

ST. ALBAN'S PARISH VESTRY MEETING
Wednesday, October 21, 2009
(pending Vestry approval)

Call To Order

The Rev. Scott Benhase, rector, called the meeting to order with a prayer at 6:35 p.m. in Nourse Hall.

In Attendance

Senior Warden Kate Bouvé, Junior Warden Jim Sottile, Treasurer Christopher Holmes, and Vestry members: Nathalie Bramson, Ruth Cline, Bill Edgar, Andrea Farr, Chuck Holmes, Keith Jones, Danette (Dani) Kauffman, Jennifer Thorson Martin, Richard Parkins, Ann Ramsey-Moor, Eve Zartman-Ball, and Oliver Eid (youth member). Clergy and staff: Douglas Dykstra, Ron Hicks, and the Rev. Jered Weber-Johnson. *Vestry member Eric Melby was absent. Secretary Jim Tate was absent (minutes kept by Chuck Holmes).*

Special guests: The Rt. Rev. John Bryson Chane, Bishop of Washington; Paul Cooney, Canon to the Ordinary, and the Rev. Mary Sulerud, Canon for Deployment.

Discussion Of The St. Alban's Parish Rector Transition

Scott introduced Bishop Chane and his staff members and thanked them for attending in order to discuss the Parish transition following Scott's call to become the next Bishop of Georgia.

- Bishop Chane summarized his discussions to date about the transition in separate meetings he held following Scott's Sept 12 election in Georgia. The Bishop met in early October with the Wardens and the Rev. Tim Boggs, the Parish's associate rector. The Bishop explained his reasons for determining and informing the Wardens that the Parish's prudent course is to proceed now with the selection process for choosing an interim rector to be followed by a comprehensive search for a new rector. The Bishop said he understood that Tim was probably disappointed with his decision. The Bishop praised the talents and potential of Tim and his future in the Episcopal clergy.
- Kate explained that, following the Wardens meeting with the Bishop, St. Alban's parishioners were informed of the Bishop's decision in a series of meeting after each service on Sunday, Oct. 17, in question-and-answer sessions.

Members of the Parish attending the Vestry meeting were invited to address the Bishop.

- A parishioner raised a question with the Bishop about the relationship between the Parish and the Cathedral. The parishioner cited the sometimes uneasy

relations, particularly with the Cathedral's decision to grow its congregation community and the challenges that poses to St. Alban's. The parishioner said that many St. Alban's parishioners felt that "we were listening and not being listened to" in relations with the Cathedral. Given the upcoming transition, the parishioner appealed to the Bishop for his help in improving communications and understanding between the Parish and the Cathedral.

The Bishop said he was "very much aware of the difficulty." He noted that he had a meeting with Dean Lloyd today (Oct. 21) and discussed with him the relationship. He said the Dean recognizes the problems. The Bishop said the Dean understands the issues that need to be resolved before a new rector is seated at St. Alban's. According to the Bishop, the Dean made a commitment to the Bishop and St. Alban's Parish.

- Several other speakers addressed the Bishop on the issue of Tim Boggs and they expressed their concerns about the Bishop's decision that Tim should not be considered as a candidate in the search for either an interim rector or a new rector. One parishioner cited Tim's pastoral gifts and his vast experience in the business world before becoming an ordained minister. The parishioner said it is "hard for me to imagine" that a rector search could find someone more capable than Tim.
- Another parishioner also spoke on behalf of Tim. He said that stability needs to be restored to St. Alban's. Russell said that Tim would be the best choice as the new rector.
- Another parishioner said that Scott's three-year tenure at St. Alban's was, in effect, an "interim" period following the retirement of the Rev. Frank Wade. She cited Tim's attributes and spiritual depth. She said the coming transition could be a "serious blow" to the church. She "implored" the Bishop to reconsider his decision and "listen to our request to have Tim considered."
- Another parishioner stated that given its position as a leading parish, St. Alban's has a responsibility to conduct a national search to find the best candidate. He had thought that Tim might be eligible in that search, but understood the Bishop's position that an exception should not be made to the rules against eligibility of an associate. He added that we should be thinking in terms of a 20-year period, and should not be deterred by temporary inconvenience.
- Another parishioner echoed previously expressed complimentary sentiments about Tim and expressed concern that the interim rector and search process would be "detrimental to the health of the Parish" and could cause the church to lose more parishioners. He asked the Bishop to reconsider.
- Another parishioner commented that St. Alban's recently conducted a national search for rector. She said she has seen many friends leave the church after the last rector transition and she "was in tears" at the prospects of another transition. She spoke for Tim and expressed her concern that St. Alban's parishioners "were going to be foster children for another one or two years" during the coming transition.

- Another parishioner noted “we have a groundswell” of support for Tim among parishioners.
- Another parishioner spoke of the importance of Tim to the Parish, and particularly of his involvement in outreach ministries. She said with Tim “we will grow this Parish.” She asked the Bishop to reconsider.
- Another parishioner said he felt that the process had been rushed and that parishioners not currently on the Vestry appeared to have inserted themselves in the process and advocated, sub rosa, for Tim with the wardens and the Bishop. Such advocacy effectively circumvented full and open discussion among Vestry members, and with other interested parishioners, of all the possibilities available to the Vestry. He urged that present and future discussions about the search process be more open and forthcoming, and as transparent as possible.

The Bishop thanked each speaker following his and her comments.

Executive Session

Scott, the Vestry and the Wardens convened a private session and continued their discussion with the Bishop and his staff members. The session began at 7 p.m. and continued until 8:15 p.m.

Resumption of Vestry Meeting

- By unanimous voice vote, the Vestry approved the August 2009 minutes.
- Scott said more amendments were needed to the September 2009 minutes and their approval will be considered at November’s meeting.

Treasurer’s Report

- Chris Holmes and Jim Sottile provided highlights from the Treasurer’s report (**attached**):
 - **Through the first three quarters of 2009**, the Parish’s budget was in good shape, with the balance helped by a number of bequests that make the bottom line look better than it otherwise would have.
 - **Income from pledges** was strong in September and we are \$2,522 above budget for January-September. Total income exceeded the budgeted forecast by \$29,389 – mostly attributable to bequests received by the Parish.
 - **Expenses** exceeded budget projections for the three quarters by about \$23,000. Unanticipated utility costs and maintenance of the HVAC system in Satterlee Hall are responsible, in part, and will persist and lead to an increase in the line item for 2010.
 - **Overall, Income-to-Expense variance** for the period showed a surplus of \$6,222.

- Scott thanked Chris for his work his important volunteer work in helping track and report on the Parish budget.

Annual Pledge Campaign

- Dani Kauffman explained in past years what has been known as the EMP will be called the Annual Pledge Campaign – stronger, clear words to describe the effort. Letters regarding the campaign were mailed to parishioners in early October.
- Every Sunday during the pledge campaign, parishioners will deliver “Stewardship Minutes” during the announcements portion of Sunday services to offer personal reflections on the Parish and its meaning in our lives.
- Scott noted that for the first time this year, pledging can be done online at the Parish’s Web site.

Junior Warden’s Report (Jim Sottile)

- **Ramp for the disabled.** Jim and Scott explained that delays in the planning of a permanent ramp means that permits for the construction would not be obtained until December and construction probably would not begin until spring 2010. Meanwhile, Scott said the Parish will look into erecting a temporary ramp that meets D.C. building code until a permanent ramp can be built.
- **Nurse Hall Kitchen.** Jim explained the delays in completing renovation of the kitchen in Nurse Hall, which had been scheduled for completion over the summer. The Parish has found new suppliers for cabinets and appliances after the previous suppliers failed to deliver as promised. Jim said delivery of the items is expected before Thanksgiving.
- **Finance Committee investment strategy report (attached).** Jim explained that the Finance Committee, with the leadership and expertise of Nathalie Bramson and Clem Dinsmore, has devised a specific recommended portfolio strategy for the Parish’s growing Endowment Fund based on the investment policy approved by the Vestry earlier this year. Jim noted that the Fund currently has about \$1.2 million and with robust growth is expected to total about \$1.9 million by the end of the first quarter of 2010. The Vestry **approved by unanimous voice vote** a motion (moved by Keith and seconded by Dick) to execute the strategy over the next few months.
 - Before the vote on the motion, Nathalie explained the details of the portfolio strategy, which was approved by the full Finance Committee at a meeting on Oct. 20. The diversified strategy would distribute the Endowment Fund holdings into a number of investment instruments, including short-term and intermediate-term bonds, domestic and foreign equity funds, and themed-index funds (including income-producing and socially responsible funds devoted to water and climate change).
 - Fixed-income instruments would account for 40 percent of the investments; domestic and foreign equities would account for 51 percent of the investments.

- Nathalie and Clem explained that the strategy would be executed over the next several months in part because existing certificates of deposit in the amount of about \$225,000 held by the Parish will need to mature through June 2010.
- A question was asked why so much is invested in Vanguard. The response: Vanguard funds are low cost and well-recognized.
- In response to a question by Eve, Clem noted that the strategy includes investments in a water fund and a climate-change fund, which represent responsible stewardship.
- In response to a question by Dick about changing market conditions, Nathalie said the Finance Committee would review the investment strategy at its monthly meetings and report to the Vestry the status of the investments and the need for a review of the investment mix.
- Dani raised a question about whether the Parish would eventually need a professional money manager to advise and administer the investments. Chuck asked what is the common practice at churches with large funds. Nathalie and Scott said churches with Endowment Funds approaching \$3 million usually hire outside help.

Senior Warden's Report (Kate Bouvé)

- **Parish Planning Workshop.** Kate reminded the Vestry of the planning workshop taking place Oct. 23-24. She said the workshop was a chance to address the next steps in achieving the Parish's goals and an opportunity to talk about the issues discussed by the Vestry tonight concerning the rector transition and the feelings and anxieties of parishioners. She said part of the workshop would be devoted to looking at the qualities sought in an interim rector.

Rector's Report (The Rev. Scott Benhase)

- **5:30 Sunday Eucharist.** Scott said the service has added music and he commended Jered for the job he has done in enhancing the experience and attracting parishioners. Jered said the service has grown, but remains meditative and his hope is to maintain that quality. Dani encouraged Vestry members to attend the candle-lit, contemplative service, saying it was a "rich experience."
- **Narthex Welcome Center.** Scott said it is nearly finished, with some work still to be completed on the framed areas. He encouraged Vestry members to give their feedback about the new center to members of the Hospitality Commission and he commended Nathalie, Dick and Lacey Gude.
- **Solar Installation.** Installation of solar tiles on Satterlee Hall is to be completed on Oct. 26 with a blessing of the project on Nov. 15. Scott noted that parishioner Brian Keane, who blogs about energy issues for Huffington Post, planned to note the St. Alban's project in his blog. Other efforts to publicize the project are being made as it is believed to be the first of its kind at a church in the District.
- **Spanish Eucharist at St. Albans.** Scott and Dick Parkins provided a report on the Spanish-language service at 5:30. The service, led by Simon Bautista, drew about 30 worshipers the previous Sunday. Scott called it an "excellent start" and said the Parish should know by spring 2010 if this will grow into a viable

congregation. Dick encouraged Vestry members to attend and said he could use more participation on the advisory group that is assisting the service.

Adjournment/Compline

- The meeting concluded at 9:12 p.m. and Ruth led compline.