St. Anne’s Episcopal Church

Minutes- Vestry Meeting

11/21/2021

*Approved 12/19/21*

Present: Darryl Hammil, Senior Warden; Debbie Walker, Junior Warden; Jason Wilkinson; Stan Meiburg; Carmen Caruth; Bob Hoover, Treasurer; Susan Gies Conley, Clerk

On Zoom: Ray Leonard; Erik Ekstrand; Grace Phillips; Donna Williams

**Ginny opened with prayer**

**Discussion of article: Church Was Already Hard**

**Jason: Relief. Erik: Opportunity to examine what hasn’t been working in our systems, how we can adapt. That we can make big changes quickly is a good thing to know about ourselves. Debbie: It’s an age-old question, no matter what we do, someone will be upset. Ginny: Some folks haven’t seen change happen before, they imagine they know what church was and note what is different today. Carmen: Honor the past and embrace the future resonated with her. We often live in the past, like we say at the end of church, it’s about the hope for our future. It’s hard not to live in the past, not to want to bring the past back. Bob has read something on the use of authority in the church recently, that there’s a tendency for those on the outside to look at change as something unprocessed, that we didn’t go through the steps. He doesn’t think we have this problem, but we should be aware that some are seeing it that way, as a potential abuse of authority and that they weren’t included. Debbie liked “God’s Persistent Faithfulness.”**

**Ginny asked, what can we take from this article and apply to where we are now? Darryl: Be generous with what will be. He said people mention how well his family is taking their recent loss. He figures, his mother would want him to move forward, not sitting around moping. That’s where we are with a society right now, we have to push through it. Debbie: Breathe in, breath out, move on, like Jimmy Buffett said.**

**Stan asked what prompted Ginny to offer this article for us to read. Ginny: Sarah, who wrote the article, was our strategic planning consultant in 2018. Ginny likes how the article is truth-telling from a clergy point of view and from someone who is no longer serving in a church ministry capacity. She is in both sides of that conversation. Ginny agrees that the time for handwringing is over, that was March and April of 2020. Doing it now is not the right use of energy. Grateful, loose, generous as the three prongs of approach.**

**Debbie: She doesn’t feel that, as the article says, church doesn’t feel safe or like church. Maybe more on the “like church.” Bob: Maybe not just about physical safety, but a safety with spirituality. The room has changed, the way we’re doing things is changed. Where you were comfortable before isn’t the same place as before. Can rattle spiritual safety. Jason: Changes he would have wished two decades ago, he wonders if they would have made a difference in keeping people at church. Maybe it will help future generations.**

**Barna Group does statistical analysis, put out an article earlier this week that says 50% of clergy in mainline denominations have considered quitting in the last 12 months. Number is 32% in non-mainline denominations. Women make up well over 60% of those in mainline denominations considering quitting. Clergy have felt unsafe, not because of fear of getting sick but because of the rage, grief, anxiety they are encountering. (Ginny is not feeling like she is on the edge.) The whole idea of safety in worship has multiple layers of meaning. She has contemplated cloning, but not quitting 😉**

**Jason said that it’s likely that older clergy have accelerated their retirement plans. Stan: When one thing becomes different, it’s easier to consider other things becoming different. Darryl: took note of the continuing relatively strong numbers of people attending online. Donna: read the article twice, the second time she was saying “push, breathe.” She’s past what we’ve been through, the screens aren’t important in the scheme of what we are doing. The Sunday evening programs sound like another opportunity to exhale.**

**Ginny: She notes that we are thinking ahead of the curve for a lot of the parishioners we are calling. We need to be nimble, flexible to walk with them where they are. “Leader’s Lag” when we have been through it and others haven’t caught up. Our call is not to wave the flag, it’s to go where the people are, encourage them not to stay stuck if they seem stuck. That’s ministry.**

Information/discussion/action

1. Approval of 10/17/21 minutes

Motion and vote

We just got the minutes via email.

Darryl moved to move this item to the end of the meeting, approved by consensus.

Returned to this topic after Item 2. Minutes were shared on the screen. Jason moved to approve minutes as submitted, Stan seconded, minutes were approved by consensus, and thank you to Erik for taking them last time.

1. Vestry retreat feedback Everyone 10 m

Ginny: What did you like about the retreat? Stan liked Pat, as did everyone, and the exercises. Time together, the format, interesting and not work! Had the required “spoon full of sugar.” Darryl liked learning about our nicknames! Ray thought it was one of the best retreats he has attended, he looked within himself. How can we have a reflection with God and not with all of the people we encounter? He considered what encompasses the world we live in. Even the two management courses he’s gone through didn’t touch upon these things. AA++ for the consultant.

Food: Fabulous!

More than one day: Was good to introduce on Friday, get warmed up and involved with each other. Jason: It wasn’t easy for his family. Debbie felt the afternoon break was a bit long. Darryl liked that most everyone showed up. Carmen liked the break. Stan felt that the group did well at being present even though we hadn’t “gone away” for the retreat. Ginny says that next year we will be in Valle Crucis, with Pat as our leader if she’s in good health. Stan also liked the report out to the congregation. Darryl liked that we introduced ourselves so the Vestry members are known and transparent. Jason liked that we offer for people to participate in Vestry meetings. Not all churches do this. Seeing how things operate is important. Ginny: Our bylaws and canons require this, except for executive session.

What were your concerns: None voiced

Wishes for the next retreat: People are excited about Valle Crucis, people going off are sad to miss it! Darryl thinks it’ll be a nice time of year to be outside together. Reflects on what Bishop Sam said at Convention yesterday.

Margaret Lumpkin Love is the Valle Crucis conference center manager, Ginny will talk with her about whether we can invite other parish leadership to attend with us. Committee chairs, other staff, maybe we can branch out a bit and have more folks be a part of the conversation. Erik says that he and Danny were married at Valle Crucis! Jason thinks that some youth leadership or presence would be good. Ginny does hope that we can invite others to be a part of that retreat.

Stan said he was glad that the focus of the retreat was on building relationships, not accomplishing tasks.

1. Financial report Bob 5 m

The revenue for October was 22,600, higher than the last three months but still below budget. Pledge income accounted for most of that deficit. Please refer to the financial reports for details. Our expenses also remain within budget, so we have no concerns through the end of the year. Donna asked why the Rector’s salary is reading under budget. Stan says that is because of the PPP loan, which paid some of Ginny’s salary so we did not have to take it from our budgeted dollars.

Bob will start to use the accounting convention of expressing everything in thousands. The group is fine with putting everything in this model.

1. Update on Pledges Darryl 5m

$290k is our budget, we have current $229k in pledges but Darryl wasn’t able to get up with Mark this week. Ginny is looking it up. Darryl isn’t worried too much because we tend to get a lot of pledges in January, and will have to wait to January to get the actual.

As of Friday, we have 67 pledges, 10 new this year, total amount of $232, 575 on a budget 286,102. We are still ahead of where we were at this time next year, in number and value of pledges.

Stewardship is writing to people who haven’t pledged yet with a gentle nudge. We’re also sending handwritten notes of thanks when people do pledge.

1. Conversation about masks

Last Tuesday it was looking good. The next day, it got worse in the county. We need a conversation about what to do if the Mayor lifts the mask mandate. Will we follow suit? The Diocese has given us permission. The Diocese has stopped making decisions because every county is different. Donna asked especially about Christmas. Grace thinks we should enforce it, with people traveling. Jason pointed out not everyone is getting a booster shot. Most people in the congregation are behaving safely, vaccinated, still a safe bet to stay masked until we revisit it in January. Ginny: By January we will know if there is a spike from the holidays. Donna liked that Leonard could sing without a mask. Ginny is in communication with David and Lauren about singers, soloists, be in support of diocesan guidelines. Stan asked, out of curiosity, what other members of the convocation are doing. If someone is from a place with a 7.5% case rate or lower, they don’t have to wear masks. We are in Phase 3, so new structure. St. Stephen’s is still on Zoom. St. Timothy’s will probably go maskless but wear one if you want. St. Paul’s will probably have a variety of services with and without masks.

1. Solar Panels

Last week we had a presentation from Eagle Solar and Light about the possibility of St. Anne’s going solar. Our roof is 10 years old. Matt Rodda says we have 5-10 years before we need to replace it. Question is, could our lease be written so the cost of taking off, putting back on after replacing a roof can be part of our lease cost. Carmen has asked that we have a structural engineer make sure we can hold the weight of panels and cinderblocks. These costs aren’t part of the package. Eagle will do this, but it's in the context of the sale. The old building is the flat roof that would hold all of the panels. Bob Gosnell said it’s 10 years old, lifespan of 15-20 years. Bob agrees that having an outside party determine if we’re more within 5 or 10 years of replacement is a good idea. Jason asked if they would put panels anywhere else, it sounds like the roof is the best place on our property.

**Jason moved that we move forward with exploring solar. Donna seconded.** Discussion: Stan said that the “moving event” is the Duke Power set-aside for nonprofit organizations to use the allocation for solar is undersubscribed. The sooner we get ourselves in line, the better. To get the rebate, we have to the panels installed before December 31, 2022. There are other issues with equipment supply. 4-6 weeks later we get the rebate.

**The motion was approved unanimously.**

Darryl pointed out that this action is an action toward out values.

Ginny said next we need to reach out to a structural engineer. Matt may be able to refer us to someone. This is not something we can bid out. Send recommendations to Ginny if you have them. Ginny has sent a link to the video, proposal, and sample contract.

1. Locks for the Nave Ginny 5 m

Right now we have $22k worth of equipment in the Nave with no extra security once someone is in the building. For her peace of mind and for our insurance, having locks from the Parish Hall and Narthex would be a good idea. We just need to get someone to come in and set them up on our system.

**Donna moved that we install locks in the Nave, Carmen seconded.**

Discussion: Darry asked if anything else needs locks. Ginny says everything else has them. Erik asked if we need to consider safety glass for those doors, if the door could be jimmied open from the inside, do we need to consider another kind of door. Stan said what we are trying to do is make it inconvenient to steal. He also asked if there’s anything else that’s cost-effective. Ginny said our current security camera setup is not viable. Jason says in the future the cameras will probably be secured to the ceiling. He doesn’t think that the projected booth will be a closed-in space, either. Maybe we could put locking cabinets in the booth and they’d be lower cost. Ginny shared that in 2019 we added security cameras around the building, getting more of a residential system. They go offline a lot, Ginny doesn’t know how to bring them back online. Only Ryan Phillips does. Ryan is generous in offering his help as Building and Grounds, but he also has a family and is a Police Lieutenant. We may need to explore beefing up that system, too, in another conversation. Darryl discussed locking the double doors to the old building. Ginny said that it’s an issue of parking and our address being on Fairlawn.

**The question was called, and the motion was approved unanimously.**

1. Phase 2 of technology Darryl, Jason, Ginny 10 m

Jason had Matt Rhoda come out to look at our second phase, creating something that won’t be so temporary in the back area. Right now we’re on a fold-out table. Also under consideration are managing the look of the screens and other aspects.

With the screens, they can put window frames around the screens and make them look like stained glass windows. Getting cameras and cords off the ground will help. There would also be a monitor for the choir so they can see in the back of the room what the rest of the congregation is seeing.

Creating a booth with a wall and desk, operators sitting in tall chairs to see over. Elevating the space makes it inaccessible for wheelchairs, and it’s not a very tall ceiling in that area. The booth will probably jut out a bit from the recess.

Ginny says we may be looking for permission to accommodate the choir coming back outside of a second wave of technology. We may want to take advantage of seasonal sales for screens and cameras right now. The new cameras could be wired into our system to cut down on delay. Jason Falin hasn’t gotten back yet. He is mindful of our cost-conscious needs and has done well in guiding our purchases. Jason says we could sell our old equipment including the projectors. The screens would be swapped for 80-85 inch flat screens.

Erik pointed out that there are two discussions we need to consider. First is how to evangelize and reach people who are participating online. The discussion about screens is about worship in the space. Screens allow us to future-proof, include videos, remote preachers, musicians. Might be more time sensitive to take care of getting rid of cords, equipment is secure, etc. Maybe we could sit with the screen situation a bit longer to consider, survey the parish to tell people what the options are. Get feedback before we make a big purchase.

Jason believes that selling the projector/screen configuration would bring in replacement funds and get rid of the concerns about all of the hanging equipment in the Nave.

Ginny says she has heard a lot of feedback about the screens and projectors. We know that people prefer that they not be there, especially from those who haven’t been worshiping in the building. They have helped when we run out of bulletins.

Stan suggested that we reach out to those who have expressed the most concern and say that we are looking at the flat screen solution, and would that help since it’ll be less obtrusive.

Ginny pointed out that having a digital presence is not going away. In 2020 we thought screens and projectors were the solution. We may have a more tasteful, comforting way to include technology with the flat screen approach.

Ginny asked if the Vestry is comfortable setting a limit for spending, of perhaps $10k from the Moore Fund’s reserve checking account.

**Stan moved that we authorize that the Technology Committee to acquire cameras and screens to replace the existing equipment, and with the sale of the current equipment spend up to a net cost of $10,000 before needing to come back to the Vestry for approval. Debbie seconded. (with friendly amendment to add language around selling current equipment.)**

Discussion: Darryl wants to investigate what different sorts of things we need in technology to enhance our footprint online. Debbie said that’s a different topic, that current discussion is about infrastructure.

Erik says he will have to vote against this and wants to explain why. He doesn’t see that it’s an emergency to have new screens installed. He doesn’t think we have a clear view of what the congregation things given that those who are not in favor of the current situation are the ones speaking up. Erik wishes that we had done more data collection and move more slowly.

**A vote was called. Two votes to Nay, no abstentions. The motion passed with the remainder voting Yay.**

1. Strategic Planning

Tabled for the next meeting.

1. Vestry Counting Debbie 5 m

We need to have two people present for counting loose plate after services to maintain good cash controls. There’s a need to train new people, those schedules need to come in to church. Seven current members have experience in counting. It would be good for seasoned members to be on hand to supervise training. It should be done more than once in a row to make the training stick. Carmen says we need to write procedures, have a group training, and then get it done. Double up, no single counters for reasons both in safety and accountability. Debbie will take responsibility to see that this happens on a Sunday. Ray pointed out that we need to have instructions repeated for key access to Mark’s office.

A discussion on keys ensued.

There is nothing in the bylaws that says who can be a counter. We can have another conversation about adding individuals later as needed.

1. Newcomer event

Barbie has given Ginny permission to invite newcomers to their home for a time of festive merrymaking. The Vestry is also welcome and is invited to help provide the food. December 2 from 6-8pm. Over 25% of those attending are new people. We need to welcome them additionally. Susan will coordinate who can attend and what they are bringing. We can safely have 30 people between all spaces. Just Vestry members, not spouses.

Closing prayer Ginny

On the horizon:

Sighs too Deep for Words December 5, 12, and 19th

Advent Quiet Day December 11

Christmas Cookie and Decorating December 16

Christmas Caroling December 17

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services