

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2020

Present: Jon Ewbank, Carol Gaige, Meg Hughes, Sandee Hughes, Debbie Lambeth, Lynn Paska, Paul Smigelski, Fr. Matt Stromberg, Jeff Wengrovius

Absent: Rich Unger

Vestry convened via Zoom at 7:05 p.m. Lynn Paska moved to accept the September minutes. Jeff Wengrovius seconded, all approved.

Rector's Report

On October 18, Father Matt will offer a special Saint Luke's Day Healing Mass, to include prayers for medical professionals and others coping with the pandemic.

A spooky Halloween Movie Night is scheduled for October 31 in St. George's graveyard, and will feature a showing of "Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown" at 5:30 p.m. and "Frankenweenie" at 6:30 p.m.

All Souls Day will be observed in church at 6 p.m. November 1. Parishioners will be encouraged to submit names of loved ones who have died, for remembrance.

The Mere Christianity video/discussion series continues on Sundays at 6:30 p.m. (except for the evening of All Souls). Zoom discussions are scheduled for Tuesdays at 7 p.m. through November 10.

A disciplinary panel recently unanimously agreed that Bishop William Love violated his ordination vows and the Episcopal Church's canon law by unilaterally banning same-sex marriage in the Albany Diocese. The consequences of his actions are yet to be determined, but it is not unreasonable to think that perhaps he will be forced into retirement.

Pledge Sunday is scheduled for November 22, Christ the King Sunday.

Father has made good progress on the new website. Content will include descriptions of our ministries and live updates of sermons and Facebook posts.

Senior Warden's Report

N/A

Junior Warden's Report

Before providing his report, Jon Ewbank echoed a concern that Sandee Hughes recently raised regarding Vestry minutes. These should be offered publicly once approved. Meg Hughes agreed to provide minutes to Jon Pearson for publication on the website, once Vestry have had the opportunity to review and comment on them.

Jon has been very active in supporting the following upgrades to church buildings:

Sanctuary

Leaking steam line – Martin Environmental Services has been contracted to perform asbestos abatement necessary before we can repair a steam leak in the rear of the sanctuary. The area will be tented and nobody will be allowed in the building on October 16 during this process. Once the abatement is complete, Crisafulli Brothers will repair the leak itself.

Cornice work on the church – Repairs have been completed.

Vent fans – The ceiling ventilation fans have been rehabilitated with the addition of new fan belts and lubrication. One of them still needs some work on its exterior housing, which has gotten rusty, but we have achieved a great improvement to the sanctuary's safety with the work done so far.

Roof ridgeline bracing – Dave Kennison and Jon are planning to cooperate and get this work done. It involves placing an upright beam and then gradually jacking it up to reinforce support of the church's roofline.

Cranmer Hall

Dormer Repair and painting – Work to commence this coming week.

Stone steps repair – Work has commenced on this project.

Boiler Inspections – The failed items from the boiler inspection have been corrected, and a re-inspection date is set for early November.

Great Hall

Kitchen and Bathroom plumbing repairs – Repairs have been completed.

Dishwasher – We had to re-bid the dishwasher, as there was confusion as to the correct replacement unit. The new bid will include removal and disposal of the old unit. We will also need an electrician to correctly connect the new unit. As installation of the dishwasher is not critically necessary in the short term, the plan is to offer a down payment to secure the deal and then follow through on the job within a few months, spreading out the expense.

Hallway retiling – It was determined that the existing tile contains asbestos, which would require abatement were we to remove it. We have one bid in hand, and a second one is being sought for overlaying the existing tile in such a fashion that old tiles can remain safely in place with a new floor on top.

Treasurer's Report

Jeff Wengrovius provided the following update on the budget, effective as of September 30, 2020:

- St. George's financial condition is very good. We have cash surpluses in both our Trustco bank account and at RBC. Our budget is still balanced (but this will change in November).
- Pledge payments on budget.
- Expenses still down due to Covid-19.
- CARES act PPP loan of \$23,300 has been totally spent on salaries, payroll costs, and utilities. PPP loan application for forgiveness has been submitted – we qualify for 100% of forgiveness.
- 2020 audit – Plans for an internal audit have been initiated and the review will be finalized later this year after the bulk of the approved capital spending is completed.
- Expenses will go over budget in November as we pay our bills for capital projects. We are projecting to take cash out of RBC to maintain a good cash position. We will spend the money sitting in various special funds, such as the garden and capital fund, and zero these out (forever).

Meg Hughes inquired as to the use of the fund earmarked for gardens. Jeff confirmed that this money will help pay for the replacement of three sets of slate steps leading to Cranmer Hall. As the stairways have become unsafe and unsightly, Meg agreed that it was reasonable to devote existing garden money to the project, but she expressed a concern regarding the funding of future garden expenditures. Jeff assured Vestry that our operating fund will continue to have the flexibility to meet the modest needs of Garden Ministry, and encouraged Meg to communicate any such requirements.

- Comments:
 - We are in the process of spending a significant amount of money on capital projects. Jeff suggests that we complete these projects and pay the corresponding bills before we propose any new projects.
 - A long-term strategy for building maintenance is needed to optimize our capital spending.

Jeff closed his report with a rumination on how the church can best encourage and reward the continued outstanding service of a certain few active parishioners. We want these folks to know that their volunteer efforts are seen and greatly appreciated. He spoke specifically of Kevin Decker, who has steadfastly provided beautiful altar flowers each week over the past several months, and Anne and David Kennison, whose tireless and capable efforts made it possible for St. George's to offer ongoing worship services (both in-person and virtual) without skipping a beat during the pandemic. Jim Wingate is another key volunteer who hasn't been thanked sufficiently for his devotion to pastoral care. Jon Ewbank asserted that the core Garden Ministry members (Suzy Unger, Debbie Lambeth, Barb Wengrovius, and Meg Hughes)

are also deserving of acknowledgement. Sandee Hughes suggested that something as simple as a handwritten thank-you note can be a meaningful way to express appreciation. She and Lynn Paska will help follow up with Jeff and Father, and all on Vestry should remain attuned to the need to personally thank and encourage fellow churchgoers who enable St. George's to function properly.

Community Liaison Report

Rich Unger was absent but had reported to Vestry that Ghostly Victorian and Colonial Haunting Candlelight tours of the Stockade are being co-sponsored by the Schenectady Historical Society and the Schenectady Heritage Foundation on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings at 6:30 and 7:30 pm, through October 30. Tickets are \$12. Many of the tours are already sold out.

Father updated Vestry on progress at Arthur's Market, set to open soon. He recently toured the store and was favorably impressed. Having this delightfully updated Stockade institution in our near proximity will be a boon to St. George's. Father and Rich are working with the store's owners on an agreement whereby some parking spaces in our lot will be set aside for Arthur's customers, and we will receive monetary support for the upkeep of the lot.

Fundraising Committee

An estimated \$500 was netted from the sale of chrysanthemums last month.

Gardens Ministry

The core group of parishioners who have worked on the church grounds weekly since May (Barb Wengrovius, Suzy Unger, Debbie Lambeth) attended a tea party at Meg Hughes's home Friday, October 9. Meg surprised the volunteer gardeners with fleece jackets embroidered with an Episcopal shield and the words "St. George's Church Garden Ministry." The gifts were sponsored by Meg as a gesture of appreciation.

Book Club

"In the Bleak Midwinter" by Julia Spencer-Fleming is the next club read. Meeting date/platform TBD.

Hospitality Committee

Father Matt has graciously picked up hosting the Sunday zoom coffee hour. Meredith Ewbank has agreed to be backup. The link is in the weekly communication from the church. Sandee Hughes hopes more people log on as the conversation is always interesting. She appreciates Father and Meredith making this fellowship opportunity available.

Communications

Lynn Paska advises that photos of the St. Francis Day Blessing of the Animals on October 4 are up on the website.

Deadline for the December Georgian newsletter is Friday, December 4.

New Business

Jon Ewbank made a motion to confirm Bob Paska and David and Anne Kennison as our Diocesan Convention candidates. Carol Gaige seconded the motion and all approved.

Jeff Wengrovius made a motion that Vestry accept Sue Hartz's resignation as Senior Warden. Lynn Paska seconded the motion and all approved that Sue be released from that duty, with thanks for her past service.

Father Matt advised that David Kennison has consented to succeed Sue provisionally as Senior Warden, with a formal bid for confirmation at Annual Meeting. Several on Vestry commented that this is terrific news for the church, as David has deep knowledge regarding our campus buildings as well as exceptional skills that will serve him well in this demanding position. Lynn moved to accept David as our interim Senior Warden, Debbie Lambeth seconded the motion, and all resoundingly approved.

As our final duty of the evening, Vestry agreed to appoint Sean Albert to finish out Jim Turley's Vestry term. Jeff made the motion, Jon seconded it, and all approved.

Concerns about how we are meant to hold an Annual Meeting during an ongoing pandemic remain unanswered. Father will seek guidance from colleagues within the diocese.

Meeting adjournment

There being no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m. The next meeting will be at 7 p.m. November 19.

Respectfully submitted,
Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk