

Vestry Check-In Minutes June 4, 2020

Highlights:

*Vestry devoted the bulk of its meeting to a wide-ranging and sometimes painfully honest discussion about the underlying causes of the current nationwide protests. Several of the comments were deeply personal. There were a few suggestions as to what we as a congregation might do.

*Rev. Anthony said he was “very proud of our vestry” for doing this work. “It is baptismal work. ... Respecting the dignity of every human being lies at the heart of this, and we can’t walk away from resisting and renouncing evil. Those are forceful verbs. Not neat and tidy, but in your face—with love.”

*Rev. Emily’s landlord has decided not to renew their lease. She and Andy will have to take time to find a new home – preferably equidistant from both of their churches, as is the case now -- and move.

Present: Lisa Jones, Emily Williams Guffey, Chuck Atwater, Christine Galli, Howard Matthews, Betty Warner, Anthony Estes, Denise Crenshaw, Desmond Jones, Roger Basse. Absent/Excused: George Port, Phil Brown and Carolyn Maher.

Action items underlined.

Emily led us in our opening prayer, one that was prayed in Washington, D.C., outside of St. John’s Church yesterday – the Prayer for Social Justice – at 6:06.

Minutes from the May 28 meeting were **approved**.

Old Business

*Jim will circulate the article about reopening churches to the Vestry. Done.

*Treasurer George Port, with B&G Vestry representative Desmond Jones’ assistance, will begin the process, previously approved in principle by Vestry, of applying to the diocese for a loan of up to \$400,000 for the Bell Tower project. In process.

*Emily will ask the Bishop’s office whether work could begin using a locked port-o-potty to ensure construction workers don’t enter the building. Emily talked to Canon Jo Hardy, after RAM Construction reached out to her again on Monday. If current trends continue, in mid-June the three Michigan bishops may move to reopen at the end of June or early July. Canon Hardy said it would be reasonable to get the ball rolling on this project. But even if the diocese gives approval to reopen, ultimately, it’s up to Emily, along with the Vestry and staff, to decide how they want to reopen or move towards doing so. It makes sense to move forward on exterior projects, especially the Bell Tower and- security cameras.

*We will talk about this {reopening} in future meetings so we have a consistent message. Ongoing.

*Christine will reactivate the Google doc form for Vestry members to sign up to be Vestry rep at the online service. Done. The next four weeks or so are lined up. New: Christine will hunt down the folks who are missing.

*Carolyn will have Elizabeth call a member who has been able to join the worship service but not the coffee hour. Done.

The Vestry devoted the rest of its meeting to a wide-ranging and sometimes painfully honest discussion about the underlying causes of the current nationwide protests – policing in America, systemic racism, the disparate impact of Covid-19 on people of color, and other issues. Several of the comments were deeply personal. There were a few suggestions as to what we as a congregation might do.

Rev. Anthony wrapped up the discussion. Anthony: I’m very proud of our vestry for doing this work, and not dismissing it. It is baptismal work. My concern is that too often, people march, discuss an issue, and after it gets out of the news cycle, we move on to something else. Respecting the dignity of every human being lies at the heart of this, and we can’t walk away from resisting and renouncing evil. Those are forceful verbs. Not neat and tidy, but in your face—with love. The God of the oppressed also reaches out to the oppressor. How do we speak the hard truth, and yet welcome the people who need to hear the truth? The Hell needs to be loved out of them.

That's the task we as believers in Christ are signed up to do. The conversations have already begun. I've been grateful to see openness.

He continued: Racism is a sin. We as American Anglicans, Episcopalians, are not comfortable calling sin a sin. The Episcopal church decided to call out racism as a sin in the 1990s. We need to call out sin – and to know that there is reconciliation after repentance, not before.

Emily said Anthony has suggested steps that Christ Church might take, in terms of readings and discussions, and she looks forward to continuing this discussion next week, and any time before then as well.

Before we closed, Emily told the Vestry that her family learned on June 1 that their landlord has decided not to renew their lease. They are looking for a new home, in roughly the same area so as to be equidistant from Christ Church Detroit and Rev. Andy Guffey's church. She informed Vestry because the house search and move will require her time and attention, but fortunately Anthony is available to help carry the priestly and pastoral load.

We adjourned at 7:21.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Treece, secretary