

St. Alban's Parish, Washington, D.C.
Minutes of the Vestry Meeting of December 11, 2007

Scott Benhase, Rector; Margot Critchfield, Senior Associate Rector; Tim Boggs, Assistant Rector for Stewardship & Outreach Ministries; Erin Hensley, Assistant to the Rector for Youth and Young Adult Ministries; Kate Bouvé, Senior Warden; Nathalie Bramson, Bill Edgar, Marc Fetterman, Kammie Hedges, Keith Jones, Danette Kauffman, Sam Lewis, Susan Morris, Jon Sawyer, Vestry; Colin Mahaffey, youth Rep; Mary Jane Shackelford, WSA Board Rep; Andrea Farr, Secretary.

Opening Prayer

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm without a quorum present.

Minutes of previous meeting

The Vestry did not take up the minutes of the October and November meetings. The October, November and December minutes will be addressed at the January Vestry meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Scott Benhase presented the Treasurer's Report in Chris Holmes's absence. Some of the highlights were discussed.

{at 6:50 pm a quorum was reached}

It was noted that most of the parish programs are on target in terms of expenditures with the exception of hospitality. Hospitality expenditure is higher than budgeted because the budget anticipated larger contributions at events.

The budget anticipated an overall deficit for the first eleven months of the year because collections in December traditionally are very high.

Scott noted that the Diocese of North Carolina has contributed \$7,500 to the parish for Erin Hensley's placement at St. Alban's.

There was discussion regarding ways to save money, for example by reducing paper usage by going back to the Prayer Book during the services. Scott Benhase responded that the savings associated would not be particularly significant, and that going to an announcement-only type bulletin would be helpful as part of a plan to "green" the parish rather than as a cost savings measure.

Motion: Sam Lewis moved to receive the Treasurer's Report.

Nathalie Bramson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Junior Warden's Report

Jim Sottile was not present but developments were reported on his behalf.

Stone House Group update

The Property Committee expects to provide the report to the Vestry prior to the January meeting. The report includes some items that require immediate attention, some of which have already been addressed.

Recommendation: Handicapped-accessibility for restroom off Room 203

The Property Committee expects to present a proposal to the Vestry next month.

Personnel policies

Jim Sottile continues to look for a lawyer to revise the policies.

Senior Wardens Report

Spring '08 Planning Retreat

Kate Bouvé reminded the Vestry of the importance of developing consensus. Consensus building improves the chances of coming forth with results that can be implemented successfully. Notice to the parish will be provided via Bulletins and the Christmas *Chronicle*.

The Vestry discussed what lessons could be taken from the MMR and applied to planning the Retreat. It was noted that the MMR process showed the importance of: face-to-face contact and dialogue; obtaining input from young people; and hearing from new parishioners.

It was suggested that Tim Boggs be asked to identify new parishioners who might participate in the Retreat. It was also suggested that the Retreat Planning Committee develop a participant selection process for Vestry consideration. It was noted that a process for Vestry consideration would be useful, but that Vestry brainstorming is also helpful.

The Vestry observed that many parishioner comments were provided after the MMR report was issued. The challenge will be to determine how to bring such people into the Planning Retreat process sooner.

The Vestry discussed what to consider in evaluating someone who comes forward and wants to participate in the Retreat. It was suggested that the person be asked which constituency s/he would represent.

Scott Benhase suggested that the Vestry consider proposing individuals with whom they disagree on some/most things. This could assist in ensuring that diverse opinions are represented at the Retreat. The Vestry discussed making a notation of personal information such as service normally attended, activities and the like, to further assist in ensuring broad representation at the Retreat.

The Vestry discussed ways to bring more reticent people into the process. It was suggested that there be a Forum on the Retreat.

Dani Kauffman, who is on the Retreat Planning Committee, thought that it would be possible for the Committee to have a proposal for selection methodology in time for the January Vestry meeting. She asked that the Vestry identify persons who should be considered and explain why their presence would be helpful.

Nowlan Estate

Kate reported that we are waiting for the judge's decision.

The Vestry asked for an update concerning the '05 audit. Scott Benhase reported that some of the needed records were gone when the audit began and had to be recreated. At this point, only a few cancelled checks from Clergy discretionary funds are outstanding. Scott noted that the auditor will not opine regarding 2006 until the '05 audit is completed.

Tim Boggs provided an update concerning the EMP. To date, there are 236 repeat pledgers and their pledges have increased by 11 percent. A letter will go out Friday to those who have not yet pledged. If the letter is unsuccessful, a call will follow.

Tim will send a carefully drafted letter to the approximately 20 pledging families/individuals who are more than 50 percent behind in their 2007 pledge. Tim was asked whether a call might be useful. Tim responded that he believed it would be more pastoral to send a letter first so that those receiving them can react in their own time.

Rector's Report

Budget - first look

Scott Benhase provided the draft budget. The Finance Committee was given the opportunity to review the draft budget, and Nathalie Bramson presented a written report containing the Committee's comments. The Committee raised a number of points including the need for: greater accuracy in health insurance cost projections; a review of building insurance requirements in light of new facilities and equipment; additional scrutiny of the projected decrease in office expenses. The Committee asked whether the reported audit fee covers all audits (*i.e.*, '05, '06, and '07). Scott indicated that would find out. The Committee's greatest concern was the planned elimination of the financial assistant's position and simultaneous addition of a part-time music assistant. With respect to format, the Committee recommended: 1) each line item in the new budget have a comparable line item in the '07 budget, and that any reclassifications be spelled out; and 2) greater detail in many categories, especially Personnel.

A discussion of the draft budget followed. The Vestry asked for the background of certain figures, particularly personnel costs and certain costs that are budgeted to be lower in 2008 compared to 2007. Scott Benhase noted that the budget began with anticipated income and the expenses developed from there.

Scott indicated that if there is no budget by the January meeting, the Vestry will have to pass a continuing resolution that maintains expenditures and 2007 levels.

It was noted that the Outreach Commission should make recommendations as to how the Vestry should spend outreach funds. It would be helpful to have a recommendation in time for the January meeting, but if not, a place holding number can be used in the short term.

The Vestry asked which institutional grants had not been paid. Tim Boggs will find out.

Signage redux

The Vestry was asked why the parish does not use the same sign company recently used by the Cathedral. Marc Fetterman will find out who prepared the Cathedral's new signs.

Clergy Housing Resolutions for the IRS (2008)

Four (4) resolutions—one each for Erin, Harriette, Tim and Scott-- were presented for consideration by the Vestry. In each instance the form set forth the amount of the housing allowance but overall compensation is blank because 2008 compensation has not yet been determined. Once compensation is established for a Clergy member, that amount will be written into the pertinent resolution and the form signed and dated by the Secretary. The completed forms will be appended to these minutes.

Motion: Keith Jones moved to approve the resolutions.

Sam Lewis seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Saying farewell to Margot

After excusing Margot from the meeting, Scott Benhase suggested that the mosaic on the aisle in the sanctuary commemorating St. Columba's Church be designated to honor the ministry of Margot Critchfield. The Vestry discussed Margot's special connection to St. Columba's. It was noted that two mosaics have been designated so far, and the each came with a donation of approximately \$6,000. The designation requires a change to a plaque that resides beside St. John's Chapel.

Motion: Susan Morris moved that the mosaic commemorating St. Columba's Church be designated to honor the ministry of Margot Critchfield.

Keith Jones seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Nathalie Bramson addressed the plans for the farewell receptions for Margot. Nathalie reported that the receptions are being treated as graduation parties.

Clergy Responsibilities in 2008

Scott Benhase is developing an outline. This plan is particularly important given Margot's departure.

Communications Committee

Cay Hartley has agreed to reconvene the Communications Committee. The Committee will make liberal use of e-mail to reduce the need for meetings. Two issues of interest: 1) developing a brochure with frequently asked questions; and 2) improved proof-reading of the *Chronicle*.

By-law change

It has been noted that our current practice of electing the Senior Warden and appointing the person finishing second in that election to the position of Junior Warden is inconsistent with our by-laws that require the election of both the Senior and Junior Wardens. Gordon Avery and persons who have rotated off the Vestry have formed an *ad hoc* committee that is developing a proposed change to the by-laws. The proposal will go out to the parish in February and the parish vote will take place in March.

The Vestry asked whether the by-laws should be reviewed for other inconsistencies. Scott Benhase suggested that any inconsistencies that are discovered should be relayed to Gordon Avery.

Scott Benhase reported that the singer Dave Potts has offered to perform a benefit concert at St. Alban's on February 22nd. His fee would be \$300, and Sam Hensley would supply the equipment. Scott raised the possibility of holding the event to benefit the Crossroads Shelter. Scott noted that the parish must provide any funds needed to run the Shelter that are not obtained by other means. As a result, the parish must do some fundraising while the new fundraising policy is under development.

A discussion followed concerning the offer as well as the ongoing issue of fundraising at the parish. The Vestry was asked whether it may be useful for the Shelter to be consulted regarding the most effective way to raise funds. It was noted that the golf tournament has not been as successful in fundraising as it had been in the past. The recent concert that raised approximately \$800 dollars also, as an added benefit, brought in many people who are not parish members. The audience was approximately 80 percent non-parishioners.

Motion: Keith Jones moved to accept Dave Potts's offer to perform here on February 22nd to benefit a ministry to be designated later.

Bill Edgar seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Old Business

Arts & Memorials Committee

Artwork: Marc Fetterman reported that Ruth Cline and Ron Hicks have collected artwork that had been taken down from the parish buildings. Ruth is researching who may have donated each work, and Wendy Reeves has made suggestions as to some that could be sold at the Opportunity Shop and others that could be sold at auction. Wendy is also approaching knowledgeable individuals that may be able to offer guidance as to how best to proceed.

Stone Carving: Marc reported that the Committee has concluded that the stone carving is fragile and would be difficult to care for, and therefore recommends that the Vestry decline to accept the offer.

Motion: Marc Fetterman moved that the Vestry accept the recommendation of the Arts & Memorials Committee to decline the offer of stone carving for the columbarium.

Susan Morris seconded the motion and the motion carried. Marc will draft a letter declining the gift offer.

The Vestry expressed concern regarding the aesthetics of certain decorations left in the columbarium, including those left too long. Marc agreed to take it up with the Committee.

Building Committee

Marc Fetterman reported that the punch list associated with the Nourse Hall renovation has been reduced to ½ page in length. Computer controls are being used to address first floor humidity concerns.

St Alban's/Cathedral group update

Scott Benhase reported on behalf of Bill Hall. The work continues, with lots of “back-and-forth” concerning the covenant statement.

Hospitality Commission (Greeting, Newcomers, Receptions)

Scott Benhase reported that there still was no Commission chairperson, and no chair for the reception committee.

It was noted that the most recent Newcomers dinner consisted of 28 newcomers and 18 current parishioners. The next dinner is scheduled for March, and it was mentioned that Vestry participation in such events was important.

Erin Hensley asked to confirm the understanding of the Vestry regarding participation as greeters. Erin emphasized the power of such participation. Erin will get the rota to Scott who will e-mail it to the Vestry. The Vestry asked to be told where to stand as a greeter to ensure that those parishioners who also agree to act as greeters are not crowded. The Vestry also asked that the service the Vestry member normally attends be incorporated into the scheduling process. Scott responded that the rota would be revised and the revised document distributed.

Candidacy for Shell Kimble

Shell Kimble is being sponsored by the parish for postulancy.

The Vestry expressed gratitude to Scott Benhase for resolving the parking issue with the PECF. Scott noted that the issue will recur next year.

Compline began at 9:30 pm.

Executive Session

The Vestry went into Executive Session at 9:40 pm.

Hiring a new Parish Administrator

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 pm.

Andrea F. Farr, Secretary