

Vestry Minutes October 15, 2020

Highlights:

*Vestry reviewed the results of the latest membership survey on in-person and online worship. In light of the findings, we will offer limited opportunities to enter the sanctuary for prayer, probably coupled with the option of taking communion (host only, no cup).

*Vestry was briefed on plans for special worship services in connection with All Saints', Christ the King Sunday, and some preliminary ideas for Advent.

*Having already been granted a \$250,000 loan at 2.7 percent interest from the diocese towards building expenses, we agreed to set the terms at 20 years, with the hope of paying it back in five years.

Present: Rev. Emily Williams Guffey, Senior Warden Lisa Jones, Junior Warden Roger Basse, Treasurer George Port, Howard Matthew, Denise Crenshaw, Betty Warner, Chuck Atwater, Carolyn Maher, Desmond Jones, Secretary Jim Treece. Absent/Excused: Rev. Anthony Estes, Christine Galli, Phil Brown. Action items underlined.

Reports Submitted: Rector, Associate Rector, Buildings & Grounds, Christ Church Cares, Outreach, Staff, Stewardship, results of PUP survey

Opening Prayer and Bible Study (Matthew 22:15-22) led by Rev. Emily Williams Guffey.

In our **Reflection**, led by Lisa, we discussed how "July is the new January," as people recalibrate their hope for when they'll put the pandemic behind them and begin a "new year." People's needs will grow as we enter winter. We talked about how to encourage individuals to admit what they need (introverts vs extroverts) and how to find ways to engage with people, with some specific ideas for the Care Team.

Minutes of the Oct. 1 meeting were approved, with changes.

The Vestry reviewed the **Property Use in Pandemic** team's latest survey results. In our July survey, about a third were comfortable with the idea of meeting outdoors. Now, about a third would attend something indoors, and another third is not sure yet. That seems like a large enough portion to do something inside. Our PUP position remains to calibrate our resources and efforts in line with the expected interest and attendance. Airflow remains an issue for any of the inside spaces, and outlets for enough fans to provide airflow can be problematic, due to old wiring. Also, when the outdoor air is very cold, the indoor air will be cold, too. All in all, responses and building conditions point toward a little use of the sanctuary for small, brief gatherings that are more strolling in nature than seated. Staff and the revived Worship commission are looking at how to offer some in-person gatherings from All Saints' Sunday and through Advent.

Since any indoor gatherings would entail small groups of parishioners, at most, we need to be more concerned about reaching out to people one-on-one, per the Care Team, than in making

major efforts to meet in person. We've only missed one outdoor prayer service due to rain so far, and that time we livestreamed it from Fa. Anthony's home. One concern: The evening prayer service is going to start being both dark and cold.

Our conclusions: Keep doing outdoor gatherings as long as possible. People aren't clamoring for lots more, so try some things but don't devote huge amounts of energy to that.

Emily reported on some of the **Worship Commission's** planning for the church year through Christmas. We're working on offering Eucharist in some way for All Saints' Day, as well as an opportunity for family members to visit the columbarium. This led her to reflect in detail on the theological opinions about Eucharist in a pandemic.

Last year, on Christ the King Sunday, which is both our patronal feast day and the last Sunday of the church year before Advent, we had an ingathering of pledges, with a font adorned florally by Richard Thomas. This year, there might be a drive-up event, to place our pledges at the church – maybe with some food involved – and the start of the J2A Greens sale. That event would be primarily outdoors; if we can go inside at all, that would be a bonus.

She also discussed some of the ideas for Advent and Christmas, e.g., a table read of our pageant by those who have been in it in years past, as well as a new pageant designed more specifically for younger children on Zoom. She hopes to wrap up our planning in the next couple of weeks, due to the production schedule that requires everything be done well in advance.

Turning to **Finance and Stewardship**, George noted that we are going to take a \$250K loan from the diocese, with a 2.7% interest rate, but we have to choose how to amortize it. The least burdensome choice would be to amortize it over 20 years, which would mean \$1,355 due every month, with payments starting in November. The interest rate will be adjusted every couple of months. He expressed hope that we would pay it off sooner, maybe even in five years, so it's not hanging around too long. We can prepay without penalty at any time.

Motion: To take the 2.7 percent, \$250,000 diocesan loan on a 20-year amortization basis, while making every effort to pay it back within five years. **Approved.**

We also need to make a commitment to the diocesan apportionment for next year. Our full apportionment is \$53,705, which represents 10% of operating income from 2017-19. It will continue to rise in line with the increases in our income in subsequent years. We agreed by consensus to pay the full amount, as we customarily have done in past years.

George also is drafting an additional letter to the congregation about our finances, with details and projections, following up on the article from Finance Committee Chair Jane Forbes which appeared in a recent e-newsletter.

Turning to the annual pledge drive, Jim referred Vestry members to the Stewardship report, which details what is happening when. We still need nominees for folks to give stewardship testimonials as part of the online service. He has not yet completed one action item from our last meeting: Jim to make an appeal in our weekly emails to make sure people make their pledges for the year, and to give more money.

George said Christ Church desperately needs to find a way to raise another \$50-60K a year (about a 20% increase) in pledge income, year in and out. Our draw from the endowment has exceeded a "prudent draw" by \$40-60K every year, and has for years. Raising more and drawing

down the endowment less would go a long way towards having the money for necessary maintenance.

That led into the **Buildings & Grounds** discussion. Expanding on the written report, Desmond said: *The committee is comparing the expenses for working on Ledyard Hall's roof vs the sanctuary roof. *KaClarence has already purchased a sump pump for the church, but he has been sick and hasn't yet been able to install it. Desmond didn't have additional information on its power source or backup power supply. *We're still waiting for delivery of the new water heater. *One security camera has not yet been installed. *In our discussions with Quinn Evans about the subfloor, we're looking to procure materials. Getting equipment and material since the start of Covid has been difficult, but it should be possible. *It's likely all the carpet will have to be replaced in the J2A room. *Part of an open window in the bell tower has been repaired. *We need to provide Wi-Fi through the entire church, but the cost is a concern. Internet upload speeds are the worst Desmond has ever seen. The committee is looking into options. Currently, staffers sometimes have to wait for another person to finish their work before they can do their own.

His big concern is that he's not sure we fully understand how much we need in funds, when, to cover B&G requirements. We need a full project schedule, plus a full building assessment, costing about \$40K. That will affect plans for the capital campaign, and may even influence which consultant we use, depending on when each one expects to start drawing in money. Most of the money from a capital campaign won't come in right away.

Outreach Committee's Racial Justice Initiative has identified alternative funding for book discussion groups, beginning with a pilot group. The facilitator is excited to be part of it. *Black Bottom Archives has asked for feedback. *Opera Modo will host a digital aria competition. They also are interested in developing with us steps towards a music school, which would entail the activation of those classrooms. They have a vision for a Christ Church cultural center/arts and music center that would run all week, and ideas for how to do so during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, **Inreach**, i.e., the Christ Church Cares ministry, has four planning committee members, and 10 people who are willing to help. They will need more. They're meeting weekly.

We discussed what we've heard from the two finalists for the position of consultant for the **Capital Campaign**, starting with the feasibility study. Emily has prepared a side-by-side comparison of the two. Seth and she followed up with some additional/lingering questions for the two. [Note: Vestry members and the Capital Campaign Steering Committee interviewed the two finalists earlier in the week.] In discussing the strengths, weaknesses, costs, etc. of the two finalists, as well as questions we still have for them, we also talked about the need to have the capital campaign's goals clear as part of a strategic plan that aligns with our vision for the church. On the other hand, our need for capital funds is urgent, giving us little time to prepare a full strategic plan. There also are concerns about the added burden on the staff, which Emily said will occur regardless of which consultant is chosen. She also expects to need new management

skills for this task, and will be taking an online course for priests to develop those. We decided that we weren't ready yet to vote on a consultant, and will do so in a special meeting next week.

With that, we adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Treece, secretary