

**Vestry Minutes**  
**Christ Episcopal Church**  
**Montpelier, Vermont**  
**July 16, 2018**

**Members present:** Bruce Story, Senior Warden, Chair; David Blythe, Shawn Bryan, Josh Fitzhugh, Diane Holland, Ted Long, Junior Warden; Joan Murray and Elizabeth (Liz) Slayton

**Others attending:** Rev. Paul Habersang, Priest-In-Partnership; John Jaworski, Treasurer; Virginia Catone, Vestry Secretary; Helen Bryan, Chair, Capital Campaign Committee; and Sharon Winn, Capital Campaign Manager

Bruce called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary, followed by a reflection and prayer by Paul.

**1. Consent agenda:** Diane moved approval of the monthly consent agenda, consisting of the June 18 Minutes; the Priest-in-Partnership report for June-July; the June financial statement; and ratification of the approval via email of eight Vestry members to proceed with the “Hearts on Fire” stained glass window project. Josh seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 7 to 1, with Ted recorded as voting “No.”

**2. Stained glass window update:** On behalf of the Stained Glass Window Committee, Helen called attention to a written report distributed prior to the meeting on the status of the window project. Stained glass craftsman Chris Jeffrey and Artist Mike Ridge have agreed on the design, Chris has signed a contract with the church to create the window at a cost not to exceed \$10,000 and plans very soon to acquire the special glass needed. As soon as he submits an invoice, Christ Church will remit to him the \$2,000 deposit agreed upon.

Helen observed that two parishioners have guaranteed the cost of the window with the expectation that at a later date there will be an effort to raise money to replenish those contributions.

**3. Capital campaign update:** Sharon Winn reported that 23 pledges to the campaign thus far have topped \$400,000, with a great many parish “asks” remaining. Nineteen members of the congregation have been trained as “visitors” and very few people remain to be assigned visitors. Letters will be mailed out to the congregation later this week. She observed that parishioners who clearly have very limited resources will receive letters inviting them to donate to the campaign and offering them a visit if they have questions.

Helen added that after the process of congregation visits has been completed, there will be an alumni “homecoming” event on September 9 to which former members of the parish will be invited. It will include a special worship service followed by a

barbecue in the courtyard, and there will be an opportunity to pledge to the capital campaign. The plan includes inviting former Christ Church clergy to join the congregation that day.

**4. Courtyard trees:** Christ Church is the recipient of a recent letter from local resident John Snell, Chair of the Montpelier Tree Board, expressing concerns about the condition and regular pruning and other needs of trees in the church courtyard as well as the very large maple inside the memorial garden. Members received copies of the letter, which contained more than a half dozen specific issues which he strongly urged should be addressed immediately and on a regular basis by professional arborists.

Ted took strong exception to Mr. Snell's letter, pointing out the church simply does not have the funds to address all the problems he raises. He went on to talk about another issue which is of significant concern to him: the overuse of the church's electrical system by the bands that play for weekly warm weather concerts in the courtyard. He indicated that he will have to shut it down if its deteriorating condition warrants. He added that Christ Church also receives no compensation for the cost of heat and light for the small tourist information building adjacent to the courtyard. Shawn echoed Ted's concerns about the drain on the electrical system of the noontime outdoor concerts staged by Montpelier Alive and the fact that the church is not recompensed for that use.

In the ensuing discussion there was recognition of the need to be a good neighbor while nevertheless not continuing to allow the drain on the electrical system without seeking some reimbursement for the commensurate costs.

As for Mr. Snell's letter, there was agreement on the members' part that regardless of the merit of the recommendations, Christ Church lacks the funds to undertake the work. There also appeared to be no inclination on the Vestry's part to respond to the letter anytime soon. Paul indicated that perhaps some modest funds might be available to provide some degree of remedial work in the courtyard.

**5. Housing Committee/Bashara project:** Shawn reported that two relatively significant issues remain unresolved with respect to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two parties discussed at prior meetings: (a) a \$5,000 difference between the Basharas' offer for electrical contracting expenses and the amount to Christ Church is entitled and (b) reserving the right of the church to be notified of and provide input into any significant changes proposed for the parking structure project.

He observed that progress toward completion of the MOU is very slow at this point. In his opinion, the Basharas have no incentive to complete that document until close to the tax increment financing (TIF) vote in November.

**6. Finance Committee update:** Helen told the members that she has been working with Treasurer John and Recording Treasurer Kathy Preis on Implementing the QuickBooks church accounting system and that some issues have been resolved. She then relayed a proposal from the Finance Committee that the church enter into an agreement with local accounting consulting firm Abacus Bookkeeping and Tax Services to manage the church's financial books, which would relieve the monthly burden on the Treasurer and Recording Treasurer. Firm owner Karen Davis has quoted a rate of \$30.00 an hour and suggests that only about an hour a month would be required for the church's books. Shawn too thought that she likely could straighten out the books in a very short time.

Helen mentioned that the Capital Campaign also plans to utilize the services of Abacus.

David spoke highly of Abacus and expressed the opinion that assistance from an external accountant would be a wise move, particularly during the annual audit. He then moved approval of the proposal to engage Abacus as outlined by Helen. Shawn seconded the motion.

After brief input from others, there was agreement to a friendly amendment to ensure that that the firm is bonded for the work that will be performed for the church. The motion thereupon was adopted.

Paul highly complimented Helen for the extraordinary amount of time she has spent on the QuickBooks accounting system transition.

**7. Worship committee report:** Diane presented a comprehensive written report on the role, composition, functioning of the Worship Committee. Among specific collaborative efforts she mentioned in her oral recap was the recent focus, at the behest of the Social Justice Ministry, at worship services on three Sundays, on the topic of racism.

Paul observed that there is a lot of intentionality to the weekly worship services and that Choir Director/Organist Lynnette adds a great deal to them.

Josh urged that an effort be made to involve some young families in the Worship Committee ministry.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Virginia Catone  
Secretary of the Vestry

