

St. James Vestry Minutes
Thursday, January 16, 2025
5:45PM

Participants: Rector De Freeman, Rev. Amanda Doshier, Finance Director Jim Ketchum, Parish Administrator Meghan Kasuba, Senior Warden Margaret Cadden, Treasurer Amanda Montz, Dan Campbell, Tracy Corte, Jim Daniell, Bill Dowdle, Dee Gambill, Jennifer Lambert, Bettsie Norton, Bruce Stone, Cappi Sully, Ken Talbert, and Clerk Mary Mullins Redditt

Absent: Misty Whitehead

Opening Prayer -

Amanda opened us in prayer at 5:45 pm

Recitation of the Mission Statement -

The vestry then recited together the mission statement:

We are a community anchored in Christ, seeking God, sharing His love, and serving others.

Meditation –Margaret Cadden

Margaret offered a mediation on what being a Christian is all about: Sharing God's love and love of one another.

Nominations & Welcome new Vestry Members

Nominate and approve Junior Warden

- Margaret welcomed all the new vestry members.
- ***Dee Gambill made a motion to nominate Bruce Stone as the new Jr. Warden, Jennifer Lambert seconded and all approved.***

Vestry expectations, roles, and responsibilities – De Freeman

- De explained that Vestry members are essentially the Board of Directors of a faith-based organization. That is important because we do things a bit differently. Faith is a key component. We come together as a learning group, muddling through together.
- Each one will have the opportunity to share a meditation at a vestry meeting. It is as simple as sharing how your faith is growing.
- We are on the cusp of a program-based church, versus resource-based church, because of our growing size.
- The Vestry helps set the vision for the church. The staff does most of the work but we will be asked to step up for activities and functions of the church. The Congregation needs to know that Vestry members are supporting the work of the church. We are representatives and liaisons to members of the Congregation.
- This is an open and honest, but also confidential session. On occasion, we will need to go into Executive Session, which means our discussion is something you don't discuss openly with any others, including a spouse or family members.
- There is a Vestry Handbook for orientation that was handed out to new members. Responsibilities are outlined in the handbook. The Vestry acts as legal representation

for the church when asked. Vestry members need to help the clergy by having personal relationships with congregation members because we are a large church and that is not possible for three clergy members alone.

- Jim Daniell noted that the vestry members are NOT responsible for running the church. We leave that to the professional staff.
- Margaret noted that it really does take all of us, and Bruce underscored that the most important thing is to be seen, to wear your nametag and to be available.
- De said that if a Vestry member needs to miss more than three meetings a year, we need to further discuss why you should be on the Vestry, because these meetings are important. If you are traveling and need to join by Zoom, that is also a less good option, that count as attendance.

Future Vestry meeting date conflicts– need to move Feb. Mtg (convention)

- **Thursday, February 20 needs to be moved to Tuesday, February 18** due to the Diocesan Convention.
- April (Holy Week), May (Bayside Baccalaureate) also need to be moved due to conflicts. These will be decided later.
- Tracy has the meditation in February.

Organ Update

- The organ is still broken from Christmas.
- Three years ago, the motor was refurbished after burning up.
- We pulled it and sent it off again and are likely to get it fixed for less than \$2 K around Tuesday. \$20-25 K is the cost for a new assembly. It is 40 years old and at the end of its life. Would take about 14 weeks to order, arrive and have assembled in the organ.
- A refurbished blower will likely get us by for the next 3-5 years, but we need to know this is what we are up against if it goes out again.
- Will discuss at the February meeting whether to invest.

Construction Update

- De ran through updated slides of the construction plans for those who were unable to be at last Sunday's annual meeting.
- Designers have been working on a Plan B – that has just come in -- in case we are unable to raise the funding for Plan A. In B, the all-purpose building is not entirely closed in and does not have an entry. It is more like an open pavilion instead of a multipurpose building. But option B will still not save \$1 million.
- Vestry members indicated that they didn't think Plan B was an option, but we will revisit this later.
- Tuesday, will go before the Standing Committee of the Diocese with their plans for approval.
- Thursday, go before the City Board of Appeals. If approved there, goes to the City of Fairhope Planning Commission.
- Next several weeks are busy for the project.

Wedding Usage

- We currently only allow parishioners to be wed here for a small fee, though we get many requests from non-parishioners.
- If extended for non-parishioners, we could charge \$2,800 for a 5-hour window and do 10 more this year and raise \$28,000 for our Capital Campaign.
- Calendar could come in conflict with some parishioners' requests, so would have to block off some prime dates for parishioners, say, for in the summer.
- Would not include the use of Green Hall.
- We would likely have to pay a coordinator/Sacristan, because right now we only have a volunteer that would not be able to handle this much.
- Would have to be signed off on by the Bishop.
- We have a strict code now that would have to be abided by.
- Bettsie Norton says that other churches have offered in a tiered manner.
- Some Vestry members thought we should request a higher price.
- De will plan to grant access to the two requests he has right now. May set the price higher to test the "market."
- Will come back to the Vestry to further discuss the policy.

Financial Update Discussion & Decisions – Amanda Montz & Jim Ketchum

Jim Ketchum gave the financial update, which will be given by our new Treasurer Amanda Montz in the future.

Financial Review

- Year-to-date is net loss of \$20 K, which it not really significant.
- The school is a big contributor to the plus side.
- Goal for next year is to bring the church into neutral so we can use the school funds for the Capital Campaign.

December Financial Report

- December was not as good a month as we would have expected. Typically, it is a "double" month, meaning we receive twice the average monthly income. Income was not strong in December.
- The pledge income and the plate income for the year were both over budget.
- The church income for the year was only off \$26 K to budget and \$70k ahead from last year. The school income was down for the year, due to student head count being down in July. We typically do not lose students.
- Some families did not follow through on their stated intentions and a couple of students were deemed not a good fit for the school.
- Margaret suggests we may need to make a recommendation to the School Board that families sign a contract, they are offered tuition insurance, and are required to pay the tuition whether or not they change their mind before school starts. This is the policy of St. Paul's school in Mobile. Margaret suggests we discuss this at the next meeting. Margaret will consult with Anne and the School staff and/or board first.
- On the expense side, December is heavy because we have insurance due then and a couple of annual-only payments.
- We were \$15 K over budget for December but under budget for the year (both church and school).

- The balance sheet looks very good with the addition of the Capital Campaign. Have \$1.8 million that has been brought in through the Capital Campaign. Have \$100 k in unrestricted funds. Have \$200 K invested at both Merrill Lynch and State Street.

Stewardship Update

- A lot of good news here. Jim provided a 4-year comparison.
- The per pledge amount is up significantly.
- We are still short 52 pledges and \$20 K from last year.
- Reasonable to think this may come in in Q1.

Dee Gambill made a motion to approve the financial report, Bruce Stone seconded and all approved.

Cappi Sully was nominated by Bruce Stone to be the School Board Liaison, Dan Campbell seconded, and all approved.

2025 Budget talks and approval

- The 2025 budget is not yet approved, but last month the Vestry approved to pay estimated expenses in January and February to carry us over until we can approve a budget.
- St. James has continually paid 10% or more to the Diocese in years past, but we may not be able to keep up with that this year.

Capital Campaign

- Dee Gambill met with the Development Committee last night. She asked them to make up packets for specific requests to be funded.
- Committee will update the proposals in two weeks and distribute six or more requests.
- Also received a \$100 K donation this week.
- There will also be a suggestion to ask those who have given to give a % more of what they already have if they can.

Vote to approve December Vestry Minutes

Bruce made a motion to approve the December vestry meeting minutes, Tracy seconded and all approved.

Host Lenten program dinner (proposed 3/12/2025)

- All Vestry members to put this on their calendar and be prepared to cook, setup and/or cleanup and be present.
- Typically starts at 5:30 pm.

Closing Prayer

Amanda offered the closing prayer at 7:13 pm.

(De noted this is the same as the opening prayer since we are consistently trying to use it during the time of our building expansion.)