

**St. Anne's Parish
Vestry Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 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 Huggins
Townsend McNitt
David Jackson
Paul Pope
Bill Silva
Susan Thaxton

Vestry Members Absent

Thea Chimento
Al Collins

Non-Vestry Members Present

John Purnell, Digital Ministries Committee
Ginger DeLuca, Cemetery Committee
Glen Mortoro, Treasurer
Katie Burke, Clerk of Vestry

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Manoj+ opened the meeting at 6:04 pm first by offering some reflections on the cultivation of holy habits during Lent and then by leading the Vestry in prayer.

Rector's Report

Since the Rector's Report had been sent out ahead of time, Manoj+ asked the Vestry if there were any questions about its contents. He also offered one correction – Bishop Ihloff was not able to attend this Vestry meeting after all, although he very much enjoyed his time at St. Anne's.

There being no remaining questions about the Rector's Report, Manoj+ asked Dave Huggins to give his analysis of this year's stewardship drive.

Analysis of the Stewardship Drive

Dave explained that St. Anne's lost 77 of last year's pledges during this year's drive, but that if you look back four or five years ago the loss in terms of pledging unit numbers is even more significant. Pledging unit numbers have always been tied to Sunday morning attendance, and this year is no exception – attendance is down, and the number of pledging households is also down. What is staggering, however, is the amount by which the average unit pledge has increased – the people who *are* pledging are pledging strongly, and we had several new large pledges this year.

The takeaway, Dave said, is that St. Anne's should consider itself very fortunate, but also that the decrease in numbers of pledging units is a real red flag in terms of loss of attendance.

Dave also drew Vestry members' attention to the graphs he provided, explaining that, while St. Anne's did gain 42 new pledges this year (for a net loss of 35 pledging units), the total dollar amount of pledges has not gone down. When asked if this drop in number of pledging units correlates to a drop in membership, Dave said that the best correlation is really between pledging units and Sunday morning attendance – the membership rolls of St. Anne's were significantly cleaned up by the interim rector as recently as 2018, so it's difficult to draw those types of conclusions about membership numbers.

David Jackson asked whether membership numbers are stable, and Manoj+ answered that they are. He also shared that this season's inquirers class has 23 members, covering all of the demographic ranges in terms of age, and that while none of them are pledging members yet, they are all looking for ways to plug into St. Anne's.

Returning to the pledging unit numbers, Dave Huggins shared that at least three of the people who had previously pledged and did not pledge this year are on the parish prayer list. Kev agreed that pastoral outreach might be needed, to all those who didn't pledge this year but had pledged in the past. Dave agreed to share the names of those who fall into that category with Manoj+, who will approach them with pastoral needs in mind.

HR Committee Report

Jason gave a brief HR update, sharing that our communications consultant is departing, but also that an offer has been made this week to a candidate for the position of Director of Children & Youth, which is very exciting. St. Anne's will also touch base with the diocese on Thursday to discuss how to go forward concerning the associate priest position.

Junior Warden/Facilities Report

Susan shared that the Facilities Committee would like the Vestry to approve \$2,895 out of the capital account above what was already approved last summer for the bathroom modifications. This additional amount reflects changes to the scope of work that is being asked: instead of

regrouting the tile, the tile will now simply be cleaned and sealed, but the countertops will now be replaced. This will require extra materials and time, and this additional \$2,895 will cover that plus our usual 10% contingency. Work is scheduled to begin at the end of the month. A motion was made to approve the requested amount, and it passed unanimously. Manoj+ gave a shoutout to Paul Manning and Kirsten for their excellent negotiating on the bathroom project.

Susan also mentioned the organ swell mixture, which needs to be repaired. During the major work that was done on the organ in 2016-2017 this need was identified, and now is the moment to go forward with the repair. The Facilities Committee is requesting \$11,000 to do this work, which will involve shipping the part to Germany.

Katie Creely brought up the fact that, if this need was identified five years ago, the Vestry might have approved it at that time. Jason remembered an organ fund that was used for the previous organ repairs, and Glen shared that there's about \$1,000 left in it. Howard asked if this repair would complete all known organ repairs needed, and Susan said that it would, but reminded everyone that the organ is a living instrument, so more repairs will surely be necessary over time.

Phyllis reflected that the organ will work perfectly well while the part, which affects volume control, is being repaired. This led Paul to speculate that it would be interesting to put together a before and after video showing the difference in sound quality resulting from the mixture repair – when the organ was fixed in 2016, the sound quality difference was astounding. Manoj+ suggested that this be done as a promotional stewardship project, to show the congregation what their contributions support, and everyone agreed that this would be a great idea. The motion was made to approve \$11,000, \$1,000 from the organ account and \$10,000 from the capital account, for these repairs, and the motion passed unanimously.

Susan then shared a follow-up to last month's discussion of the security system upgrade that will be financed by the hate crimes grant. The Vestry had already approved \$51,000 for this project, which it will get back now that the grant is in place. Reading from a report shared by the Digital Ministries Committee, Susan asked the Vestry to approve two things. The first would be that, of the entire \$51,000, \$48,883 would go to selected vendor Clear Connection, leaving the remaining \$2,116 for the Digital Ministries team to use for any additional work associated with the project. The second thing to approve is an ongoing operating expense of \$2,500 per year for cloud-based services. Susan then asked John Purnell, of the Digital Ministries Committee, to share anything else the Vestry might need to know about this project and these requests.

John clarified that the Digital Ministries Committee only needs Vestry to approve funding for the recurring expense for the second two quarters of this year – that was what was missing in February's approval, and it needs to be approved so that the project can go forward. The amount to be approved at this meeting, then, would be \$1,250, but it is also important to know that the entire \$2,500 will appear in every annual budget going forward.

In answer to a question from Katie, John clarified that he didn't know which cloud service Clear Connection would use, but that they have given us a commitment that it will work for our purposes. They will implement a cloud-based access control system, which means that St.

Anne's will not have to have servers of its own, or pay for software upgrades. Air-conditioning, heating, door access sensors – all will be handled through the cloud.

David asked about other maintenance costs, and John agreed that the hardware should be expected to have a 5-10 year lifespan, but that after that there would likely be some upgrade costs. He also shared that a great thing about this system is that it can be operated using cell phones – instead of using a fob or a badge, you only need to have your cell phone in your pocket to access doors, if you're in the system. Even if the building loses internet access, doors will still be accessible to those who are in the system. Additionally, there are no batteries that will need to be replaced – everything is network-based, so there is some upfront wiring work that is included in the scope.

The other development that has occurred since John wrote the request Susan referenced is that a second quote has come in. Clear Connection quoted \$48,000, but their competitor Blue Cap IT came in 25% cheaper. The Digital Ministries Committee is inclined to give the contract to Clear Connection, since Clear Connection brought St. Anne's the opportunity, but with a 25% gap in quotes John does not feel ready to make that recommendation yet – he has some more due diligence vetting to do. As a result, he amended the two requests the Digital Ministries Committee is making of the Vestry as follows:

- The Digital Ministries Committee asks the Vestry to approve \$1,250 of recurring costs for the two quarters left in 2022.
- The Digital Ministries Committee asks the Vestry to approve having the Executive Committee and the Digital Ministries Committee select a vendor within the limits described in the original request shared by Susan.

There are some deadlines to meet, according to the terms of the grant. St. Anne's needs to be encumbered (that is, we need to have entered into a contract and given the chosen vendor a purchase order) by June 30, and the work needs to be completed and invoiced by August 15.

Both potential vendors say that meeting these deadlines in terms of labor would be no problem, but both are worried about meeting them in terms of the suppliers delivering the equipment. John added that the first thing to do is to pick a vendor and get encumbered, then get some firm schedules on delivery. If these schedules are outside of the grant timeline, then we will beg for more time from the state, given the current situation with the global supply chain.

John also said that his goal would be for us to be encumbered by March 20 – he has sent the contract to Ed Hartman for his review.

Referring back to the motion approved in February 2022 for this project, Manoj+ said that the Vestry could choose to interpret the previous motion as covering John's second request, and everyone agreed to do so. A motion was then made that the Vestry approve an additional \$1,250 for ongoing costs for Q3 and Q4, and this motion was passed unanimously.

Secretary to the Vestry Report

Having sent out the report ahead of time, Linda wanted to highlight just a few of the things it covered. Her plan is to contact every ministry over a two-month time span. Selected updates included:

- ACT (Anne Arundel Connecting Together, of which St. Anne's is a member) is supporting the county's Turnaround Thursday program, which works with people recently released from incarceration to provide comprehensive support in job training and skills necessary to develop a different life for themselves. ACT calls this "generational change."
- Foyer groups have continued to function during the pandemic, keeping up social bonds at St. Anne's.
- The Homework Club is back to being able to work with children at the Stanton Center, and lots of St. John's students are participating.
- Naomi's Village is promoting a special activity: Easter cards for children being sponsored.
- The Guatemala Ministry is planning a trip, though it is being mindful of potential COVID restrictions.
- Reconciliation Ministry members received training in taking oral histories last Saturday, in preparation for their upcoming interviews of current and former St. Anne's parishioners about events that took place between St. Philip's and St. Anne's during the 1960s. Additionally, the Racial Reconciliation Collaborative, led by St. Philip's and supported by St. Anne's, will launch later this week with a street banner project promoting racial reconciliation and social justice throughout Annapolis and Anne Arundel County.
- The Refugee Committee is in active conversation with First Presbyterian and Calvary Methodist about how to help a refugee family get settled.

Linda then answered a few questions from Vestry members. Kev wanted to know if St. Anne's Archivist Eric Fredland was involved in the oral history project, and Linda explained that he was very involved. He will not take oral histories, but he will be interviewed for the project. Jason asked who heads the Refugee Committee, and Manoj+ said that its leaders are Eleanor Huggins and Ford Rowan. Dave Huggins shared that a staggering number of emails have been received saying that St. Anne's parishioners are willing to support refugees.

Cemetery Committee Report

In an update on the grass cutting situation in the cemetery, Linda reminded the Vestry that Cemetery Manager Mark LaBuda, who has cut the grass in the cemetery for years, decided this year not to submit a bid for grass cutting. Accordingly, he got three bids from other companies for the grass cutting contract. Elite, a company recommended by St. Mary's, came in with the lowest bid. Their bid is for \$41,750 for 25 cuts, but this is responsive to weather conditions – if significant rainfall causes the grass to need to be cut more than 25 times, the overall cost of the contract will increase. The bid from Bay Ridge is wildly out of range (\$93,000), and the third bid, from Chester River, is \$44,200 comprehensively, meaning that the cost will remain the same no matter the weather conditions.

Since all of these bids are above what the Cemetery Committee budgeted for grass cutting (\$35,000, based on Mark's bids from recent years), Linda asked the Vestry whether the cemetery budget needed to be amended. This is really just a procedural question, she clarified, since the cemetery has received more income in the past year than it expected, so whichever bid we go with won't be outside of the affordable range. Manoj+ explained that, procedurally, the Vestry would need to approve the overage specifically at the end of the year.

In terms of deciding between Elite and Chester River, the risk of a longer growing season might make Chester River's quote preferable, but Linda also shared that Mark thought St. Mary's having recommended Elite gave them the edge. Paul agreed that, while the St. Mary's cemetery is smaller than ours, it always looks perfectly manicured.

Linda then moved that the Vestry authorize the budget for grass cutting of the St. Anne's/Cedar Bluff cemetery for the 2022 season not to exceed 46K (Elite's bid plus our usual 10% contingency, which in this case could cover a rainy season), with the contract to be awarded to the company approved by the cemetery manager by March 15. The motion passed unanimously.

Linda and Ginger then offered an update on the Cemetery Committee's work overall. The committee was charged with managing the cemetery in accordance with what the policy manual actually says and developing a 10-year business plan. The committee has already developed a Vision/Mission/Goals statement, and are working hard to align the business plan with it.

Ginger added that one of the biggest highlights in cemetery-related news is the new feeling of Vestry buy-in to cemetery work. The Cemetery Committee's biggest goals include making the cemetery financially self-sustaining and transforming it into a place where Annapolitans, especially our neighbors on Clay St., feel welcome to come for respite and contemplation. This feels more and more possible with increasing Vestry support.

Ginger also reported that a lot of networking with local nonprofits has been taking place. Our contact from the Watershed Stewards Academy, who worked with us in the cemetery last year, got a grant from Unity Gardens and is committed to coming back again this year and into the future. The garden planted by Girl Scouts was sadly torn up by the machinery parking on our grounds, but if we step back and look at the ultimate picture here, we're getting at total of

\$21,000 for allowing that machinery to park there. With that money, we can get water into the cemetery, a true necessity if we want to have gardens there.

Ginger continued to share aspirations for the cemetery, including Suzanne Webber's project of putting in a pollinator garden and our continued support of Black local historians Janice Hayes-Williams and Elinor Thompson who are trying to uncover the stories of Black Annapolitans buried in our cemetery. Incidentally, we shared some of those stories with members of St. Philip's who joined us for the Racial Reconciliation Ministry's oral history training, and they were very excited to hear about them. Additionally, Tina Simmons at the Anne Arundel Genealogical Society is interested in working with the Cemetery Committee, and Nature is Sacred, a group that does grants for meditation gardens, is meeting with committee members on Thursday.

Jason gave Ginger and Linda a hearty thanks for all their diligent work, and Paul shared how uplifting it is to talk about the cemetery now that so many exciting things are happening there.

Howard said that it would be really nice to schedule some kind of activity for parishioners over at the cemetery, and Katie Burke described her proposal for crowdsourcing some help mapping the cemetery by organizing "Family Pin Dropping Days" – St. Anne's families could come, drop some pins, send the data back to Katie, and enjoy a nice day out in a beautiful place. Katie Creely agreed that this would also be a good sales pitch, showing parishioners what their money pays for in terms of maintaining and beautifying the cemetery. Vestry members suggested a cemetery open house or hosting the ministry fair in the cemetery, and Manoj+ reminded everyone that the Congressional Cemetery even does movie nights. There are many possibilities.

Treasurer's Report

The treasurer's report was brief this month. Glen shared that revenues are up and expenses are down, so we're off to a good start!

Jason also took a moment to ask how the new shared drive system was working for everyone. Several Vestry members reported that they are not yet in the system, but that they are working with Josiah to get access.

Howard suggested that the Vestry try to think about a way to make all of the documents shared on the drive (except for anything related to HR) available publicly, and Linda agreed that one of the groups she would like to make more transparent to the congregation via her new role is the Vestry itself.

Vestry Retreat

The poll for deciding on the dates for the Vestry retreat returned the highest number of votes for March 25th and 26th, but Paul pointed out that Linda Gregory's funeral will be on the 26th, and

many Vestry members might want to attend. The second-choice weekend, April 8th and 9th, is the weekend of Pam Forbes' funeral, so after some general discussion the weekend of April 29th and 30th was tentatively decided upon.

In terms of the structure of the retreat, many Vestry members voted for an all-day Saturday retreat, but the Executive Committee would also like to add a Friday night dinner for socializing and getting to know each other. Since it wouldn't be an overnight trip, Manoj+ proposed that the meeting place be somewhere not on parish grounds, so that it would feel like a proper retreat, but not too far away, so folks could easily get home at the end of the day. He suggested the space at 59 Franklin, or potentially meeting spaces at St. Margaret's or St. Martin's-in-the-Field.

Speaking as a new Vestry member, Phyllis agreed that she would appreciate the additional time for socializing on Friday night, and suggested that the Vestry rent a room in a local restaurant for that part of the event. Townsend wondered whether the Lighthouse Bistro would be a good choice, since they don't have regular dinner service there.

Jason shared that the Vestry's approach to the retreat should be to assess St. Anne's needs, to discern God's vision for St. Anne's, to understand the Vestry's role in that vision, to determine three to four clear goals that the Vestry can focus on, and to map out what the Vestry can do month to month to meet those goals.

Approval of February Minutes and Closing Prayer

The February minutes were amended to show that Kara was not present last month, and were then approved as amended.

Kev then offered a closing prayer, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Burke
Clerk of Vestry