

**St. Anne's Parish
Vestry Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 12, 2022**

Clergy and Vestry Members Present

Bishop Robert Ihloff
Rev. Manoj Zacharia
Rev. Dion Thompson
Linda Adamson
Howard Buskirk
Thea Chimento
Katie Creely
Phyllis Everette
Kara Friedell
Kevin Hays
David Huggins
David Jackson
Townsend McNitt
Paul Pope
Bill Silva
Susan Thaxton

Vestry Members Absent

Al Collins
Jason Houser

Non-Vestry Members Present

Joe Clapsaddle, Diocesan Council
Betty Creighton, Diocesan Delegate
Kay Davis, Diocesan Delegate
Katherine Hilton, Diocesan Delegate
Eleanor Huggins, Refugee Committee
Ford Rowan, Refugee Committee
Katie Burke, Clerk of Vestry

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Manoj+ opened the meeting with a prayer at 6:00 pm. He then handed things off to Bishop Ihloff, who asked that Vestry members and other meeting attendees introduce themselves.

Conversation with the Bishop

After the introductions, the bishop shared some information about the upcoming General Convention in July (which will take place in Baltimore – volunteers wanted!). Nineteen different

countries are represented in the Episcopal Church, and over 1500 bishops and deputies from those countries typically attend the General Convention (fun fact: the largest diocese is the Diocese of Haiti, which comprises the entire country of Haiti). Most liturgies at the General Convention are held in English, Spanish, Creole, and sometimes French.

Under normal circumstances, Bishop Ihloff continued, the Maryland Diocesan Convention would be coming up in May, but this year the date has been changed to the fall. This year's Diocesan Convention will be very special, however, because there will be the election of a new Bishop of the Diocese of Maryland. Bishop Sutton is planning to retire sometime after the Bishop Co-Adjutor is consecrated, which is scheduled for a year from September. The House of Bishops expects the Diocesan Bishop to retire between six months and a year after the Bishop Co-Adjutor comes on board, which would be sometime in spring 2024. This timing will give the continuity that is needed for a smooth succession.

Bishop Ihloff also shared that, interestingly, he and Bishop Sutton are the only pair of bishops they could think of in the country where the Diocesan Bishop (Ihloff) retired, then after a due amount of time came back as the Assisting Bishop to his successor (Sutton).

The bishop then asked the assembled Vestry members and parishioners whether they had any questions, and Katherine asked whether potential candidates for Diocesan Bishop were currently being screened. Bishop Ihloff said that they are, but that he himself doesn't know very much about it – the bishops don't participate much in this process, and most of the work is done by the search committee. The search committee, in this case, is the same group of people who comprise the profile committee, and this group has representatives from all over the diocese, with parity of geographical areas, church size, and minority representation. There is a process that allows for nominations, the bishop then explained, but nominations cannot be made from the floor, since background checks need to be done.

Dion+ shared that he himself is on the bishop search committee, and that he is the co-chair of the profile committee, the group that will be writing and posting the profile. There is a high degree of confidentiality, of course, but he wanted the Vestry to know that St. Anne's is well-represented.

Phyllis asked whether, in any of the listening sessions that have been held, anything surprising or worth noting has come up. Bishop Ihloff reiterated that he has not been participating in the process, and handed the question off to Dion+. Dion+ shared that the search committee has not heard as much anxiety about Heather Cook as they expected to hear, and that they have tried to stave off any such concern by conducting the process with a sincere sense of integrity and transparency. Townsend said she hoped that the diocese has learned from that experience, and that its vetting and background check procedures have become more robust. Dion+ said that the background check stage hasn't happened yet, but that the search committee is taking a very careful approach. They have been advised by their consultant that it's never too late to stop the train if something is discovered, and the committee has taken that advice very much to heart.

Kay asked Bishop Ihloff to speak a bit about how he would like to see St. Anne's contributing to the diocese, the diocese contributing to St. Anne's, and that mutual relationship contributing to other parishes in the diocese.

The bishop said that the diocese has relied on both clergy and lay people from St. Anne's for many years. As to how the diocese can contribute to St. Anne's, he relayed how the diocese had been involved in supporting St. Anne's project to put classrooms in the undercroft (this project was ultimately squashed by Historic Annapolis).

Kay asked how, in the bishop's opinion, St. Anne's might benefit smaller parishes nearby, and Bishop Ihloff answered that the leadership in ecumenical and regional efforts that St. Anne's clergy and parishioners have already contributed has been very helpful. Kay wondered what St. Anne's could do to strengthen its relationship with the diocese. Bishop Ihloff advised that St. Anne's should be in good dialogue with its neighbors, the better to figure out how to share some of its capabilities with other parishes.

Howard wondered how a parish like St. Anne's should go about getting to know a smaller parish without having it come across as paternalistic. The bishop agreed that that is a great danger in these types of situations, and that when it happens it is universally resented. He suggested that collaboration with smaller parishes might be administered through a regional council, or through clergy involvement, and that it could take the form of joining together for a Lenten program or something similar. This type of collaboration could have the effect of sharing resources that a smaller parish might not have while keeping the emphasis on community building and strengthening.

Bishop Ihloff shared an example from his own experience: as the interim rector at Redeemer in Baltimore, he sponsored a series of different bishops coming from different dioceses for a Lenten program. He brought in several other churches from that region to be co-sponsors, although all the resources came from Redeemer, and thus relationships were built while working together on the project. The bishop advised that this was probably something best thought about by the Vestry, in consultation with clergy.

Susan asked the bishop to reflect on the ways in which the past several years have changed the diocese's thinking about the role/mission of the church and diocesan leadership. Bishop Ihloff said that he doesn't completely have an answer for that question, although he does know that the church is never going to be what it was before. There's some sadness around that, for everyone, but the church will never drop the technology it developed during the COVID era. The bishop explained that he's in a different parish every Sunday, and he's starting to see that we really have turned a corner, and that people are beginning to come back to church.

At the same time, the notion that attending church online, which can be extremely beneficial in some situations, might become habitual for a large swathe of parishioners could be a real problem. We need to communicate better that there is so much more to give and to receive at church than simply the service, and that instead of being merely a consumer, you can also be a contributor. Bishop Ihloff suggested coffee hours as a good draw to get people back in person,

although he recognized that much of what worked in the past isn't going to work in the immediate future.

Howard shared that in a recent article in the religious news service, a trend was explored where churches saw people coming back when they reopened more fully, but that the numbers plateaued pretty quickly. He asked whether the bishop would say that that's what we're seeing in the diocese.

Bishop Ihloff agreed, saying that it's particularly an issue now that we see that COVID is surging in DC, but we have no numbers on it. He knows that there's still a lot of fear out there, especially for people who have young children. Nevertheless, he encouraged St. Anne's to start doing all the things that will be attractive for families, including preparing to ramp up Sunday School in the fall.

Dion+ said that he was glad to hear that the bishop was not wringing his hands about the death of the church, and Bishop Ihloff said that having lived through many ups and downs in the church was useful in terms of perspective. He recalled being told as a seminarian in the 1960s that the church as he knew it would be dead in 20 years – well, obviously that didn't happen!

The bishop then advised thinking of the Episcopal liturgy as an evangelical tool. He cautioned that the Rite 1 service, though it can be appealing to those who grew up Episcopalian, can often seem too formal and off-putting to really be a useful tool in growing the church. Manoj+ shared that there is a resolution in the Diocese of New Jersey that aims to keep the structure of the Rite 1 service but modernize the language.

Bishop Ihloff then said that, despite his earlier concerns, there is some benefit to exposing people to some of the Rite 1 service/language, because it very clearly shows some of what the Elizabethan Settlement is about. The first part of that service includes "the body/the blood" language, and the second part of the service includes "memorial" language – this was designed specifically to draw opposing sides together. We have allowed a huge variation of specific interpretations to co-exist under the communal umbrella, and the bishop believes that this has created a healthy church.

Drawing the conversation with the bishop to a close, Susan made a quick motion to table the agenda, so that the Refugee Committee Report, which particularly interested the bishop, could be discussed first. This motion was seconded, and passed unanimously.

Refugee Committee Report

Ford Rowan and Eleanor Huggins, of the Refugee Committee, gave a brief report of where things stood in their work. Ford shared that the first family the committee will work with may not be Christian, but that we don't care for them because *they* are Christians, we care for them because *we* are Christians, with which everyone at the meeting heartily agreed.

Ford continued on to say that the Refugee Committee is working with First Presbyterian Church and Calvary United Methodist Church to support a family who is already here in Annapolis – this collaboration came about through personal connections between the three churches. Ford sees refugee support work as a great time to come together ecumenically with not only the Presbyterians and the Methodists, but also with the Evangelical Lutherans and the Catholics, and obviously with the Episcopal Migration Ministries, all of whom already have good ongoing refugee support programs.

Eleanor shared that the Refugee Committee has already received a number of donations, and that they are getting ready to give Calvary United Methodist their first contribution in the amount of \$4,000. This contribution will go toward helping pay the family's rent, utilities and other expenses for the next five months.

Dave asked what happens at the end of five months, and Ford shared that the churches are also making a combined effort to help people find jobs in addition to housing (although housing itself can be difficult, since this is a high-rent area). The question becomes how do we work with other groups who have expertise in areas like real estate and job sourcing to maximize resources for refugees in need. Ford shared that he likes to raise money for good causes, and that someone once told him that a person asking them for money is “offering them the opportunity to do a generous act, which in and of itself is a gift.” A good perspective!

Manoj+ thanked the Refugee Committee for its speedy work, and Ford acknowledged that the entire team is still working under COVID difficulties. Thea thanked the committee for its perseverance – being willing to hang on and stay motivated during the time when the refugee quota in Maryland was so low that we couldn't participate is precisely what has allowed the committee to act quickly now.

Thea also asked about any social and emotional needs the family might have, and Ford said that the joint committee is trying to figure out how best to integrate them into the community, knowing that coming on too strong can sometimes make people feel threatened or pressured. He also said that the committee is working with VOAD, a group that receives physical donations that people might want to give and makes them available to refugees in need.

Linda shared with the rest of the Vestry that the Refugee Committee is the largest committee in the church, comprising 30-35 people (huge, for a church committee!).

The group then took a five-minute break at 7:06 pm, during which time Bishop Ihloff, Katherine Hilton, Eleanor Huggins, Ford Rowan, and Joe Clapsaddle all took their leave.

Rector's Report

The Rector's Report having previously been disseminated to the Vestry, and in the interests of time, Manoj+ asked anyone with any substantial questions about the report to bring them to him offline.

Paul added a quick word of thanks to Manoj+ for including the section on the reinstatement of the eagle lectern – he finds it tremendously useful to have the language to describe the issue, especially the line, “The issue for St. Anne’s is much larger than the eagle lectern.”

Manoj+ said that we have already, in our brochures and various informational items, acknowledged the source of the lectern, but that the issue is really about how we go from here in talking about St. Anne’s history.

Manoj+ then handed over the meeting to Susan, who, as Junior Warden, was presiding over the meeting in Jason’s absence. She asked Linda to give her report.

Secretary of the Vestry Report

Linda asked Townsend to give a brief report on the Women’s Ministry Retreat, which took place over the weekend of April 1-3 at the DuPont Memorial House in Rehoboth Beach, DE. The theme was “renewing our minds,” and the retreat included sections on prayer and scripture. Meredith+ joined the retreat and was a delight to get to know, and Suzanne Webber led a wonderful nature hike for the group.

Linda mentioned that it was significant that the group included some women who had never been on a women’s retreat, and Townsend added that there had also been some younger women in attendance, which was good.

Manoj+ gave a big thanks to Townsend and the retreat team for planning the event. He also shared that Meredith+ had just returned from a retreat at Holy Cross, which was silent and 90% men, and so she had reported to him that she found the Women’s Retreat to be a revelation!

Dion+ asked about the energy in the room, and whether any ideas for projects had been generated. Townsend replied that there was a lot of interest in regular gatherings, not just of women, but of more regular small groups at which people might get together to study scripture.

Linda then shared that she had also provided a one-page report of where the other ministries were with their work. On the topic of the Cemetery Committee, she said that the cemetery is currently gorgeously in bloom, and also that the committee has a preliminary document on the gatehouse architecture. Work is also ongoing to rectify the fact that St. Anne’s actually doesn’t have a documented title to the cemetery.

Linda also described the document she had uploaded to the shared site as a functional organizational document of all ministries and committees in the church, broken into “clusters”. Vestry liaisons will then be assigned to these clusters, which will radically change how we’ve always assigned Vestry liaisons in the past. In the new system, Vestry members won’t be assigned to ministries where they’ve been personally involved, so that they can bring a fresh eye to the running of the ministries in their cluster. Liaisons will contact their ministries monthly and report back to Linda, who will collect those monthly conversations into one monthly report from

the Secretary, which will then be shared back with the Vestry. Then, once every year, each cluster will get a deep dive at a Vestry meeting. This is also the structure Realm is going to use to organize ministries – Realm requires a hierarchical arrangement.

Manoj+ identified a few ministries that will be early adopters of Realm, including the Executive Committee and the Vestry itself. The Digital Ministries Committee will provide training to everyone.

Linda shared that one of her goals in her position as Secretary is to foster radical transparency, to the extent that it is ethical and legal, and she believes that this reorganization will help with that.

Manoj+ said that one of the key goals is for the Vestry, which has a fiduciary responsibility, to have better communication with all ministry areas. Realm will also help with file management, which has been an issue for the Vestry and other ministries.

Linda said that welcome ministers for Holy Week and Easter services were needed, and Manoj+ sent a sign-up sheet around so that people could volunteer. Dave also brought up the fact that the process of having people sign up as welcome ministers and lectors is broken, and Manoj+ asked him to send him an email outlining the issues after Holy Week is over.

Facilities Report

Susan asked for two quick votes on issues facing the Facilities Committee:

- 1) Three estimates were received on pest control (there are mice in the church), and the Facilities Committee is recommending Home Paramount's proposal as the best fit for St. Anne's needs. The proposal is to get rid of the mice that are currently in residence, as well as for ongoing service to try to keep mice at bay going forward. The estimate is \$3,053, with an additional annual service fee of \$700/year, and also including the overage that the Vestry always includes to be safe, for a total amount of \$4,053. A motion to approve that amount to be used for pest management was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.
- 2) On the topic of the new gas meter on the side of the church, in November the Vestry approved up to \$5,000 for a concealing screen for the meter. Now BGE has increased the size of the meter, so a larger screen is needed. Brown Contracting has asked for an additional \$1,500 to increase the screen size. A motion was made to approve the additional \$1,500 for the screen from the capital account, and it passed unanimously.

Susan also shared an update on the fence around the church, which had been damaged by a driver. The Facilities Committee is working on getting our insurance to cover it, but we have no further information on what actually happened (the person who drove into the fence has not been caught). Manoj+ shared that he is reaching out to the mayor's office to see if there is video footage of the incident, and that he will let the Vestry know if there is any further information.

Vestry Resource Review

Linda reminded the Vestry that she had sent out a review of chapter one of the Vestry Resource document, which lays out the Vestry's responsibilities (roughly those of a non-profit board of directors, plus taking point on discerning God's vision for the church). Important points she wanted to highlight include the following:

- Our church today does not only include cradle Episcopalians, it also includes people from lots of different faith backgrounds, or no faith background at all.
- Our nation is currently in a time of downward mobility, which is important to remember as we project incomes for the future.
- Despite the fact that people might not come to us speaking Episcopalian, or even speaking Bible at all, what they do have is a hunger for meaning, and we can meet that need.
- We should ask ourselves these two questions, and be able to answer them: "What does this have to do with Jesus?" and "How does this help us grow discipleship in our church?"
- The nominating committee should be looking both for experienced people and new people, or, put another way, people who have been at the center of the community and those who have been at its edges.
- The Vestry should reflect on the discussion questions as it heads into the Vestry retreat at the end of the month.

A brief discussion of additional resources followed, with David Jackson ending by requesting that reports contain more historical background so that new Vestry members can better understand the issues. Manoj+ said that the Vestry also needs to discuss how it will work together to remedy the chaos of the file sharing, and that this discussion should happen soon.

Vestry Retreat

Susan shared that the Friday night dinner will be held at the Lighthouse Bistro, with the Yacht Club as a backup.

Manoj+ said that the Saturday portion of the retreat will take place at St. Margaret's, where there will be plenty of parking.

Susan concluded that more information about the retreat will be forthcoming by email as details are ironed out.

Stewardship Report

Dave Huggins shared a stewardship document that shows that we have now reached our budget target – hooray! He also shared an attendance memorandum which shows that we are now back up to 80% of our historic attendance, and that last Sunday saw 17 people attending the children's program. Manoj+ asked what the attendance numbers were for last Sunday, and Dion+ shared that the number was 356. The Vestry expressed general happiness about this number.

Approval of March Minutes and Closing Prayer

The March minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

Linda then offered a closing litany for peace, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Burke
Clerk of Vestry