

**The Church of the Ascension  
Minutes of the Vestry  
September 20, 2016 Meeting**

**Present:** Rev. Stewart Tabb, Bill Willey, Michael Murphy, Sam Webster, Susan Meredith, Mark Strickland, Courtney Wheeler, Suzi Montagna, Suzanne Tate, Lynn Farlin, and Anne Doyle.

**I. Welcome:** Rev. Stewart Tabb called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the opening devotion. She noted that Donna Killmon would lead the devotions at the October 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**II. Register:** The minutes of the August 16, 2016 meeting were approved as changed. Anne is to send them to Nellwyn for posting.

**III. Treasurer's Report:** Michael Murphy announced that the Finance Committee reconvened after a several year hiatus. He reported that both pledges and expenses came in lower for the month of August. Several funds changes were mentioned, including the NEST program with its corresponding expenses being taken over by another church, the Organ Fund being separated out of the Surplus Fund, and the Memorial Fund being used for an approved \$900 renovation of the choir room. It was also noted that plans were being made to have Richard Butler compile statistics for costs directly associated with the day school, including utilities usage and direct payroll costs. The Finance Committee desires to zero-out the Surplus Fund by transferring its balance to the appropriate sub-accounts within the general fund. The Finance Committee will handle the transfer of funds and will report its actions to the vestry. Finally, a formal audit report will be forthcoming. Stewart thanked Michael for his report.

**IV. Warden Reports:** Bill Willey distributed the Junior Warden's report, attached, and briefly discussed several items from the list. He called attention to Item #12, in which the Talbot family donated the proceeds from Ascension's purchase of adjacent land to Granby High School. Regarding Item #1, Bill noted that Larry Bergmooser would provide the Building and Grounds Committee with a cost estimate for the cleaning and beautification of Ascension's tidal march frontage. The estimate will include the removal of several trees that have been damaged by storms. Finally, for Item #2-the Bell Tower project, Bill noted that the first of two payments had been made to the Verdin Company for its installation of the bell and tower.

**V. Clergy Report:** Stewart discussed the annual stewardship program and pledge drive, noting that planning has begun. The Stewardship Committee is on board to use the same program as last year with some modifications. She noted that the program was largely well-received last year, with this year's program beginning on All Saint's Day (November 6, 2016). She communicated her expectation that the vestry would divide up the list of parishioner non-pledges for the purpose of making phone calls.

**VI. Discussion of the *Conversation Regarding Marriage*:** Senior Warden Sam Webster led a discussion on Ascension's ongoing discernment of God's will regarding the sacrament of marriage in the Episcopal Church. The Bishop has left the decision of performing the sacrament of marriage up

to each individual parish. During the August 16<sup>th</sup> vestry meeting, Sam distributed materials prepared by The Episcopal Church to be used as a basis for discussion during the vestry's September 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. The discussion's purpose is to initiate further conversations among Ascension parishioners on God's will regarding marriage in the Episcopal Church. The vestry decided to begin the conversation of the sacrament of marriage, and then to continue the conversation with the congregation. The vestry noted the following parameters:

- This is not an exercise to bring shame upon anyone's personal opinions, but to have an open, honest discussion;
- Parishioners can agree that marriage does include the following traits: fidelity, monogamy, mutual respect, and communication;
- Church of the Ascension can unite around the principle that marriage is a holy relationship in the presence of God. On this topic, the vestry members discussed beautiful and memorable examples of where they have seen the image of God in the other person.

The vestry focused on the historical considerations and questions surrounding marriage, noting how the idea of marriage has changed in the last 2,000 years from spiritual to secular and back to spiritual again. Societal norms about engagement, name changes, legal decisions, civil benefits, and gender expectations have also changed. The vestry discussed sacramental marriage versus a strictly legal marriage, noting that the Puritans did not bless marriages. The vestry further noted that the Episcopal Church has come back to a communal affirmation of marriage, even though it acknowledges that the way people are together in a relationship, and the definition of *family* have changed. Finally, the vestry noted that the Bible is not clear on the picture of marriage.

While there is no specific timeframe in which to make a decision surrounding the sacrament of marriage, the vestry would like to complete a parish-wide conversation. To this end members discussed the possibility of holding six cottage-style meetings on the topic of marriage. Courtney offered to work with Stewart to set up the gatherings and discuss facilitators. Lynn will also help with the facilitator decision.

**VII. Other Business:** The vestry voted to allow the Sunday school to take up a collection to purchase Thanksgiving turkeys.

**VIII. Schedule/Devotions:** Stewart led the closing devotion with the Order for Compline. The next vestry meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 18, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

**IX: Subsequent Vote Via Email:** After the September 20th meeting, the vestry discussed/voted via email to approve a similar stewardship program as last year with a reduced budget, including the cost of a catered lunch at \$2,400 for 150 people. The vestry's vote to approve the signing of the caterer's contract and make a deposit was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Doyle

## Jr. Warden Report for Tuesday SEP 20 2016 Vestry Meeting - Amended

1. **Tidal Marsh Project**: Larry Bergmooser presented a briefing about the Tidal Marsh Project, and things we might do to cleanup/beautify the almost 600 linear feet of wetlands frontage behind the building. Included in this brief was information about things we can and cannot do to the wetlands. Of immediate importance will be the removal of 3 trees in or bordering the wetlands area, including a huge pine tree located just behind the Pig Pavilion. This tree has been damaged by lightning strike(s), and would cause major damage to the shed and furnace room if it fell in that direction.  
Larry is getting estimates for the removal of these trees.  
Additionally, both long range and short term plans for the beautification of the wetlands area were discussed, including how much of the wetland frontage we might want to clear.
2. **Bell Tower Project**: The first of 2 payments was made to the Verdin Company. The final payment will be made in early 2017, with installation hopefully completed before Easter.  
Things we have left to do:
  - Select a color for the steel posts
  - Choose a concrete contractor to pour the concrete footings
  - Ensure that electrical connections for bell are still good
  - Get all necessary permits for Bell Tower installation
3. **Air Quality in Choir Room**: Sanair Company performed air quality testing in Choir Room and Choir Loft. As of MON 9/19 we have not received their report.
4. **Plumbing problems**: Ladies room had 2 toilets that were not flushing properly. Wright Way plumbing completed necessary repairs MON 9/19. While here they also fixed a leaky faucet on small sink in kitchen and repaired leaky deep sinks next to stove.
5. **Electrical issues**: 2 lighting fixtures in kitchen, 4 fixtures outside above the concrete benches, and 1 fixture in the Men's Room are not working. Also, automatic lights on flag pole are on in daylight hours. Hart Electric will be at Ascension on Tuesday September 27, 2016 to assess problems and make necessary corrections.
6. **Broken Kneeler**: Thanks to Merrill Dorman, the kneeler on the middle aisle right side of the sanctuary has been repaired. Merrill will also repair broken tables in the Choir Room and Lounge.
7. **Fire Inspection**: Fire Marshall was at Ascension last month – **we passed!**

8. **Dishwasher**: Another \$1,200+ repair was required to make the dishwasher work again. Perhaps at the next such repair we might have to consider cutting our losses and look for a different model?
9. **Stove Cleaning**: Vernon Fields thoroughly cleaned the stove and hood in August. He is available to do other projects (cleaning, painting, etc.) as needed.
10. **Bell Tower**: Larry Bergmooser and Marilyn Meek removed a tree in the area where the new Bell Tower will be placed. Removal of this tree was required as preparation for the Tower installation.
11. **Cox Memorial Gardens**: Marilyn Meek purchased and planted a Camellia bush in the corner of the Gardens near to the hose, replacing a plant that had died.
12. **Purchase of Land adjacent to Parking Lot**: The Talbot family donated the proceeds from the sale of this land to the Minton Talbot Scholarship Fund for students at Granby High School.
13. **Sound System**: Several people have complained that they can't hear the sermon, Bible readings or prayers. Should we hire a Sound Engineering company?