

**St. Anne's Parish
Vestry Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 13, 2022**

Clergy and Vestry Members Present

Rev. Manoj Zacharia
Linda Adamson
Howard Buskirk
Thea Chimento
Katie Creely
Kara Friedell
Kevin Hays
David Huggins
David Jackson
Townsend McNitt
Paul Pope
Bill Silva

Vestry Members Absent

Al Collins
Phyllis Everette
Jason Houser
Susan Thaxton

Non-Vestry Members Present

Katie Burke, Clerk of Vestry

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Manoj+ opened the meeting with a prayer at 7:01 pm. He then asked that a motion be made to amend the agenda to add the approval of the August minutes, an HR resolution involving a housing allowance for new clergy, and the report from the Secretary to the Vestry. The motion was made and seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Vestry Resource Guide Discussion

Thea then gave a presentation on chapter 5 of the Vestry Resource Guide, “Finance and Administration.” She expressed gratitude that, as a sizeable parish, we have financial experts who can do most of the work for us. Some of the other key points from this chapter included:

- Working together to make sure financial administration is well handled should be everyone’s priority. A good way into thinking about church finance, especially if you’re a person who’s less familiar with it, is to think, “How am I taking care of our staff, clergy and parishioners by engaging with these issues?”

- Every member of the Vestry, as well as every church officer, has fiduciary responsibility for the finances of the church. This means that, if bad legal things are happening because of inconsistencies with the money, they're happening to you.
- Communicating to the congregation about what is financially normal for St. Anne's and where we are at any given moment with respect to that normality scale is vitally important.
- Ideally, a church's total budget should be funded 75% by contributions, and Glenn confirmed that this is so at St. Anne's.
- Fraud can happen to anyone – the point of fraud is that it looks like normal operations. As a parish, St. Anne's has taken a lot of steps to make sure it doesn't happen to us.
- Sound property management is important, since the buildings of the church are a physical witness to the work that the church does. St. Anne's is extremely lucky to have a capital fund and a Vestry with a long history of projecting and preparing for potential future big expenses. (Manoj+ clarified at this moment that the portion of the spreadsheet we have detailing property management was included by Mark Grimes and based on Bill Wilbert's assessment.)
- The Vestry should for the most part be leaving Human Resources management to the professionals we hire, as the Vestry Guide suggests, but Vestry members do have a responsibility to make sure that St. Anne's is a safe and equitable place to work.
- The Diocese of Maryland believes that Vestries require additional training, and so it requires Vestry members to complete trainings in anti-racism and sexual misconduct.
- As to volunteer management, the question we need to ask ourselves is, "How can I encourage folks to see if a ministry is in need of their time or talent?" (Kev then asked if there might be an abbreviated form of the anti-racism and sexual misconduct trainings that could be added to the Vestry retreat, and other Vestry members were generally in favor of doing so. Thea also suggested that the Diocese also has a video training on recognizing and preventing domestic violence – she would definitely recommend it.)
- The security guidelines are being adhered to at St. Anne's within the Diocesan requirements. A major part of adhering to the policy on alcohol and tobacco use is that you must have attractive and accessible alternatives to alcohol available at every event where alcohol is being served.

Rector's Report

Since the Rector's Report had been shared on the Vestry drive ahead of time, Manoj+ checked to see whether anyone had any questions. No one raised any issues, so Manoj+ moved on to a discussion of this month's reflection on John 21 and the F.I.S.H. Differently! article about capital resources.

Kev said that he found a lot to relate to in the story of the disciples, experienced fishermen, out there trying to fish but having no success until they listened to Jesus's instructions as to where to drop their lines. Isn't this just like us? We're out there aggressively fishing, fishing, fishing, not stopping to listen to the message we're being given about where to look and what to do when we get there.

Katie shared that what struck her most was the intellectual capital portion of the F.I.S.H. article. She remembered the success of the listening sessions St. Anne's held this summer about service times – could we use that approach more often? Could we focus on giving people a way to directly share their opinions?

Linda said that she'd been reflecting on what happens when you gather the resources you *think* you need: you end up predetermining which voices you're going to listen to, instead of actually listening past what you *think* the answer is going to be.

Howard said that one of the things he remembered from the parish profile that was put together during the last rector search at St. Anne's is that St. Anne's is good at directing information out to people, but not very good at getting information back from them. Are we fully using the intellectual capital that's out there, or could we develop a mechanism by which that feedback could really flow?

Paul said that he appreciated the point the article made about the limits in the Episcopal Church on what lay people can do. His experience in moving from the Catholic Church is that the Episcopal Church has a very bottom-up structure, with congregations calling their own ministers and dioceses calling their own bishops, but, as the article points out, lay people are limited in what they can do. If we let lay people do more, it would help us to listen to the voices we're not hearing now.

Manoj+ concluded the discussion by mentioning that the Latin word for tradition, 'paradosis,' implies the handing down of something that is alive. How do we as the Vestry hand down something alive while understanding it within the context of our present moment?

Treasurer's Update

Since this is not one of the meetings where our treasurer, Glenn Mortoro, will make one of his official quarterly reports, there are just a few brief things to note. Giving is up, but given the state

of the market there has been an investment income loss. Expenses so far have been less than budgeted, not only in terms of the salary side but in all areas.

Stewardship Pledge Campaign Update

Dave Huggins passed around a sign-up sheet for Vestry members to give brief stewardship talks at services throughout the fall. He also shared that Manoj+ is working on the pledging letter, which will need to be send out in the next two weeks. Dave asked that, if it's at all possible, all Vestry members try to make their pledge before the end of the month – it's very helpful to have some initial numbers.

Dave explained that Glenn thinks that we need a 6% increase in pledging this year, which would represent keeping up with inflation plus 1.5%. He also reminded the Vestry that, since we'll have two Sunday morning services instead of three this year, our weekly attendance will be affected, which will in turn affect our stewardship campaign.

Vestry Update on Ministry Cluster 7 (Children)

As Vestry liaison to Cluster 7, the cluster of ministries that center around children and youth activities, Kev gave a brief update on what his cluster has been up to. Tempest Brevard, our new Director of Children and Youth, has been putting together programming aimed at the whole range of kids' ages. One fun new addition has been the "love ministry," where kids can get a stuffed animal in the back of the church to play with and cuddle during the service.

On the PASA side, things are going well – it's estimated that capacity will be reached (in terms of number of students) by early October. Meredith+ and Tempest visited PASA to continue to build good communication between the church and the school

Manoj+ asked if there was any way the Vestry could be helpful, and Kev said that Tempest is very grateful to have a Vestry who listens.

Linda suggested that Vestry members might consider going to Tempest's Friday night Food and Fellowship events sometime, as attendance has been sluggish so far. Manoj+ reflected that Tempest might change the timing for those events in the future, since many kids couldn't attend because of late school times.

Kev shared his own experiences running a youth group with his wife Laurie in Monterey, California, saying that you often try a lot of different types of activities to appeal to kids, and so many of them don't work. Then you'll hit on something that explodes, and things will pick up by leaps and bounds. For the Monterey youth group it was camping, and letting the kids be in charge of planning the trips – the program took off like crazy, and soon youth group kids were bringing their friends. Kev said that he feels confident that something like that will happen for

Tempest too, and Howard agreed that he was blown away by her level of energy for the work, which will surely yield good results.

MOU With Nature Sacred

Katie Creely spoke next, explaining that she had examined the Fiscal Policy Manual in order to gain clarity on the Vestry's responsibility with respect to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Nature Sacred that has been under discussion. According to the terms of the MOU, Nature Sacred would create a reflection garden in the St. Anne's cemetery. Katie explained that under Section 8 of the church's bylaws, the Vestry is named as a trustee of the parish's real property, which includes the cemetery, and the Vestry is responsible for maintaining that property. That's why what goes on at the cemetery is important to Vestry members, and Vestry support is important to the Cemetery Committee.

Under Section 4d of the Fiscal Policy Manual, the Cemetery Committee is responsible for managing the cemetery properties. Section 3d of the Fiscal Policy Manual sets out their specific role when it comes to spending. The Cemetery Committee is a specific standing committee created by the Vestry to oversee the revenue and expenditures of the various St. Anne's burial properties. So this is where the situation with the MOU starts to be a little bit different from the way the Vestry would normally view itself with respect to approving expenditures above a certain level. While Section 3a of the Fiscal Policy Manual states that the Vestry must approve all expenditures over a certain amount, that provision doesn't apply in the Nature Sacred situation because the MOU does not contemplate an expenditure of existing funds. What the MOU is contemplating in terms of St. Anne's responsibility is more of a fundraising effort – we are committing to raise new funds to go to the design and construction of the contemplative garden on the cemetery property. So that's why, as a Vestry, we are not voting on the expenditure of that money.

Because the MOU commits St. Anne's to a fundraising effort, then, that effort must be conducted in accordance with our Fundraising Policy, which is a separate section of the Fiscal Policy Manual. That is where the Vestry has a role in this process – the project doesn't require Vestry approval of the expenditure itself by a vote, since we're not talking about spending existing funds, but it does require the Vestry to vote to authorize raising of the proposed funds.

To recap the situation as it stands now: in accordance with the Fiscal Policy Manual, the Cemetery Committee has made a decision that they want to engage in this project on the cemetery property, which is in their purview to do. Because it is a fundraising effort, Linda, on behalf of the Cemetery Committee, has presented it to the Executive Committee, which has approved the project and supports the fundraising effort. What the Vestry needs to do now is to vote to authorize the raising of the funds, which the Executive Committee has already decided it supports.

At this point David Jackson asked whether this meant that the MOU has been executed by the church, and Katie replied that yes, it has been executed. David asked if he could say a bit more about that, and Katie ceded the floor to him.

David explained that, having been a real estate developer for 30 years, he was deeply concerned that this MOU was a bad agreement for St. Anne's and did not sufficiently protect the parish's property rights. When Linda asked for further explanation of David's concerns, David explained that St. Anne's would be giving Nature Sacred the right to do a lot of things on the property – they could put up their own signs, for example, and we'd have no recourse. He also mentioned the apparent lack of a floodplain determination and the potential violation of tree removal ordinances (if you don't have a permit from the city to remove trees in a critical area, you leave yourself open to fines of up to \$10,000), and urged the Cemetery Committee not to go forward with the MOU as is.

Linda shared that, although she doesn't have the same type of professional background David has, she has engaged with Nature Sacred and seen examples of their previous work, and she would like to speak to that. In other similar gardens, Nature Sacred has incorporated a bench with their name into the design, but has otherwise not included any signs of their own.

David said that the MOU as it's written would still give Nature Sacred the right to put up such a sign if they chose, and expressed concern that the Vestry does not have a voice in approving the MOU. Katie clarified that the Vestry has a clear role in this process, and it is not approving the MOU – the Cemetery Committee makes that decision. The Vestry's role in this process is to approve the fundraising efforts.

Linda expressed how much she values David's caution and his professional experience here – looking for potholes in the process that might turn into sinkholes is invaluable. She also shared that, in terms of fundraising, over half of the estimated \$30,000 requirement for the basic work has already been donated. The additional fundraising mechanism that the Cemetery Committee would like to use is the selling of engraved memorial pavers – pavers would be necessary in any case to maintain ADA compliance, so why not use them as a fundraiser? We have recently seen a very successful example of selling pavers as a fundraising initiative at the West Street location of the Anne Arundel County Public Library, where the library made much more money through the sale of pavers than was expected. So the Cemetery Committee would like to assure the Vestry that the plan to raise money for the Nature Sacred project has been carefully thought out, and is designed to be something that would be engaging for the congregation in addition to raising funds.

Paul asked for clarification about what the Vestry is being asked to approve at this time, and Katie explained that the Executive Committee has considered the recommendation of the Cemetery Committee to proceed with this project and has agreed to support it. The Vestry is now being asked to decide whether to approve fundraising efforts to support this project (the Vestry does not need to approve a specific fundraising plan, only the fundraising efforts in general).

Dave Huggins said that he thought it was very important to know the risks involved, but that he also knows how much work has gone into making the cemetery a welcoming place, and that he strongly feels that the work needs to go forward.

Howard said that, given the concerns David Jackson has raised, he'd have a difficult time voting to approve the fundraising effort tonight.

Manoj+ added that another aspect of this situation to be aware of is that St. Anne's relationship with Nature Sacred was facilitated by Mayor Buckley and his deputy, who were working with Nature Sacred on the bike path when Nature Sacred made the proposal to St. Anne's. Manoj+ further reminded the Vestry that, while some very valid concerns were raised tonight, it should also be taken into account that the Executive Committee has been considering the Nature Sacred MOU and its legal implications for about five months already.

At this point, David Jackson proposed that the motion to approve the fundraising effort be tabled until the next Vestry meeting, and Manoj+ asked if there was a second. David's motion was seconded, and the vote to table the motion was held. A consensus was not reached – five voted for tabling the vote to approve the fundraising effort, and five voted against tabling the vote. One Vestry member abstained. Manoj+ then looked at the bylaws to determine the possible actions he could take at this point, while discussion continued.

Dave Huggins asked for more to be said about what the actual concerns about Nature Sacred are. David Jackson said that it looked to him like Nature Sacred was mostly interested in making a beautiful urban park in the cemetery. Linda responded that one of the things the Cemetery Committee loved about Nature Sacred is that their spaces are specifically designed to be places of meditative care – they are intended to be welcoming places for community members to be sure, but not in the same way a community park might be. The sacredness of the space is specifically part of what Nature Sacred enhances with their designs.

Manoj+ then said that, given the 5-5 nature of the vote to table the fundraising approval, he would like to propose that we move the rest of this discussion to the end of the meeting, by which point something germane to the discussion will have been raised. In the meantime, he asked that the rest of the meeting proceed as planned.

Nomination Committee Update

Kara shared that the Nomination Committee met on Sunday, September 11, to meet each other and to talk about the types of characteristics they're looking for in new Vestry members. Kara also met with parish staff to discuss the same thing, and had some very productive discussions.

Characteristics the committee and staff named included the following:

- Advocate for the organization
- Strategic vision

- Range of personal and professional experience across group members
- Open to new possibilities
- Range of diversity of age and experience across group members

Kara reminded the Vestry that the nominating committee will be looking to fill three Vestry openings, two openings for Diocesan delegate, and two openings for alternate Diocesan delegate. Manoj+ then reminded everyone that, procedurally, he needed to officially name the nominating committee. He named the following people to the committee:

- Kara Friedell (chair)
- Susan Thaxton
- Bill Silva
- Stan Ward
- Ann Carlson

Kara then said that they had just found out that Ann Carlson wouldn't be able to participate in the nominating committee this year after all, which would mean that Manoj+ will need to appoint another non-Vestry member to fill Ann's place on the committee.

Kara then asked other Vestry members how the nomination process went in the past: what went well? What would you like to change about the process? What should the committee know, and what potential pitfalls might it encounter?

Kev said that he'd want to target a parent in a young family for the Vestry, someone with young kids to give that perspective as we work to grow our youth programs.

Paul answered Kara's question by saying that in previous years the nominating committee has done exactly what's being done now – the committee has thought about whose experience we need on the Vestry and asked those people to join.

Paul also opined that it would be wonderful to get a youth member on the Vestry, but he also acknowledged that it's a big ask for students. He also said that, although we do have Phyllis filling this role this year, it might be nice to add another teacher, someone who has experience guiding young people.

Howard said that he thought it was very important to have people with different backgrounds on the Vestry, and Kara suggested that looking for someone with a fundraising background might be useful. In the interests of time, Manoj+ asked the Vestry to consider which characteristics they'd like to see new Vestry members embody, and to email Kara with a list of those characteristics.

Strategic Committee Leader Request For Proposal (RFP)

According to Kev, the Executive Committee and the Treasurer have taken an existing Request for Proposal (RFP) for a leader for the Strategic Committee and have adjusted it for St. Anne's

current needs. The RFP will be posted in the Vestry folder, and Kev asked that Vestry members read through it and offer any feedback they may have to Susan, Jason, or Kev by Tuesday, September 20.

Kev then shared that the RFP used to be a bit more focused on finding someone who has performed this type of role specifically at a church before, but that, upon reflection, the EC realized that this approach might be too limiting, so they remove that specific requirement. The RFP doesn't technically need to be approved by the Vestry, but the EC wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to look at before it went out. The Vestry will, of course, be able to review the resulting proposals that come in.

Secretary of the Vestry Report

In the interests of time, Linda chose to highlight just a few things from the Secretary's Report. She pointed out that St. Anne's used to have a Memorials Committee to deal with any and all issues pertaining to our many memorials in the church, but that that group has dissipated in recent years. The Executive Committee plans to encourage the Memorials Committee's reactivation in the near future.

Additionally, Linda drew Vestry members' attention to the newly updated Ministry Committee Organization chart, where every Vestry member has now been assigned a ministry cluster for which they will act as liaison. Vestry members should at this point reach out to the ministry leaders in their cluster and establish good communication channels with them.

Housing Allowance

Manoj+ then introduced a resolution regarding the designation of a salary portion for the standard housing allowance offered to St. Anne's clergy. The resolution read as follows:

“Whereas Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code permits a minister of the gospel to exclude from gross income a church designated allowance paid to him or her as part of his or her compensation to the extent used by him or her for actual expenses of owning or renting a home, whereas the Reverend Meredith Kefauver Olsen is compensated by St. Anne's exclusively for services as a minister of the gospel, and whereas St. Anne's does not provide the Reverend Meredith Kefauver Olsen with a rectory, it is hereby resolved that the amount that she asked for, \$8,750, shall be designated as a housing allowance and shall apply to the remainder of the calendar year 2022.”

Manoj+ asked for a motion to that effect and a second, both of which were duly made.

Manoj+ then clarified that this was simply a redesignation of funds for this purpose, not a request for new money.

August Minutes Approval and Return to the Nature Sacred Question

The August minutes were accepted as read, and then approved unanimously as submitted. Manoj+ then directed the Vestry to page 4 of the Vestry-approved August minutes and read the following aloud:

“The Cemetery’s #1 priority is the MOU with Nature Sacred. Linda asks the EC/Vestry to approve the Nature Sacred project funded by parishioner donations, a former parishioner’s gift to match these donations up to \$15,000, allocations of unspecified donations for use by the Cemetery Committee, and proceeds from the sale of pavers, with any shortfall to be made up by existing funds restricted for the cemetery’s use.

David [Jackson] requested some additional information about the Nature Sacred project, what it entails, and how it will be funded, and a spirited discussion ensued. The result was that Jason agreed to ask Linda to share all documents provided by Nature Sacred on the Vestry drive for further review, and suggested that, following that review, a vote on Linda’s motion could be taken offline.”

In that context, and given that the Vestry finds itself split and in discernment on the issue of the fundraising aspect of the Nature Sacred MOU, Manoj+ cast his tie-breaking vote to postpone the discussion of the fundraising aspect until next month.

David Jackson asked whether that meant that we would be proceeding with the MOU, and reiterated his concern that insufficient boundaries are placed on Nature Sacred in the existing document. Manoj+ said that that was a good question, and he thanked everyone for voicing their opinions on the issue. He also affirmed that, while the Vestry may not always have unanimity as it makes decisions, all Vestry members are representing what they feel is best for the parish and are coming to the table with the best of intent, integrity, and good will. Linda shared her gratitude to everyone as well for their thorough consideration of this project.

Closing Prayer

Kev then offered a closing prayer, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Burke
Clerk of Vestry