

St. Alban's Episcopal Church

Minutes of the Vestry Meeting

Tuesday, January 20, 2015, 6:31 PM

Nourse Hall

Vestry Officers Present: The Rev. Dr. Deborah A. Meister, Deborah Potter (Senior Warden), Bill Edgar (Junior Warden; by phone for a brief portion of the meeting), Curt Large (Treasurer), Lindsay West (Secretary)

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

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

Diocesan Delegates: Cay Hartley, Amanda Hobart

Visitors: Barbara Manard, Kiki McLean, Jonell Easton, Susan Morris (WSA)

Call-to-Order: A meeting of the Vestry was called to order by The Rev. Dr. Deborah Meister at 6:31 PM.

Rev. Deborah Meister shared the gospel reading for the following Sunday, reading it aloud. She asked Vestry Members and Delegates to share a word/phrase/image that stood out to them.

Some words and phrases shared were: believe in the Good News; immediately; fish for people; left their nets

The gospel was read a second time by Rev. Jim Quigley; Rev. Meister asked what Vestry members and Delegates hear God saying to St. Alban's through these words.

Sandy Kolb – nets were valuable and they left them to go on and follow Jesus.

Mark Shima – lots of stuff about fish resonates – can't help but think of people in our church and casting nets to catch people

Lauri Fitz-Pegado – leaving behind what's familiar and taking a chance, putting aside – open to something new, having faith in being a follower

Mark Edwards – mending nets – implies holes in nets and when there are holes you don't catch people

Rev. Meister – stuck on good news. There is a lot of stuff here – things we have to keep doing because we have to keep doing it – not because it's a really great thing.

Check-in:

Sandy Kolb said that the Mustard Seed offering for December for Ebola relief brought in \$3200 and that St. Alban's contributions and those of the Cathedral congregation brought in enough to ship a container of supplies to Africa with some money left over that can be used to buy medical supplies.

Lauri Fitz-Pegado reported that after the Unaccompanied Minor training they were able to take up at least one case of two brothers who are in Arlington, 16 and 17 years of age from Guatemala, who were abused by their father and are now here living with their mother. Their case has been taken up through the program. It is currently being determined what other needs these brothers have and what parishioners can do. KIND has asked that the parish create a catalogue of skill sets people possess at St. Alban's and other congregations along the Wisconsin Ave. corridor who are being asked to get involved.

Mark Shima said it was discussed in a group after church one Sunday that lay people would be interested and are capable of leading Wednesday night meetings and discussions.

Amanda Hobart reminded the Vestry that delegates are present to bring any issues from the Vestry to the Convention next weekend. Deborah Potter asked that the delegates "divide and conquer" to attend as many workshops as possible.

Approval of the Minutes

Sandy Kolb offered a MOTION, seconded by Marcy Fisher, to approve minutes of the Vestry's December 16, 2014 meeting. The MOTION was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Treasurer's Report

Curt Large, Treasurer, reported that December was a great month. In November it wasn't clear that St. Alban's would meet budget, but there was a strong surge in pledge income, which was \$61,135 over budget and \$72,533 over December of 2013.

Pledge income ended the year over budget by \$13,482. Plate and Parish Support was over budget by \$32,619. The income-to-expense variance was \$37,699. There was no draw against the Endowment Fund.

Mr. Large also highlighted holiday offerings – they were budgeted at \$12,000 but over \$16,000 was received. Envelopes were included for Christmas offerings in the December mailings to parishioners, which may have helped.

The Endowment Fund totaled \$3,373,649 which is up significantly from end of 2013.

In regard to the pledge campaign, there has been a good response. The total amount of pledges is almost exactly level with all of 2014. This is good news considering where the parish was a month ago. It is alarming, however, that the number of pledges is down 9% from 2014.

Mark Shima asked how the Parish would pay for replacing old heating systems. If need be. Mr. Large said the costs would come out of the Reserve Fund first and possibly the Endowment Fund. There is currently \$585,000 in the Reserve Fund so if costs are over that, there could be a need to tap the Endowment.

Cay Hartley asked if there was an understanding as to who doesn't pledge and why? Rev. Meister said there will be a list of names created by Doug Dykstra, Director of Finance, with who increased, decreased, and stopped pledging that can be reviewed to discover possible answers to these questions.

Deborah Potter said that the Vestry will have to decide how to handle the surplus. A resolution was made at the close of 2013 that the Vestry will, by majority vote, direct how such funds will be allocated.

Mr. Large shared the recommendation from the Finance Committee, which was that funds first be used to raise the Reserve Fund to \$600,000 and that the rest be carried over into 2015 operating budget. There was strong belief that this should be done rather than placing it into the Endowment Fund. The money that came in during December was given in part because the parish was short of funds. Those funds should be used for the church in 2015. If specific initiatives can be identified, that would be best.

Vestry members discussed possible ways to allocate surplus funds, including previous years' decisions and the recommendations of the Finance Committee.

Mark Shima offered a MOTION, seconded by Sandy Kolb, that the surplus funds from 2014 (\$37,699) will be used first to fully fund the Reserve Fund at \$600,000, (a total of \$14,783) and the remainder of those surplus funds (a total of \$22,916) be used for operating funds for 2015, for line items to be specified later. The MOTION was approved by unanimous voice vote.

5:00 Spanish Language Service

During the week of January 5th, Rev. Meister, Lin Tate and Lauri Fitz-Pegado met and came up with a plan. Deborah then shared it with Bishop Marianne and Sarabeth Goodwin, Diocesan Latino Missioner, who had an entirely different set of suggestions. She asked whether it made sense to keep the Spanish language service at St. Alban's and about the possibility of being creative and flexible in creating a bilingual service.

At the Town Hall Meeting of January 11th, a lot of people weighed in on the future of the service with a wide spectrum of responses. Rev. Meister, Ms. Potter, Ms. Tate, Ms. Fitz-Pegado and others met with Spanish-speaking members of St. Alban's after the 5:00 service on January 18th. The Bishop was present, in a listening capacity and to explain some of the Diocesan decisions around Spanish Language Services. Deborah Potter took comprehensive notes. A number of people from the morning congregation came.

Rev. Meister stated at the meeting that the parish cannot afford to continue this service in the current model. She said that 5:00 service members are members of the St. Alban's family and shared a variety of models that might be possible. The congregation shared their opinions and another meeting was set for February 1st.

Lauri Fitz-Pegado said that it was a very emotional meeting. Community and family were the common feelings expressed. Julio, the musician, said that he plays at three services in the morning with 250 people attending, but he looks forward to coming to St. Alban's because there is a sense of family and community that he doesn't experience elsewhere.

The congregation wants to stay at St. Alban's. There was an overwhelming feeling that they must have failed. One person stated this directly and also said later that if they had failed, so has the church. There was frustration. They had been baptized, confirmed, and held events and now they were being told there was no place for them. There was a sense they would fight this.

Lin Tate said the Bishop shared the history of the establishment of the congregation and how the church is just now getting to the point where it can move forward. She also said that to regard this as a budget issue is a huge mistake because a lot of emotions have been expressed in both meetings and there is a lot of love on both sides. To disregard that would be a bad thing to do.

Ways of integrating were discussed and there was a great deal of interest from both sides in trying to find ways to do things together – Grate Patrol, Christ House, working in the Op Shop. Both groups are now at a point now where they can explore ways to integrate and work together.

Ms. Fitz-Pegado shared that she, Ms. Tate and Dick Parkins have been asked to participate on Jan. 25 in a discussion of options with the Spanish congregation after the 5:00 service. It was suggested that a committee of morning services and 5:00 service parishioners would be beneficial to work together to come up with a solution.

Ms. Tate also shared a fairly strong indication from emails of English speaking congregation members that this decision not be taken by the Vestry members on their own. It should be looked at it in the context of everything the church is trying to do and the total budget. There may be more money than anticipated for this service.

Rev. Meister shared that what she heard that resonated with her was that a surprising number of the speakers made the point that they didn't leave another congregation to come to St. Alban's. They were previously unchurched and wanted to come to St. Alban's. This is primary evangelism where people were religiously inactive for a number of years until they found this congregation.

Deborah Potter added there was a real "can-do" attitude by the congregation. They said they know how to raise money; they can figure this out. It is not a matter of equivalency, but can they raise money in their own way to contribute to the health and welfare of the church. They can and already are coming up with ways to do that.

Rev. Meister also said that most in the room wanted to remain as a congregation and valued relationships with each other.

Ms. Fitz-Pegado shared the story of a 15-year-old acolyte who had the last word at the meeting. Her mother had given her the choice of being Catholic or Episcopalian. She already goes to Catholic school and when she walked into the morning service and saw Deborah she was surprised that a woman was a priest. Then she saw Simon and he had a family, kids and wife. She wondered how this was possible and decided that she liked this aspect of the Episcopal Church. She thought maybe she'd like to become a priest.

Rev. Meister said the teenager's main point was that what unites us is a lot more than what divides us, and all serve Jesus. It is the same in these two congregations: It is just a language. St. Alban's can go bilingual if we try.

Rev. Juan Pastor Reyes shared that he was sad about the situation. He heard from many of St. Alban's members that it is important to them that the congregation at 5:00 remain at St. Alban's. If they are invited to come to morning services, English is still a barrier. Moving to a bilingual service is a beautiful idea, he said.

He also discussed the issue of cultural differences. English speakers try to speak and act properly all the time while Spanish speakers like to talk all the time and laugh. When they talk to English speakers it is difficult because they try to fit in and be more quiet.

Rev. Meister addressed this issue of culture with a story about her last year in seminary when there was an interracial blowup. What eventually got uncovered was that in the last decade, Yale had made an extensive effort to diversify its student body. Through angry meetings and productive work it was discovered that the people of color felt that as long as they walked, talked, and carried themselves like white people they were welcome. Whenever they expressed themselves in the ways of their culture it was viewed as not proper or academic.

Rev. Reyes was concerned if the Spanish language members do not have a service any more they will not go to church any more. They will go back to their old ways. He asked Vestry members to open their hearts and minds and think about this and decide to keep St. Alban's united because this is a great opportunity.

Ms. Potter shared that the community will meet next Sunday to brainstorm ways to go forward. She noted that it was sobering to hear the sense of abandonment. What she felt was said and heard was to find a way forward. February 1st, Rev. Meister will meet the congregation to see what new ideas may have surfaced. Ms. Potter thought the idea of joint committee was a great one.

Rev. Meister asked that everyone in the room to hold this situation and everyone involved in prayer.

Sandy Kolb thought the English-speaking congregation should be having conversations too. The cultural issues happen again and again. There have been parallel meetings, but morning service members should hear the heartfelt response from the town hall after the 5:00 service.

A forum to continue the discussion was set for Feb. 8. Members of the Spanish-speaking congregation will be invited.

Vestry Format

Rev. Meister asked the Vestry to resume an earlier conversation about how to make space for bigger discussions at Vestry meetings. There are a number of suggestions on the table. One was to have more than one Vestry retreat per year – 2 or more half days to look at bigger picture issues. This asks for more time from Vestry members but might be great way to discuss the big issues. A second suggestion was the use of a consent agenda. A third suggestion was to try to compress normal business into 10 meetings and have 2 meetings scheduled for big picture ideas.

Ms. Kolb suggested having more confidence in committees to delegate and do the work. There should only be a report during a Vestry meeting if it is new information and not repeated in other reports. When there is something out of the ordinary or something that needs to be paid attention to, time would be given to the issue. She doesn't see that it is a productive use of Vestry's time to have reports about formation numbers, etc. Consent Agendas require reports be given before the meeting and give Vestry members time to review them and ask questions. Then something can be taken off the consent agenda and put onto the discussion table.

Ms. Fitz-Pegado suggested the Vestry should function like a corporate board. When a board meets it does not have staff there. There may be a reason for clergy to be here for part of the time, but they really

should be there only if there are issues on the table that are of relevance to them. Vestry members are too involved in the day to day activities of this church, she said.

Rev. Matthew Hanisian said that he is married to someone who teaches how to have efficient Vestries and St. Alban's is not alone in feeling they are not doing things the right way. Seminaries haven't taught people how to do this effectively if at all. There are lots of things that don't have to involve the entire table of members. Decisions can be made in committee and shared later. He said that when a church has more than one priest, part of that work is to mentor and train the priests newer to the clergy. It is helpful as a learning experience to attend the Vestry meetings. Vestries who do not invite their clergy leave the associates feeling in the dark about what is going on in their church.

Rev. Meister said she liked the idea of subcommittees. One structural difference between a Vestry and corporate board, she noted, was that a board is made up of people who do not have much day to day involvement in the company whereas a Vestry is integral to the parish and have day to day contact with the church. With subcommittees being used, it will be important for Vestry members to pay attention to reports from those subcommittees. Otherwise, people can pull a member on Sunday asking if they have heard about subcommittee decisions and the member won't know what they are talking about.

She also noted that for certain reports there is a striking difference between reading a summary of facts and hearing the passion and thoughts of the people who are working on it. An oral presentation conveys a completely different sense of the work than words on a page.

Ann Morrison brought up the issue of the excessive use of reply all in the email feed. The number of emails is affecting other parts of her life. Ms. Morrison said emails from Vestry meetings should be from one person to another, instead of forwarding others comments.

Mr. Large suggested that how long an item is expected to be discussed should also be noted on the agenda. This sets the expectation that there is a time limit to conversations and they can be cut off more easily.

Marcy Fisher said she would like to see make a commitment to a 9:00 adjournment be made. If it comes to 9:00 and the Vestry cannot postpone a part of the agenda, it can vote to continue, but otherwise what is left would be tabled.

Mark Edwards shared that Vestry members are feeling exhausted with meetings going beyond 10:00 month after month and that meaty subjects aren't discussed regularly.

Donna Palmer suggested that half day retreat will be necessary to discuss bigger discussions.

Ms. Tate suggested that new Vestry members be given continued training on how a Vestry works. She said that she is just beginning to understand how it works as she nears the end of her term.

Craig Albright reiterated the need for a 3-5 year strategic plan that will help guide the Vestry in future meetings.

Rev. Meister suggested that the Vestry try the consent agenda. In the future, assigning Vestry members a mentor would be helpful. She said subcommittees might be more fruitful with an outline for a strategic plan. She floated the idea of a couple half day sessions.

Ms. Kolb also suggested that the agenda not be loaded up with more than one big decision a month. There needs to be agenda planning throughout the year.

Rev. Meister said she will propose dates for half day retreats to begin discussion around creating a strategic plan.

Committee Reports

Adult Formation

Ms. Kolb shared that the Advent Forum series was well attended and appreciated. The Martin Luther King, Jr forum was phenomenal.

Ms. Palmer also shared that Core Curriculum classes are well attended and enjoyed. Also, Wednesday evening Get Fed program attendance is up.

Young Adults

Rev. Hanisian shared that during the past three to four months pub theology NW met with varying levels of attendance. 35 to 7 (right before Thanksgiving) people attended from St. Columba's, the Cathedral, and St. Alban's. The leaders are assessing if this is a ministry that needs to continue.

Senior Warden's Report

Deborah Potter, Senior Warden, learned from the Property Committee that there is progress on the sign. There is a design that is of great interest and a company based in Landover is going to look at the property to decide on a location for the sign outside on Wisconsin Avenue. If the sign is placed parallel to Wisconsin and put at an angle, it will be easier to see. The Flower Guild has offered to cover a portion of its cost.

The St. Joseph's Guild has set the second Saturday of every month to clean up and repair areas around the parish. That means the next work day is Feb. 14.

Ms. Potter briefly referenced a memo Ms. Kolb had circulated to the Vestry. She agreed that St. Alban's is at a crossroads and change is going to come and the parish is ready for it. The rector discussed some of these issues with the Vestry more than a year ago. Some preparation has been done. Rev. Meister's remarks on Sunday set the stage for change.

One of the things Ms. Potter has done with Rev. Hanisian's help is put together attendance figures for morning services. To summarize, it appears there is growth in attendance from 2013 to 2014 in almost every area, but if you break it down, it is only at the 9:15 service. There has been a decline at 8:00 and 11:15. This information should inform strategic planning.

The only individually-tracked service that has continued to decline is Christmas Eve, which has declined since 2011.

Rev. Meister shared her deep appreciation for Ms. Potter for taking the attendance information and organizing it by calendar date which is really helpful.

Rector's Report (written report)

In addition to her written report, Rev. Meister commented that the Christmas service attendance numbers were really skewed. There were more than 300 people at the 4:00 service in the Little Sanctuary, but the late services were less well-attended. The staff have decided to change service times to reflect when parishioners want to attend.

Next year there will be two concurrent services at 4:00; one will be in the Little Sanctuary and one will be the pageant. There will also be 5:30 and 10:00 choral services.

She shared that Godly Play materials have arrived and she is working on scheduling an assembly party.

The Op Shop has decided that it needs to hire a manager to replace Ann Nix. That person will be an employee of the church but will be paid for entirely by monies from the Opportunity Shop. It is a 20 hour per week position at \$15 per hour. There are no benefits. There is a substantial amount of time off due to Op Shop closings. The person should have deep Christian formation and be able to treat all clients the same whether they are homeless or socialites. At least one year in retail is preferred. This listing was placed on Craigslist and other websites to advertise.

The recent Wisconsin Corridor Churches meeting was very productive, open, and honest. It was noted that with the three churches there is a 90% overlap in both strengths and weaknesses. There was a strong sense that they want to continue to talk about things that can be done together to strengthen the churches rather than be competition. The Diocese asked that one lay and clergy person from each church be chosen to continue discussions. Marcy Fisher and Rev. Meister will be St. Alban's representatives.

The Bishop has asked the Diocesan team to read *The Advantage* by Patrick Lencioni by chapter and discuss as a group. Rev. Meister thought this would be good for the St. Alban's Vestry as well. They will discuss or act on one chapter a month over the next year.

In a look toward future staffing, Rev. Meister said changes should be made over the course of this year. It is not driven by current budget realities but by looking at what the parish does well or is struggling to do because of current staffing. The likely future makeup of full-time staff will be relatively unchanged; a rector, an associate, a director of finance, vergers, and parish administrator.

One more full time position, either clergy or lay, could combine a director of Children and Family Ministries with a director of Parishioner Engagement. This position would help the marginally committed members of the parish connect in better, and help the parish make better use of its members' gifts. There are currently a significant number of people who pledge a couple hundred dollars and come and go. This position could be broken into two part time positions, but there is a much greater possibility of leveraging the work with one full time person.

There also needs to be a director of Communications, keeping information updated and creating an advertising and evangelism strategy. This could be a very part-time staff member, or an outside consultant, Rev. Meister said.

A contemporary worship service is in development for this fall, to try to appeal to people who share our core values but do not share our current aesthetics. There are many people who are interested in service, community, and making the world a better place, but are not interested in a traditional service. Money left in the 2014 New Initiatives Fund will be used to get this project off the ground. No Episcopal Church in the immediate area has a Sunday morning contemporary service (except St. Dunstan's in Bethesda) and

there are a lot of people who are looking for one, Rev. Meister said. The service will be held in Satterlee Hall. It can be done without altering current Sunday morning schedule. Both St. Dunstan's and St. Columba's (which offers an evening one) have built solid congregations at those offerings.

In regard to young adults – it appears they are engaged in other ministries in the parish and it is difficult to get them involved in age segregated activities. Our seniors have been asked, repeatedly, if they want more age-specific ministries, but have not been able to suggest any.

There is an ongoing discussion as to whether the parish has too many clergy/staff. The answer is different based on who is asked. The issue is not how many people are in the pews, but the expectations of the people in the pews, Rev. Meister said. If the parish goes down to two clergy, people are going to be asking for pieces of a priest and the answer will have to be no because there are only so many pieces they can be carved into to be effective in the areas they need.

Mr. Albright said that if the Vestry is going to be embarking in a strategic plan the discussion of staff structure should be informed by the plan. Rev. Meister replied that the strategic plan may not be in place when some of these changes will need to be made. She suggested that one set of plans may need to be made sooner and then another set after the plan is worked out.

Associate Clergy Reports (written reports)

In addition to his written report, Rev. Hanisian, shared that the ASP Mission Trip has 40 participants, and that St. Margaret's wants to send people as well.

The Google Ad campaign has received 1695 unique clicks. There were a lot of new faces at the 4:00 Christmas Eve service. Rev. Meister said that Rev. Hanisian suggested that Google Ad words be front loaded for various seasons and other needs.

In addition to his written report, Rev. Jim Quigley shared that since the last Vestry meeting, he has been in the office 9 days, 14 including Sundays. Core Curriculum has started again and is fully enrolled at 40. The curriculum is being written as it goes along and is getting better and better. People who don't usually do so are expressing things from a faith perspective.

The most exciting thing is that 37 adults, plus children, attended Get Fed last week. Wednesday Morning Bible Study began again.

The Creative Retreat committee met to plan a spring creative retreat. They are discussing an art project that would involve parishioners and maybe even passersby that could be a performance piece. It would be illuminated every night for about a month and would involve prayers. People driving by would be able to see it.

Rev. Reyes shared his discussions with the Spanish language community about the importance of being united.

Deborah Potter circulated an Operating Budget Adjustments spreadsheet prepared for discussion at Saturday's Budget meeting.

Executive Session

The St. Alban's Vestry held a brief Executive Session and adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 9:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lindsay West, Secretary