

St Philip's

episcopal church

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October 23, 2023 Vestry Meeting Minutes

Vestry members present: Gail Albergo, Lowell Dargbeh, Leigh Egeghy, Erin Gasch, Rebecca Hix (Clerk), Sarah Johnson, Adam McClellan, Wes Newman, Shamioka Rhinehart, Liz Sappenfield (Junior Warden), and Connie Semans (Senior Warden).

Vestry member absent: Richard Williams

Clergy present: The Rev. Maryann D. Younger

Guests present: Ginny Bowman (Treasurer), Elizabeth Newman

Call to order: The regular monthly meeting of the Vestry of St. Philip's Episcopal Church convened on October 23, 2023 at 6:05pm in the Library with the Rector presiding. Sarah invited the Vestry to listen to Mark Watson Wilson sing "I Will Hold You Dear" as our opening prayer.

Consent Agenda

- Minutes of the September vestry meeting
- Treasurer's Report & Simplified Financial Report covering September
- Rector's Report
- Senior Warden's Report
- Junior Warden's Report

In reviewing the stewardship presentation, it was agreed that in hindsight, we should have had a finance committee member or vestry person at the stewardship presentation to answer questions about the budget.

Adam moved that we approve the consent agenda, with edits to September minutes at the discretion of the Clerk. Connie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Harris Property Discernment Committee (HPDC)

Elizabeth Newman reminded the Vestry that the HPDC reports twice a year to the Vestry about activities at The Trees.

- In his visit in February, Bishop Sam said he likes it when things develop organically.

- That is what is happening right now.
- The HPDC has a full fall of scheduled events to try number of things as part of their discernment.
- They have three areas of focus: community, creation, contemplation
- There is a growing list of organizations contacting them about doing retreats, from all over the U.S.
- After spending the fall testing things, the HPDC will engage with the parish to get their feedback, in order to have a robust discernment that ends December 2024.
- They are exploring working with a consultant, Foundry Commercial.
- They have begun paying the Caretaker in Residence a stipend, as approved at the last Vestry meeting.
- In addition to everything else, LEAP is quietly out there every Thursday morning.
- The Vestry is encouraged to read the report from the LEAP about their experience at The Trees.

Outreach Committee funding recommendations

Shamioka referred the Vestry to the Ministry Funding Recommendations provided in the October Vestry Package.

- **Inreach** - The committee is recommending that the Inreach requests be fully funded, which would leave a balance of \$1,775 for potential additional Inreach investment.
- **Outreach** – The committee is recommending that the Outreach requests be funded at \$80,350, which would leave a balance of \$31,650 for potential additional Outreach investment.
- The Vestry’s attention was drawn to the scoring rubric that was created which helped the committee in being clear about their recommendations.
- Erin noticed that there were two ministries that did not submit a funding request: the Episcopal Center at Duke and LGBT Outreach.
- It was requested that Shamioka follow up with Laura Dearth to do a little research on our previous relationship with those ministries to see if there is someone else the committee could reach out to.
- Maryann clarified that she had collaborated with Durham Episcopal churches on the Spiritual Royalties project, which would pay musicians that write spirituals for their work, as this is a group of artists that often are not paid.
 - Each church was going to allocate a portion of their music budget to Spiritual Royalties.
 - This project seems to have lost momentum and Maryann told the committee to use the money as appropriate.
- Adam noted that 2 or 3 ministries were highlighted for possible mid-year funding and questioned how we handled that in budgeting.
- Shamioka requested that the Vestry set the money aside for that.
- Ginny commended the committee on doing an awesome job this year and noticed that we have never had a report so strong.
- Ginny recommended that the Vestry not vote on these recommendations at this time, but rather roll them over into the 2024 budget process.
- Maryann asked the committee to take the process one step further to ensure that we are funding ministries with which we have a relationship.

- We questioned our investment in UMD and if this process aligns with the spend of the endowment that is required.
 - Maryann directed Shamioka to talk with Laura about this.
 - Erin echoed that if we are passing through money because of a rule of the endowment, but we do not have a relationship with them, then we need to work on that relationship. We want to make sure the spirit of the money is being addressed.

Children & Youth update

In her update on Children's formation, Maryann reminded the Vestry that one and half years ago, Emily cut back to half time, and wanted to narrow her focus on the young children.

- There are 45 different children active with catechesis.
- Atria 1 has gone down younger in age, but they have to have a parent with them. It is a dynamic environment.
- Emily is doing a fabulous job and is very supportive of other staff.

As Maryann reflected on the past year in Youth formation, she reminded the Vestry that it has been a difficult year, that resulted in families being disengaged and concerned.

- This year parents and the youth are showing up!
- There are 10 youth in Rite 13.
- 8 youth in J2A
- And 4Ward has 6 youth.
- The hiring committee is redoing the job description for the youth minister to make it clearer and more eye-catching.
- We commented that the benefits go beyond the youth and noted that the 9am service is growing.
- Leigh thanked Maryann for her undying support of the youth.
- Leigh went on to note that we are seeing the fruits of Maryann's labor and her vision for reaching out to the whole congregation.
- Adam commented that it is impressive that the youth program is doing so well just six weeks after the youth director left and it is exciting to see people pulling together now.
- Maryann reminded the Vestry that the leaders have had a heavy lift over the last 6 weeks.

Gail shared that hospitality hour is going great. People are featuring their ministries and people are staying longer at coffee hour. There is a vibrancy to it.

- Connie asked if anyone was behind the administration of hospitality hour, to which Maryann responded that Meghan is logging in the schedule and branded instructions are being made. The hosting group is also included in the bulletin each week.

Staffing update

Maryann called the Vestry attention to her Rector's Report.

- Gail asked if Maryann wanted the Vestry to attend Welcoming Wednesdays.
- December Engage! Will be a time of sitting in the church by candlelight.
- There will be one Wednesday night service of Lessons and Carols and one Wednesday night will be the Blue Christmas service.
- The Vestry was reminded that St. Nicholas used to come talk to the kids.

- There will be wreath-making on November 29th.

Nominating committee for 2024 Vestry elections

Connie informed the Vestry that the following people have agreed to serve on the Vestry nominating committee: Connie, Gail, Adam, Leigh, Treat Harvey, and Robin Kneeborg.

Erin moved that the Vestry approve the nominating committee. Sarah seconded the motion.

- During discussion of the motion, Connie said that the committee is open to any suggestions for people to be asked to run. They will put the slate of 8 people together over the next two months, which will include an open call, an opportunity to nominate in the pre-annual meeting.
- Erin reminded the Vestry that there is a lot of energy in the youth and children right now, and they should be included.
- Leigh reflected that when she was approached to run, there was an attempt to minimize the responsibility, and does not think that is what should be done.
 - It was recommended that some of the Vestry members give testimonials about serving on the Vestry.
 - Lowell recommended that there be a forum that included a job description.
 - Liz liked Leigh's idea, and emphasized doing announcements and testimonials during worship, when we have the largest attendance.
 - Erin asked if Grace could help us with a Vestry PR campaign.
 - Maryann reminded the Vestry that she does an orientation with the whole slate of candidates and emphasizes that regardless of the election, they will have a leadership role.

After that discussion the motion passed unanimously.

BRIEF UPDATES

Update from Lowell

- He thanked Maryann for her blessing on the Saturday night kick-off.
- Lowell and Martha are flying to Liberia for a month.
- There is unease about the run-off elections.
- Lowell asked for the Vestry's prayers.

Church Renovation - Phase 2 – Steering Committee

- Connie is assembling a committee and hopes to convene it before the end of the year.

Verbal Committee Reports-outs - Social/Inreach

- Rebecca thanked the Vestry for implementing the St. Philip's Day celebration.
- Conversation ensued about whether services should be combined for special celebration days, an idea that was supported by the Vestry.
- Maryann is concerned that we do not have a coffee hour after each service.

Verbal Committee Reports-outs - Technology/REALM

- Adam referred the Vestry to his report and drew special attention to how the lead role for the committee should be filled.

- Connie shared that this has been discussed at the Executive Committee and that if we want a robust technology platform, it would be ideal if the position rested on staff, and then a vestry person or committee would be support role.
- At the next committee meeting, they will talk about a PR campaign for REALM.

Meeting talking points for the Epistle.

1. The Harris Property Discernment Committee gave their bi-annual update to the Vestry about their leadership of the on-going discernment about what God is calling St. Philip's to do with the property. We commend to you the upcoming events at The Trees, which you can find [here](#).
2. We are thankful and excited about the children and youth ministries at St. Philip's right now! There are 68 children and youth involved in our programming. We are thankful for the children and youth, the adults leading and the parish's support.
3. We have turned our attention to the next class of Vestry members that will be elected at our upcoming Annual Meeting. Do you hear God's call to serve? If so, please reach out to Connie Semans.
4. The Vestry was excited about the great St. Philip's Day celebration on October 15th. Thanks for the fellowship you all brought!

Book study - *How We Learn to Be Brave*

- Maryann led a discussion of chapters 3, 4, and 5.
- She recommended that next month we reach chapters 6, 7 and the epilogue.
- In December or January we can talk about how we apply the learnings to our leadership.

Adjournment

The meeting was brought to a close with a prayer by Maryann and adjourned at 8:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca S. Hix
Clerk

LEAP at The Trees - Montse Cabellero - 10/20/23

There are multiple benefits for the kids to be out in the woods. The main benefit, to me, is that The Trees offers an open-ended classroom.

Kids learn by playing. Open-ended play is a form of playing with no fixed standard answer, not pre-determined limitations. The Trees offers, for example, open-ended materials like leaves, and sticks that the kids just pick up from the dirt and they can be used in whatever form they image.

This type of play and classroom is very important, particularly in early childhood education. Kids are free to explore and develop their problem-solving critical thinking, imagination, and creativity.

A lot of our kids have poor motor skills, for several reasons. The Trees provide a space for our classroom to develop their motor skills. They get to walk on uneven terrains, uphill, and downhill, stepping over rocks, logs, and roots, developing their core, legs, and back muscles. While bending up and down to closer observe objects, they are developing their equilibrium, while reinforcing their muscular strength. Picking up leaves, sticks, etc. they are developing hand strength and hand/eye coordination that will help them with writing and reading.

The Tree also offers a variety of sensorial stimulation: textures, colors, temperature, and others. There is just no substitute for nature as a classroom.

Also, a lot of our parents and kids are not comfortable in nature and they usually do not go out much to enjoy or explore it. The Trees gave them the confidence to go outside

Here are testimonies from a couple of our families

1. My kid is 3, we have never been outside like that. We just go to the park and sometimes to the beach. I was so scared of him getting lost, or hurt. It seemed like a dangerous place with trees and animals and a lot of unknowns. After the second time he was there I felt so much confidence. I was not scared, and neither was he. He enjoyed it there and he asked me all the time when he would go to the Trees again. This summer we all went to the mountains and had the best time ever. The Trees was not only a place where my kid had the best days at school but also helped my family not to be scared of nature.
2. My kids really enjoy the Trees. I am not even sure why, but she just loves to be there. She knows so much about trees, birds, and insects. She is not scared of anything. We never went out much, as we both work long hours, but now she makes us go to the Eno River almost every weekend. She just doesn't get tired of it

These are a few things we hear the kids saying about The Trees. They call it their forest.

- Can we come here every day?
- Look the leaves are falling, it is raining leaves. I love it when it rains like this
- There is a creature here, teacher, come and see. What is it? Can we learn about it?
- Are we going to walk today? I love walking in the forest. I never walked in the forest before
- I just love it here. Can we come tomorrow too?