

St Alban's Episcopal Church
Minutes of 2015 Vestry Retreat
Day Two, June 20, 2015 – 10:00 am to 3:20 pm
Residence of Deborah Potter

Vestry Officers Present: Reverend Dr. Deborah Meister, Rector; Deborah Potter, Senior Warden; Rich Turner, Junior Warden; Tom Jansen, Secretary.

Vestry Members Present: Mark Edwards, Ivan Fermin, Marcy Fisher, Marcus King, Sandy Kolb, Ann Morrison, Donna Palmer, Ken Patterson, Joan Phalen, and Marty Welch.

Others Present: Ray Donnelly, strategic planning consultant (10:00 am to noon); former Junior Warden Bill Edgar (for one portion only, as indicated below).

Call-to-Order: The meeting began at 10:10 am with morning worship led by Rev. Meister that included a reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans 12:9-21.

Strategic Planning Review

Rev. Meister introduced Ray Donnelly, a strategic planning consultant retained to help prepare the St. Alban's Strategic Plan. Rev. Meister explained that Mr. Donnelly would spend two hours outlining ideas that could be used by the Vestry to provide direction to the Strategic Planning Committee. Members of this Committee are Senior Warden Potter, Vestry Members Sandy Kolb and Craig Albright, former Junior Warden Bill Edgar, Reina Baires, Abigail Davis, and Kevin Hassett, and Rev. Meister,

Mr. Donnelly reviewed the strategic planning process, which will consist of determining the current status of the Congregation; getting congregational feedback for the Vestry; establishing future directions with proposed goals; implementing the plan to get there; and, finally, observation, assessment, and refinement. He stressed that congregational "buy in" is necessary during every step of the process.

Ken Patterson asked if there had been previous strategic planning efforts in the Parish. Rev. Meister said that there had been such efforts, but they mainly amounted to statements of goals. There was general discussion about the goals and objectives written in the past, but it was believed that they were not comprehensive. Sandy Kolb observed that any new efforts need to directly involve the various St. Alban's ministries as well as the entire St. Alban's staff.

Mr. Donnelly introduced an exercise in which those present broke into two small groups to develop Mission Statements for St. Alban's, one statement for the present and one for its future. Each person's proposed statement was limited to 150 characters ("tweets"). When the groups reassembled into one, and reported their results, it was apparent that most of the "tweet" statements were tied to outreach efforts, and helping and serving others. It was noted that they generally lacked mention of God and spirituality.

Donnelly then shared similar "tweets" from a Planning Committee exercise in identifying the present mission of St. Alban's, how the St. Alban's is seen by its neighbors, and what that mission *could* be.

PRESENT MISSION

1. Our mission is to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and help enrich the lives of the people of the Washington DC Community.
2. Preach the Gospel, make disciples, transform the world in God's name (not currently acknowledged by parish).
3. Welcome faithful, seekers, doubters.
4. Welcome, serve, build faithful followers if [sic] Jesus in community.
5. I think our mission is to do the best we can as a community.
6. To nourish a community of faithful Christian believers, seekers and doubters; tendency to be somewhat inwardly focused.
7. St. Alban's welcomes all who are faithful and all who struggle with their faith. Together we can build a strong community with the goal to strengthen our surrounding one.

AS THE NEIGHBORS SEE IT

1. Is there a church there? Or, to be a side chapel of the cathedral.
2. To be a place of worship, as neighbors a source of help, a venue for arts and community gatherings.
3. Nice stone building on the corner, part of the cathedral, maybe.
4. St. Albans [sic] is a nice little church to go to when the cathedral is booked.
5. I thought that our neighbors expect a lot from our parish, for spiritual growth.
6. Is this the cathedral? The rich church on the hill.

AS IT COULD BE

1. Our mission is to preserve a place where Christians can worship.
2. Preach the Gospel. Make disciples. Transform the world in God's name (boldly acknowledged explicitly by parish)
3. A welcoming congregation which is known by its expressions of God's love for the world.
4. Multicultural community that spreads the love and joy of life in Christ's image with all who need it.
5. We welcome [all] [those] who seek to strengthen their relationship with God outside of the church.
6. If we could work and be together could....
7. A more outwardly focused participant in the community of this city so as to create opportunities to reach and nourish more souls; more diverse racially, chronologically, economically.

Children's Ministry Position

After a short "pot luck" lunch, and Ray Donnelly's departure at 12:45 pm, Rev. Meister introduced the topic of a potential hire for the position of Director of Children's and Family Ministries. For this discussion former Junior Warden Bill Edgar joined, because of his involvement in the search process to identify candidates for the position. A job description for that position is set forth as follows:

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S & FAMILY MINISTRIES,
LAY MINISTRY SUPPORT, AND NEWCOMER INCORPORATION

St. Alban's Church in Washington, DC, is seeking a warm, joyful, outgoing, and well-organized person of deep and infectious Christian faith to fulfill the responsibilities of an exciting position as Director of Children and Family Ministries, Lay Ministry Support, and Newcomer Incorporation.

Director of Children's and Family Ministries:

I. Direct, plan, and support Christian formation for children aged newborn through sixth grade. We use Godly Play for Pre-K through 3rd grade, and varied curricula for our two-year-old class and for our 4th-6th graders.

- Recruit, train, and schedule teachers for each level of our church school.
- Prepare and provide materials for Godly Play classrooms in a timely fashion.
- Maintain classrooms between Sundays. (In the next year, we envision moving our children's classes to better space. At that time, the Director will play a key role in designing and creating welcoming and child-friendly spaces which demonstrate the love of God and of this parish community.)
- Select curriculum for children in grades 4-6 and recruit, train, and support teachers for them.
- Work with all children's volunteers to get them certified in Safeguarding God's Children.
- Be available as a resource during Sunday morning church school, filling in as necessary to ensure good classroom management.
- Plan special activities or worship for children around major Christian holidays.
- Work with director of Christmas pageant to plan the event, recruit volunteers, and incorporate children in joyful and appropriate ways.

II. Serve as a pastor for Sunday school children and their families

- Be a welcoming presence in weekly Children's Chapel, greeting children by name and forming relationships with their families.
- Be the storyteller in Children's Chapel one time per month.
- Support Children's Chapel in other ways as needed.
- Plan and deliver offerings for families of our children and teenagers on topics related to faith formation and the nurture of healthy family life. These could range from one-time special offerings on pertinent topics to weekly or monthly Bible studies or support groups.
- Plan and support intergenerational offerings, such as the annual Advent wreath-making workshop or Scavenger Hunt on the Close.

III. Represent the children and families in staff discussions of parish-wide issues and offerings, to ensure that we are planning well for the needs of all our members.

Director of Newcomer Incorporation:

- Work with existing Incorporation Team to welcome newcomers to the parish, introduce them to people of interest, and help them find a place in our ministries.
- Offer newcomer classes as needed to introduce people to our parish, its history, and its ministry offerings.

Director of Lay Ministry Support:

- [This is a new position here, and its duties may need to evolve with experience.]
- Assist newcomers and existing parishioners in discerning how to use their gifts to serve Christ, either in our parish ministries or with our ministry partners. This may take the form of one-on-one meetings or of classes on subjects such as vocation and spiritual gifts.
- Provide pastoral guidance for leaders of our ministries, helping them to discern good directions for their work and being attentive to their needs in terms of time, talent, vision, and training. Where appropriate, bring these concerns and needs to the attention of the clergy. (Our Mission/Outreach ministries work directly with clergy on the issue of vision and direction, but may need other kinds of support.)
- Work with ministries to disseminate information about their work to interested parties, both within and outside of the parish; this includes but is not limited to updating Ministries Booklet annually.

If the successful applicant is a priest, s/he will share in preaching, worship leadership, and pastoral visitation as appropriate.

St. Alban's Church welcomes the faithful, the seeker, and the doubter. The appropriate candidate will be able to meet each person in that continuum where they are, without judging, and walk with them as they grow in faithfulness.

This position will be full-time with benefits. All members of our staff must complete Diocesan training in Safeguarding our Children and are subject to background check before being hired.

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Before addressing the Children's and Family Ministries position, Rev. Meister and Mr. Edgar discussed the overall St. Alban's staffing complement, reporting that over the past years some things have changed to the point where a fresh look was needed. This need became critical when the part-time Children's Ministries position became vacant almost a year ago. Other issues affecting matters include the departure of the Parish Administrator, and the anticipated retirement of the Director of Facilities. A new Parish Administrator has been hired, and he is expected to take over some of the duties of the Director of Facilities once that position becomes vacant; the remaining Director of Facilities duties would be handled by a contracted handyman.

Initial advertisement for the currently vacant Director of Children's Ministries was for a part-time position, but no potentially suitable candidates emerged. Expanded searches have identified two very well qualified candidates for the position, both of whom expressed interest if it were converted to full-time. One is an ordained priest, and the other is lay; both are nationally recognized experts in children's ministries. It was noted that the latter person may in fact be overqualified for the position as she is coming from a much larger church where she directs a large staff. It was suggested that if the ordained candidate were hired she could take on additional responsibilities; she is currently learning Spanish which opens up the possibility that she could assist with the Spanish-language members of the Parish.

Following extensive general discussion of the budget's staffing component, Rev. Meister and Bill Edgar advised that the Parish could hire either candidate within budget. Bill Edgar departed.

ACTION: Ken Patterson proposed, and Mark Edwards seconded, that the Vestry authorize the Rector to hire a full-time Director of Children's and Family Ministries who would also support lay ministries and newcomers. The measure was approved unanimously by Vestry members present.

Vestry Vacancy

Those present discussed the need to replace Vestry Member Jordy Vandebunte who will be moving away from the area. Senior Warden Potter said this would take place at the July meeting, and added that a candidate has already indicated willingness to serve.

Year-Ahead Priorities

There next followed small group discussions on the Community and Purpose of St. Alban's, and ideas to deepen its ministries, following up on discussions begun the evening before, which had involved exploring the Parish's spiritual growth and linking it to a mission and vision of the Church. The small groups were asked to consider "What can the church do (or what should it be) to help people grow in the ways you have experienced as crucial in your own life?" and "How would we need to shape our ministries in order to bring about that result?" After the small groups reported their results, there was a general discussion of ways to braid together what St. Alban's is already doing as a community and owning it. Among the ideas were increasing visibility in the neighborhood with things such as festivals, Earth Day Observances, and other such events. It was also suggested that parishioners could become more visibly "churched" in the workplace, that there be more Wednesday night offerings, and that St. Alban's offer more exposure to meditation and create a spirituality center. Some additional ideas included:

1. supporting and serving others;
2. becoming a community of radical empathy;
3. changing the world one person at a time;
4. becoming better people for a better world; and
5. teaching others.

Finally, those present set forth the following priorities for 2016:

1. Integration of Spanish-speaking and English-speaking parishioners.
2. Meeting people who are not part of our community and involving them in mission.
3. Strategic plan.
4. TLC (Transforming the Lives of Children).
5. Education: thematic small groups (Ann Morrison and Joan Phalen to work on this and report in August) and talks/non-Sunday forums on real-life issues.
6. Learning the interests of our newcomers.
7. Resolving issues with service times and styles.
8. Strengthening stewardship, both in number and in amount of pledges; having more frequent "pledge minutes".
9. Review Vestry commitment to approve a balanced budget by a certain date every year and the commitment to stewardship that is appropriately serving the Parish.

The 2015 Vestry retreat concluded with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by Rev. Meister.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Jansen, Secretary