

St. Alban's Episcopal Church
Minutes of Vestry Meeting (As Approved)
Tuesday – May 17, 2016 – 6:30 pm
Nourse Hall

Vestry Officers Present: The Rev. Dr. Deborah A. Meister, Deborah Potter (Senior Warden), Rich Turner (Junior Warden), Hollis McLoughlin (Treasurer), Tom Jansen (Secretary).

Vestry Members Present: Mark Edwards, Ivan Fermin, Marcus King, Sandy Kolb, Tomás Montgomery, Ken Patterson, Joan Phalen, Marty Welch; Emma Morrison (Youth Representative).

Staff: The Revs. Jim Quigley (first part of meeting), Emily Griffin and Debbie Kirk.

Others Present: John Wimberly (first part of meeting); Susan Morris (WSA Representative); approximately six members of the Parish.

Call-to-Order: A meeting of the Vestry was called to order at 6:33 pm by the Rev. Dr. Deborah Meister. An opening prayer was offered by Deborah Potter.

Report on Staff Retreat: Rev. Meister introduced the Rev. Dr. John Wimberly, formerly the Rector at Western Presbyterian Church, in Washington DC, who then worked for the Alban Institute and is now with the Congregational Consulting Group. Rev. Wimberly led the recent staff retreat, and summarized his observations for the Vestry, using four slides (Attachment A). In brief summary: Rev. Wimberly explained that, after initially meeting one-on-one with each staff member, he conducted a four-hour meeting with the entire staff. He described the staff as “wounded” and seeking clarity about their job responsibilities and wanting to understand the scope of their work vis-à-vis that of the Vestry. He noted that in his experience it is particularly difficult to be a pastor in Washington DC, in part because typical Washingtonians live and thrive on conflict and tend to bring it into their church lives. He described three keys factors necessary for a church to be successful: clarity of purpose; a cohesive leadership team of both staff and lay people; and proper alignment of each element of the community. He discussed the proper role of the Vestry, noting that after a Vestry decision has been made it is critical for the entire Vestry to support it, without dissension. Rev. Wimberly explained that it is more important for a parish community to be “healthy” (with minimal politics, minimal confusion, high morale and productivity) than to be “smart” (with inspiring worship, solid theology, quality pastoral care, and a growth strategy) because, although both are important, any “unhealthy” church would see high congregation and staff turnover even if liturgy is solid.

Upon request by Mark Edwards, Rev. Wimberly said he could provide to the Vestry a written report of his findings. He added that he believes a parish has to move forward even while still in conflict, and figure out a way to become healthy. He stated he had concluded the Vestry and staff are currently at odds, and that while the Vestry needs to look at and evaluate the staff's performance, it must not micromanage the staff, as management is the responsibility of the Rector, with appropriate measures of accountability.

It was noted that Rev. Wimberly will lead a Vestry retreat in September to further discuss these issues and more.

Check-in Period: Rev. Meister offered a prayer in thanksgiving for Ken Patterson's birthday.

Sandy Kolb said 50 people came to the Café St. Alban's session recently for brainstorming on possible action steps in each strategic focus area, and an additional 15 met from the Spanish-language Service. She noted that a recurring comment was for the need to continue closely working with youth in light of Rev. Hanisian's departure. In terms of increasing Parish involvement with the neighborhood, she suggested St. Alban's support the upcoming Capital Pride (LGBTQ) Parade on June 11, perhaps by having a delegation carry the Parish banner, and also participate in the interfaith walk on the upcoming 15th anniversary of 9/11.

Tomás Montgomery reported that a parishioner recently asked him about childcare during church services. Rev. Meister explained that child care for infants during Services had been suspended because it was scarcely being used; Rev. Griffin added that she is looking into whether there would be enough interested parents to resume it. There was some discussion of having infant childcare organized and staffed by volunteers, but it was acknowledged it would be difficult to get, and manage, a sufficient cadre of volunteers to make it work reliably.

Approval of Minutes of April Vestry Meeting: Tomás Montgomery made a MOTION, seconded by Sandy Kolb, to approve the Minutes of the April 19, 2016, Vestry meeting. Joan Phalen requested a change to a statement attributed to her on page four regarding a discussion of the Special Parish Meeting, so that it would read: "She said it was mean-spirited for a parishioner to call Ruth Cline out of order . . .". With this amendment, the Minutes were unanimously approved.

Consent Agenda: Rev. Griffin provided a report titled "Children's Formation Report to the Vestry – May 2016" (Attachment B). In addition, she noted she would be attending the Wild Goose Festival – a festival joining spirituality, justice, and art taking place July 7-10 near Asheville, North Carolina – as an invited leader working with children; last year the event drew 2,000 people, including 150 children. Ken Patterson reported Gala proceeds were \$27,706, a new record and \$1,000 more than last year's Gala; he thanked all in the Parish who supported the event and helped make it such a success.

Associate/Assistant Clergy Reports – Tomás Montgomery made a MOTION, seconded by Sandy Kolb, to accept written reports from the Revs. Quigley, Griffin and Kirk (Attachments C, D and E), and all present voted in favor.

Treasurer's Report: Doug Dykstra distributed the Parish Financial Report through April 30, 2016. Hollis McLoughlin noted that pledge income is down \$50,000 from last year, as a result of lower or rescinded pledges and fewer pre-paid pledges in 2015. He believes this may be due in part to stock market declines leading parishioners to not pay their entire pledge before the beginning of the year; he is closely tracking this to determine if these pledges are being paid on a weekly basis. He noted that the previously-approved supplemental draw from the Endowment may not need to be taken because of projected savings resulting from the departures of Rev. Hanisian and Ron

Hicks. The Endowment Fund is up 2.2% for the year because of stock market gains. The Reserve Fund is up to \$560,000 as a result of \$101,000 added from bequests.

Strategic Thinking: Some preliminary discussion took place on the document entitled “Implementation and Monitoring of St. Alban’s Strategic Thinking”, which had been distributed at the April 19, 2016, Vestry Meeting. Some confusion was expressed about the relationship of this document to the undated “Strategic Focus Areas” document that was included in the Strategic Planning Report to the Vestry, dated February 16, 2016, which the Vestry had voted to accept at its February 16, 2016, meeting. In particular, Joan Phalen noted that the “Focus Areas” document contained the statement that the Parish budget process should “Prune outreach efforts that do not work within this framework [of housing, feeding, and TLC]”. She stated that she and others felt this should be deleted as it seemed to mandate rejection of other ministries such as the prison ministry organized by John Daniel Reaves, and moreover could be divisive. Rev. Meister noted that the Vestry had already accepted the “Focus Areas” document and that the time to revisit the “prune” language would be farther down the road. A MOTION to adopt the “Strategic Thinking” document was made and seconded, and approved.

As a pathway to finalize the project, Sandy Kolb stated the Task Force had recommended focus areas rather than a detailed plan because proposals can have budget implications. Rev. Meister stated that ministry focus areas had to be clear, as did roles of the Vestry and staff, because un-clarity was a point of friction.

At this point, Rev. Meister asked Doug Dykstra to make copies of the “Strategic Thinking” document, and these were distributed to the Vestry members. Mark Edwards noted it would be helpful to include suggested time frames. Ken Patterson noted the Governance Committee had not received the “Strategic Thinking” document; Kolb noted it was the same as the previous document except that it added a reference to the cafés. Deborah Potter explained this was not a plan but rather a way we will operate. Rev. Meister noted this would allow the staff to reallocate money mid-cycle. Marty Welch suggested it made sense to re-examine the whole process every 5 years.

In conclusion, Rev. Meister noted that the Vestry had evaluated the strategic plan and strategic thinking process in April and May and had already voted to adopt it with no one opposed.

Report on Reconciliation Consultant: On behalf of Suzy Mink, who was travelling and unable to be present, Rev. Meister reported that Mink’s committee seeking a reconciliation consultant has made screening calls to 14 consultants and selected three finalists: David Joseph, Lori Freedman, and Tom Ehrlich. Each has experience in dealing with conflict. Deborah Potter asked if there was a deadline for the effort. It was hoped that a person would be selected by the time of the Annual Meeting. In response to a question, the Rector agreed to provide names of Mink’s committee members.

Alcohol Policy: Deborah Potter provided a copy of the St. Alban’s alcohol policy with changes outlined to bring it into conformance with Diocesan guidelines. (Attachment F) Tomás Montgomery made a MOTION, seconded by Sandy Kolb, to endorse the amended policy, and all present voted in favor.

Junior Warden's Report: Rich Turner orally reported that some modifications are being made to louvered windows in the Satterlee Hall boiler room to prevent rodents from getting in from outside. He announced an urgent need for volunteer painters who can commit to re-painting the many rooms to be vacated by the Early Childhood Development Center, during a two-week period in August. It was suggested that a plea for help be published in the Sunday Bulletin yellow pages, and Ken Patterson suggested a table be set up on Sunday mornings for volunteers to sign up. Turner described exterior painting that needed to be completed soon, to be done by a contractor because of its nature, and advised that this might require funding from Vestry. He further reported that he still needs to find a way to improve Internet speed for the Church, and that research is being done to determine how to add new LED bulbs in the Church that are compatible with the electronic dimming system.

Senior Warden's Report: Deborah Potter reminded the Vestry there would be two Forums for Vestry candidates, beginning this Sunday and continuing the next Sunday. Six Vestry members will be elected – four to three-year terms, one to a two-year term, and one to a one-year term – with a second ballot required to fill a seventh vacancy for a one-year term in the event Vestry member Sandy Kolb were elected Senior Warden.

Rector's Report: Rev. Meister reported highlights from her written Rector's Report, which is here reproduced in its entirety:

Rector's Report: May 2016

Liturgical:

- ⊕ St. Alban's presented 13 persons for confirmation, one for reception, and one to renew her baptismal vows at the service at National Cathedral on Saturday the 14th.
- ⊕ We baptized two children on Pentecost and also held a bilingual service at 11:15.
- ⊕ I have preached, celebrated, or assisted in eight Sunday services.
- ⊕ I worked with Katie Shillman and Sophia Higgins, our Youth Preachers.
- ⊕ We have concluded our preaching and testimonial series the focus areas of the strategic plan.

Pastoral:

- ⊕ I made nine pastoral visits and spent another thirteen hours on pastoral care.
- ⊕ The Flower Guild hosted a very successful First Wednesday.

Personnel:

- ⊕ The staff conducted one-on-ones with John Wimberly, Jr., in preparation for the staff retreat. The retreat itself was held on May 11th at the home of Kiki and Joe McLean. I'd like to express appreciation for their gracious hospitality.

Administrative:

- ⊕ The staff brainstormed Project Hope as an outreach to people who would be drawn to the Close by FlowerMart. While we were rained out on Friday, Saturday's session was a great success. Debbie Kirk, Noell Sottile, Marcy Fisher, Suzy Mink, and I staffed it for six hours and engaged a large number of people. The project was particularly engaging to children and to millennials, although people of all ages and races and of many cultural backgrounds were drawn to participate. We are going to leave the board and some chalk in place for a bit and change the question and see whether we can create some buzz in the neighborhood.

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- ⊕ The staff have been learning how to use MailChimp and Ekklesia360 in preparation for moving the Daily Cup to a new distribution system. Charles Porter has proven to be a good teacher.
- ⊕ In addition, I spent ten hours in staff supervision and attended five other meetings.

Formation:

- ⊕ Jim and I have concluded the Core class on the Scriptures that Shaped Jesus and have begun the next one, Encountering Paul.
- ⊕ I also concluded the remaining four sessions of the adult inquirer's class.
- ⊕ I took a group of twelve parishioners to Holy Cross Monastery for our Eastertide retreat. It was a graced space for all of us.
- ⊕ I led one session of the Workers' Lunch.
- ⊕ I was able to attend the annual symposium of Friendship Place. This year, it focused on homelessness among senior citizens. It was sobering.

Looking Ahead:

May 22, 29	Candidates Forums
June 5	Annual Meeting and Vestry elections. Begin Summer Schedule: 8:00, 10:00, 11:30.
June 18-19	Vestry Retreat
June 19	St. Alban's Day. Picnic, scavenger hunt, Ron's retirement.
September 24	Vestry retreat with John Wimberly

In addition, Rev. Meister thanked the Flower Guild for their recent efforts in putting together the May First Wednesday Dinner. She reported that the "Project Hope" chalk board in front of the Church has worked well and will continue with a different topic. There will be no usual Vestry Meeting in June; instead there will be a Retreat for the new Vestry on June 18-19 at the Turner residence. The July meeting will be moved to an alternate date. The Annual Meeting will include a discussion of the role of the Vestry by Mary Kostel.

Other Business: At Rev. Meister's request, all outside observers left the room for a few minutes. In their absence, the Vestry decided not to go into Executive Session, but Rev. Meister asked if the Vestry would support a solicitation of funds for construction of a new Baptismal Font stand in honor of the Ron Hicks, adding that, depending on the amount collected, it might be possible to also build a new small portable Altar. Joan Phalen suggested that a hymn could be commissioned in Hicks's honor, in lieu of the Altar. Ken Patterson made a MOTION, seconded by Tomás Montgomery, to approve the solicitation of funds, and those present voted unanimously in favor. Upon completion of this business, the observers still remaining were invited to come back into the meeting room and Rev. Meister informed them of the Vestry's decision.

Testimonies from Outgoing Vestry Members: Joan Phalen, Mark Edwards, Tomás Montgomery, Craig Albright, Marcy Fisher, and Ann Morrison are departing Vestry members, and the undersigned is departing as Secretary. Those present each made brief comments about their service. In Ann Morrison's absence, Ken Patterson read a written statement from her (Attachment G). Reflecting on the recent Parish difficulties, Mark Edwards offered quotes from Krista Tippett's "On Being" podcasts – "Anger is often what pain looks like when it shows itself in public." "We are made by what would break us." And "In the end, we will be measured not by what we've accomplished, but by how we love." – and he expressed hope that the new Vestry

would be better listeners of all viewpoints held by parishioners, so as to be able to represent the whole community rather than one faction or another. He also offered a prayer entitled the “Coventry Litany of Reconciliation” (Attachment H). Senior Warden Deborah Potter – departing after six years of Vestry Service – described how her faith had deepened over that time, and added that she hoped the new Vestry would enter into covenant, trust one another, and maintain appropriate norms of behavior.

The meeting concluded at approximately 9: 25pm with prayer led by Rev. Meister.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Jansen, Secretary