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Vestry Meeting Minutes

September 28th, 2026

Attendance

Vestry Present:	Jillian Downs	Sue Guptill
	Marty Nelson, *Sr. Warden*	Jeff Pitts
	Andy Slaughter	Natalie Sommerville
	Mike Uhl, *Jr. Warden*	Bynum Walter
	Caroline Wang	Emily Yeatts
Vestry Absent:	Heather Beard	
	John Bowman	
Clergy:	Rev. Maryann Younger, *Rector*	
Guests:	Marcus Southern, *Treasurer*	
	David Kneeburg, *Clerk*	

Call to Order

The September meeting of the Vestry of St. Philip's Church convened on September 28th, 2026, at 6:00 PM in the library. The meeting began with opening prayers led by Jill with a reflection on Michaelmas.

Consent Agenda

1. August Minutes
2. Treasurer's report
3. Rector's report
4. Senior Warden's report
5. Junior Warden's report

The vestry discussed the consent agenda and noted two corrections to the August Minutes – David to edit and upload final version. Bynum motioned to approve the agenda, Marty seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Updates

Ministry Fair

The Ministry Fair had strong turnout and a positive atmosphere, with many attendees signing up near the end—including several who were not regular volunteers. Organizers praised Shamika Rheinhart's logistical support and highlighted effective engagement by Daughters of the King and the J2A youth scavenger hunt. They recommended documenting the planning process while details are fresh. Future fairs should improve signage, clarify expectations for participating groups, and better prepare table hosts for late sign-ups.

Stewardship

Stewardship pledges currently total $267,000 from 58 households, compared with $344,000 from 72 households at the same point last year. Diantha will organize a Vestry follow-up campaign for households that previously pledged but have not yet done so, using calls, email, and text during the October 24–November 8 window. Clergy will screen the contact list for pastoral concerns and account for known late pledgers. Vestry members should promptly report any sensitive circumstances uncovered during outreach.

St. Philip's day

St. Philip's Day will combine the pledge ingathering at a single 10:00 service with a parish celebration featuring catered food, potluck dishes, games, face painting, a photo booth, and a parish photo. Vestry members are encouraged to attend, wear name tags, and volunteer for setup and cleanup.

Discussion

Electronic Voting

Emily summarized the latest plans for electronic voting. Although the bylaws permit online voting, the technology must still be implemented before the next annual meeting. Emily will connect Josh and another interested Vestry member to form a working group that will evaluate Election Runner and Realm based on cost, usability, real-time voting, and support for paper ballots. The group will also consider using a practice poll to familiarize participants with the system.

The Trees

Emily gave an update of the latest news from the Trees development committee. The Trees property is pursuing financial sustainability, responsible stewardship, and an organizational structure that may include becoming an independent 501(c)(3). Fundraising is progressing, but a small year-end gap remains, and the property faces significant safety, accessibility, parking, lighting, and shelter needs. St. Philip's cannot reliably absorb unpredictable capital expenses, while the current church affiliation may limit access to private and corporate funding. Establishing a separate nonprofit is viewed as the likely next step,

followed by negotiation of a formal lease and ongoing commitments with St. Philip's. No decision was made, but future Vestry commitments should be specific, measurable, and time-bound.

EHM

Sue presented the results from the EHM discernment committee. The committee recommended distributing $300,000 in EHM grants: $75,000 to L'Arche North Carolina, $175,000 to Preserving Home, and $50,000 to Reinvestment Partners. Accrued interest will support UMD's Hope Day Services, while Grace will coordinate communications and celebratory outreach with the recipient organizations. Bynum motioned to approve the award letters, Marty seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Budget

The preliminary 2027 budget projects an $86,663 deficit despite approximately $58,000 in revenue growth, largely reflecting higher personnel, health insurance, worship, and programming costs. Applying $27,000 from the Davis Fund and $2,000 from the Johnson Fund could reduce the deficit to about $56,000, but these are one-time measures that do not address the structural shortfall. Further review will distinguish recurring from one-time expenses and reassess the 3% pledge-attrition assumption.

The related altar flowers program currently has limited sponsorship, with a $5,000 transitional budget line serving as a backup. The vestry discussed plans to identify a coordinator and rebuild participation through service announcements, epistle and website promotion, and targeted Realm outreach.

Executive Session

An Executive session was not held.

Epistle Talking Points

As published in the week following the meeting:

The vestry met Monday, September 28. Here's what happened:

***St. Philip's will invest $300,000 in affordable housing in Durham**. Vestry member and EHM committee member Sue Guptill presented the committee's recommendations for distributing the funds entrusted to St. Philip's by the Episcopal Housing Ministry of North Carolina. The vestry voted unanimously to approve the recommendations, directing the funds to several nonprofit organizations working to expand or preserve affordable housing in Durham. Stay tuned for more news soon about the organizations receiving funding and the work these grants will support.*

***Planning for the future of The Trees continues to move forward**. The vestry had a robust discussion about The Trees, with vestry member Emily Yeatts sharing an update from the development committee – including progress toward development goals and the property's ongoing needs around safety, accessibility, shelter, and maintenance. Looking ahead, the committee will continue exploring governance and fundraising options that can support The Trees' long-term needs and clarify its relationship with St. Philip's.*

***Work has begun on St. Philip's 2027 budget.** Treasurer Marcus Southern presented a preliminary budget to help the vestry begin considering its priorities for the coming year. Despite projected revenue growth, the preliminary budget shows a*

gap, driven largely by rising health insurance costs. The vestry and Finance Committee will continue working toward a balanced 2027 budget that builds on the financial success we've experienced this year. Your pledge helps us know what resources we'll have to work with in 2027 – pledge today.

***The vestry is working toward offering electronic voting at our next annual meeting**. Vestry member Emily Yeatts, who led the work to update St. Philip's bylaws to allow electronic voting, shared next steps for putting a voting system in place. A small working group will explore options, including systems already used by the diocese.*

Adjournment

Maryann ended the meeting with a closing prayer at 7:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David Kneeburg, Clerk of the Vestry