

Vestry Minutes

Final Version

May 15, 2005
Adams Room

Present: Clergy and staff: Paul Abernathy, Shearon Williams, Susan Block
Wardens: Mike Townsend, Charley Donnelly
Vestry Members: Stewart Andrews, Eileen Blumenthal, Rod
Lawrence, Julie Murphy, Burton Reist, Lisa Sotir, Susan Thigpen,
David Willson, Margaret Wood
Officers: Pete Carlson, Hank Donnelly

The meeting began at 1:15 p.m. with an opening prayer offered by Pete Carlson. The Rev. Dorothee Hahn bade farewell to Vestry members following her year of service with the parish and received congratulations on her recent ordination to the diaconate.

Action Items and Discussion

1. Honduras-Related Fundraising

Brock Hansen presented a request to hold a Pub Lunch to raise awareness about Daniel, a Honduran who served as driver and guard for the St. Mark's adult/teen group that visited that country in 2004. Daniel was tragically killed recently, and there is an effort underway to contribute to his family through the Diocese of Honduras.

Paul pointed out that the effort to inform parishioners about the fundraising project did not fall under the Vestry's 2002 resolution setting limits on fundraising campaigns, and so did not require formal Vestry approval. However, he suggested, and Brock agreed, that the Vestry receive a report on the amount of contributions and number of contributors to the fund.

2. Endowment Committee Report

Don Ellison presented a report from the Endowment Committee, explaining the various funds and requirements governing each. He described recent activities and funding projects, such as scholarships, and outlined plans for marketing the planned giving program.

The report was followed by a discussion of the role of endowment funds and the relationship between the endowment funds and the operating budget. Don pointed out that there is a very high minimum valuation (\$633,000) required before funds can be expended from the

Building Preservation fund, and suggested that the requirement, which was set when the Rectory was sold in 1998, could be reconsidered. In general, however, members expressed strong opposition to the use of endowment funds for operating expenses, with Paul pointing to two parishes in the diocese that had spent down their endowment funds for regular operations.

3. Register's Report

Minutes of the March 20, 2005, Vestry meeting were approved without changes.

4. Treasurer's Report

Pete Carlson reported that there had been a number of new pledges since January. He also proposed two amendments to his report, which would:

- Require that babysitters be treated as employees, with all the government-required paperwork, only if they earned over \$600 a year from St. Mark's. Current policy required paperwork for all those paid as babysitters.
- Transfer \$2,000 from the Pub fund to the social events budget.

The treasurer's report was approved as amended.

5. Junior Warden's Report

In presenting his report on the state of the building and building-related projects, Charley Donnelly noted that the rug in the Parish Hall and Foyer is in poor condition, which raises liability concerns in case someone should trip on the worn and rough spots. He reported that the rug could be replaced for an estimated \$7,000-\$8,000, although he had received only one bid so far and was continuing to seek others. While funds are available for the project, he asked for a sense of the Vestry statement to proceed. Susan Thigpen moved that the Junior Warden be given discretion to seek additional bids and spend money on the project, and the motion was approved without objection.

6. Seminarian Financial Support

Paul raised the issue of the Canon requirement that parishes provide financial support to members accepted as candidates for ordination. He said he would provide \$1,000 from the Rector's Discretionary Fund for support for postulant David Dill in the current year, and suggested that similar amounts be funded as a line item in the budget for the following two years. The proposal drew strong support from members, who called for maintaining an ongoing relationship with David and his family.

Some members raised concerns, however, about making commitments for future budgets. In addition, some

raised the issue of Karen Byrne, who is attending seminary despite not being accepted by the diocese as a candidate for ordination, and suggested that she should receive some financial backing as a show of support as well. Although expenditure of money from the Discretionary Fund does not require Vestry approval, Paul indicated that he favored a formal endorsement of the idea. He asked that members subsequently vote electronically on a resolution endorsing the idea,.

7. Shrine Mont Report

Mike offered a brief report on the status of Shrine Mont planning. He explained that parishioners had been informed of the recent report by the Shrine Mont committee, and reported that vigorous efforts were underway to market the conference to new members. He added that planners had decided to make the arts a centerpiece of activities on the weekend.

8. Strategic Initiatives

Pete reviewed the list of strategic initiatives for 2005, and Mike suggested that future meetings contain some time to review how those goals are being addressed.

- **Space Usage Report**

Shearon reviewed the issue of Sunday School growth and existing needs identified in the 2000 report on future space planning, and called for creation of a subcommittee to review space needs. During discussion, Charley asked why the parish is striving to grow membership at the same time it is struggling to deal with the space problems created by growth. But Mike identified a distinction between the short-term problem of finding space for Sunday School classes, and the long-term need to grow in order to strengthen parish finances. This led to a discussion of the role of growth in meeting the financial challenges ahead, which was followed by an agreement to form a subcommittee to study the issue, with a membership including Shearon, Charley, Don Ellison and Margaret Wood.

- **Sunday Morning Schedule**

Mike reported on the recent Pillars Committee meeting on the Sunday morning schedule. That meeting agreed on the following principles to guide any changes in the worship schedule:

- a. Sermon Seminar will remain.
- b. Communion in the round will remain.

- c. Announcements will remain.
- d. Define differences between the 9 am and 11 am services.
- e. Hospitality is a core principle.
- f. Improve and focus on the coherence and flow of services.
- g. Christian Education must be part of the process.

The Pillars meeting formed a task force with representatives of key constituencies to make recommendations for possible changes, which would go into effect on the Sunday, Sept. 11, services.

- **Growth Strategy Rollout**

Mike reported on rollout of the Growth Strategy, which has been revised to reduce the emphasis on numerical goals. He promised to distribute an updated draft of the document to Vestry members, with the hope of rolling it out to the parish this summer.

9. Alcohol Sales

Mike led a discussion of the issue of alcohol sales on church premises. He described the legal aspects of this issue as complex, and said that Vestry Counsel Rosemary Harold was preparing a memo on the topic for members. Mike also noted a request to sell beer made by St. Mark's member and master brewer Rick Weber at the Washington Early Music Festival, which will be held at St. Mark's in June. Vestry members decided that beer sales would be allowed by the St. Mark's Arts Council, which would donate the proceeds to the Festival. Members also emphasized the need for an ongoing policy on alcohol use at third-party events held at St. Mark's.

10. Medical Resources

After discussing a recent incident in which a member of the parish fainted during the service, members urged that Vergers identify the medical professionals present at each service in order to speed assistance in case of an emergency.

11. What's Working, etc.

Working

Anacostia River Project
Energy Efficient Bulb Sales

Not Working

Newcomers' Card – Susan Block has not been getting many cards recently.

Needs Recognition

Linda Staheli – For creating Sunday School registration data base.

Need Attention:

Hospitality Committee has been experimenting with new formats for prospective members, but feels that it is not getting helpful flexibility from the Christian Education program. (Pete)

A commitment rite for recent graduates of the Life, Community and Faith class is scheduled for May 29. But the definition of membership in St. Mark's is still confusing and unclear. (Paul)

The Vestry adjourned at 4:20 pm after a closing prayer by Stewart Andrews.

Approved by Vestry, June 19, 2005

Respectfully submitted,
Hank Donnelly,
Register