

CHRIST CHURCH CHRISTIANA HUNDRED

Vestry Minutes

November 14, 2024

7:00 PM

Present: Ran Barton, Audrey Bruce, Cindi Cozza, Barb King, Ted Ledden, Alexander Maynard, Thorpe Moeckel, Scott Nickle, Jamie Poston, Jaq Whalen, Alexia Wolf

Also Present: John Faulkner, Michael Kurth, Deb Piper

Absent: Chuck Arensberg, Ruth Beresford, Eliza Phillips, Bart Reese

The meeting was called to order by Ran Barton, senior warden, at 7:04 PM, and he offered the opening prayer.

Leading the Congregation

Green Show Preparations: Alexia shared two requests from Nancy Greenberg, Green Show Chair: to sign up online to volunteer and to buy Preview Party tickets sooner rather than later.

CCEP Update: Cindi noted that the Board of Trustees' meeting was postponed to next week due to Sheila Abio attending the NAES (National Association of Episcopal Schools) conference. She reported that the school was awarded a \$31,200 grant from the Ellice & Rosa McDonald Foundation, which will be used for enrichment classes such as Spanish, music, art, and Godly Play. This grant opportunity was identified by Chip Sawyer, CCEP Board Treasurer, whose father Murray Sawyer is one of the foundation's trustees. The Open House on November 2 was successful, and Grandparents Day today (November 14) was very well attended.

Presence of Vestry at Parish Events: Ran reviewed the list of fellowship, formation, ministry, and special worship events from November 17 through December 7. Michael described the current model for how the parish supports Family Promise, with our next assignment being Thanksgiving week. He also highlighted the Interfaith Thanksgiving Basket Project, taking place on November 17, now in its 26th year.

Driving the Strategic Plan

Goal 1: We will grow our Episcopal faith community with God's help

Social media – Ran reported that he and Bart have not yet scheduled their meeting; however, he has researched search engine optimization and best practices for tailoring content on each of the various platforms. Scott suggested looking into Google Cash that is available to non-profits to promote their sites.

IWC (Invite – Welcome – Connect) – Audrey explained that the Welcome brochure is currently the gateway into the newcomer process. A new brochure will be developed called “Why Join Christ Church?” that provides details on what makes our parish unique. A postcard will be sent to selected zip codes to make residents aware of our parish. The IWC Committee is seeking to improve communications with the preschool by once per month having a member of the CCEP faculty (and often a parent as well) join the first portion of their meeting. In addition, on Fridays, students receive a flyer in their bookbag listing upcoming parish events. Michael spoke about the Belong class offered quarterly, which has been retooled to serve those who are new to this parish, rather than new to Christianity or the Episcopal Church. This change has led to more nuanced discussions of beliefs and practices in the subsequent Adult Confirmation class, allowing Belong to emphasize ways of connecting to our community. Belong class participants take the Ministry Match survey upon completing the course, and the committee is working on how to convert the results of that into real connection. The most recent class comprised about 15 new members from 12 families. Over the past year, 53 people have taken the class, representing about 60 new members when spouses and children are included. Together with those who have been baptized, we have welcomed about 80 new members. Michael wrote an article about Baptism for the CCEP newsletter, leading to multiple families and adults expressing interest in being baptized in January.

CCEP family listening – Barb read from Chuck’s written report that having both school and parish leaders attending the NAES conference is a sign of our commitment to joining our two communities together. Vestry members should now be receiving CCEP’s weekly newsletter, and parishioners are welcome and encouraged to attend CCEP’s monthly family chapel service. Some preschool dads will be assisting with preparing school spaces for the Green Show.

Life transitions – Michael reported that he, Jaq, Stacey Carpenter, Mike Socha, and John Newlin had met before Stacey’s departure to discuss how we can best support current parishioners through critical transitions in their lives. From a clergy perspective, work on this topic has paused until a new Associate Rector is called in 2025. Jaq has been researching this aspect of pastoral care, and together with Stacey’s notes, she has developed a list of the top ten life transition moments and potential ways we could train lay people to connect with parishioners on these. Ruth had indicated we need to offer an introduction to what pastoral care is, and from that identify who in the parish would be interested in training for this ministry.

Ministry Architects Coaching Consultation Next Steps: Ran recalled that we approved approaching Ministry Architects to obtain coaching for Vestry members to be effective at their strategic plan work. For the knowledge gained from the training to endure, it makes sense for those in their first year of Vestry service to participate: Barb for Goal 1, Cindi for Goal 2, and Thorpe for Goal 3. Ran will email Heather Kenny to schedule the sessions; Jaq asked for the training to be recorded.

Quarterly Update to the Parish: Jenno reported that Sherry Lawton-Fasic inquired about the Vestry providing quarterly updates to the parish on strategic plan progress, taking over from the Renovation Team's monthly updates that ended in June. Jenno will reach out to Barb, Cindi, and Thorpe for content to include in these reports.

Managing Parish Resources

Property: Thorpe welcomed John Faulkner, long-time Convener of the Property Committee, then gave an update on work related to the Parish Hall leaks. The committee invested \$5K in an order-of-magnitude estimate of the work necessary to finally resolve the issues. The report we received from Whiting Turner Engineering estimates a project in the range of \$500K to \$1 million. The next step is to authorize \$150K for an in-depth assessment and solution design, with final costs to be determined by March 2025. The work would then be put out for bids, and construction is targeted to begin in June 2025. John remarked that he and Andy Marine have been working on these problems for years, and worrisome damage is all around the building; further delaying a comprehensive solution will only increase eventual repair costs. Barb noted the potential liability issue, especially as regards the preschool. Ran asked when was the last time we spent a very large amount of money on a repair; John replied that it was the church roof replacement in 2006. Ruth and Eliza met to discuss ideas for a capital campaign, given that it would arise from a repair expense about which it could be challenging to generate excitement, especially in a year when pledging is slow and we are facing a year-end deficit. Buildings and Grounds currently has \$200K in its capital fund as well as some endowment funds earmarked for capital work, which could be used toward the assessment and design work. Ran remarked that Mark Parsells was very encouraging about our ability to figure out the financing. Ran proposed the idea of a "tiger team" with Vestry, Finance Committee, and Property Committee representation to work on this project in between monthly meetings.

Personnel: Ran reported that the Personnel Committee has met twice recently. Delaware's new mandatory paid parental leave law goes into effect next year; it is different from our traditional benefits. We will comply with state minimums, resulting in an expense of about \$3K per year to pay into the state pool that will provide for this benefit. Compensation discussions focused on the cost of living adjustment (COLA): we seek to be aware of and close to the diocese's COLA but not directly in synch because the diocese has their own way of calculating this. The committee agreed to a 3% COLA for 2025, along with a 1% merit pool. Ran is working with Brin Taylor on renewing the annual review process; Stacey's exit interview provided some lessons in this area. Alex Ergon is rolling off the committee and Michael Flynn is joining; Joe Zakielarz continues as Convener.

Finance: Ted referred to the written report he emailed in advance. Ruth had mentioned to him that expenses are being closely managed. Ran asked about the cost of printing offering envelopes; people

are receiving them who don't use them. Ted responded that he would inquire with the offering counters and Mike Sayer about the decision to print them.

Draft of Revisions to Funding Priority Statements: Jaq, Barb, and Cindi had circulated the draft to the Vestry, but some had not yet reviewed it closely, and they are not certain whether Ruth has seen it yet. As this is not time-urgent work, it has been tabled for now. Barb proposed revisiting the document as part of the budget discussion. Ran will remind the Vestry to read the draft before then. Jaq noted that the pie chart is difficult to interpret because some colors are too close to one another and some slices are too narrow to identify.

Stewardship 2025: Deb reported that number of pledges received and dollars pledged so far are well below last year: 234 pledges received for \$872,710 with 198 yet to pledge as of now, compared to 307 pledges received for \$1,365,874 with 103 yet to pledge as of the same time in 2023—a difference of 73 pledges and \$171,592. At the end of 2023 we had 413 pledges, and our goal this year is a very optimistic 450. Deb noted that this is the first time in her six years of serving on the Stewardship Committee that the response to the pledge drive has been this slow. She remarked that we receive a number of gifts that are consistent year after year, but which are not tied to a pledge. She and Mike Sayer will contact these givers to see if they would be willing to have their intentions counted as a pledge; we know some are not. Discussion followed regarding points of confusion and clarifications needed on the difference between making a pledge and making regular or automated monthly contributions (i.e., payments). Ran noted that the average pledge received to date this year is about 10% higher than last year's average at this time. Deb added details about the 234 pledges received so far: 93 were increased to the tune of about \$73K, 18 decreased representing about \$31K, 111 were unchanged from last year, 4 were reinstated for about \$3700 (pledged in 2023 or earlier but not for 2024), and 8 are new pledges. Deb explained that follow-ups on missing pledges will begin with emails from Mike after Thanksgiving; phone calls have not been found to be effective because people don't answer their phones. Handwritten notes have produced the best response. John mentioned that over the years he has known parishioners who decreased their pledge and no one contacted them to inquire if this was a signal that they were unhappy, so they decreased again the next year, and the year after that, and they perceived a message in that lack of follow-up. Deb responded that Stewardship Committee members review the list of parishioners whose pledges have not been received or were decreased and commit to contacting those with whom they have some connection, so that these contacts do not come from a total stranger; the Vestry may be called upon to assist with this effort. Deb also reported briefly on progress with revitalizing the Planned Giving initiative.

Meeting Tasks and Takeaways

Approval of Minutes: October's meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Report from the Clergy: Michael spoke about the recent resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury following a report that was critical of his handling of sex abuse cases. This development does not impact us day to day, but the archbishop's role is to be the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, so we eagerly await the naming of a new one. Then Michael touched on a local story involving the sudden and unannounced removal of a bench from in front of Sts. Andrew & Matthew, which was used by Friendship House clients. Wilmington Police claimed the removal was prompted by illegal activity, which SsAM and FH dispute. He asked that we pray for a good resolution to the situation and for the people affected by the loss of this bench, and he added that we may be called upon to add our voices in support of Friendship House. Ran reached out to City Councilman Nathan Field, and he replied that he is on the case. Regarding the cancellation of the Theologian in Residence program due to the unexpected death of Robert Willis, Michael shared that he attended the funeral in New Haven, and it was a fitting tribute to his mentor. Fletcher Banner, Willis' widower, mentioned to Michael that he would like to come here to honor the commitment; we don't yet know what form that might take or when it might occur, but the door is open.

Concerns and Thanksgivings: Jaq distributed notecards for Vestry to write a note to someone in the parish to connect with them. Audrey expressed thanks to the Parish Fellowship Committee that is hosting Friendsgiving on November 17. Michael reminded all that there is just one service at 9 AM in the church on that date.

The closing prayer was offered by Ted. The meeting adjourned at 8:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer O'Connor, Clerke