

Minutes Grace and St. Peter's Vestry, March 24, 2020

Note: This meeting was held via Zoom.com, because of the restrictions on gatherings in effect because of the Corona Virus. Parish operations have been drastically altered, including a shift to worship by video.

Present: Rev. Bob Bergner, Kelly Mattox (Senior Warden), Susan Stanley (Junior Warden), Linda Simmons (Treasurer), Arnie Pritchard (clerk), Whitney Batson, Jennifer Campbell, Beth Delancy, Chris Grant, Mark Mahaffy, Nadia Major, Sue O'Connell, Cindy Turner, Robin Zenobi

Excused Absences: None

Unexcused Absences: Roxanne Burrowes, Will Hart

Also Present: Henry Dodd

Bob offered an opening prayer

The agenda was approved

The minutes of the February 18 meeting were approved with two small changes which Bob had sent to Arnie

Treasurer's Report

There is no full Treasurer's report, but Linda did present some updates and questions.

Several checks have recently been cut and signed, so we are current with bills. Linda has also deposited some incoming funds in the bank.

She said that it was important to ask parishioners to keep current on their pledges if at all possible, during this extraordinary time.

Linda has spoken with Kim about getting pledges deposited when they come in, without the usual processing by two parishioners after Sunday services. Our ministries are continuing, although their form has changed. People can send checks to the office. We do not want to set up automatic withdrawal from bank accounts, because people's situations may change suddenly. Kelly mentioned that we can also collect pledges via credit card on the website, with a few modifications. Kelly and Linda will work together to see that this happens, and to figure out how to properly credit each donation.

Bob has asked Sue Stanley, chair of the Stewardship Committee, to do write something on the need for continuing pledges, to be included in his weekly message. There will also be a separate letter solely on this issue. [AP1]

Adaptation to the Virus

Worship

For the last two Sundays we have done one service, Morning Prayer at 9 A.M. On March 15 there was a congregation of nine people. On March 22 Bob, an acolyte and a musician did an on-line video service. There were some technical issues which were worked out and the video has been available for viewing on Facebook since a few hours after the service. We plan to continue this practice for the duration of the Covid-19 shutdown.

A question was raised about whether it is necessary to open the building for services. Bob thought that it gives an idea of continuity and familiarity. There was some discussion of this.

Gretchen Pritchard is keeping track of the number of viewings of the service.

The services will be on the website as well as on Facebook.

There was some discussion of whether we need a musician for these services.

Bob and Gretchen will discuss Holy Week ideas. Gretchen has picked up some ideas from a webinar run by Virginia Theological Seminary.

Outreach/Communication

We need to make sure that parishioners get the necessary links to participate on line.

We will invite the whole parish to a Zoom discussion every Thursday evening for the duration.

Dinner for a Dollar has continued with takeout meals handed to people outside the building. The same is true of the new site at Hamden Plains Methodist Church. Sue O'Connell had the idea of DFD deliveries. She will also offer to deliver prayer books and hymnals to those who need them at home.

Bob has heard positive responses to phone calls which have been made to parish members possibly in need. Sue O'Connell has identified one person who needs lots of support, with whom she talks almost every day.

The Hamden Chamber of Commerce newsletter mentioned the award which we received from the Black History Committee.

Meeting with Bishop Ahrens

The officers and Whitney had a Zoom conference with Bishop Laura Ahrens on March 17.

There was some talk about the nuts and bolts of mergers, but nothing really new. The diocese gave us a document outlining the rules and the process in some detail.

Linda mentioned some items from the meeting that were more specific:

- There are no “forced mergers”.
- There are different options for selling property when a merger happens.
- The diocese views us favorably/.
- Bishop Ahrens suggested that if we talk about a possible merger with another parish it should involve the whole congregation more than it has to date.

Other

Kelly said that the wardens from St. John’s North Haven had contacted our wardens, and there was a good meeting held via Zoom. St. John’s is responding to the virus about as we are, though they have stopped their community supper. They are interested in a joint picnic in September. The wardens of the two parishes are planning to meet by Zoom every two weeks. We may get together bigger groups when it is possible to hold an in-person meeting.

Saint John’s recently received a letter from the diocese, largely about the need for lay leadership to step up in parishes which have part-time priests upon whom great demands are being made. We did not receive this letter; we do not know why the diocese sent it to some parishes with part-time priests but not others.

For Easter, we do not know if we could hold an outdoor service, or whether such a gathering would be allowed if it involved more than ten people.

There was a suggestion that the vestry meet on Zoom every two weeks. We decided to assess this after Holy Week.

Sue O’Connell asked Bob how he had been affected by the sudden change in his work. Bob replied that he is working at least as much as usual but is doing all right.

The Alcoholics Anonymous twelve step group is still meeting, others meeting in our building have been cancelled. The AA group is supposed to focus on sanitizing downstairs. Cindy was in the building two weeks ago on a Friday and found lights on and doors unlocked.

There was some discussion of the possibility of restricting movement of AA participants in the building.

Bill Menosky and Bob have discussed installing locks so as to give everyone access only to space that they need. We have some quotes but nothing will happen for a while.

Bob will ask Kim to clearly remind the AA group about what they are supposed to do about lights, locks and cleaning. Sue O’Connell will leave cleaning supplies for them to use.

Bob commented on the amazing way in which members of the parish have stepped up during the current difficulties.

Kelly asked if we have told people what to do if infected. We have gotten the message out to some degree. Bob will add it to a message to the parish.

Bob offered a concluding prayer and the meeting adjourned.