

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER
Vestry Meeting Minutes
November 21, 2023 at 6:00pm Van Every, Room 207

Vestry Members Present: Mary Amos, Anne Binns, Joyce Bott, Jason Evans (virtual), Ed Gash, Kirt Hibbitts, Carlyle Knox, Bob Murphy, Natalie Parker

Vestry Members Absent: Tom Cooke, Margaret Kahn

Clergy Present: Fr. Greg Brown, Rev. Cat Connolly

Recording Secretary: Niki Manke

Guest: Karen Crane – Holy Comforter Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair

1) Convene: Opening Prayer (Cat Connolly)

- a) St. Benedict's Prayer Book

2) Agenda Approval (Joyce Bott)

- a) *Motion (Ed Gash); Second (Natalie Parker); Approval (Vestry)*

3) Scripture/Bible Study (John Snelsire)

- a) Matthew 17:14-21, Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy
 - i) We need to have faith!
 - ii) If you don't know how to do it, know who to ask.

4) Finance Report (Karen Crane)

- a) October 2023 Financial Statements
 - i) YTD Pledge receipts unfavorable to net pledge budget by \$23.9k; favorable to prior YTD by \$27.2k.
 - (1) Have we received some good receipts for November which was helpful.
 - ii) YTD Total revenue unfavorable to budget by \$29.9k due to plate offerings over by \$1.1k, net pledge receipts under by \$23.9k, General Offering under by \$13.1k, Visitor under by \$0.2k, Sales Tax Refunds over \$1.4k, Interest and Dividends over by \$14.5k, Other Income over by \$13 and Pledge Received-Previous Year under by \$9.6k. Month unfavorable to budget by \$26.6k. YTD favorable to 2022 by \$18.9k.
 - iii) YTD Expenses favorable to budget by \$42.3k. Salary & benefits under budget by \$18.6k, Ministry under budget by \$21.8k, Office under budget by \$3.7k, and Buildings & Grounds over budget by \$2.8k and Utilities over by \$1.0k. Favorable to 2022 by \$7.3k. In comparison to 2022, Salary & benefits is \$2.6k higher.
 - iv) Note payable to Holy Comforter Foundation balance is \$71k with balloon payment of \$68k due November 2024.
 - v) Noted that we are out of EXCESS operating cash. The operating cash we have and are operating out of is between a checking account and money market account. We're low on the excess, not actual cash.
- b) We're still missing a few key pledges. A list of contacts has been requested from Vicki Bott and reminders will be going out to some of the church leaders this week.
- c) Finance Committee has met
- d) Update Strategic Modeling has met and will present a preliminary budget at the December Meeting.

5) Blessings, Gratitude, & Generosity/Freed Up (Kirt Hibbitts)

- a) Starting a financial stewardship class called Freed Up. 5 people from the BGG group have tried it and tested it. Want people to do it in small groups because it works best for having good conversation. Class on January 7th. Classes start on the 28th. We listen to a lot of sources in regard to money, but do we listen to God who has a lot to say about it?

- b) Looking to Vestry to be facilitators/group leaders to make sure people are meeting regularly. Guessing we need 5. Mac Redfern has already volunteered to be a leader.
- c) 5-8 people per group. Groups need to be diverse with family make-up as well as economically.
- d) People are more likely to jump on board when they see a member of Vestry jumping in to help.
- e) Trish is working on the software page.
- f) After Christmas we will be pushing it more.

6) Update Employee Handbook (Jason Evans & Mary Amos)

- a) Jason and Russell have talked. Need to get together and meet. Rough draft in January

7) Ministry Reports

- a) Hispanic Ministries (Natalie Parker)
 - i) La Misa – Numbers seem to be increasing. Greg will likely have more to report.
 - ii) La Escuelita – Things are going great! Waitlist for all classes. Qualified for 2 grants. Annual Fundraiser will be February 9th with an in-person component and more to come.
 - iii) ESL – Things are going well, but not much detail. They've been going to Community Dinners and more books were ordered.
- b) Women's Ministries (Mary Amos)
 - i) Darrow-Owens continues to do many things. Mary passed out pamphlets to those present at the meeting and invited everyone to join.

8) Associate Rector's Report (Cat Connolly)

- a) Back full-time for 2 weeks. A busy 2 weeks.
 - i) Interviewed potential candidate. Good experience because she has never interviewed before.
 - ii) Oyster Roast, Convention, Annual Meeting
 - iii) Trying to remember things like how to write a sermon.
 - iv) Doing the Eucharistic Prayer in Spanish this coming weekend.

9) Rector's Report (Greg Brown)

- a) **Clergy Status**
 - i) Cat is back!!!
- b) **Fr Greg Vacation:** November 13-16 in Texas.
- c) **Diocesan Convention**
 - i) November 16-18, 2023 in Winston Salem
- d) **Liturgy and Worship**
 - i) We confirmed 10 persons at the Bishop's Visit!
 - ii) La Misa attendance is growing again, and they are assuming leadership roles! We are creating a new directory.
 - iii) Continues to celebrate the Eucharist the first Friday of each month at Matthews Glen
 - iv) Continues to celebrate the Eucharist every other month at Southminster.
- e) **Staff**
 - i) Annual Staff Reviews have been completed.
 - ii) Offices will close Nov 22-24 for Thanksgiving, and December 25 – Jan 1 for Christmas.
 - iii) We will have our Staff Retreat on Tuesday, November 28 ON campus. Doug Bacon will discuss Strengthfinders results with staff, and help us determine how we can use our strengths to further our mission and ministries. Ahead of this Fr. Greg is doing some Values/Vision/Mission work with staff for both individuals, and as a staff. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT VESTRY HAS APPROVED \$4k FOR DOUG THAT WILL BE DUE AFTER THE RETREAT.
 - iv) We still anticipate that Patrick will take a three-month sabbatical in 2024. We will adjust supply costs to cover his absence.
 - v) The prospect for both Children's and Family ministries did not work out. We are developing plans for working with youth and young adults.
 - vi) Fr. Greg has asked Vestry's help to generate SMART Goals for each and all staff (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound). He has never formally done these before.

f) Circle Group updates

i) Our next Quarterly Leadership Meeting will happen in February.

g) Programming

i) Advent Movie Night will begin in November. The theme is angels.

ii) Blue Christmas / Longest Night service will take place on December 21

iii) PLEASE CONTINUE TO BOTH PROMOTE **AND ATTEND** parish programs and events!!!

h) Local Concerns

i) (All same as last month)

ii) We are planning a group education piece for our collective Park Road Clergy membership, to move us forward in ministry and to build fellowship among our churches. In the upcoming election year, we are choosing a program from Just Faith around Christian Listening. It will be a 7-8 week program beginning around lent.

iii) Our Park Road Clergy meets once a month for fellowship and to plan common events. Our Lenten Wednesday Programs are popular and growing!

iv) Churches include; Holy Comforter, Avondale Presbyterian, Park Road Baptist, Sedgefield United Methodist, St. Luke's ELCA, Southminster, and Woodlawn Community Fellowship.

10) Mid-Meeting Reflection/Break (Mary Amos)

a) Liturgies for Hope

i) Liturgy for Giving Thanks

11) Senior Warden's Report (Joyce Bott)

a) December Meeting Propose moving it to December 12th. New members are invited.

b) Holiday Party, Dec 8th or 15th – need to check schedules and will confirm date.

c) Clergy Housing Reminder (Dec 2022)

d) HOCO Updates Scheduled

i) More than financial updates. Need to make sure some of the leaders get up and give an update.

ii) Dates for 2024

e) Staff Holiday Bonus – no intention to vote today but will in December.

f) Ministry Liaisons for 2024

i) Don't have to stay with current assignments. Don't have to make decisions tonight, but something to keep in mind.

ii) Kirt noted that he cobbled one together because he had passion for it. With Strengthfinders do we want to people to use that to discern the liaisons for the various ministries?

g) Mutual Ministry

i) Reached out to Earnest Graham and Google, there are documents in the general "2023" folder to read to prepare ourselves for the conversation and preparation of our own document. See what resonates with us and how we want to move forward.

12) Junior Warden's Report (Carlyle Knox)

a) Solar Panel Update

i) Plan to do a virtual vote by December 1. Vote will be to approve the \$3,000 for the Interconnect agreement with Duke Energy.

ii) Information included in the "Solar Information" folder on the shared drive. It's in the general "2023" folder.

iii) Possible to request some money from the Diocese based on a conversation had with the Bishop. (One of the goals of the Diocese is "Creation Care")

iv) Possibility of money from Foundation funds.

v) The current plan is to go with the purchase option which makes Holy Comforter responsible for the service and maintenance of the system.

(1) Idea was suggested to create a fund to help cover these costs. Fund could be general "Creation Care" fund which could also help cover maintenance of the new beds and other garden work.

13) Old Business/Reminders

- a) ~~Approval of Sept. & Oct. Minutes (Joyce)~~
 - i) To be sent by Niki for review and approval.
- b) November 2023 BGG Speaker, Jason Evans
- c) December 2023 BGG Speaker, Anne Binns

14) Closing Prayer (Cat Connolly)