

# St Stephen's Anglican Church

Mays Chapel, Maryland



## Vestry Minutes 16 September 2020

Attendees: The Rev'd Guy Hawtin;  
John Cobb; Tracy Collins; Tom Fitzgerald; Brock Johnson; Jai Seunarine; Bill Spicer;  
Peter Threadgill (secretary);  
**Clergy:** Fr John Novicki;  
**Staff and Guests:** John Darlington.

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

### 1. Reading of the Minutes

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

### 2. Treasurer's Report

Mr Reynolds was not present but he provided reports in his absence. Fr Hawtin noted that contributions were down 18.7%, but that was not particularly relevant. Although we did not have services for a long period, pledges are good—and better than others in the area, based on anecdotal evidence. Fr Hawtin offered his congratulations to the congregation for doing so well, noting that the pledge line included pledges received by mail.

Fr Hawtin noted that the Profit & Loss statement is really Income & Expenditures (P&L is the term QuickBooks uses). He noted that there's quite a lot of money in the checking account.

Fr Hawtin and Mr Cobb discussed the fact that a new bank has taken over the old one: Revere was bought by Sandy Spring. Mr Cobb noted that this happens often with small banks, and that for now, the same people are working in the local branch. He noted that that might not last, and that we might want to follow departing personnel to wherever they go. He said that bank security had increased recently and that it was cumbersome. If you want the inconvenience of a large bank, you should go with a large bank. Mr Cobb noted that Sandy Spring is a mid-size bank, and that he prefers small banks. Fr Hawtin added that it's good to have a personal relationship with your bank.

Mr Fitzgerald moved a vote of thanks to the treasurer. Mr Cobb seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

### 3. Rector's Report

### **3.1. Dismissal of Choirmaster**

Fr Hawtin announced that the Parish and Adric had parted ways, given that there is no likelihood of resuming normal church music anytime soon. Fr Hawtin said he would give Adric a good reference, and that the Parish would need to rethink what we do music-wise. Fr Hawtin has had some discussions with Fr Novicki about what those changes might be. Fr Hawtin noted that Adric is an at-will employee, so he is not entitled to severance, but that a parting gift would be appropriate. That discussion was deferred to New Business.

Mr Seunarine asked for further details, and Fr Hawtin explained that there is a prohibition on singing, with no likelihood for resumption in the near future. Additionally, Adric was concerned about COVID, especially given the health of his parents. Fr Hawtin said we might look for someone to play the organ until the Govenor says we can sing again, and that it may all go away on November 4th.

### **3.2. New Computer System**

Fr Novicki is introducing a new computer system, which will be really good, and better than the ad hoc system we currently have. It's been an eight- or nine-month process to get the computers. In the end, he was able to get reduced prices from Dell and Microsoft as a non-profit charitable establishment. The end result was a discount of 40%-45%. The server is set up and recognizes files and people, but it needs further set-up so that it can be accessed outside the building (such as from home). To do this, Fr Novicki needs to deal with the phone system. The final installation will have a guest account, which may develop into kiosk services. Fr Novicki said there would be in-service training, so others (staff, vestry, etc.) will be invited to participate.

Mr Darlington asked about the state of the phone system. Fr Novicki answered that everything is fine, but we're not quite utilizing everything yet. Mr Johnson observed that the expenditure for the phone has more than doubled. Fr Novicki's response was that Verizon decided that we're a business, while previously they had charged us as a residence.

### **3.3. Services and Attendance**

The only service which has not been restored to the calendar is the Saturday family service, which was not well attended. (Most of those people are coming to the Friday midday service.) We may or may not resume the Saturday service in the future. Sunday attendance has been between 40 and 50 people. Mr Spicer said the attendance may be higher, because the ushers don't always properly record the numbers.

Fr Novicki said that, against conventional wisdom, we have picked up three families, who came because their churches weren't meeting. They have commented that our services were like those they experienced when they were kids.

We are still doing video services, podcasts, and newsletters to let people know we're still around. Most pastoral services have been funerals; they've been sad affairs because they've all been graveside services (with one exception), and most have been very small.

Mr Darlington suggested that it might be advantageous to send out a letter to past members to welcome them back. Fr Hawtin said they all received the newsletter. Mr Darlington said he didn't know how

many people read the newsletter, but that a letter on letterhead would command more attention. Fr Hawtin said we don't want to make people feel unfaithful because they're afraid, so he will send a draft to Mr Darlington for review. Fr Novicki added that he sent welcome cards to the new families, and added them to the newsletter distro.

Mr Seunarine asked how many people can attend on Sunday. Fr Hawtin answered that we're limited to 50% capacity, but the sanctuary's capacity is about 170, so there's no issue with admitting people. We're continuing the usual three services; Fr Hawtin doesn't want to consolidate services because you lose people.

#### **4. Rector's Warden Report**

Nothing to report.

#### **5. People's Warden's Report**

Mr Spicer reported that the trees were taken down. He didn't call the roofer because he decided the roof isn't leaking. There is water coming in on the Epistle side, but it's a ground-level issue. There's a sing exposing a joint, and there's also run-off from the air conditioner. Mr Spicer will look for people to take a look, and Fr Hawtin said he would talk to his son-in-law.

#### **6. Committee Reports**

##### **6.1 Parish Life Committee**

There's an interest in getting bible studies going again. Mr Spicer suggested putting out a sign-up sheet to gauge interest.

##### **6.2. Sunday School**

Mrs Collins says they have a new family interested; the wife plays the organ. They were not happy at Old St Paul's, so they may stay here.

##### **6.3 Grounds**

The stumps have been ground out. Mr Darlington asked about the grass. Fr Bursi has volunteered to cut the grass. It looks like he had done half, and then stopped because of hay fever. Mr Spicer said he would come back to finish the work. Fr Hawtin was not happy about Fr Bursi cutting the grass because he is unsteady.

At the end of the meeting, during New Business, it was noted that Mr Johnson, Mrs Rock, and Mrs Novicki spent several hours rehabilitating the playground. They got rid of weeds and poison ivy, and put in mulch. The following week, a new family with children showed up.

##### **6.4 Stewardship**

Nothing to report.

## **6.5 Memorials**

Nothing to report.

## **6.6 Construction & Rehabilitation**

Nothing to report.

## **7. Old Business**

None.

## **8. New Business**

### **8.1. Dismissal of Choirmaster, continued**

Mr Cobb reiterated that Adric was an at-will employee, and that anything we do is not required by law. He pointed out that there is no precedent in the Parish history, because with previous firings, the employee decamped under clouds, with a storm of rancor. He added that we need to give Adric a chance to deal with health insurance. Under COBRA, the Parish will keep Adric on the insurance rolls for 18 months as long as he pays the premium.

Mrs Collins pointed out that the Parish paid Adric for several months after his automobile accident, because we're a Christian organization. Mr Cobb expressed surprise that Adric had been kept on for so long during the pandemic.

Mr Fitzgerald asked how Adric will be affected, and whether he has something to fall back on. (The answer was no.) He also asked if Adric intended to stay on as a parishioner. (The answer was no.)

Mr Seunarine pointed out that Adric was fired, because the Parish is going in a different direction, so he will be eligible for unemployment. Mr Seunarine also pointed out that a gift from the Parish might delay or disqualify unemployment.

Fr Hawtin suggested a month's salary as a farewell gift. He described it as an obligation of a Christian organization, even though the Parish is not exactly flush with money. Mr Cobb noted that Adric would not be departing immediately. He would be around for a couple of weeks, under supervision, while packing up his belongings.

Mr Threadgill moved that the Parish give Adric one month's salary as a farewell gift. Mr Johnson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

### **8.2. Distribution of Materials**

Mr Darlington asked if it would be possible to continue printing sermons, because he likes to send them out to people. Fr Hawtin said that they are occasionally printed as meditations in the newsletter. Mr Threadgill pointed out that in the past, the sermons were posted to the web site. Mr Johnson confirmed

that people miss having the printed sermons.

Mr Darlington further asked if we could get copies of the financials ahead of time. He said he needs at least a day to review them. Fr Hawtin noted that Mr Reynolds has enormous demands on his time. Fr Hawtin said he would try to get Mr Reynolds to distribute the financials earlier, but we're dealing with volunteers, and you can't always command them to do something. Fr Novicki said he hopes that eventually when the new computer system comes on line, we may be able to use that. The financials are currently kept on a laptop which Mr Reynolds has at home. When the new system goes in, we will once again have a treasurer's computer at the church.

Mr Johnson asked if there was a preferred schedule for the installation of the referenced computer system. Fr Novicki said things are held up now by dealing with a third party (the phone company). The system is currently ready for in-building set up, but just can't get outside the building (like a VPN, which he would like to offer to the staff).

### **8.3. Flowers**

Mr Johnson observed that the Flower Committee currently consisted solely of Devon Rock. There was talk of going back to real flowers, instead of the artificial flowers currently in use. Mrs Rock was willing to do live flowers once or twice a month on her own, but she would need volunteers if we were to have real flowers more often.

### **8.4 Signage**

Mr Johnson asked if we were going to do anything with the sign outside the narthex door that used to display service times: it looks like a gallows. An earlier discussion noted that the sign was in the wrong place: it needs to be closer to the road. Mr Johnson asked that he and Mr Spicer be authorized to deal with the sign. Fr Hawtin commented that it needed to be with the consultation of the Vestry. Mr Cobb moved that Messrs Johnson and Spicer be given such authorization. There were several seconds, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **9. Close**

Mr Cobb's motion to close the meeting was seconded by Mr Johnson, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2011.