

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Vestry Meeting Minutes for Review
July 20, 2021

Present via Zoom: Rector Rev. Jon Stratton; Deacon the Ven. Harry Leip; Senior Warden Michael Shepley; Junior Warden Willie Meadows; Members Matt Bernico, Lisa Carpenter, Alicia Hernandez, Joyce LaFontain, Lisa Will-Smith; Treasurer Barbara Uhlemann; Clerk Julien Worland

Absent: Associate to the Rector Rev. Aaron Rogers, Faith Sandler

Call to Order and Reflection

The rector called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM, and Michael Shepley led the reflection.

Appointment of Timekeeper

Lisa Carpenter was appointed timekeeper.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June regular meeting and the special meeting on July 15 were unanimously approved as prepared.

Financial Report

Treasurer Barbara Uhlemann explained the migration of parish financial records to new software, QuickBooks Online. The cost will be \$700 per year. It is more flexible, permits several viewers to access information without the parish administrator's extra effort, and is easier for our auditors to review. During this first month, she presented preformatted reports but anticipated more customization in the future.

Barbara reviewed the balance sheet, liabilities and equity, funds activities, and income and expenses (budgeted versus actual) for the parish and for the food ministry, year to date. She alerted the vestry to some apparent errors and difficulties in the reports with consistently separating parish and TFM amounts, which she will investigate. Overall income and expenses were appropriate for this point in the year. Costs for the roof repair were within budget. She invited vestry members to call her if they had additional questions.

She said the parish was awaiting a bequest. New pew cushions will be a future additional cost. She explained that if possible, they will be posted as a capital expense, which would reduce our diocesan assessment. Funds for the installation of a new roof over Jon's office, approved by the vestry, were not yet spent.

Next month she will update the cash flow report and present a budget-by-class report separating parish and TFM data.

Decisions

Vandersall Recommendations. After a review of the Vandersall report, the parish's Generosity and Stewardship Committee recommended the vestry empower the rector to negotiate with Vandersall for up to \$10,000 to work on becoming more intentional about how the parish handles its money (1) by setting up structures and ways to track and give thanks to our donors, and (2) by training ten people for one-on-one stewardship conversations with parish members.

Motion. Joyce LaFontain made the motion as written above, and Lisa Carpenter seconded it. Barbara explained that funds would be withdrawn from bequests, which would affect our cash flow but not appear in our operating expenses. There was more discussion clarifying what the deliverables would be and clarifying the meaning of some of the terms Vandersall had used. Jon explained he expected we would benefit from more-detailed rich records of donations as a way of understanding trends over time, of being able to thank donors with more information in hand, of sharing more information with the congregation about our finances, and of recognizing donations received. The underlying principle is that more discussions about money are healthy if we tie them into our theology. Amy Barnes from the Generosity and Stewardship Committee will be our point person in dealing with Vandersall. The vestry passed the motion with one abstention.

Vestry Publications. Michael Shepley said the Vandersall report identified needs for more transparency about decision making, parish leadership, and parish finances. Several steps could be taken for improving transparency. These steps could include (1) reporting vestry actions either immediately or a month later after approval of the minutes, whether by publishing them in writing or by summarizing them at Sunday Mass; and (2) publishing summaries of parish financial reports either in the Sunday bulletin and/or in the E-Times. He added that, as a general rule, congregation members should have access to almost all of the minutes.

The vestry discussed the history of sharing vestry information, including agenda announcements, and shared ideas for improvements.

Plan: Michael Shepley, Alicia Hernandez, Lisa Carpenter, and the rector will meet to discuss how to publish vestry information and will report at the next vestry meeting, but they can implement changes before then if they choose.

Appointment of Delegate to Diocesan Convention. Michael Shepley has agreed to serve as our delegate until our next Annual Meeting.

Motion: Barbara Uhlemann made a motion to appoint Michael, which Lisa Carpenter seconded. There was no discussion and the vestry agreed unanimously.

Trinity Identity. For approval, the vestry discussed the recently created new Trinity logo. The vestry discussed the logo and its wording, “Trinity Episcopal St. Louis.”

Motion: Willie Meadows made a motion to adopt the committee’s recommendation for the new logo design and its wording. Matt Bernico seconded the motion, and the vestry passed it with one abstention.

Discussion

LGBTQ Plaque and Celebration. Costs for the event were \$2,931.00 or slightly more. Donations totaled \$3,345.60. After a final accounting, the parish will donate the excess to Sage as previously announced. To thank the 30 donors, the parish will send a photo of the plaque and a printed thank-you letter signed by the rector and senior warden. The parish will follow up with tax letters at end of the year.

Trinity Sabbath Week August 15-22. Jon explained that, as a witness to the importance of keeping Sabbath, taking time for leisure, and the human need for rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation, Trinity church will enter Sabbath mode for this period. During this time, the building will be closed, parish staff will be paid but off, and parish committees (including the vestry) will not meet. Services will be held on the two Sundays during this period, but they will be simple said services without music and featuring a short homily and minimal volunteers. TFM will announce the Sabbath in advance. The Sunday hot lunch will be hosted by non-Trinity volunteers.

Jon said he would prepare a write-up about this decision for I-Seek.

Motion: Barbara Uhlemann made a motion to celebrate this Sabbath event, and Lisa Will-Smith seconded it. The vestry passed the motion unanimously.

Updates

Building and Grounds. Willie Meadows reported Roof Tech inspected the work on July 7 and found a number of incomplete items, which the contractor will complete. After refurbishing the east wall, water damage has reappeared, and repairing it should be the contractor’s responsibility since they gave us the go-ahead on refurbishment.

There remain two holes in the ceiling of the upper room that need to be repaired.

Willie will sign a new contract for the repair of the roof over Jon’s office, at \$16,290, which is slightly below what was previously estimated and approved by the vestry.

A search is on for replacement compressors for the HVAC system.

Willie secured two bids on replacing the wood windows in Jon’s office.

Motion: Willie entertained a motion to accept a bid from Viviano's to replace all 5 breezeway and exterior windows for \$4,800. The motion was tabled until September to allow Barbara Uhlemann to update spreadsheets to assure there were sufficient funds available. She will send the data out for vestry approval.

Willie explained that he had arranged for scrubbing and waxing the SPH floor but the workers will not move furniture. He was arranging for volunteers and scheduling to avoid interfering with any parish functions.

Pastoral Concerns

The vestry discussed health and welfare concerns in the parish.

Check-In

Vestry members shared their current successes and challenges.

Closing Prayer and Adjournment

Jon closed the meeting with a prayer at 6:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Julien Worland, clerk