

176th Annual Meeting of Christ Church Detroit

January 30, 2022, 1:00 p.m. Zoom

Minutes – APPROVED 1/29/2023

At 1:05, Senior Warden Denise Crenshaw called to order Christ Church Detroit's 176th annual meeting, and the second one held virtually on Zoom due to COVID-19. "One of these years we'll be in person and that'll be glorious," she said. For various reasons (think: COVID), some but not all ministry reports were available at this time, so the usual "magazine" of annual reports was not released.

After instructions on how to vote and other logistical details, and confirmation of a quorum, the proposed agenda was approved. Rev. Emily Williams Guffey opened the meeting with prayer.

Minutes of the 175th Annual Meeting, on January 31, 2021, were duly moved, seconded, and approved.

Rev. Emily then recognized the past year's vestry members, namely:

- Class of 2024: Ruth Boeder, John Leney, Anthony Mitchell, José Rodriguez
- Class of 2023: Mary Brown, Denise Crenshaw (Sr. Warden), Carolyn Maher, Howard Matthew (Treasurer)
- Class of 2022 (finishing their term): Claire Brown (who had filled in the final year of another Vestry member's term), Desmond Jones, Jim Treece (Secretary), Betty Warner (Jr. Warden)

Rev. Emily offered special thanks to the officers and those who were finishing their three-year terms. Denise also thanked the latter's spouses. She then introduced the slate of **new Vestry members** making up the Class of 2025: Claire Brown, David Jackson, Caroline Widak, and Stephanie Wren. A motion to accept this slate was duly moved, seconded, and approved.

Outreach Chair Seth Lloyd introduced the members of the committee and invited anyone interested in joining the committee to do so. He went on to say that this parish has a long and distinguished history of outreach, literally from the inception of the parish. Despite the pandemic, that history has continued this year. A few highlights, with more in the written report:

- Pope Francis Center. It serves about 600 homeless people six days a week. We've been a partner in that, sending volunteers to help in the past. Last year, we heard they were raising funds to support not only their existing ministry but also a permanent home for those in need. At committee member Ruth Boeder's suggestion, the committee offered to match funds donated by parish members. We had proposed raising \$500, but eventually raised \$3,000. In addition, after the Center said socks were the most-requested item from their clients, Christ Church contributed more than 1,300 pairs of socks – so many that the Center had concerns about storing them all.
- The Rotating Shelter run by Cass Community Services. We have hosted this in the past, but in these pandemic times, they instead asked us to help feed the 50 people they were housing. Over 30 people stepped up to help. Special thanks go to Genet Barthwell, who ordered the food and cooked most of the dinners at a time when she wasn't in the best of health.
- Afghan refugee project. Ruth Boeder and Eileen MacDonald sponsored two in-person and one Zoom session, and then a survey, to determine the level of support from parishioners. Based on that survey, we agreed to host a household, and we'll soon be put in touch with a family: Father, Mother, and 5 children. Margo Norris and Mary Herring already are in touch with Samaritas, and are exploring housing options and what else will be needed.

- Diaper drive. Our goal this year was 24,000 diapers for Crossroads of Michigan, which would have been a slight increase from last year's total. In fact, we raised enough donations in kind and in cash for 30,137 diapers. Thanks go to Sally LePla and Eileen MacDonald for their hard work.

The theme here, he said, was that this parish steps forward to serve, just as it did in the 19th and 20th centuries. "You've responded to the committee's requests magnificently, as an expression of God's love to all."

Denise thanked Seth, adding, "It's who we are as a church: we're out there in the world."

Rev. Emily said that Ruth Boeder, Anthony Mitchell, and Jim Treece had agreed to serve as delegates to the diocesan convention in October. Their election was duly moved, seconded, and approved.

Denise then introduced **Buildings & Grounds** Chair Teresa Lloyd, noting that Terry and the entire committee have dealt tirelessly with many building challenges this past year.

Terry said, "The other day I had a chance to go down Jefferson past the church. Jefferson has some beautiful areas and some not-so-beautiful areas. Christ Church really looks good." We had some years when we didn't look good, say when Sibley House's shutters were falling off, she noted. "This may sound shallow, but we need to look good, in part for the sake of Detroit."

The year began with some fairly straightforward issues, such as the tuckpointing of the bell tower. But the continued pandemic soon raised other issues, including the need to have a better way to livestream worship services with fiber cable. The church got a city permit and installation was supposed to happen in July, but was put off, first to October and then again. Roger Maki-Schramm investigated and found we didn't have the permit. He tracked it down and this week we hope to install the cable.

Torrential rains in June and July flooded the basement, aka Ledyard's Lower Level, making those classrooms unusable and forcing out the Jewish Reconstructionist congregation. At first, the committee thought it would be a simple matter of waterproofing the basement, but it turned out the task was more complicated. There were leaks around the windows, and it wasn't clear whether the downspouts and gutters were able to carry away heavy rains. The Buildings and Grounds Committee now is trying to identify precisely the problems. Architects will help us set out a plan. Terry said she realizes people are frustrated, but it's a big, complicated job. "If the foundation isn't strong, the church isn't strong."

She closed by thanking the committee for giving so much time and expertise, often during their own work hours.

Finance Committee Chair Jane Forbes then delivered the financial report. She said she wanted to be both honest and upbeat in describing the financial results for 2021. Compared to almost everything else that happened, our financial results were outstanding. While we still had a deficit, both revenues and expenses were below budget.

Parking revenue, a major component of revenue pre-pandemic, was still low with people not in downtown offices, and that's likely to continue. On the expense side, staffing costs were lower, in part due to the resignation of Calebria Webb, our associate for education and community engagement.

Jane recognized those who left bequests to the church in the past year: Tish Brown, Nancy vom Steeg, and Milli Stennis, via a trust established for the fund she had set up earlier for special music.

Looking ahead to the coming year, inflation is affecting some of our expenses, e.g., paper and utilities. Inflation also will be seen in food costs when and if we start serving food again. There also will be

changes in compensation for clergy and staff, including the first increase that Rev. Emily has received since she joined us three years ago. Some of the staff pay increases are based on redefined job duties. There's also a new line item in the budget: \$15,000 for "ministry support." The terms of its actual use haven't been fully decided, but the goal is to reduce Rev. Emily's workload, say by allowing for more guest preachers.

The diocese has had a requirement for a periodic full CPA audit. We've been producing "reviewed statements" regularly, but in 2022 there will be a full audit.

The total market value of our investments rose to \$1.9 million from \$1.7 million last year, after adding the bequests and withdrawing funds to cover our deficit. Jane quickly reviewed our restricted and unrestricted investments. The unrestricted ones, which we've been drawing on to cover our deficits, are not an immediate problem. But if those withdrawals continue apace, that will become a problem in just a few years. She added, "To me, relying on our investments is like being 40 years old and still relying on checks from your grandparents" to pay routine bills.

After thanks to her committee, Jane opened the floor for questions.

Q. Is there a line item for an associate rector?

A. No. That's something we hope to consider in the future. The full cost would be around \$100,000/year, based on what Fr. Anthony was paid, as salary and health care.

Q. Have we considered adding a deacon?

A. (From Rev. Emily) We have our eyes out and word in to the bishop that we'd like some support, whether deacon, seminarian, or whatever. The budget shows more money for guest preachers and such, so we'll continue to hear a variety of voices. I'm sure the bishop will encourage us all to take care of each other. And we will embrace morning prayer, too, as part of our regular worship rhythm.

A Vestry member reminded the attendees that Fr. Anthony was a gift to us – both spiritually and financially. Christ Church Detroit paid nothing for his service here for almost two years. The cost was picked up entirely by the diocese, through a diocesan trust which supports newly ordained priests. Now that we have experienced the enormous and varied benefits of having additional clergy on staff, we need to consider whether we're willing to increase our giving to pay for having additional clergy in the future. We shouldn't assume that Rev. Emily can continue doing all she does and pick up Fr. Anthony's responsibilities as well.

There being no other business, Denise said that plans to celebrate the year we had in 2021 are in the works, and then asked Rev. Emily to close the meeting with prayer. Rev. Emily offered a Franciscan blessing: May God bless you with discomfort with easy answers; with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people; and with tears to shed for those who suffer pain.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Treece, secretary