

St Stephen's Anglican Church

Mays Chapel, Maryland



Vestry Minutes [17 June 2020]

Attendees: The Rev'd Guy Hawtin;
John Cobb; Tracy Collins; Anne-Stuart Darrell; Tom Fitzgerald; Brock Johnson; Bill
Spicer; Peter Threadgill (secretary);
Bob Reynolds, treasurer;
Clergy: Fr Novicki;
Staff and Guests: Adric; John Darlington; Kim Reynolds.

The Rector called the meeting to order at 1905 with the Vestry Prayers.

1. Reading of the Minutes

Mr Cobb moved to approve the minutes, Mr Fitzgerald seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report

Mr Reynolds reported that he decided in March to apply for PPP (Paycheck Protection Program); it was subsequently approved for \$35K and is included in the balance sheet. A decision on loan forgiveness is still pending.

There are two wills from Andy Young. The parish was notified late last year that the dispersement would be \$150K in stock and \$45K in cash, which are all reflected in the Revere account. The second trust will yield an additional dispersement. Mrs Darrell asked if there were restrictions on the bequests, and the answer is no. (Fr Hawtin explained that Col Young, who was married to Darcy Young, set up a trust for his two sisters. The parish is a residual beneficiary to the trust, as are Old St. Paul's, Johns Hopkins, and a few others.)

Mr Reynolds reported that the Profit & Loss year-to-date is \$83,393, which does not include bequests. This is down 17%, but total expenses are down 14%. We have taken \$35K out of the T Rowe Price account since the beginning of the year. Fr Hawtin pointed out that the reserve is rather handsome: churches generally want a minimum of six months overhead in reserve, and we have eight (2/3 of a year).

Mr Reynolds pointed out that we have two mortgages and a line of credit. Mr Hawkins used to pay down the mortgage at the end of the year when contributions were up, but Fr Hawtin said it's not a good idea to pay down the mortgage because of the current fluid situation.

Fr Hawtin pointed out that we cannot approve the Treasurer's Report (because it is what it is), but suggested a vote of thanks to Mr Reynolds. Mrs Darrell moved to thank the Treasurer, there were several seconds, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Mr Darlington pointed out that the last line in the 6-Year Profit & Lost Summary prepared by Mr Threadgil (as an update of last year's 5-Year Summary) was incorrect: it should be labeled "Adjusted Net Operating Income".

3. Rector's Report

3.1. Pandemic activities

Fr Hawtin asked Fr Novicki to talk about the parish pandemic activities. Fr Novicki has been coming into the church to do essential things. He has been producing videos of eucharists and Fr Hawtin's radio broadcasts. Mr Threadgill has been posting the videos and recordings to YouTube, Facebook, and the web site. According to the statistics he provided, online watching has been falling off. It was suggested that this might be because people are returning to church. Fr Hawtin says the broadcasts are useful for shut-ins; the parish has had a big ministry to retirement communities, a very underserved community; visits haven't been possible during the quarantine. Fr Hawtin would like to keep the recordings going, now that we have established the technology; they are a good reminder that the parish is still alive and kicking. Shortly before the pandemic, the phone situation was solidified, and with planned network improvement, we will be in better position to do multimedia events at church.

Before the parish had a building, Fr Hawtin decided the parish needed a weekly newsletter. Everyone was asked to come up with four new recipients, and he would like to reinstitute that. The parish previously advertised in The Baltimore Sun, but it didn't bring anyone in, so we stopped and saved money.

Mr Spicer suggested putting up a banner at the street corner saying we're still here, but no one volunteered to do any follow-up.

3.2. Responsibilities of the Vestry and Insurance

Mrs Darrell asked Mr Cobb what the fiduciary responsibilities of the vestry were. Mr Cobb said he hadn't researched them specifically, but they include no stealing or selling things; Since the vestry doesn't have day-to-day power over the financials and acts as a body, their responsibilities are limited. In response to Mrs Darrell's question about liabilities, Mr Cobb said the vestry was similar to a board of directors. Maryland is one of the hardest states to punch through the corporate veil. He related an anecdote where three brothers owning three different companies were able to declare bankruptcy without impunity, so the vestry shouldn't be worried about being sued for injuries or bankruptcies; short of an illegal act, the vestry is fairly well-protected.

Fr Hawtin asked Mr Darlington to discuss the parish's insurance. Mr Darlington said the insurance covers the building structure up to the limits in its policy. The policy was increased to cover certain high-value items such as the piano. The policy covers injuries on the premises; personal injuries; defamation, etc. The directors and officers are covered for liability for decisions made or failed to be made that lead to lawsuits. There is limited auto insurance for vehicles rented for the church, and

workers compensation covers employees and volunteers (the latter is important). Mr Darlington assured Mr Spicer that injuries incurred while mowing are covered.

Mrs Darrell said she had received a copy of the canons from Mr Richardson, and Fr Hawtin said we should talk about roles. Fr Hawtin said that the Canons were revised in 2011. (Mr Threadgill noted that there is a link to the ACA canons on the parish web site.) Fr Hawtin pointed out that Canon 37 details the responsibilities of the priest.

Fr Hawtin said there are two sides to the church: spiritual and temporal. A rector is responsible for both, but administration of the temporal/secular side is the responsibility of the vestry. To put it another way, the rector is the conduit for the spiritual side, while the vestry is responsible for temporalities, like grounds and money. The vestry acts as a sounding board for the rector; the rector's warden represents the rector to the vestry.

A vicar would have the power of the rector, but a deacon only has partial rector's authority. A rector has access to the facilities, but he is not allowed to have a financial interest, such as a title. This is different from the Roman tradition, where the priests hold the title to the church property. The Anglican tradition is different: the people own the property, not the priest. (This is why most priests don't use a rectory, because they prefer to own a house as an investment.) The Roman church instituted priestly celibacy in the 14th century so that priests couldn't leave parish property to their children.

So the vestry administers the physical plant of the church, while the rector administers the services. Until the 1950s, morning prayer was the main service of country churches because there was a shortage of clergy. Fr Hawtin prefers to have laymen officiate at the offices; laymen can only preach with a license from the bishop, and with the approval of the priest (who has to pre-read the sermons to make sure there's no heresy).

3.3. Increased lay participation at services

Fr Hawtin suggested having laity read the Epistle at communion, and the lessons at morning prayer. (This is considered a great honor in Britain, where the readers are escorted to the lectern by a vergers with a wand.) Women and older children would also be asked to read. Lectors would need to be scheduled. Fr Novicki told Mr Spicer that some of the older Sunday School children had already been told they would be reading the Epistle.

3.4. Pandemic precautions

Mr Spicer said he would like the parish to be a stickler in observing COVID practices in order to build people's confidence. He said we should go slow at first, with masks in the lobby and going up to the altar. Mrs Collins asked how people would take communion. Fr Hawtin explained that people have been communicating in one kind: pre-consecrated hosts are distributed in non-reusable plastic cups which are later collected for deconsecration. People are then allowed to come to the altar to intinct. (Fr Hawtin noted that the Roman practice of receiving in one kind began as a reaction to the Black Death. Theologically, only one kind is necessary.)

Mrs Darrell asked about singing, since choirs have been hotspots, and she feels strongly about not singing. Fr Hawtin acknowledged that there has been a debate on singing. The CDC said you shouldn't sing, because of the increased expulsion of germs. The Governor had originally banned singing, but the

latest guidance was silent on the matter. Mr Fitzgerald was told that there was no guidance from the ACA. Fr Hawtin suggested that it might be better not to sing, to encourage more people to return. He said that the CDC takes things back and that WHO is worse. Fr Hawtin said we needed straightforward non-political information. He stated that he will not have politics in church, and that he will not have politics preached in church.

Mr Spicer suggesting putting something in the newsletter to encourage mask wearing, to get people to come to church. Mr Fitzgerald said we need to encourage confidence, and listen for indicators that would allow the resumption of singing. (He would like the Choirmaster to play music, but he doesn't want people badgering him to play hymns.) Mrs Reynolds said she wasn't coming to church until things were safer. Mr Darlington said he thought COVID19 was no worse than the flu, and that it was blown out of proportion. He added that masks are a symbol of fear (pointing out that of all the attendees, he was the most likely to get it).

When Mr Darlington asked if masks were mandatory in church, Fr Hawtin said not as far as he was concerned, but that people should maintain social distancing. Mr Darlington suggested that some parishioners aren't coming to church because they don't want to wear masks. It was observed that at current attendance rates, social distancing is not a problem.

Mrs Darrell moved that we ban singing in church, Mr Spicer seconded, and almost everyone voted in favor (there was one abstention). The Choirmaster asked how long the ban would last. Fr Hawtin said it depended. If the Governor explicitly said people could sing, then we would sing. Other than that, the ban would last at least until the next vestry meeting.

4. Rector's Warden Report

Nothing to report.

5. People's Warden's Report

Mr Spicer reported that routine monthly and quarterly maintenance checks are proceeding. Gary Mullaney has been a big help on grounds work. Mr Spicer has found a tree service that does a good job, so he will try to get an estimate for the work that is needed. Fr Novicki complimented Mr Spicer on the good work that he is doing.

6. Committee Reports

6.1 Parish Life Committee

Nothing to report.

6.2. Sunday School

Mrs Collins reported that Diane Novicki is keeping in touch with parents. There was a small group on Sunday (14 June); perhaps everyone is used to sleeping in.

Mr Spicer asked how attendance had been in the last two weeks since the church reopened. Mrs Collins

answered that they had eight children last week, and that activities are held outside, weather permitting.

6.3 Grounds

Provided as part of the People's Warden's Report.

6.4 Stewardship

Nothing to report.

6.5 Memorials

Nothing to report.

6.6 Construction & Rehabilitation

Nothing to report.

7. Old Business

Fr Novicki provided a report on what it is that he does, to supplement the roles listing which Mr Threadgill provided. Fr Hawtin said that Fr Novicki's listing is not complete, because the clergy are responsible for everything.

Fr Hawtin pointed out that people listed as associate rectors are not necessarily members of the parish. They are listed because every priest needs an assigned altar to celebrate at in order to fulfill his priestly obligations, and because they're all men under authority, and so they need an official authority figure to provide their chain of command.

8. New Business

None.

9. Close

Mr Cobb's motion to close the meeting was seconded by Mrs Collins, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2100.