Ellis, Leah Luczynski, Al Symonds, and John Garinther. If you feel the call to be part of the fall campaign, please let one of the wardens know.

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
The Horizons Team will be meeting over the next couple of weeks to discuss the next parish survey among other topics. The goal of this team is to gather information from surveys and other church teams/activities and take an overarching view of our collective mission. The team is asking critical questions about finances, property, and mission activity to ensure the parish is trending in a positive direction that is aligned with our mission and the desires of the congregation. Current members are Christine Reynolds, Craig Reynolds, Chris Plankey, David Nevin, and John Garinther.

Safety/Security Assessment
The Property Committee is taking several actions to ensure the safety/security of the congregation, especially as it relates to the Sunday School activity in the Sears Room. Please see the minutes from the Property Committee meeting for further details.

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.

        - Vestry has approved the cost of the survey. Hill Engineering was sent a deposit during the week of August 10 and work has begun.
    - 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.
        - The proposal has been received and will be reviewed at the August 25 Vestry Meeting.
    - 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**
No rector's report this month as Nina is on Sabbatical.

VI. Action Items from this Meeting:

1. Vestry members are asked to put forth names of those they feel are a good fit to fill the positions that will be opening on vestry.
2. Anne Williams mentioned facilitating some announcements relating to the labyrinth and prayer shawl ministries.

VII. Next Meeting Date: September 22, 2026, 7pm in person in the Sears room.

VIII. Closing Prayer (David Nevin):

Closing Prayer: Ephesians 3:20,21
O God, at the setting of the sun, we place our trust in you. As the night draws near, we give thanks for your presence with us. Help us entrust our lives to you with the delight and confidence of one who loves and is beloved. Through Jesus, our faithful Savior. Amen.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:18pm

End of Minutes.
Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Plankey, Clerk