

St. Paul's Episcopal Church Vestry Meeting, Wednesday, January 22, 2025
Location: Colhoun B and C

The Rev. Dixon Kinser called the meeting to order at 6:35pm and gave a devotion. Those in attendance were the Rev. Nick VanHorn, Tom McDowell, Morris Friedman, the Rev. Erika Takacs, Brant Snavely, Julie Williams, Salem Parham, Sheldon Moser, Jack Scruggs, Carol Davis, Ralph Womble, Kathryn Vernon, Keith Gooze, Matthew Phillips and Charlotte Broughton.

Dixon made an addendum to the minutes from November 20, 2024 stating an email was sent out on December 9, 2024 to vote to repair the exterior cross on the tower. There were 9 yay, 2 nay and 1 absentia votes. The motion passed.

St. Paul's treasurer, Julie Williams, gave the financial report, and her remarks are included here:

The Finance Committee met on January 21, 2025 to discuss the 2024 financial statements and 2025 proposed budget. Attached are some notes from the meeting.

2024 Financial Highlights:

Pledges are ahead by \$3k for the year, with some trailing stock donations that may still come through.

Stewardship campaign running well.

o Have raised around \$2.565 Million or \$80k over 2024 as of today

o Still waiting on 100 or so pledge cards, of which approx. 80 are expected to pledge

Expenses highlights:

o Maintenance – continues over budget due to vestry approved roof repair

o Ended the year \$14k to the good

2025 Budget

Expenses are flat as compared to 2024, mostly due to decreased personnel costs and maintenance costs, partially offset by expected increases in utilities and Property & Casualty Insurance

o Tom is putting insurance out to bid this year to try to reduce costs

Increase in pledge income will reduce our deficit that is funded by unrestricted funds to about \$100k or less

Financial Collars:

The financial collar calculation shows that there is over 6 months (approx. 6.6 months) of operating expenses in reserves.

o This means the Church is considered to be in yellow light position

o Once the capital campaign has repaid the church, we are anticipating that there will no longer be any level of financial distress, as there will be about 8.7 months of operating expenses in reserves.

About \$300k is expected to be repaid in 2025, with the rest as estate gifts are received.

Although we are in a surplus position, under the financial collars calculation the church is in a yellow light position, the Finance Committee recommends that the Vestry not undertake any additional new initiatives or elective expenditures unless they can be funded by sources outside of the general budget.

Although reserves remain fairly strong, the Committee is especially concerned about the trend of losses and advises against any new financial commitment.

There was some discussion from Ralph Womble in reference to the \$600k that still needs to be repaid from the campaign. Julie explained that most of it should come in during the first quarter of 2025, but that many older parishioners have requested their gift be part of their estate gift.

Tom McDowell reported on the 2025 Proposed budget. We only voted on the expense of the budget, as we are still awaiting the last of the 2025 pledges to come in before approving the income side. Dixon and Tom presented program and staffing priorities as more pledges come in. For the expense side of the budget, Jack Scruggs made the motion and Kathryn Vernon seconded and the motion passed.

Tom also reported on the Cheerful Giving/What If? Campaign. We have had 516 pledges at \$2.565 million which is a 3% raise from 2024. There are still about 100 outstanding pledges, which averaged just under \$5000 per pledge. We are working to finalize 2025 pledges with a follow up letter and phone calls.

In new business, Tom has received the clergy housing amounts (which he does not report actual amounts) to be non-taxable income to the clergy, and he requests approval to report them as such. Matthew Phillips made a motion, Brant Snively seconded; and the motion passed.

Matthew Phillips reported on the Weapons Free Campus Policy. Because of increased engagement with neighbors from the Dwelling and others being on campus and accessing the building, we have encountered people who want to enter the building with homemade weapons and tools, carried for self-defense. This has caused confusion and distress for ushers and VOD members who have to address that circumstance. A clarification of our policy was requested. By North Carolina law, St. Paul's has always been a weapons free zone because of our preschool. However due to not having the preschool on our campus, a vestry vote to continue/reaffirm that policy is required. Changes in North Carolina law also require we post a sign as part of this policy. A motion to continue as a Weapons Free Zone was made by Jack Scruggs and seconded by Carol Davis. The motion passed with 9 yays, 2 nays, and 1 abstention votes.

A discussion followed in regards to the policeman and police car presence on Sunday mornings. Tom has called many times and there are just not enough police cars to go around to have a car present on Sunday mornings. Our off-duty officer will be asked to be out front and in the narthex to increase their visibility. This was effective on Christmas Eve.

In the rector's report, Dixon stated that Advent and Christmas were amazing! We exceeded pre-pandemic attendance numbers! There is growth, vitality and engagement in the parish.

The vestry retreat will be from 6:00 pm February 7 to 3:00pm 8, 2025 at Valle Crucis. This includes the February Vestry meeting so there will be no meeting on February 26, 2025.

Dixon has nominated Morris Friedman as Senior Warden for 2025. The junior warden will be elected by the new vestry and Charlotte Broughton has agreed to serve if voted in at the vestry retreat in February.

After the Annual Meeting on February 2, 2025, we will have a photo with the new vestry.

Confirmation will be held April 6, 2025 and there will be a lunch with Bishop Jennifer.

The Rev. Nick VanHorn reported on confirmation as well. EYC is back and there is a lockout this coming Friday until 11pm. Nick will report more on the Youth trip at our next meeting. ECM dinner series has decided to move to quarterly meetings with the next meeting on February 12, 2025 where local celebrity Cameron Kent will speak. The May speaker will be Bishop Michael Curry.

Welcome to the Rev. Erika Takacs! She reports that Advent and Christmas were awesome! Lucy and Erika have worked together on the liturgy so far, which will be Erika's responsibility going forward. Erika thanked Lucy for how well she has handled the liturgy, as it is very well organized and easy to fall into this roll. Attendance numbers have been up from 1700 in 2024.

Advent 1: 437

Advent 2: 567

Advent 3: 603

Advent 4: 453 but, that evening:

Lesson and Carols: 500+++

Erika was bummed to have to cancel the Feast of Lights, as she was excited to experience the service, being that she has never seen it. On another snow day which had baptisms scheduled, three families still wanted to move forward with the service. February 16th will be a make-up day for the rescheduled baptisms. Easter vigil and June 8 are other baptism days. Ash Wednesday is March 5, 2025.

Erika is part time and will be in the office on Tuesdays and Fridays, then other days as needed.

The Rev. Lucy Strandlund was absent, but she is in full Adult Formation mode.

The Rev. Nancy Vaders is the new director of pastoral care and senior adults.

Matthew Phillips gave the Senior Warden report. The vestry slate consists of Erin Adams, Lucy Paynter, Jackie Piscetelli, and John White. The slate came together quickly as those that were asked were excited to be asked, feel great about the church, this vestry and how we are stewards to the church.

Matthew asked if you want a change in your committee assignment, now is the time to request a change.

Staff Brunch sign up was sent around by Besty. Please sign up for one month. Vestry of the Day link will be sent out in order of seniority.

The parish invested in Rebecca Gordon and Matthew Phillips as they have entered their pastoral discernment. Matthew was appointed to St. Clements where he found a wonderful church family. Matthew has been made a postulant and will be meeting with the bishop to see what's next.

Morris Friedman gave the Junior Warden report. During routine gutter cleaning, Rick photographed some broken slates and a small hole on our newly repaired roof. Christman is going to assess the situation and have the proper repairs made which are still under warranty. Tom will email photos to the vestry.

Salem Parham reported on the Playground Committee that has been formed and is chaired by Taylor Williams to gather information on updating the tired playground as well as help fix the mosquito and drainage problems.

Kathryn Vernon reported on the ECW creating a new ministry – ArtReach – which will be September 6th to fund outreach ministries.

Carol Davis reported the 11:15 streaming last week was black. The church was aware of this issue and it is now viewable online.

Lectors need to be educated on how the microphone works at the lectern.

A Liturgy for the retiring vestry was read.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12pm with pastoral and executive sessions following.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlotte Broughton