

St. Alban's Episcopal Church
Minutes of Vestry Meeting, As Approved
Wednesday, August 19, 2020

Officers Present: Geoffrey Hoare (Rector), Ken Patterson (Senior Warden), Trevor (Ted) Swett (Junior Warden), Hollis McLoughlin (Treasurer), and Carol A. Aschenbrener (Secretary).

Members Present: Carol A. Aschenbrener, Paul Brewster, Walker Carter, Leo Coco, Rachel Colson, Glenn Davis, Lisa Garnett, Barbara Manard, Karina Rodriguez, Dudley Winthrop.

Youth representatives: Annie McLean, Ruthie Rhodes.

Members not Present: Megan King, Josepha Musabyemariya Nelson

Staff Members Present: Jim Quigley, Emily Griffin and Yoimel González Hernández (Associate Rectors), Doug Dykstra (Director of Finance).

Others Present: Robin Rudd (WSA) and Heather Sondel (Diocesan Delegate).

Call to Order: The Rector called the meeting to order via Zoom conference call at approximately 6:30 PM and led the vestry in prayer.

Opening Meditation: Vestry member Leo Coco opened by noting that this was the third reflection he was offering during three years on vestry. He sometimes finds it difficult to maintain his usual stance of facing life with an abundance of hope during the crises we currently face, but he hasn't given up. While quarantining, he has found sources of resilience in painting, yoga, reading poetry and, most recently, learning to play the ukulele. He read three poems that convey hope and beauty: "Whistling Swans" by Mary Oliver, "On the Fifth Day" by Jane Hirshfield, and "The Peace of Wild Things" by Wendell Berry. (All are readily available online.) Members of the vestry responded by sharing some recent experiences that reminded them of hope and beauty. Paul Brewster's description of the "unrestrained joy" of the family puppy discovering the beach for the first time resonated with many.

Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting: Upon motion seconded, the Vestry approved the minutes of its regularly scheduled meeting held on July 17, 2020.

[Vestry Action 2020.7-1]

Report on Youth Ministry: Vestry member Glenn Davis commended Yoimel for keeping the youth program running during the summer, adding new virtual gatherings, providing resources for youth and their parents and coordinating a successful Youth Sunday on June 14, with 13 youth contributing to the service in some way. The fall program will continue to be comprised of four age groups: Rite 13 (6th-7th grades), Journey to Adulthood (8th-9th grades), Senior Youth (10th-11th grades) and 12th grade. A number of the experienced group leaders will be returning and Yoimel would will be working to recruit additional leaders.

Jim and Emily are leading the Formation Task Force, which is evaluating ideas and suggestions for resumption of youth programming in September. They are exploring a new format for this year that would begin with a Zoom gathering of all three youth groups (no 12th grade class needed this year) for devotion, Scripture and music before breaking into the separate groups. All groups would begin the year with six weeks of the “Dismantling Racism” special curriculum of the Episcopal Church before moving to their specialized curricula. Although the Friday Night Grate Patrols remain on hold, there likely will be an opportunity for youth to prepare sandwiches and/or casseroles in their own homes for pick-up by a volunteer.

Stewardship Report on the Annual Appeal: Vestry members Rachel Colson and Lisa Garnett reported that campaign planning was in process and they hoped to do initial contact in September, with follow-up in October linked to other church activities. The campaign would likely end in November with follow-up in December and January. They are looking for volunteers to share stories of generosity in the October testimony. They are also looking for volunteers to help with calls. Ken Patterson stressed the expectation that all vestry members would help with the calls.

Treasurer’s Report: Treasurer Hollis McLoughlin commended Director of Finance Doug Dykstra for the comprehensive financial report. All indications at present are that we will make budget for the year. Although we expect a shortfall in income of about \$100,000, this should be offset by decreased expenses while the church is closed and deferral of hiring a parish administrator until after we re-open. Geoffrey, Hollis and Doug will continue to monitor finances closely. Hollis noted that the financial picture for 2021 was likely to be more challenging.

Upon motion seconded, the Treasurer’s Report was adopted.

[Vestry Action 2020.7-2]

Senior Warden’s Report and Update on Re-gathering: Senior Warden Ken Patterson reported that the St. Alban’s Regathering Team (START) had begun its work, with the following subcommittees and their chairs: Worship (Dudley Winthrop); Music (Matthew Steynor); Facilities (Ted Swett); Kitchen Use (Barbara Manard); Technology (Deborah Potter); Communications (Megan King); Finance (Hollis McLoughlin); Op Shop (Robin Rudd); Parish Life (Megan King); and Christian Education (Jim Quigley). The Executive Committee is charged with general oversight and will take the lead on issues such as the timing of gathering in person, based on reports from the subcommittees and external factors such as the positivity rate for COVID-19 testing in our region. Some subcommittees have already met and there will be an update at the September vestry meeting.

Since the coronavirus is spread by airborne transmission, the ability of our air handling systems to provide sufficient fresh air exchanges is a key issue. Ken thanked Geoffrey, Charles Porter, and Ted Swett for their persistence in pursuing an engineering study of the HVAC systems. In the interim, we continue to explore safe options that might be open to allow very limited and use of the building by staff and “essential” volunteers, with physical distancing and mask requirements.

Once the engineering study is completed and other needs for safe re-opening are identified by START, we will have a clearer picture of the financial implications of changes needed in order to reopen safely. Ken has had several conversations with an insurance specialist and noted that the church's insurance almost certainly would not cover any damages awarded on claims related to being infected by coronavirus, although the insurer might fund the defense on any such claims. It will be necessary to have people sign a waiver of liability in various circumstances, such as volunteers and participants at weddings and funerals.

Rector's Report: Rector Geoffrey Hoare shared some of the ways that clergy, staff continue to facilitate community during this period when we cannot gather in person. Coffee Hours are held twice monthly, a number of small groups continue to meet and Sunday worship services in English and Spanish continue to evolve.

Geoffrey recently submitted to the bishop two requests for limited re-opening, one for up to 20-person gatherings for baptisms, weddings and funerals and another for limited volunteers to organize the backlog of donations to the Op Shop. He shared the good news that the kitchen range can be brought into compliance with code by venting the range hood directly out through the wall, a less costly solution than had been anticipated. Finally, he noted that the Executive Committee is considering the feasibility of a focused appeal to cover some of the significant costs associated with re-opening, such as renovation of restrooms and upgrading the HVAC system.

Junior Warden's Report: Junior Warden Ted Swett expanded on the building ventilation issues referenced in previous reports. The HVAC systems are old and were put together in patchwork fashion, complicating routine maintenance. Because of the age of the systems, our ongoing repair costs have been high. Replacement of these systems would be expensive; two recent estimates for new cooling systems range from \$370,000 to \$1.02 million. This existing capital need has taken on new urgency with growing evidence of aerosolization as a significant factor in the spread of coronavirus. As noted in reports from the Rector and Senior Warden, assuring the adequacy of ventilation is a key issue in planning for the eventual re-opening of our buildings. The church has hired a contractor to perform an "air audit" of all HVAC air handlers in our buildings to provide an understanding of where we stand with respect to the current air quality guidelines promulgated by the Centers for Disease Control and what upgrades or modifications might be needed. Such services are currently in high demand so, as of this date, the audit has not been scheduled.

On the positive side, Ted summarized the continued progress on water mitigation and the refreshment projects in Satterlee and Trenbath. He reported that much needed pruning of large trees around the church and at the back of Satterlee kitchen would commence on August 26th. Thanks to a generous donation from some parishioners and a contribution from the Pyle Fund (an endowment subfund dedicated to landscaping purposes), this project can be completed without any draw from the Reserve Fund.

Other Reports: A number of other reports were received by the vestry. Highlights from those reports include the following:

- Associate Rectors Emily Griffin and Jim Quigley are co-chairing the Christian Education Regathering Subgroup which includes representatives from Adult Formation Team, Children’s Chapel, Sunday School and Way of Life. They reported that plans are underway to continue Children’s Chapel on Zoom and offer Godly Play classes online, with frequency to be determined by September. Baptism catechists will meet online with families seeking preparation for baptism. A number of small groups have been meeting online over the summer and will continue to do so. There will be a report later on any new groups forming and existing groups that are open to new members. The pilot Sacred Ground group has 9 members and there will be an opportunity to form another group in the fall if there is interest. EFM does not currently have the minimum of 6 participants needed for a new class this fall. The Adult Formation Team is considering new formats for online sessions. The Advent Retreat could be accomplished in a physically distant format at Memorial House in Rehoboth; no commitment is needed until mid-October.

Emily updated the vestry on continued enhancements that she and Yoimel are implementing for the services in Spanish. As a board member for the Godly Play Foundation, she is currently involved on the Search Committee for a new Executive Director.

- Vestry member Josepha Musabyemariya reported on recent conversations with the Headmistress and Administrator for St.Saviour’s School and the directors of non-profit entities responsible for Hope and Resurrection School. They expressed appreciation for the 2020 donations of \$19,000 from St. Alban’s that each school received. The Global Missions Committee share information related to expressed needs from the schools. Vestry members interested in more information may contact Josepha.

After closing prayers, the vestry went into executive session at 7:52 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Aschenbrener
Secretary