

VESTRY MINUTES
Christ Episcopal Church
Montpelier, Vermont

February 15, 2016 – 6:30 p.m.

Members present: Rilla Murray, Senior Warden, Chair; Helen Bryan, Steve Dale, Josh Fitzhugh, Ted Long, Junior Warden; Kate McCann, Liz Slayton, Corrie Wilcox, Denise Womer

Others in attendance: Paul Habersang, Priest-in-Partnership; Ginny Catone, Secretary; John (JJ) Jaworski, Treasurer

Paul opened the meeting with a reading from Day by Day.

Approval of minutes: Steve moved approval of the January 18, 2016 minutes as submitted. Kate seconded the motion, which was adopted.

New Vestry matters: The first portion of the meeting centered on plans and expectations for the Vestry during the current year 2016. Rilla observed that the focus must be on long-term planning with mission sustainability as the theme, of which she regarded the following as the three key components: ministries, building and finances.

Introductions: At her invitation, everyone introduced themselves and described what brought them to the Episcopal church.

Norms and expectations: Rilla sought feedback on a draft document called “Christ Church Vestry Norms and Expectations” which she had circulated for pre-meeting review and which she hoped would function as mutually agreeable operating rules with the understanding that they can be modified if and as needed. She made the point that the document was an approximate reflection of the way the Vestry has been and should be operating and was considerably less stringent than similar guidelines for numerous other vestries.

The outcome of discussion was agreement to change the “attendance” expectation by addition of the words “to strive” to the second sentence so it would read, “*We agree to strive to make attendance at vestry meetings a priority...*”. An additional change on which there was support was to add “intergenerational activities” to the list of examples described in the “visibility” section. Josh moved adoption of the “Norms and Expectations” with those two amendments. Helen seconded the motion, which was adopted.

Ministry liaison assignments: New and continuing members expressed their wishes with respect to the ministries to which they wished to serve as liaisons for the current year. One new entity was added to the ministries list: Building Committee. Rilla will circulate a revised liaisons list reflecting the additions and changes made at this meeting.

Vestry meeting planning: Also discussed was a schedule of topics that the Senior Warden proposed for inclusion on each month’s agenda for the year. Most of the conversation centered

on the general subject of building maintenance and improvements, initiated by Liz with the suggestion that with the sanctuary restoration recently completed and building matters still fresh in people's minds, this year might be an ideal time to plan a capital campaign. Several others thought that although laying the groundwork for one is a realistic goal for 2016, launching a capital campaign is not, for various reasons. In Paul's opinion, for example, it will be a major initiative that must incorporate any long-term vision that may emerge from the long-range subcommittee's explorations and recommendations; and it is important to continue recent years' efforts to address several decades of deferred maintenance such as the bell tower. The Diocese is currently working toward a strategy for a capital plan for Rock Point which he thought might be helpful to Christ Church in developing our plan. Josh proposed revisiting discussions of two years ago with Partners for Sacred Places focused on raising money for capital needs and potentially laying the groundwork for a capital campaign.

Ted and Denise also stressed the need to start reserving some funds for building maintenance.

Vestry retreat: Rilla indicated that she will schedule the retreat on the April date most convenient as reflected in her electronic poll of the members. It will be a four-hour event focusing on long-range planning and mission sustainability moving into the future. She asked that Steve as chair of the long-range subcommittee and one other member serve with her and Paul as a committee to plan the event. . *(N.B. The retreat date subsequently was set for Sunday, April 17, from 4-8 p.m., including a short regular Vestry meeting instead of the originally scheduled April 18 date. Supper will be included; local location to be announced. Helen was named as the additional member of the planning team.)*

Financial report: (1) John presented the financial report for January, pointing out that pledge and stewardship offerings appeared unrealistically low for two reasons: electronic banking transfers were not processed within the month and deposits for the fifth Sunday in January were not posted until February. Upon completion of the financial report, including an overview of its structure for the benefit of new members, Kate moved approval. Corrie seconded, and the motion carried.

(2) Helen described an issue which the Finance Committee considered relating to implementation of an audit committee recommendation to transition from using two programs (Power Church and Quicken) to just Quicken software for all church accounting. For reasons she and Paul described, the Finance Committee agreed to continue to use just Power Church for now, with the possibility remaining to shift to Quicken in the future.

Consent agenda: Rilla sought the members' reactions to the proposed adoption of a consent agenda, a written description of which they had received in advance. A consent agenda is designed to maximize meeting time for consideration of substantive topics by grouping typically routine, informational and non-controversial ones into a consent category which could be approved in a single action. Routine or no-decision items - e.g. minutes and monthly information reports such as those from the Priest-in-Partnership and the Youth and Family Minister - are typical of the items that would comprise the Vestry's consent agenda. Any member prior to the meeting may request to move a specific item from the consent category to the full agenda. Rilla observed that using a consent agenda would require everyone to read in

advance all the consent items. She also pointed out that if the Vestry decides to adopt the consent agenda for its meetings, the group will review that decision in a few months.

Asked whether approval of a report would obviate subsequent discussion, Rilla suggested that if there is a possibility that a concern might affect approval of an item, a judgment would have to be made beforehand to remove that item from the consent agenda. Steve added that where there may be a policy issue, for example, a report might be accepted but the specific issue can be discussed later in the meeting. Steve also suggested that it would be helpful if the monthly financial reports were accompanied by brief highlights of any areas of concern, such as pledge and stewardship offerings considerably below expectations. JJ said he would include such notes, as necessary, in his email forwarding the financial report.

The Vestry adopted a motion from Josh, which Steve seconded, to approve using a consent agenda. Rilla requested that any member wishing to remove an item from a consent agenda so that it can be discussed later in a meeting should contact her or Paul.

Disaster management: There was some discussion of the importance of developing a disaster management plan for Christ Church. Rilla and Ted outlined specific needs such as a written list of liaisons with the police department and the National Guard; ensuring compliance with local requirements in terms of life safety conditions; and regularly scheduled inspections. Ted outlined plans to address various of the issues raised. Josh suggested other churches in the state may have prepared disaster management plans that could serve as prototypes for Christ Church.

Long-range planning subcommittee update: Steve gave a report on the group's progress, with a reminder of the sensitivity of possible significant changes in future parish house uses and the fact that until such time as the Vestry sets a general direction, explorations are in very preliminary stages. Thus far the subcommittee has narrowed potential options for expanded use of parish hall space to seven areas, with the initial focus on three: housing, food-related, and health care. As one of the team focused on housing possibilities, he described a very productive meeting with Downstreet, a local organization that helps to develop and manage affordable housing; and a subsequent walk-through of the second floor of the parish house with an architect to determine feasibility of transformation into apartments. Steve will present an updated report on the subcommittee's work at the March meeting.

Parochial report: Paul cited various facts and figures from the annual Parochial Report which he had prepared with JJ's assistance and which requires Vestry approval before its submission to the Diocese on March 1st. There were no objections to the report, copies of which members asked Paul to send to them.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Virginia Catone
Secretary of the Vestry

