St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting
Date: September 22, 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: Galatians 5:22-23
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Wisdom: Albert Einstein
Subtle is the Lord, but malicious He is not.

Prayer of the day: Pat Bennett, England
Lord, here, in my head and my heart, the kaleidoscopic fragments of this day – all whirl together, scintillating, elusive and distracting …
Help me to turn them gently until the pieces settle and the patterns become clear.

II. Clerk Report: Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting
Corrections: none
Motion to approve: by David Nevin
Seconded by: James Brennan
All in favor. None opposed. None abstained. Motion passes unanimously.
August minutes approved in person on September 22, 2026.

III. Old Business

Action Items from previous 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. This action was to be carried out by communicating directly to the wardens outside of the setting of the formal vestry meeting so it is assumed yet unclear to the clerk if any names were put forth.
2. Anne Williams mentioned facilitating some announcements relating to the labyrinth and prayer shawl ministries. Done.

IV. New Business

a. **Vestry Nominations** (David Nevin)
Leah, Caleb, and John are cycling off. It was reported that Craig Reynolds and Amanda Watroba are confirmed yeses for At-Large positions. The Warden position is still open.

b. **Administrator Search: Good News** (John Garinther)
John reported we have hired a new parish administrator. Sukeigh Sukiennik (they/them/he/him), 22 years old and a recent graduate of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts with a degree in business, a concentration in accounting, and a minor in economics. He starts October 1st which means a 1 month overlap with Sarah Morrison before she ends her 8 year tenure in the role on Oct 29.

c. **Sabbatical Project Funding** (John Garinther, David Nevin)

The cost for the Little Free Library is between $600 and $700. Donations for the money will be requested from the lectern during announcements, plus the weekly blast and Sunday bulletins. Vestry members are encouraged to bring in books for it.

The cost of the We Care Kits came out to $368. We'll start with 48 kits. The cost of each bag is $6.77. Because we bought in bulk and not all quantities worked out perfectly for the 48 kits we're starting out with, we ended up with some extra supplies which will be used when we put the next round of kits together. The source of the funds is the Rector's Discretionary fund.

Update on welcome packets: Chris Perry offered an update on the welcome packets. An old one was found and its content is being updated. The size of the new one is important to ensure it fits in the slot in the pews which is ideal for its placement.

d. **Roof Repair Proposal** (John Garinther)
In early September, Mahan Roofing completed a $17,500 roof repair involving a missing ridge cap and approx. 150 slate tiles prone to leaking. They again mentioned they recommend we have the valleys of all of our dormers redone. It cost us $15,000 to have this done to a single dormer in January of this year and we have 12 dormers altogether, so we cannot afford a proactive approach as far as this goes.

e. **Lot Survey Results** (John Garinther)
First draft of survey received from Hill Engineers. Shows rear porch and stairs in our east alley are over our property line and extend into the driveway which is privately owned by:

Church St. Holdings LLC
Jason P. Berger
413.822.1357

mailing:
46 Housatonic St.
Lenox, MA 01240

operations:
500 Pittsfield Rd.
Lenox, MA 01240

ACTION: Garinther to contact Attorney Donald J. "Donny" Allison, the Chancellor and chief legal advisor for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts to seek guidance.

f. **AED Training** (John Garinther)
JD Hebert will conduct an AED training on October 11th.

ACTION: all vestry members are encouraged to attend.

g. **Farewell for Sarah** (John Garinther)
John reported we are trying to figure something out to mark the end of Sarah Morrison's 8 year tenure as our parish administrator. He said she was asked what she might like but she asked for time to think about it, and is still thinking about it.

h. **Nina's Return Celebration** (Anne Williams, Christine Reynolds)
Something like a glorified coffee hour. An upscale reception with a

Scottish theme. Vestry help will be required for setting up, serving, cleaning up, tech, etc. In the dining room? Start announcing it at the end of October?

i. **No Book Book Group: Volunteer Co-Convener Needed**
James Brennan offered to assist Craig Reynolds with this. Gather once a month over the next few months. In the evening? Sit in a circle and each talk for 2-3 minutes. While the particulars are still being fleshed out, Craig Reynolds approached the wardens with this idea.

Anne Williams spoke about racial justice in our diocese and her experience as part of the group that convenes to consider and discuss it. They just started a new book dealing with this and the group meets 3 on Mondays over 6 weeks.

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
September 20, 2026

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

Minutes prepared by Chris Perry

September 1, 2026 for August 2026: Budget Summary

I. Budget
A. Brief summary of the Month of January through August 2026.

On the **income** side, we took in $16,651 for the month which is lowest of the 8 months YTD. We are still $15,357 or 6% ahead to-date of what we thought our income would be,. Still, this is a large reduction from the YTD excess at July's end: $ 31,383. Of special note is

that pledges were the lowest of any month, less that half of the average month in August. Summer is annually a time of vacation and lower receipts.. Endowment distributions are also ahead: we have received 3 of our 4 (75%) annual distributions from endowment, even though only 8 out of 12 (67%) months have passed, so this category, which is ahead, will decrease more toward what is budgeted over the next month.

On the **expenditure** side, operating expenses for August were $43,588 /$40,971, which is slightly higher ($1,754) than the average month. Year-to-date, we are 3% 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. The items that are most contributory to the excess expenditures include natural gas and delivery, elevator and computer maintenance. Looking ahead – see the note from Sarah below – there are a number of upcoming repairs (e.g., slate roof repair) and planned expenditures so future monnths will have higher expenditures. 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 ($26,937) by far our largest of the 8 months. The year-to-date deficit is ($57,894) or only 91% of the deficit anticipated at this point in the year ($63,733). Nonetheless this still presents a challenge

Information needing to be checked.

Query: Church Gas in August: $2,920.32, is this due to yearly settling up Delivery charges (we are on a monthly budget)?

Electricity cost: $0.00?

Chris will ask Sarah for clarification of the above entries.

B. Additional points raised by Sarah, Parish Administrator.

August Financial are attached. I am still 1.)trying to figure out how the Realm balance of the Beacon checking account became so out of whack. If I can't figure it out by the time the new administrator starts, it might be a good project for us to tackle together, they'd really get an understanding of Realm (and my lack of accounting skills)

The extra reports – 2.) Statements of Activities and Financial Position - reflect Year to Date info rather than just the month of August and are provided to give a broader view of the overall finances because:

I want to bring to your attention the fact that 3.) St. Stephen's needs quite a bit more cash than we're expected to collect in the near term. There's a $17,500 bill due to the roofer, $1,790.00 due to the survey group and about $20,000 in bills and payroll due by the end of September. That's approx. $38,800.00. We currently have about $24,500.0 in cash between the savings and checking at both Beacon and Lee Banks. (Not counting $ at Fidelity) I

don't expect more than $5000 in pledge income through the end of September. You will 4.a.) also need to pay 2 admin salaries for the month of October. The new person will be paid $22.50 per hour, working 21 hours per week until Nina+ returns, moving up to 30 hours after Nov 16. That will be an additional $2,050 plus benefits and social security for October. For Nov and Dec., the new person's salary will be about $330 more than mine and, again, there will be 4.b.) increases in social security and benefits. The diocese has provided me with the 2026 5.) health ins. info and notified us that they expect premiums to increase at least 10% for 2027. Once on-boarding occurs I can give you more complete information.
6.)When the vestry approves expenses outside the regular budget, the Finance team needs to tell them where that money is coming from. (a specific account within the savings account or a specific endowment account)
Most of the money that has been borrowed from savings needs to be returned at year's end.

Big property expenses: take from Property accounts (earlier this year and present + upcoming) Ask Vestry to use the Real Estate Fund 110200

plan A: if we have the amount of capital improvements for the year, make a Vestry motion to take that amount from the Real Estate Fund 110200 Plan B. If that calculation is not available, we will borrow from Fidelity Savings and Lee Savings, then repay it when Plan A is able to result in a check from the Diocese.

C. Fidelity Money Market Savings account. This account is now 50227.26, having yielded interest of:

July 86.00 .
August 141.26

D. We discussed the fact that our current monthly Capital and Unbudgeted income and expenditures is not trackable month to month. Everyone agreed that it would be better to have a separate spreadsheet for Capital account income and expenditures (budget) which identified the specific item expenditures, with Savings included. It is currently confusing have these lumped with the pass-through accounts.

Plan: Chris and Al will do a draft of a Capital Budget with Savings that separates it from pass-through (Unbudgeted) account. It should also show the items in the budget

E. John Garinther informed the Committee that Sukeigh Sukienik will be our new new Parish Admnistrator, who will be trained by Sarah over several overlapping weeks in early to mid October.

II. Old Business

A. Beacon and Lee Checking accounts. Sarah and Chris Perry have been in discussion about when and how to close our Beacon Checking account. This will happen after the Realm anf Beacon figures are reconciled.
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, as well as the Parish Administrator.

B. Don Phipps suggested that we review and discuss the first two pages of the document he uploaded to the Finance Folder over the summer. We did this, with soe discussion, especially related to thermostats and heating in the Parish House.

C. Safety Deposit Box: Update. 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 was going to discuss with Sarah, what is in it, then bring this back to the Finance Committee to consider options.

We might consider selling the bond, keeping docs somewhere else, then closing the box.

III. New Business.

A. Capital Budget and non-recurring items Update.

[This overlaps with item I.D. above.] 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 previously 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 & Action: before we create one, Al was going to 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. Chris made a quick inquiry and Sarah said that she would have to inquire herself.

B. Other. None

IV. Adjournment

At 12:30 P.M., the meeting was adjourned,

—end of report—

No questions were asked of the treasurer's report.

Chris Perry said we are not doing too bad as far as income and expenses go. He said based on some discussion with John Garinther and observations of reports from the Property Committee we should expect some larger property expenses soon. He

explained our savings account starts at $100k and gets drawn down throughout the year. Usually we make 2 draws on our endowment. We need to take one now for ~$58k for "code compliance" and "leaky roofs". The money should be withdrawn from Real Estate Fund 11200.00. We anticipate a $95,000 deficit. We need to make sure we are not dipping into money that resides in capital surplus aka money donated by Craig Smith.

MOTION: Made by Chris Perry to withdraw $58,965.28 from Real Estate Fund 11200.00 and move it to our Lee Bank Savings account. Seconded by Christine Furcinite Reynolds. All in favor. None opposed or abstained. The motion passes.

It was noted the clerk would need to draft a Secretary's Certificate to accompany the withdrawal since the need is immediate and faster than it will take for the normal turnaround of the minutes. Al Symonds offered to supply the clerk with a sample Secretary's Certificate the clerk may use as a template.

There was some discussion about our safe deposit box. We plan to empty it and move its contents to another secure location, yet to be determined.

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

—start of report—

Property Committee Meeting Minutes

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16 September 2026

I. Attendance

Meeting began at 10:02am 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. Correction(s): to IV. 3. added “and one which may be hardwired at the organ console.” Requested by Phipps.
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 Lee Audio and Security about panic buttons. Not done.
    b. Plankey to loan *Kill A Watt* device. Done.
    c. Plankey to buy walkie-talkies. Tested and returned the first set. Researching another option.

III. Review of old business:

A. Review Property Action Items Spreadsheet - here

B. Rear Exterior Staircase Plan - First draft of survey received from Hill Engineers. Shows rear porch and stairs are over our property line and extend into the driveway which is privately owned by:

Church St. Holdings LLC
Jason P. Berger
413.822.1357

mailing:
46 Housatonic St.
Lenox, MA 01240

operations:
500 Pittsfield Rd.
Lenox, MA 01240

Action: Garinther to contact about acquiring a piece of that property.

C. Roof Repair - Mahan Slate Roofing Co. in Agawam, MA completed repairs on September 11, 2026 for $17,500 to replace a missing ridge cap and approx. 150 slates prone to leaking.

D. Security Enhancements - We tested a pair of low-powered FRS walkie-talkies we purchased. They worked fine transmitting the entire length of our facility, however we were not satisfied with one design flaw which

rendered them unreliable so we returned them with plans to purchase and test another set.

E. Freezer/Refrigerator Power Measurements - Located in the kitchen and annex, these units are being tested to determine their efficiency. **Action: Garinther** to test with *Kill A Watt P3 P4400* device.

F. Phipps' Energy Report - This document created a formula the church will use to compute our costs to rent empty space. The report is complete and has been sent to the finance and property committees for feedback. No one has replied yet with any. Members of each committee are encouraged to.

Don plans to replace the drawings in it with scale drawings so calculations can be made to compute our costs per square foot for spaces we might rent. Don will: 1) make any changes/corrections accounting for any feedback that comes in from those who received a copy of the report, 2) create a PDF, 3) archive the report and consider it done.

We will have our first chance to run computations since discussions have been underway to rent some empty space for office use.

IV. New business:

A. Boiler Readiness

1. Consolidate Chemical Drums - **Action: Garinther and Plankey** to combine 2 partially full chemical drums in the boiler room into 1.

2. Discuss Boiler Start Up Date - The boilers recently passed their annual inspection. We plan to hold off for another couple weeks on starting them up, if we can. In the meantime, we are staying mindful of things that can/should happen before we fire them up for the season.

3. Condensate Surge Issue - How can we correct the condensate surge causing our BFT to overflow? Should we lower the float level in the BFT? To begin, we will increase the constant low-end holding temperature in the Sanctuary to see what effect that has.

3. Steam Trap Inspection - We plan to locate, attempt to inspect/clean, and tag our steam traps.

   Action: Symonds and Plankey to meet Monday, September 21st from 10am to 12pm to identify and clean steam traps, starting with the one

impacting the operation of the radiator in the organ chamber in the hallway between the sanctuary and the guild room.

V. Adjournment

1. Date of next meeting: Wednesday, 21 October 2026, 10am in the Sears Room.
2. Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 12:07pm

Respectfully submitted by:
Chris Plankey

—end of report—

No questions were asked of the property report, but Chris Plankey spent some time elaborating on more recent work being done by the committee involving testing the panic buttons installed throughout our facility in order to confirm their functionality and reliability.

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

—start of report—

Wardens' Report

September 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 6, Sunday, 11:15 AM, **Labyrinth Walk**, Auditorium
- Sept 8, Tuesday, 5:30 PM, **Jazz Vespers**, Zion Lutheran Church
- Sept 24, Thursday, 7:00 PM, **Big Queer Nun Book Discussion**, Zoom link
- Oct 4, Sunday, 11:15 AM, **Labyrinth Walk**, Auditorium
- Oct 18, Sunday, 11:00 AM, Pledge Campaign Kick-off, Sanctuary

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

Each project is making progress and will be open for discussion at the Vestry Meeting on Sept 22.

Stewardship Team

Susan LeBourdais has agreed to chair the Stewardship Committee this year. The fall pledge campaign will officially kick-off on Sunday, October 18. The second committee meeting was held on Sept 21 and the DRAFT outline below was created to identify topics and speakers during the fall campaign.

The campaign theme this year is “Sharing Our Plenty”. Leah has created this graphic that will be used on pledge cards and other supporting documents:



Date/VPOD	Topic / Prompts	Proposed Speaker	Mission Tie-In
Oct. 18 John G.	**Kick-Off** ● Overview of Campaign and Tie-Ins	Susan LeBourdais	
Oct. 25 Leah L.	**God's Abundance** ● Share a story of when you experienced God's abundance ● How does our parish and/or your faith help you to trust in God's plenty?	Caleb Dillon-Harmon	*Assemble* We Care Kits being organized by Leah and Chris
Nov. 1 Josie E.	**Room for Everyone** ● Talk about a time you felt welcomed at St. Stephen's ● How has the parish shown radical welcome to you or others?	Amada Watroba	St. Stephen's Table *monetary donation*
Nov. 8 Christine F-R	**Giving with Joy** ● Talk about a time when giving of time, talent or treasure brought joy ● How has generosity impacted our community?	Cathy Carchedi	*Warm clothing donation* for Cathedral of the Beloved OR the Christian Center
Nov. 15 Chris P.	**Beloved Community** ● How has being part of this parish changed your life? ● Where do you see God building a beloved community among us?	Dan Moon or Angie Moon	*Donations of toiletries, etc.* for The First at Zion
Nov. 22 Jim B.	**In-Gathering and Report on Donations** ● In-gathering of pledge cards ● Update on the donations for each of the mission tie-ins	Josie Ellis	

A bulletin insert will be created that can be used each weekend during the campaign period. The insert will contain an overview of the campaign, with information about each mission-focused tie-in. The goal is to provide advance notice so parishioners are aware of what to expect each week. They can bring to the church, if desired, items that will be donated based on each week's mission.

Finding the Gap Team

This activity has been paused until we receive further information from the Property Assessment study (identified in the following section) being conducted by Stewardship Realty.

Property 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 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.

At the most recent meeting on Sept 3, the team discussed the following connected challenges:

- **Money:** The parish has financial deficits and needs to explain its financial situation more clearly.
- **Buildings:** Property repairs and building costs continue to require attention.
- **People:** Fewer volunteers are available, and many responsibilities depend on the same small group of people. The group worries that the parish could run out of volunteers before it runs out of money.

The next meeting is scheduled for Oct 20.

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. They also require stamped engineering drawings of the new design. 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.
  - Draft of the property survey was provided Sept 15, 2026 and is under review by the Property Committee.
- Roof Repair
  - Work Completed Sept 11, 2026
- 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. John drew our attention to the chart featuring the stewardship/sabbatical projects with dates, actions, and talked a little about how those time in with Stewardship's "Sharing Our Plenty" theme.

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 encouraged to bring in books for the Little Free Library.
2. Vestry members are encouraged to attend the AED training on October 11th.
3. John Garinther plans to contact the Chancellor to seek help with our need to rebuild our rear stairs which will have to extend beyond our property line.

VII. Next Meeting Date: October 27, 2026, 7pm in person in the Sears room.

VIII. Closing Prayer (David Nevin):

Closing Prayer: Janet Lees, June 2020
The Blessing of the Creator, light you.
The Blessing of the Risen Son, light you.
The Blessing of the Light-giving Spirit, light you.
May the Holy Three give you light, love and peace this night and forever.
Amen.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent: 8:23pm

End of Minutes.
Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Plankey, Clerk

Adendum:

The text of the Secretary's Certificate resulting from this meeting appears below:

SECRETARY'S CERTIFICATE

The undersigned duly appointed Clerk of St. Stephen's Parish in Pittsfield, Massachusetts does hereby certify that at a duly called Vestry Meeting for St. Stephen's Parish in Pittsfield Massachusetts held on September 22, 2026, at which a quorum was at all times present and voting, the following vote was adopted:

Voted: It was Moved, Seconded and Voted to withdraw $58,965.28 from Real Estate Fund 11200.00 and transfer it to our savings account at Lee Bank.

And I further certify that as of the date hereof, said vote is unchanged and remains in full force and effect.

Executed under penalties of perjury, on September 23, 2026.

Christopher A. Plankey II
Clerk
St. Stephen's Parish, Pittsfield, Massachusetts