

**St. Anne's Parish
Vestry Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020**

Clergy and Vestry Members Present

Rev. Manoj Zacharia
Linda Adamson
Thea Chimento
Al Collins
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

Rev. Dion Thompson
Howard Buskirk, clerk of Vestry

Welcome and Introduction of Guests

Vestry met through a Zoom call because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. Manoj+ opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. with prayer.

Reflection and Pastoral Care

Dion+ offered a reflection on the first 16 verses of Romans. Dion+ said after he suffered an injury during the summer he was touched by the response and has focused on ways to enhance pastoral care. The Parish had planned prayer walks during Advent and that was gaining steam but had to be scuttled because of growing COVID concerns.

Dion+ updated Vestry on the Stephen Ministry's program and on work parishioners are doing to write letters to other members of the church concerning life events. Hospital visits have resumed, but only for clergy, he said. The prayer chain has been reinvigorated, he said. Work is ongoing on the liturgy and on streaming services. The 5:30 p.m. service was "catching fire" before the church had to close again. Clergy is working on what the Christmas Eve will look like, he said. "We are setting that high bar and we are striving to meet it in all ways," he said.

“The breadth of your work is amazing and so meaningful,” Mark said. Mark asked Dion+ if he has felt safe making visits to parishioners. Dion+ said he has been doing his best to stay safe. Manoj+ expressed gratitude for the work Dion+ is doing for the Parish.

Dion+ noted that the Longest Night service Dec. 21 will be especially meaningful this year in light of COVID and recent deaths.

Manoj+ said he plans to call in other members of the clergy and staff to make reports to the Vestry.

Rector’s Report

Madeleine Hughes and Walter Leisersohn have been selected to lead the Evening Prayer Ministry. Manoj+ also paid tribute to longtime leader Jerry Chambers who recently died. The Parish plans a live-streamed service on Christmas Eve and taped service for Christmas Day, as well as a Lessons and Carols service at 5:30 p.m. on Jan. 3.

Facilities Report

It has been a quiet month, Jason said. There have been water issues at the South Street entrance of the Parish Hall including problems with the gutter system and downspouts. Mark moved that the Vestry retroactively ratify the EC’s approval of \$2,023 to repair downspouts on the South Street entrance to be funded out of the Capital Account. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Treasurer’s Report

Susan updated the Vestry on the latest on the budget and the effects of the pandemic. Everything has been “tracking” as in recent months, she said. Giving is slightly over budget, while expenses are under budget, she said. After a challenging spring, “the church is very fortunate we’re ending up in a pretty good place,” she said. The budget process is in motion and will soon be submitted to Vestry. The audit is nearly complete.

Thea asked when the Parish had last changed auditors. Mark said the church doesn’t have an obligation to change auditors as a public company would, but doing so could be good business practice.

Stewardship Committee

David reported that while contributions are coming in the Parish is still short by 117 pledges of reaching its goal. David thanked Vestry members for their help in reaching out. Unit pledges are running 23% higher than last year, but total pledges are about 75 less than this time last year, he said. “It’s a very confusing issue,” he said. “Things are a little bit up in the air.”

David said there have been questions about whether money for reparations will come out of the budget and they will not, as the Vestry already agreed. There have also been questions about the 8 a.m. service, he said.

The Rite I 8 a.m. service is “definitely coming back once we are able to reconvene safely,” Manoj+ said. The Parish will restore services at 8, 9:30 and 11:15 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., he said. “The structural integrity of all the services will be there,” he said.

PASA Budget

Mark moved that the Vestry approve a 2% PASA tuition increase for the Preschool for the Arts at St. Anne’s for the 2021-22 school year. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote,

Susan said PASA initially didn’t want to increase tuition in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and to help out families, but the problem is that leaves out teachers who hope to see their salaries raised. By not keeping up with costs, a private school can end up having to raise tuition more precipitously later, she said. Tuition needs to be “pacing with our expenses and making sure teachers can continue to also get salaries increases,” she said.

Nominating Committee

Paul thanked other members of the committee for “their intensive work.” Paul reported that Howard Buskirk, Katie Creeley, Kara Friedell, Jason Houser and David Huggins have been nominated for Vestry. Joe Clapsdale, Kay Davis, Elizabeth Rogers and Bill Silva were nominated as Diocesan Delegates. “I was impressed with how spiritual this whole process was,” Paul said. The other members of the committee were Betty, Kev, Vollie Melson and Judy Olson.

Housing Allowance

Mark moved that the Vestry to approve housing allowances sought by clergy of \$50,000 for Manoj+ and \$25,575 for Dion+. The motion was approved on a unanimous vote. Clergy each year are allowed to request that a portion of their compensation be categorized as housing allowance. Mark explained that Vestry has to approve the allowance but has no responsibility to vet their requests.

Cemetery Plaques

Linda offered a slight modification to language on plaques that will be installed in St. Anne’s Cemetery. The biggest change is to make clear that the cemetery is “all inclusive” now without asserting that there was no discrimination when it opened in 1790, she said. “We know it was diverse, we don’t have documentary that it included everybody in the past,” she said. Mark moved that the Vestry approve the language for the cemetery plaques as presented by Linda, Al and the Cemetery Committee, which was approved by a unanimous vote.

Diocesan Resolution 2020-06:

Manoj+ reminded the group that the opportunity for weekly discerning prayer is ongoing on Wednesdays at noon and thanked Vestry members who have so far participated. Mark began the discussion by noting that at this time no direct request to help fund the resolution has come from the Diocese. In planning

ahead, the parish seems to have three viable options for response for proceeding:

1. Do nothing until we hear more from Diocese with specific information on its plan;
2. Participate in the Diocesan Reparations Fund in some way (with no amount specified at this time) with funds applied from the endowment; or
3. Take funds from the endowment and put it toward healing and empowerment with guidance from, for example, the Blue Sky Committee, or another entity, to help guide the process.

Mark asked for group feedback on the three options and gave several examples of other religious entities have done to work toward healing and empowerment. He also noted that, given the size of St. Anne's endowment, even one percent of it would mean \$50,000 that could be put into a fund for healing work in Annapolis.

Vestry members made several suggestions, including making a multi-year monetary commitment rather than a one-time amount and partnering with the diocese in this effort to support it but continue to work in our own town. Sarah asked if there was a decision timeframe and Mark pointed out that there is none as of yet. Carrie pointed out that not having specific information on the Diocesan plan makes it difficult to determine a direction. Jason noted that since the pandemic continues to impact churches in the Diocese, having a discussion about a large sum of money is difficult. He further stated that we are now discerning ways to address healing and reconciliation that go on every day in the work we already do in the community. All acknowledge that this issue has a political aspect and that any communications on the subject needs to bear that in mind.

Kev, a member of the Blue Sky Committee, reminded the group that this committee was created with the specific goal of finding new and creative community partnerships that will help create a thriving community. He pointed out that reparations isn't just money, it also means giving help where it's needed.

Linda noted that she recently attended the annual meeting of ACT, where she heard people from Ark and Dove Presbyterian Church in Odenton speak on how they as a congregation are confronting their collective racist past and what they are doing to address and repair it.

Al spoke eloquently about the need to support the Diocese and the resolution as it has been presented. He also noted that this discussion occurs before we have complete information from the Diocese.

Betty suggested that the parish reach out to the Diocese to thank them for inspiring us to take bold steps toward reparation and reconciliation on the local level. Thea concurred, noting that St. Anne's is one of the dioceses' larger parishes and we should be mindful of the potential of example. Betty elaborated, noting that a larger fund like the diocesan one helps smaller parishes have an impact when they contribute what they can to a larger one to address a specific issue.

Mark reminded the group that a key tenet of St. Anne's outreach work is that it includes direct parishioner involvement, lifting up those who help with the effort as much as those who receive the benefits. He thanked the group for their thoughtful comments and noted that the discussion has helped clarify a direction going forward.

Manoj+ asked that everyone prayerfully keep prayerfully discerning about this issue and reminded the group that the straw poll taken tonight in no way represented a decision by the parish on this matter.

Blue Sky Committee Report

Kev shared a recent development directly related to the mission of the committee. Judy Guy, a resident of Heritage Harbor, reached out to ask if the group of women there who raise funds for specific projects might partner with St. Anne's to help purchase books and school supplies for children attending virtual school at the Stanton Center. That effort led to a follow up idea of addressing any technical problems involved in making virtual school available there. Kev will speak with IT Committee member John Purnell to follow up. The Blue Sky Committee will talk about how to make this happen at its next meeting. Kev also reported on a meeting with Najiba Hlemi of Seeds for Success, who will also attend the next meeting talk about that project. Kev reminded everyone that the goal of this group is to help the community thrive so St. Anne's thrives, too, with a three-year strategy starting with smaller projects and growing from there. He thanked the committee members for being able to discern and take action at the same time.

Approval of November Minutes

The November minutes were mailed to Vestry members prior to the meeting. Mark moved that the reading of the November minutes be waived and that they

be accepted as submitted. Thea seconded the motion and it passed with a voice vote.

The meeting closed at 9:21 p.m. with a prayer led by David.

Respectfully submitted,
Howard Buskirk
Clerk