

# Vestry Check-In Minutes June 18, 2020

## Highlights:

- \*Vestry asked Rev. Emily to put together a small ad hoc committee to review and address the logistical and other issues tied to the eventual reopening of the church. The group's primary goal is to ensure the safety of all parishioners during this pandemic.
- \*Vestry continued its discussion and prayers about Black Lives Matter issues, led by Rev. Anthony.
- \*Vestry briefly discussed some preliminary problems, and solutions, related to our Blessing Box.

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

Reports received: Notes from the Bishop's virtual meeting with Senior and Junior Wardens, supplied by Roger Basse; and notes from a 6/16 CEEP webinar on reopening churches, supplied by Jim Treece. "Questions for the Vestry" about reopening, from the Michigan Bishops' "Plan for Re-Entry," also was circulated.

Opened with prayer by Emily at 6:05.

Minutes from June 11 meeting were **approved**, with fixes to attendance.

**Old Business** (i.e., action items from the prior meeting)

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 \$300,000 for the Bell Tower project. *Application submitted. The Diocesan Council meets a week from Saturday.*

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. *Depending upon when the work will begin, port-o-potty may not be needed. It still seems that Phase 2 will begin at end-June or early-July. Desmond says we need to check in with RAM Construction, which previously told Emily they'd be ready to work at the start of July.*

Christine will track down Vestry members who have not yet signed up to be Rep at Sunday service. *All but a couple of holdouts have signed up.*

Betty will help Lisa to share those images with the entire Vestry. *Betty and Lisa to connect on this soon*

We will talk about {reopening} in future meetings so that we can develop a consistent and informed message. *On today's agenda*

For Vestry's next Check-in meeting, Anthony will share an excerpt from a book as part continued dialogue and reflection. *On today's agenda*

## Reopening

Emily: We'll see what the Bishops say are the permissions for Phase 2. It'll be quite limited, still. It's almost mind-boggling to navigate everything that's on the table.

Roger summarized his takeaways from the Bishop's meeting with Wardens. A re-opened church service will have a maximum of 50 people, or perhaps fewer. It's the decision of each church how many can meet, based on the size of the sanctuary. Outdoor services are encouraged, which raises the question of whether we could use the park next door. Any inside activities will require a deep cleaning. We should be lining up an outside company to do that, one that will comply with all rules from the CDC, the state, and the Bishops. Meeting all such rules is a liability issue. These rules also apply to all other groups using our buildings. Tracking and tracing is paramount. Absolutely no singing. Wind instruments can also pose a risk. Communion is important; we'll try to have this, but no common cup, maybe a little tray with small cups. Bishop Bonnie hates those, but is rethinking her position. No coffee hour, period. Everyone will need to wear masks. Only possible exception is the person giving the homily, if 30 feet away from anyone else.

Jim then summarized what he had learned on a webinar. For example, one church has opened for what it calls "Pilgrimage," whereby individuals can enter the sanctuary on weekdays at allotted times for prayer and candle-lighting. It calls its reopened worship "SD Worship," for "Social Distanced Worship," because it wanted a separate name for this type of worship to signify that it wasn't a return to pre-Covid-19 forms of worship. He

concluded with a call to form a task force or ad hoc committee to explore how Christ Church will approach re-opening, and suggested we bring in the outside groups that use our buildings (e.g., Reconstructionist congregation, AA) as ex officio members, so they're at least aware of what's coming.

Christine emphasized the need for a sign-in procedure for those entering the building. This would allow tracing. We also need to check temperatures, and to find a way to allow people who aren't tech-savvy to sign in and come, too.

Emily agreed that we need an ad hoc committee. She said the Bishop had surprised her and other priests by saying we could go into the building this week to film video worship, but with a maximum of three people: rector, organist, and camera person. The purpose of that was to provide some comfort to parishioners by allowing them to see the church interior, and to have the priest and organist to start thinking about logistics. She recorded Ed on the organ, and herself saying the prayers/officiating. Being there reminded her how hot it is in the church, and that the air doesn't move inside the sanctuary no matter how many doors you open. Because the coronavirus lingers in the air, that gives her pause about using the sanctuary for any gatherings.

Emily: I like the idea of short pilgrimages, in one door and out the other, perhaps while Ed is playing so we all get to hear the organ. We might be able to have a series of those, perhaps coordinated with an outdoor service, so that worshipers pass through the church for the prelude or postlude.

She also spoke with KaClarence, our facilities manager. First, he expressed gratitude for still having a job, and that the building's closure has protected his health. His comments reminded her that as we open, we need to be very careful, because it matters for a lot of people.

Our building projects also will entail having people in the building. While she was in the building to record Ed and her sermon, she walked around the sanctuary, and the floor looks visibly lower where we have foundation problems: it has sunk maybe another half-inch to an inch on both the East and West sides. Desmond said that RAM Construction can keep the Jefferson Avenue entrance open while working on the Bell Tower.

Sibley House could potentially be a gathering place, but we need to learn a lot more about how air moves there. Its HVAC system hasn't yet been adapted for the summer season this year.

Sarah is scheduling a deep clean/disinfecting for next week. Our vendor offers hospital-grade, EPA-approved Covid cleaning. We also discussed getting thermometers, masks (to distribute to anyone who comes without one), and sanitizer.

Even so, some vestry members expressed doubt about our ability to adequately track and trace attendees, so as to alert anyone who comes to a worship service or other event in our buildings if another attendee tests positive after the fact. Chuck: The U.S. doesn't do that well on a national basis. It may be insurmountable for a church. I'd feel more comfortable if we went back to the Bishop and ask her expectations for tracking and tracing.

Roger: When the word comes down to go to Phase 2, there will be all sorts of details provided.

Roger noted that while some Episcopal churches will open as soon as allowed – mostly rural ones in areas with few Covid-19 cases – and Lutheran and Catholic churches are opening, “to me, opening for Phase 2 really seems like a challenge.” Episcopalians tend to stay away from church in the summer anyway. Maybe we should keep that tradition, though we'd need to communicate to the congregation so they don't think we're just taking the summer off. Denise: If people have to sign up, they may have to sign a disclaimer. Jim relayed some comments about waivers from his webinar notes.

There were comments that an electronic sign-up or RSVP system would result in the church having to turn some people away because the sanctuary is at capacity, but Jim said the experience of other churches seems to be that, initially at least, not that many people come to an in-person service, probably due to safety concerns on their part. But an online sign-up certainly would help with tracking and speed up the sign-in process for people when they arrive at the building.

It was agreed that a small task force, maybe six people, should be set up to meet early next week.

## **Dialogue and Reflections**

Anthony led our continued discussion of our response to racism, with an excerpt from Michael Eric Dyson's *The Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*. Outreach committee has also decided to read this book. What follows is a very inadequate summary of Anthony's reading and exposition of the text.

The book uses the form of the black church liturgy, in the sequence of worship: Confession, repentance and conversion. It also is part of a long tradition of the jeremiad sermon — a long lament. To repair the breach requires renouncing it first.

Chuck: Dyson is from Detroit and went to Cranbrook. He's also, Chuck noted, a difficult read.

Anthony: There's a lot of hard work here, a lot of naming of the challenges in the first few minutes of the sermon. A call to rise to the challenge of the text. By the end of the sermon, the tension is resolved and the congregation is called to join in the celebration. Name the sin, then give the invitation to "come to Jesus." This is where we need to be. We're ready culturally, to name the problem.

Even if you're not a Christian, the Bible is a founding text of America, as is the Declaration of Independence. What are the ideals in those documents? What do we have to let go of, to move forward? This conversation starts afresh every time we see a video of a black man/woman killed senselessly.

Next week: we'll take up Conan O'Brien's interview with Lamar and Lydia Richardson's son. Betty will send out the link, and Jim will put it in the minutes, here: [https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=CX\\_1-PpSm7g](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=CX_1-PpSm7g)

**Critical Committee items** –covering items that are time sensitive

**Buildings & Grounds.** Desmond: \*A couple of weeks ago, we were trying to get a dumpster to clear the rubbish across the road in the southern parking lot to comply with promises to our neighbors. Sometime in the next couple of weeks, we want to do a one-week rental at a cost of about \$630. KaClarence will oversee putting the stuff in there, including some dead tree material. \*KaClarence has a quote for repair of the hot-water heater, replacing a control unit and the flame-sensor rod. \$875. \*Blessing Box. People who use it, are leaving the wrappers/waste around the box. Peanut butter and sauce have been tossed on the ground. Need to think about how to deal with that. Maybe place a wastepaper basket nearby? Emily: We moved the box to the other side of Woodbridge, so any debris will be in the parking lot. We've seen that behavior from time to time over the years, with food being stashed in odd places. Less so during the shutdown.

Vestry **approved** the expenses for the temporary dumpster and hot-water heater repair.

**Community Outreach/Reading Camp.** There was a meeting earlier today, to hear what Brilliant Detroit plans and whether we can get behind that. They're already adapting some of their reading programs to a virtual format, e.g., Reading is Fundamental, with tutoring on Zoom over six weeks. We were impressed; it's the closest format to what we'd seek in Reading Camp. Volunteers, money, and in-kind contributions are needed. We'll hear more from Brilliant Detroit later this week, but the upshot is that there's a road forward.

Adjourned at 7:16.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Treece, secretary