

St. Alban's Episcopal Church
Minutes of the Vestry Meeting
Tuesday, April 21, 2015, 6:30 pm

Nourse Hall

Vestry Officers Present: The Rev. Dr. Deborah A. Meister, Deborah Potter (Senior Warden), Bill Edgar (Junior Warden), Curt Large (Treasurer), Lindsay West (Secretary)

Vestry Members Present: Craig Albright, Mark Edwards, Marcy Fisher, Lauri Fitz-Pegado, Rich Jensen, Marcus King, Sandy Kolb, Donna Palmer, Mark Shima, Lin Tate, Jordy VandeBunte.

Staff: Rev. Jim Quigley, Rev. Matthew Hanisian, Rev. Juan Pastor Reyes, Doug Dykstra (Director of Finance)

Diocesan Delegates: Cay Hartley

Call-to-Order: A meeting of the Vestry was called to order by The Rev. Dr. Deborah Meister at 6:34 pm. An opening prayer was offered by Donna Palmer.

The Bible passage offered for reflection was John 10:11-18.

Check-in:

Sandy Kolb shared an update on the gala. Over 100 people have participated by donating angel tickets, providing auction items, and volunteering. The event sold out 2 weeks ago and 10 people are on the waiting list. She said it looks like it's going to be fun and thanked all the people around the table who helped, especially Donna Palmer's husband John, who has been willing to help provide the entertainment.

Rev. Meister said that the committee did a good job of getting information about the gala in front of the parish as well as getting the auction catalogue together and online. Ms. Kolb commended Dudley Winthrop's help with the technology element of getting the catalogue together.

Jordy VandeBunte brought up concern for acquiring assistance for Ron Hicks with his job as Parish Verger and planning for when he retires. Rev. Meister shared that it is already being worked on. She shared that when she asked each of the staff members to gather goals for the year, his goal was to get his work together in order for transition. One of Rev. Meister's goals is to try and find someone to shadow him, but not before September. Ron has told her that at some point he will retire, but there is no date offered. He has admitted it is getting a lot harder to do some of the work like climbing ladders.

Deborah Potter attended the inaugural morning Spanish language service at 10:30 last Sunday and said it was joyful. She shared a video on the church's Facebook page. She noted that all eight of the Spanish

language service children attended Sunday school. Ms. Potter shared that her husband Bob, an usher, counted 42 adults in attendance, including clergy and musicians.

Rev. Juan Pastor Reyes said that the children were hesitant at first, but the others were so warm in welcoming them that they joined in and were very happy. He also shared that the musicians remarked on the beauty of the Little Sanctuary.

Approval of the Minutes

Lin Tate offered a MOTION, seconded by Rich Jensen, to approve minutes of the Vestry's March 17, 2015 meeting. The MOTION was approved by unanimous voice vote with the addition of a comment from Donna Palmer that Lauri Fitz-Pegado was the driving force with the Spanish Language Service task force and should be commended for taking up the charge and getting the members of the task force all together to do it.

Adoption of Consent Agenda

Associate Rectors' Reports

Sandy Kolb offered a MOTION, seconded by Jordy VandeBunte , to adopt the Consent Agenda for the April 21, 2015 meeting. The MOTION was approved by unanimous vote.

Rev. Meister commended associate clergy for their huge amount of work for Holy Week – creating, planning, and revamping the services. It turned out really well.

Finance Report

Curt Large, Treasurer, shared that first quarter numbers look great. Pledge income is up \$10,000. Year-end pledge prepayments are up almost \$50,000. Expenses are below budget by over \$15,000. This is due in part to not having hired a Children's Ministry staff member. Other expenses are close to budget but all below.

Mr. Large said that Doug Dykstra, Director of Finance, deserves great credit for the large Lenten offering the church received for 2015. The offering was more than \$3,000, compared to \$176 in 2014. Mr. Dykstra included Lenten offering envelopes in mailings and in the pew racks.

Mr. Large also noted that the pledge campaign continues to improve, with a total of \$1,223,733. Twenty-six households have now increased their 2015 pledges.

An additional bequest of \$20,000 was received last month from Estate of Peggy Belknap. Ten percent was posted to the bequest tithe budget line; the remainder was added to the Endowment .

The St. Alban's Opportunity Shop continues to do very well. Sales are up 20% from last year. Mark Shima asked what might be behind the increase. It was suggested that the shop's new ability to accept credit cards, recent high end donations, and good morale from the volunteers are all part of why sales continue to go up. Someone else noted that thrift shops were trendy right now.

Rev. Deborah Meister shared that an Opportunity Shop volunteer who has repeatedly hit staff cars in the staff parking lot will be banned from using the staff parking lot in an attempt to try to protect others' vehicles.

Junior Warden's Report

Bill Edgar, Junior Warden, updated the Vestry on progress made in the design of a sign for the church. He shared an image of the sign and its color scheme. It will be two signs angled in the shape of a V, in order to be seen from both north and southbound traffic on Wisconsin Avenue. The sign will have interchangeable panels with different information for different seasons. Additional panels can be added over time as necessary. The cost of the sign is \$9,000. The Flower Guild has generously offered to cover the cost. The DC permitting process will begin in the near future and hopefully will go smoothly.

Senior Warden's Report

Neighborhood Demographics

Deborah Potter, Senior Warden, introduced a report on neighborhood demographics that she, Craig Albright, and Chuck Holmes developed. It provides a picture of immediate area as well as Ward 3 in general, and gives a sense of what the challenges are in sense of diversity and interest in joining a faith community. The growth of those classified as "nones" has been documented for some time but she noted it as important to know that those who attend church regularly now are considered counter-cultural – the exception, not the rule.

Lin Tate asked whether Ward 3 was the church's target for new members and the logic behind that. Ms. Potter said she was tasked with finding out about the church's neighborhood. There are a lot of people in the surrounding apartments that the church does not connect with. Mr. Edgar said it is a logical target, although not the only one. Marcy Fisher noted that many people in the area do not realize the church exists at all and is not part of the cathedral.

Ms. Potter also spoke about upcoming Vestry elections. She said that if the question of representation of the Spanish speaking congregation comes up, this Vestry is on record as to the importance of electing someone from the Spanish language congregation. Vestry members should talk to Lauri Fitz-Pegado, Lin Tate, or Rev. Juan Pastor Reyes, to learn more about candidate, Ivan Fermin. His English is excellent. He and his wife will be attending the gala. Rev. Meister noted that one potential point of confusion could be that his name does not necessarily sound Hispanic.

Ms. Potter also said that there will be more new Vestry members than usual next year, with six returning and six new members. She expects those who are continuing on the Vestry to offer one to one mentoring for new members

Rector's Report

In addition to her written report, Rev. Deborah Meister wanted to note there was a lot of energy around Holy Week services, and all staff and volunteers were heavily involved. Parishioners have commented that it was one of the best in years.

Norman Scribner's tribute service will be held at St. Alban's on Sunday June 7th. The Rev. Frank Wade will preach and The Rt. Rev. Ted Eastman will be the Celebrant.

Zac Harmon's last day is May 10th. A celebration for him will be held in conjunction with Youth Sunday.

Rev. Meister attended a meeting with the three Wisconsin Corridor churches in regard to outreach or advocacy. A meeting is scheduled for May with lay people from each congregation. Alice Thomas, Marcy Fisher, and Susan Morris will be representing St. Alban's.

She and Deborah Potter met with Ray Donnelly to discuss the process for the strategic planning initiative. During the initial discussion of fees, Mr. Donnelly asked for \$100 per hour for face to face meetings with no fee for prep time. He later suggested a flat fee of \$2500. Rev. Meister shared concern that this may be too low a price. A discussion in regard to fees for Mr. Donnelly's services was held, with members agreeing to accept the offer; if after one year of service, Mr. Donnelly has spent more hours on the project than originally projected, the fee can be adjusted to reflect the work completed.

Deacon Debbie Kirk has agreed to be the long term supply priest for the Spanish language services following Rev. Juan Pastor Reyes's departure in June. We are still working on a Letter of Agreement.

There has been interest in the Interim Children's Minister position. Rev. Meister shared her thoughts regarding whether someone should be hired now, at the end of church school season, or whether the position should be filled later in the summer, with more hours per week, as preparation for the new school year begins. Ms. Potter suggested that if the right person came along, he or she could be hired and things would be found for them to do.

Ms. Tate asked how many hours Debbie Kirk and the Interim Children's Minister are scheduled to work. Rev. Meister answered that Debbie Kirk was hired to work Sunday mornings and weddings and funerals as necessary and no time beyond that. Rev. Reyes provides 20 hours/week of focused attention. Sarabeth Goodwin said she could help out if necessary. The church might be able to fund the position at 10 hours a week next year to provide time for developing pastoral relationships, but this is not what was budgeted for 2015.

The Children's Ministry position is budgeted at 12-15 hours per week. A reason to delay hiring until mid-July or August would be more flexibility to roll in more hours as needed.

Rev. Meister attended the Bearing Fruit educational event offered by the Diocese. She wished everyone on the Vestry had heard the keynote by Rev. Tom Berlin. Rev. Berlin is pastor of Floris United Methodist Church in Virginia and the author of a number of books on healthy sustainable church growth. She described him as smart, engaging, and realistic, and he and his staff exude confidence and enthusiasm and love for their work.

The Vestry received an email requesting participation in a campaign endorsed by Churches for Middle East Peace asking a banner be displayed in the front of the church reading, "We Support Peace with Justice for Palestinians and Israelis," and including the group's web address. Rev. Meister said that two issues need to be addressed: Should the church do this? And if yes, where should the banner be placed?

Vestry members discussed the merit of placing this banner in front of the church. There was a lot of concern that it should be assumed the members of the parish support the particular platform for peace endorsed by the group sponsoring the banner, and that placing this group's sign outside the church would be making a political statement with an endorsement of the group's views on various policies and legislation.

Rev. Meister said she has worked really hard to keep this issue out of the parish because it is unnecessarily divisive, in her view. Churches have expended a huge amount of energy without being particularly effective. However, this group does seem to have a balanced view.

Several members have looked into the group and viewed the website and believe it has good intentions. It was the overall opinion of the Vestry that instead of a sign, they should discuss global outreach and advocacy as part of strategic planning. Also, Rev. Meister will contact Lisa Sams, member of the Global Mission Committee to talk more generally about advocacy, which will be discussed as part of the strategic planning process. A thank you was extended to the signers of the letter for bringing the issue to the Vestry for discussion.

Rev. Meister also shared a coaching program that has been offered to the church. The program is run by the consulting group the Center for Progressive Renewal. The year-long program is meant to build leadership within the church and would involve a site-visit from a coach to set goals and monthly skype sessions, and is priced at \$6,000. She thought it might be interesting but that it could be too much with the strategic planning process underway.

There did not seem to be strong interest from the Vestry in participating in the program at this time.

Executive Session

The St. Alban's Vestry held a brief executive session and adjourned with prayer at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lindsay West, Secretary