

**VESTRY MINUTES**  
**Christ Episcopal Church**  
**Montpelier, Vermont**  
**June 20, 2016**

**Members present:** Helen Bryan, Acting Chair; Steve Dale; Josh Fitzhugh; Ted Long, Junior Warden; Elizabeth (Liz) Slayton; Corrie Wilcox; and Denise Womer

**Others in attendance:** The Rev. Paul Habersang, Priest-in-Partnership; the Rev. Beth Ann Maier, Regional Deacon; and Virginia Catone, Secretary of the Vestry

Helen Bryan, whom Senior Warden Rilla Murray had asked to chair the meeting due to her own absence, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the parish hall.

Prior to consideration of the agenda, Paul described the prior day's Gear Garden committal service of the cremains of long-time parishioner Ruth Beard. All attendees had an opportunity to be part of the rite, which he depicted as touching, lighthearted and fun. As is appropriate for this time of year, he then offered a prayer for God's creation, the earth.

1. **Consent agenda:** Corrie moved acceptance of the consent agenda, circulated to the members prior to the meeting and consisting of the minutes of the May 16 meeting, the May/June Priest-in-Partnership report, the May financial report, and a report on the Youth and Families ministry. Denise seconded the motion, which the Vestry adopted.

2. **Youth and Families report:** Augmenting her detailed written report which included a PowerPoint presentation, Denise talked about the challenges which young families face and the need to avoid pressuring them through undue expectations of the extent of their commitment. She also made clear that what may appear to be simply play activities in the children's area of the sanctuary during Sunday services are religious themed. Additionally, Denise said she hopes to start a third group within this ministry, for a mid-age group beyond the current very youngest and the older youngsters, and she described what the service area for this middle group might encompass. One of the pluses of the past church school year has been an increase in the number of parishioners willing to help with the youth and families program.

Paul talked about trends for the future and expectations of changing family structure and activities, including diminishing and sporadic attendance and involvement in church activities. These factors present a challenge for the youth and families program, and Denise described her interest in trying to keep youth and families engaged through such means as intensified community outreach activities.

Josh complimented Denise on her PowerPoint presentation and urged her to make it available electronically to a wider audience than the Vestry. Denise indicated that would be possible through an email link to parishioners or on the web site.

3. **Regional Deacon Report:** Beth Ann brought the members up to date on local activities and certain matters within her purview. Among them was an initiative with other central Vermont

churches which she hopes might come to fruition over the next year or two: a position possibly funded through a community grant for a person who could make direct connections to community resources to assist folks who lack permanent shelter or are transitioning from homelessness. Liz suggested that it might be helpful to talk to the various entities that might provide such services.

After describing the role of Christ Church as host to two large gatherings focused on homelessness, Beth Ann mentioned that efforts during the past year to establish a pastoral care team have not come to fruition; that on September 25 there will be a joint Sunday service with Church of the Good Shepherd at Rock Point; and that the Barre congregation is going to start offering a once-monthly Sunday 5:00 p.m. service, child friendly, food involved.

4. No smoking policy: After lengthy and spirited discussion, the Vestry voted in favor of a no smoking policy for the courtyard, to be implemented through the placement of several small signs to be attached to the benches reading “Thank you for not smoking.” Helen asked to be recorded as abstaining from the vote.

5. Parking: Ted reported that he has not yet been successful in borrowing from the city the stencils for church parking spaces, as discussed at the last meeting.

6. Penny box: Josh presented a proposal to raise money to pay for needed bell tower repairs; namely, the installation of a box that he hoped ultimately might yield a collection of one (1) million pennies, \$10,000. Prior to the meeting members received a detailed written summation of his idea, including a sketch of the collection box, a description of where and how it would be installed, and a list of five issues/questions such as capacity and security which are not entirely resolved and about which he sought Vestry members’ input.

After receiving an abundance of feedback on this subject, Josh indicated that he would craft a box and a sign to present for the Vestry’s inspection, further discussion, and ideally approval. One idea on which there was consensus was Paul’s suggestion to install an inexpensive security camera that would include the collection box within its range.

7. Outreach definition: Consideration resumed from prior meetings of a definition of outreach, in the context of making decisions about allocation of donations designated for that purpose. Kate introduced a preliminary draft at the May 16 meeting, which was incorporated into the minutes of that meeting for the members’ review and feedback. When it became apparent early in this meeting that there was insufficient support for the proposed wording, Helen encouraged suggestions for modifications. Ultimately there seemed to be consensus on an approach that would reflect two parts of the church’s mission statement; namely, “welcomes all” and “transforms lives.” There was mention of the fact that the Diocesan Canons specify that parish discretionary funds are to be dispensed for “pious and charitable purposes” and Josh asked Ginny to send him that link. He said he will draft a revised definition of outreach for the Vestry’s consideration.

Beth Ann inquired as to whether community action could be construed as an outreach function. She made the point that Vermont Interfaith Action, which has been the beneficiary of numerous

annual allotments from the Howland Outreach Fund, can positively impact the lives of a lot of people through influencing systemic changes.

8. Housing Committee update: Steve advised that a decision has been made to move forward with Downstreet Housing and Community Development as a major development partner. He described some of the issues inherent in constructing multiple housing units atop the parish house footprint; e.g., accessibility – the need for an elevator, flood plain mitigation, et al. Such additions will come at a high cost without a lot of space to offset those costs. Exploration of the structural possibilities of the current building and what will be entailed in building up is essential, and Steve thought the cost of that assessment will be minimal, possibly under \$500. He made the point that all those kinds of options must be explored fully before a decision can be made whether to not to use the existing building as a base from which to construct housing units.

In mid-July the committee expects to meet with Downstreet and city officials whose support is essential to securing grants to hire an architect and to proceeding in the expectation of adding housing on the church property. The committee has divided up a list of human services entities from which to develop a list of populations that might best be served by that housing. Steve expected by the end of the summer to have a better idea of possible populations; to have completed an initial review of possibilities for the building; and to have made progress on grant possibilities for the future of the parish house.

Both Steve and Ted both indicated that it will take a long time – Steve suggested three years – before there will be visible signs of progress on constructing housing on the site. Ted observed that the Vestry must keep the congregation and the community fully informed as to what is happening. Steve thought it would be at least late August before the housing committee has enough additional information to reengage the parish in discussion of the subject.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Virginia Catone  
Secretary of the Vestry