

Minutes Grace and St. Peter's Episcopal Church Vestry, February 18, 2020

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

Excused Absences. Roxanne Burrowes, Jennifer Campbell, Beth Delancy

Unexcused Absences: Nadia Major

Also Present: John Anderson, Peter Festa

Bob offered an opening prayer. He then welcomed the two new members (Chris and Robin) and the two non-vestry members in attendance.

The agenda was approved after being amended to include a presentation by Peter.

The minutes of the January 21 meeting were approved with corrections.

Annual meeting review –

There was a consensus that the annual parish meeting was concise, informative, and followed by an excellent lunch. Holding the meeting in the sanctuary helped keep the meeting focused and saved time. The format worked well. Showing information on a screen with a projector worked well and helped minimize paper, although Robin said she had some difficulty seeing things on the screen from where she was sitting. We may need to make the on-screen material more readable, and/or to ask people to move up.

Inter-parish Mission Committee

Susan Stanley reported that the wardens had another good meeting with the wardens of Saint John's, North Haven. Bob continues to meet with their Priest in Charge, the Rev. Joseph Krasinski. There continues to be a cordial exchange of ideas, though no definite plans emerged this month.

Relations with diocese

Due to some re-shuffling of assignments at the diocese, Bishop Laura Ahrens is now the person to talk to about inter-parish collaborations and mergers. A meeting with her has been scheduled for March 17 at 2 P.M. at the Commons in Meriden. In order to be as efficient as possible, we plan to have one person asking all our questions. Please submit any questions or topics to Kelly, either directly or through Kim. Vestry members should let Kelly know if they will be attending. Car pools should be arranged. There is a vestry meeting on the evening of the same day, so those who attend the meeting with Bishop Ahrens should be able to report to the Vestry.

Will pointed out that we do a lot of collaboration with other organizations in program activities. Kelly responded that the collaboration to be discussed with Bishop Ahrens is more about financial matters and sharing resources.

Bob has informed Tiffany Reed we are not ready to join in the diocese's fund-raising campaign with selected parishes. Tiffany told Bob that the current round may be the last one.

After participating in the January vestry meeting Adam Yates, our diocesan consultant, wrote a very favorable note to Bishop Douglas about our efforts to confront our challenges.

Treasurer's Report

Since it is so early in the year, there is no real treasurer's report. Linda did mention several points.

We have recently spent about \$4,200 on electrical upgrades.

Bill Menosky and Bill Stanley have inspected the roof over the hallway, which is flat and collects water. The pitch which was there is gone. The two Bills have spoken with two contractors about re-pitching and about some structural work. It appears that this will cost about \$3,000 -3,500. This is preventive maintenance, not response to a crisis. The work will be done when warmer weather arrives.

It was moved, seconded, and passed to authorize the two Bills to go ahead with this.

Stewardship – Nothing new to report

Environmental Issues

Peter Festa had asked for the opportunity to discuss some possible pro-environment actions with the vestry.

Peter's suggestions:

- Environmental issues should be a regular part of the vestry agenda
- The parish should have an environmental committee, which he would be happy to organize. He has some ideas they could work on.
- He pointed out a large tapestry of a woodland stream which he got from Amazon and displayed on a wall in the Brewster Room. He has bought another one, which shows a photo of earth from the Moon. He has some ideas for putting them up in the sanctuary.
- Massaro farms offers subscriptions for organic produce. Peter suggested that during the season he could pick up the produce on Fridays and distribute it on Sundays, using a jar to collect contributions. We would need to collect about \$35 per week to cover the cost of the subscription. He sees this as an educational tool as well.
- Peter has heard that there is going to be a solar cooperative as part of a state program, with solar panels in Stratford. The co-op would supply electricity, and the cost would appear on UI bills in the same way as other electricity suppliers. Peter has spoken with the organizer, who works for U.S. Solar in Minnesota. The parish could join the Co-op and encourage parishioners to do so. The organizer said that the rate would be lower than UI's standard offer. Chris and Kelly each said that they have been involved with solar energy and there was a request that they circulate information about their experience. Kelly said that she does not believe our roof would qualify for solar panels.
- Peter has also met with people at St Peter's Cheshire. They are planning a session on meat and the planet; no date has been set yet. They would be happy to collaborate with us on environmental issues.

Jonathan Westphal is looking for a clean up site to work on.

Linda says we have \$500 that was donated to be used for environmental causes. We are open to more donations. We also have a lot of leftover reusable bags. Peter suggested selling them. We will offer them to the guests at Abraham's tent.

Peter will get us more information on some of these issues, will make announcements, and will attempt to recruit a committee.

Rectory/Building Committee

Sue O'Connell reported that Bill Menosky and Beth Delancy had met with an attorney who had offered us some pro bono advice on legal issues related to rentals. If we rent to a for-profit entity there are tax issues, and potentially hefty legal fees. Sue suggested that we pursue the possibility of sharing space with storefront churches. The Committee plans to draft a letter this weekend to such potential tenants. Linda explained some of the ins and outs of the tax issue – as soon as we rent to a for-profit, we have possible income tax liability for the revenue and property taxes on the space.

Renting to other churches might offer opportunities for joint ministry.

Mark raised the issue of possible problems with the corona virus. Kelly suggested that the Rectory Committee try think of a plan B in case students cannot travel between the U.S. and China. Allison and Whitney would need to be involved.

Town of Hamden events –

The town's gun buyback broke the area record for guns turned in. This is apparently going to be an annual event.

We just registered to participate in the Memorial Day Parade. We also plan to be at the Hamden Festival in June.

Dinner for a Dollar will open its second location at Hamden Plains Methodist Church this Saturday. The Hamden Plains Congregation will serve two Saturdays per month to start. We and the United Way are doing outreach for this. Another way to look for collaborators would be a flyer in the Chamber of Commerce monthly mailing.

The local NBC TV station will be at Grace and St. Peter's on Friday evening to do a piece on DFD.

Grace and St. Peter's 200th anniversary –

Mark reminded us that the building was consecrated on October 4, 1821. After some discussion a consensus emerged that we should begin focusing on the 200th anniversary commemoration in early 2021, with the idea of having a bishop visit for the Sunday service closest to the anniversary.

Sue O'Connell said that Bill Menosky and Joe Mackay are planning to put up the sign with the date of 1820 on March 16.

Operations Updates

- Music/Worship – Holly Schrader is fitting back in very well as organist for the time being. Laura Richling has commitments elsewhere through Easter. We are assuming that we will have the traditional Holy Week services. We are leaning towards participating in the Easter Vigil at Trinity on the Green. We might have some baptisms, and people previously members of other communions may be received into the Episcopal Church.
- The Lent program starts after the March 1 10 A.M. service and will run for five weeks.

- Our week for Abraham’s Tent starts on the evening of February 24 and ends on the morning of March 2.
- Sue O’Connell has raised a concern about possible infections from drinking from the chalice. We will continue to offer the chalice, but if people wish not to receive the wine that is fine.
- Altar Guild – All going smoothly
- Buildings and Grounds – See above. In addition:
 - An eagle scout may be painting the carpeted area downstairs in March as part of his project. Sue O’Connell raised \$130 from selling of unused pews from downstairs, which will be used to buy paint.
 - We would like to hold another work day in April.
 - Linda pointed out that we now have a programmable thermostat for heat. On Saturday and Sunday it turns on and off automatically at the right times.
- Communications – Linda said that we have sometimes done Christmas and Easter mailings to people who have recently moved into Hamden. She passed around a flyer for doing this this year. The vestry voted to approve up to \$500.
- Staff -Continues to do their usual outstanding job
- Web presence – Still excellent
- Pastoral Care (including home visits) – Some visits continue, although not many people are asking for them
- Parish Activities – Nothing new beyond those listed above.

The vestry adjourned and read Compline.

Next Vestry Meeting March 17, 2020