

**St. Anne's Parish
Vestry Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2020**

Clergy and Vestry Members Present

Rev. Manoj Zacharia
Linda Adamson
Al Collins
Thea Chimento
Betty Creighton
Carrie Dana-Evans
Mark Grimes
Kev Hays
Katherine Hilton
Jason Houser
David Huggins
Sharon McElfish
Townsend McNitt
Sarah Morse
Paul Pope
Susan Thaxton

Non-Vestry Members Present

Howard Buskirk, clerk of Vestry

Welcome and Introduction of Guests

Vestry met through a Zoom call because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Manoj+ opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. with prayer.

Rector's Report

Manoj+ asked if there were any questions about a written report he circulated before the meeting.

The written report observes that the Parish has been “adaptive” in enacting liturgies and plans to continue the current schedule of services. Thanksgiving services will be held at St. Anne’s within the COVID-19 parameters. Christmas services will be modified slightly. The staff is looking into conducting the services outside on the “circle” with congregants standing in circular form outside of the gates. Manoj+ reported he has appointed Judy Guy and Petey Cosby as chairs of the new Outreach Grants Committee.

The newest member of the clergy, Alyssa Pasternak Post, has started to “discern and shape her ministerial portfolio in wonderful ways” and is getting to know the Parish, Manoj+ said. Mark asked Manoj+ to pass along the Vestry’s thanks and welcome.

Mark asked about the possibility of soliciting donations for the St. Anne’s Cemetery from outside the Parish community, especially from among groups that might not normally

donate to a religious organization. “That’s going to be a long term challenge,” Mark said. Manoj+ also said Arthur Hall, a member of the cemetery staff had passed away.

Facilities Report

Jason discussed a report he distributed to the Vestry on various long-term projects. He asked for a vote by Vestry approving a second coat of paint on the Parish House, needed to protect the wrapper of the building. Linda moved that the Vestry approve an additional \$9,000 from the Reserve Property Fund for completion of the second coat of paint on the Parish House by Covered Bridges. Katherine seconded the motion, and it was approved on a unanimous vote.

The Parish plans to install new water coolers in the Parish House, which will allow for the filling of water bottles, Jason said He asked for a motion from the Vestry. Dave moved that the Vestry approve \$3,900 dollars from the Capital Fund for replacement of the water fountains in the Parish House. Paul seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

The refinishing of the Parish Hall Floor has been completed, Jason said. Spire AVL will be completing the installation of cameras needed for enhanced streaming of services on Oct. 19. The purchase of the cameras and other technology was previously approved by the Vestry.

The Facilities Committee continues to work on the repair of the church clock and the lawn lighting around the church, Jason said. Paul said he missed the ringing of the steeple bells and hoped they would be restored soon.

Treasurer’s Report

Susan updated the Vestry on the latest on the budget and the effects of the ongoing pandemic. Giving was strong until September, during which revenues came in at about half the budgeted amount. September is normally a strong month and saw the lowest donations in a number of years, Susan said. The numbers were also out of synch with the summer, through which giving has been “surprisingly” strong.

“We have a relatively healthy surplus right now, primarily driven ... by reduced expenses,” Susan said. Many donations are now online, but the Parish still gets checks in the mail every week, she said.

Vestry members asked if there was any technical or other reason why giving has been low. Linda noted that while the stock market is doing well there is widespread suffering. If the trend continues we need to ask what is going on in the Parish and how lives are being affected by the pandemic, Linda said. Thea noted that some government support programs ran out in August and September and “larger forces” should be taken into account.

If this is a trend, we need to think about the implications for stewardship, Susan said. Vestry should wait for October numbers before sounding any alarms, she said.

Mark warned against putting too much emphasis on numbers from any one month and noted that the Parish has cut more than \$85,000 from its budget. “We need to keep an eye on this” and the implications for the messaging on stewardship, Mark said.

Year to date, the Parish is showing about an \$80,000 surplus before the impact of investment gains. Preschool for the Arts at St. Anne's numbers are not included. Cemetery contributions are low because of slow plot sales.

Stewardship Committee

Dave said the committee is seeing extremes, with some pledges up as much as 50% and others down as much as 90% over last year. Pledges are coming in a “touch slower” than expected, he said. Dave asked for volunteers from Vestry to help spread the message, speaking at the three services each Sunday.

Manoj+ thanked Dave for his leadership of the stewardship team. Mark asked if there is any way to check with those who have cut their pledges to see if there is a pastoral need. Dave noted that the committee doesn't have access to individual giving totals. Betty said that kind of outreach is appropriately left to the rector.

Susan said some may be giving their money to other organizations in light of the pandemic. Carrie said for younger parishioners it's important to communicate on social media.

Nominating Committee

Manoj+ moved that Paul, Betty, Kev, Vollie Melson and Judy Olson be appointed to serve on the Nominating Committee. Paul will serve as chair. Katherine seconded the motion. The resolution was approved on a unanimous vote.

Diocesan Convention Resolutions

Vestry needs to be aware that the Diocesan Convention approved creation of a reparations fund with an initial \$1 million investment, Mark said. The Diocese has urged congregations to prayerfully consider contributing to the fund. No details are yet available about how the fund will be used. No formal request has been made by the Diocese so no decisions need to be made now, but the Vestry needs to be up to date on developments and begin discernment, he said. A discussion followed.

Manoj+ noted that St. Anne's delegates to the Convention discussed the resolution during a recent Adult Forum. “There was elation at the fact that the Diocese of Maryland has established a fund and there were also questions,” he said. One area of question is whether the money would be better spent locally, perhaps through a scholarship fund. “There are a lot of conversations.” We need to pray, educate ourselves and begin collective discussions, but there is no need to rush, Manoj+ said. The Diocese hasn't formally requested money.

We need to be prepared as a Vestry to answer questions from the parish, Kev said. Jason agreed. “If the Vestry feels it's time to lead, we should lead,” he said.

Vestry needs to get ahead of the discussion and frame the discussion, Sarah said. “The word reparations means repair” and the most important first step is the acknowledgment of past wrongs, Linda said.

“This is a very important topic,” Al said. “I want to make sure we approach this in a prayerful way ... and be very open to how the spirit leads us.”

Mark said Vestry has to represent the entire Parish and needs to be concerned about the views of all members of the congregation. Similar to the Diocese, the Parish could use a portion of its endowment as the source of funds, rather than individual pledges, he said. . The Vestry agreed to the statement: “We are prayerfully considering how and if St. Anne’s may participate, but we will not use funds from parishioner’s pledges.”

Dave said that route is correct given sensitivities among some parishioners. Katherine said it makes sense to have some direction now during the Stewardship campaign.

Townsend encouraged prayer and discernment involving the entire congregation, rather than making any choices now.

The Diocese came to a decision over a period of time, following prayer, and the Parish also has to go through a deliberative process.

Approval of Minutes and Closing Prayer

Mark moved that the Vestry waive the reading of the September minutes and approve them as amended. The motion was seconded by Sarah Morse and approved in a unanimous vote. Jason led the closing prayer. Vestry adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Howard Buskirk
Clerk