

St. Paul's Episcopal Church Vestry Meeting - Wednesday, January 28, 2026 - Zoom

The meeting, held on Zoom because of winter weather, was called to order by the Rev. Dixon Kinser at 6:35 p.m. and the Rev. Lucy Strandlund gave a devotional. Those in attendance were Salem Parham, Charlotte Broughton, John White, Lucy Paynter, Ralph Womble, Jackie Piscetelli, Erin Adams, Jack Scruggs, Kathryn Vernon, the Rev. Nick VanHorn, the Rev. Erika Takacs, Tom McDowell, Julie Williams, Victoria Bass, Grady Phillips, and Betsy Reiners.

The minutes from November's meeting were not yet complete so there was no vote.

Julie Williams, St. Paul's treasurer, gave a report on the church's current financial status. The highlights are included here:

The Finance Committee met on January 20, 2026, and discussed the December 2025 financial statements and the 2026 budget.

As of 1/20/26, pledges were at 99.8% of budget (only short by \$6k) and may exceed 100% once some stock gifts are identified. Non-pledge income for 2025 has exceeded budget by \$10k for the year.

- Expense highlights:
 - Salary expenses were over \$10k, and this is mainly due to overtime.
 - Maintenance expenses were over \$24k and this was due to some Vestry approved projects.
 - Overages are not anticipated in 2026 since the Williams Fund will again be available for maintenance expenses.
 - Utilities were under budget by \$14k.
 - Worship expenses were over by \$55k, and these expenses were covered by gifts from parishioners.
- The deficit for the year was \$19k (.005%) against a budgeted "break even".
- Due to a couple of unexpected year-end gifts, the fund balance (monies in operating and investments) increased by \$400k. Because of this influx of cash, the operating checking account was \$1.3M at year end.
 - The Investment Committee moved \$500k from checking to our cash management account at Schwab on 1/3/26. It is invested in a 7-day Treasury fund.
- Stewardship discussion:
 - Victoria Bass, stewardship director, provided an update on 2026 pledges.

Tom McDowell provided a summary of the 2026 budget. He said based on expected pledges and expenses, we are again anticipating a \$0 bottom line. The budget may be adjusted if pledges increase.

Tom answered several questions from the vestry regarding expenses, salaries, and benefits. After a thorough discussion Jackie made a motion to accept the 2026 budget as presented and Morris seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Dixon presented a draft of the current gift acceptance policy and facilitated a discussion, along with Victoria Bass, about different aspects of the policy. It was decided to table the passing of the policy until it can be studied at a later vestry meeting time.

Victoria Bass shared current statistics of the Stewards of God's Grace campaign. She reported that at the last vestry meeting we still needed \$745,833 and we were just over \$2,250,000 in pledges for 2026. As of today, she shared, our balance is \$2,908,371.67 and this amount is over 583 units averaging \$4,988 of which 57 are new.

There are 37 outstanding pledges from FY2025 that we need for FY2026 totaling \$64,416.80. If these are secured, our total would come to \$2,972,788.47.

Victoria said she has compiled a spreadsheet of the outstanding pledges in hopes the vestry can make some calls and follow up on these pledges. She will share a link to Google spreadsheet via email.

Of the top 10 pledgers', the average age is 78. In the 11th through 20th place, the average age is 63, and their combined average age is 71.

New Business:

Tom explained that the clergy have an option to take part of their salary as a housing allowance. The vestry must approve this allowance yearly. Ralph made a motion to approve and Charlotte seconded the motion. It passed.

Dixon welcomed Matthew Phillips to the meeting to discuss his candidacy for holy orders. Phillip shared with the vestry what his process has been like and some of what he is learning. Phillip shared a link to a document that needs to be signed by every member of the vestry and by the secretary of the vestry.

Because last weeks in person service was cancelled and the voting for vestry could not be done, the St. Paul's church bylaws allow for the vestry to call a 'special meeting' where voting for the new vestry class can take place. It was decided that the meeting will be on Sunday, February 8 at the three-morning services. Ballots will be available at each service for members to fill out and vestry members will take them up for counting. Ralph made a motion for a special meeting to be held on Sunday, February 8, 2026, from 7:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. to elect a new vestry class for 2026. John seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Dixon said about the vestry retreat that details would go out tomorrow via email. He reminded those present that the February vestry meeting will take place at the vestry retreat so the next vestry meeting scheduled is March 26.

Dixon announced that Charlotte Broughton will stand as the new Sr. Warden for 2026, and Jackie Piscetelli has agreed to have her name considered for Jr. Warden for 2026. A vote will be taken on this at the vestry retreat.

Because of the poor weather on February 1, the Sesquicentennial kickoff has been rescheduled for Feb 15, 2026.

Dixon encouraged the vestry to make plans to attend the special lunch on Sunday, May 17 at the Benton Convention center to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St. Paul's.

Dixon said plans for the preschool part of the building are still being discerned.

Dixon asked vestry members to mark their calendars for confirmation Sunday, April 5, 2026, when Bishop Jennifer will visit and have lunch with the vestry.

Dixon announced that he is now serving a three-year term on Diocesan Council.

In clergy reports, the Rev. Nick VanHorn reminded folks about the next men's speaker series on February 11, that the youth lockout was a fun time with the kids, youth confirmation is moving along and the dates for the youth summer trip are June 7-11, 2026.

The Rev. Erika Takacs said, as people who hold information about things happening at church, she appreciates the vestry's efforts to share information with members as they can. She said the leaflet changes are still being studied, and the vergers are doing a great job being lay helpers on Sunday mornings. Erika invited those in attendance to send to her anyone who is confused about the different roles available at Sunday services. She would be happy to educate anyone. She also gave a cheer to the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally.

The Rev. Lucy Strandlund announced that 60 people signed up for the retreat on St. Paul being led by the Rev. Dr. Jane Patterson. Because of weather, the event has been moved to April 25, 2026. She said the Sunday morning class on St. Paul has been well attended and she is working on the offerings for adult formation in Lent. The registration is now open for the ICON workshop.

In the Sr. Warden's Report, Morris Friedman encouraged the vestry to consider if they want to liaison with their current committees or if they want to try something new.

Jr. Warden, Charlotte Broughton had nothing to report.

Dixon led the Liturgy at the Conclusion of Vestry Service, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 with Executive session to follow.