

**St. Anne's Parish
Vestry Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 8, 2022**

Clergy and Vestry Members Present

Rev. Manoj Zacharia
Linda Adamson
Howard Buskirk
Katie Creely
Phyllis Everette
Kara Friedell
Kevin Hays
Jason Houser
David Jackson
Townsend McNitt
Paul Pope

Vestry Members Absent

Thea Chimento
Al Collins
David Huggins
Bill Silva
Susan Thaxton

Non-Vestry Members Present

Katie Burke, Clerk of Vestry

Welcome and Opening Prayer

This meeting was held in person, and it was decided that there will be no more hybrid in-person/Zoom Vestry meetings going forward.

Manoj+ opened the meeting with a prayer at 6:04 pm, beginning with a brief devotion. Manoj+ then invited everyone present to introduce themselves, since there were some new Vestry members in attendance.

All of the Vestry members present, plus Manoj+, took the Vestry oath aloud, then signed individual copies of the oath.

Manoj+ then discussed the “Vestry Expectations” document, in which he proposed adding two additional Vestry officers, the Secretary to the Vestry and the Counselor to the Vestry. Both positions would be held by Vestry members, and they would each also become members of the Executive Committee.

The Secretary to the Vestry’s purpose would be to act as the glue between Vestry and staff,

to keep staff abreast of the various decisions the Vestry makes, and to coordinate how items get onto the Vestry agenda. The Secretary would complete this last task by bringing to the Executive Committee's attention the needs of various St. Anne's committees; from there, the Executive Committee would filter these needs onto the Vestry agenda in order of priority.

St. Anne's already has an excellent external Chancellor, Ed Hartman. Ed does work for the parish pro bono; in the last 5-6 years this work would have amounted to roughly \$60,000 in billable hours. In thinking about this situation, and in strategizing about how to keep the number of hours we ask of Ed to a more reasonable level, Manoj+ decided to propose the additional Vestry/Executive Committee position of Counselor to the Vestry. The person filling this position would be a Vestry member who is able to advise on legal issues that don't need to go to Ed, or to liaise with Ed when the need arises.

Vestry members agreed that both of these positions would be good and valuable additions to the current officer structure.

Manoj+ then offered a slate of potential officers, but made sure that Vestry members knew they could nominate others for these positions if they saw fit. The slate of candidates proposed by the rector were as follows:

Senior Warden: Jason Houser

Junior Warden: Susan Thaxton

Secretary to the Vestry: Linda Adamson

Counselor to the Vestry: Katie Creely

Registrar: Kevin Hays (this position can be held by someone who is not a member of the Vestry, but in this case Kev is a Vestry member)

Treasurer: Glen Mortoro (this position can be held by someone who is not a member of the Vestry, which is the case for Glen)

Parish Chancellor: Ed Hartman

Manoj+ called for any other nominations, but there were none. A motion was made to accept the candidates for office as proposed by the rector, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Manoj+ then appointed Howard Buskirk to fill the role of COVID Regathering Team chair and communications officer, since Linda Adamson had stepped down from that role to take up the role of Secretary to the Vestry.

Howard asked Manoj+ to clarify how often the new Treasurer will attend Vestry meetings, since Glen is not a Vestry member, whereas our previous Treasurer, Susan Thaxton, was. Manoj+ said

that the bylaws require the Treasurer to come to Vestry meetings and give a report at least quarterly, and added that Glen would come as often as he could in addition to that.

Manoj+ then thanked Susan for her wonderful service as Treasurer, and explained that the prudent saving measures put into place by Steve Fisher before her, and continued by Susan's judicious management, put St. Anne's in a much more solid place during the difficult COVID years than it would have been otherwise. The entire parish owes them both a debt of gratitude. Manoj+ then deputed the Sr. Warden to run all Vestry and Executive Committee meetings for the year, and Jason took over running the meeting.

Jason offered a big thank you to Kev and everyone who helped run the Annual Meeting last weekend. Kev shared that he'd received feedback that voting members would like a tutorial on how to do the virtual voting next time, and suggested that a mockup video be created. Paul and Howard asked how many people attended this virtual Annual Meeting, compared to last year's virtual Annual Meeting, and Manoj+ said that he would get those numbers, although he hopes that next year we can have an in-person Annual Meeting. Kev reported that the tellers had found tallying the votes so much easier in the virtual voting system than it had been to tally by hand that it would definitely be a good idea to figure out how members could vote on their phones at in-person meetings in the future.

Jason then explained that there would be some background reading for new Vestry members on several issues currently before the Vestry, as well as a few meetings he and Katherine Hilton will lead to offer new Vestry members an orientation.

Rector's Report

The rector's report had been distributed ahead of time, so Manoj+ simply asked if anyone had any questions about its content. Howard asked how long it would take to add a third priest, and Jason replied that the HR committee has had amazing candidates for the youth and children's minister position, and that it would be reasonable to expect that position to be filled shortly after Easter, but that hiring for the associate priest has been a little bit more challenging. Due to the priest shortage throughout the country, there are not many candidates, especially those who are seasoned priests and not fresh from seminary, which the HR committee believes is a necessary requirement at St. Anne's.

Manoj+ said that, out of six potential candidates, he and Dion+ have spoken with four, and they've both agreed that none of the four would be a good culture fit at St. Anne's. This means that Manoj+ and Dion+ have decided to take the hiring of the associate priest a little more slowly and more intentionally, since they are looking for someone who understands the value of rooting all social justice work in deep prayer. He added that the addition of Olivia and Meredith to the priest roster has been refreshing – they both have joined clergy prayer time via Zoom on Thursdays, and have asked to join in the spiritual direction that Manoj+ and Dion+ both receive. This is the type of approach St. Anne's clergy are looking for in a full-time permanent associate

priest, and Manoj+ and Dion+ are committed to taking the time to find someone who would be a good fit in this way.

Linda asked whether we're sure that we're paying enough, given the lack of candidates. Manoj+ said that when he first came to St. Anne's, the associates were severely underpaid, but that he believes that they have now remedied the situation. One of the continuing issues, however, is that no one will move in order to be a junior priest, so we're restricted to only local candidates. This is also true for the Invite/Welcome/Connect minister; no one's going to move for a part-time position. Manoj+ pointed out that he has heard many stories about Paula Waite, and that we're looking for someone like her to be the Invite/Welcome/Connect minister – we just haven't found the next Paula yet!

Keve then asked whether there were things that Vestry members could do to help support the clergy while the search for the associate priest continues. Manoj+ answered that the best thing Vestry members could do is to get involved in covering the Invite/Welcome/Connect piece until that person is hired. Townsend suggested that we might keep a standing list of Vestry members who are willing to be assigned to meet newcomers to the church and keep in touch with them, and Manoj+ said he thought that that was a great idea.

Howard pointed out that there are noticeably fewer children attending services at St. Anne's these days, and asked other Vestry members for their thoughts.

Jason shared that other families might be like his, aware of the fact that the kids are big sickness spreaders and keen to keep them home until the COVID numbers come down. Phyllis pointed out that, in the long run, bringing children back to St. Anne's will involve making their parents feel involved and committed to the community here. She advised focusing on the Invite/Welcome/Connect approach as the best way to do that.

Regathering Update

Linda offered an update from the diocese: some graphs showing a projection of what they hope the omicron variant's rate of descent will be. The important thing to note, she said, is that the death rate curve does NOT mimic the case rate curve; this version of the disease is not as deadly (to the vaccinated, at least).

The diocese has also updated their list of measures churches should take, and only one of them (masking) is still a requirement. The other measures are recommendations, but the diocese is allowing each church to make its own decisions about them.

Manoj+ added that, by canon, if the bishop offers a pastoral directive clergy are obligated by oath to follow it. So far, only three pastoral directives have been received: clergy have to be vaccinated (if medically possible), staff members have to be vaccinated (if medically possible), and all churches must follow the diocesan directives when it comes to being open vs. being

closed. Going forward, the Regathering Team must gauge where we are and where we should be with respect to these other recommended measures.

Linda said that, in looking at the practices of local churches, she has found a wide discrepancy: First Presbyterian, for example, is just barely getting back to in-person services now, while Catholic churches nearby have been filling the pews for some time. This discrepancy seems to be confusing to members of the Annapolis community.

Paul suggested that the Vestry add the COVID Regathering Team to the list of areas where Vestry liaisons are necessary, since the team is going to be around for another year at least. Jason offered a big thank you to Linda for all her work as head of the team for the past several years.

Security Grant Update

Manoj+ shared that we have received a Maryland State Department of Education grant in the amount of \$51,000 for security upgrades. This grant was driven primarily by Amy Hoffman, Director of PASA, and the St. Anne's IT Committee. This group has asked the Vestry to make the following motion:

“The Vestry approves \$51,000, as awarded in a grant from the Maryland Center for School Safety, to be paid to Clear Connection for upgrades to systems supporting physical security at St. Anne's and PASA. In the event that Clear Connection is unable to execute the project in a timely manner, the Vestry authorizes the IT/Digital Ministry Committee to execute the project in a timely and ethical manner according to the terms and conditions of the aforementioned grant.”

Jason shared the context of this request: two years ago, pre-COVID, the issues churches were seeing with security were related to shootings. Both the Security Committee and the IT Committee at St. Anne's made some assessments about St. Anne's needs, including restructuring of the Security Committee and active shooter training for ushers. These issues tapered off with the advent of COVID, as you might imagine, but while churches were closed in COVID's immediate aftermath Amy Hoffman and the IT Committee sought out this grant to make the changes that had been identified. The grant, which comes from the Department of Education, is appropriate for our use in this case because PASA is a school.

Manoj+ shared his concern that active shooter training is probably something we need to do, but it's also difficult to figure out how to do that in a pastorally sensitive way. Howard said that, as an usher, he would like to have that kind of training, and Phyllis shared that she has taken part in such trainings in a school setting and you do need to be prepared for people to fall apart, since the situation for which you're training is so painful to imagine.

Linda added that such training seems essential for churches, especially now – one of the reasons why the synagogue that recently experienced a hostage crisis (Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas) came out of the situation relatively unscathed was because they HAD had an active shooter training. Jason said that when Sarah Morse was the Junior Warden she had been

working on a security plan for St. Anne's; the Vestry will need to pick that up as we move into the new year.

The motion, as shared by the group who received the grant, was made and seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

Vestry Retreat

Jason shared that, in pre-COVID times, the Vestry had held its retreat over a weekend. He would like to return the Vestry to this practice, and asked for volunteers to help him plan a Vestry retreat for the March/April timeframe.

Manoj+ said that having a Vestry retreat sets up the context of the work the Vestry does – this is more than a non-profit governing board, it's also a spiritual community, and it bears responsibility in both areas. He suggested a few possible locations for the retreat, and Jason added that the retreat would allow existing Vestry members to bring new members into the continuous Vestry conversation that's gone on throughout the years.

As an additional administrative note, Jason explained that, since the Vestry does not meet during the month of July, it typically authorizes the Executive Committee to make decisions about expenditures during that time, if such decisions need to be made. A motion to preauthorize the Executive Committee to make expenditure decisions during the month of July was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Parochial Report

Manoj+ relayed that, according to canon, the parochial report needs to be submitted by March 1 every year, but that St. Anne's has not achieved this goal in many years. This year, however, we will be able to submit the parochial report on time. Manoj+ gave kudos to Kirsten Hair, Susan Thaxton and Dave Huggins for getting the report done in such a timely manner.

Linda suggested adding the Sacred Ground study group to the section on the actions of the Racial Reconciliation Ministry – ten people participated in that group.

Linda also asked about the percentage listed as the endowment draw in Item 27 – don't we take a 4.5% endowment draw, not a 5% draw? Manoj+ agreed that we do take a 4.5% draw, but explained that the program from which the parochial report was created doesn't allow for half percentages to be entered.

A motion was made to approve the parochial report as amended. The motion was seconded and then approved unanimously. The next steps for submitting the report require that the Clerk of the Vestry, the Rector, the Senior Warden and the Registrar all sign off on the report, following which it will be submitted to the diocese.

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Jason then shared the St. Anne's staff's committee assignment sheet – the goal here is for each committee to provide a quick paragraph on their work to the Vestry, via the Secretary of the Vestry. A closing prayer sign-up sheet was also shared, so that Vestry members could volunteer to offer closing prayers at all Vestry meetings.

Kev then wanted to publicly acknowledge the rector's report Manoj+ gave at the Annual Meeting – it was inspiring and beautifully delivered. Manoj+ replied that he's honored to serve St. Anne's and its people, and that every day he thanks God for leading him and his family here.

A discussion then arose about whether we could use a cloud-based system for sharing Vestry documents, to eliminate the need for a bunch of emails with a bunch of different attachments. Manoj+ agreed to talk to the IT Committee about it, to see which infrastructure the parish is already using and to begin to use that for sharing Vestry documents.

Approval of January Minutes and Closing Prayer

The January minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

Townsend then offered a closing prayer/poem, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Burke
Clerk of Vestry