

**St. Mark's Vestry Meeting  
December 18, 2023**

**Present:**

Rev. Aileen DiBenedetto, Rector  
Stuart Paul, Junior Warden  
Frank Ruggiero, Treasurer  
Rebecca Ethier, Clerk  
Brenda Cole-Milner  
Laurie Voedisch  
Dayna Hume  
Brenda Matthews  
John Mentzer  
Jean Robertson  
Stephanie Powers

**Absent:**

James Normington, Senior Warden  
Cathy Chipolone-Collins

**Learning**

It's time to reflect; Rev. Aileen has been with us for 9 months. Whenever new clergy come into a parish, there is always a change of membership. St. Mark's has had long tenures for priest along with the same interim. New faces also come in. All that change works together for good and new life. It can be tough in the interim. It can take about 3 years to get back to previous pledging levels.

A discussion ensued about if we have the time to wait? Is the parish sustainable? The numbers aren't there.

We need to make sure we are taking care of people who are here and provide good communication. We need to draw them into ministry and participating. People want to feel cared for and then they come back.

**Information**

*Review of November Vestry Minutes*

A motion was made by Laurie to accept the November Vestry minutes as drafted; Jean seconded. All voted in favor.

*Senior Warden's Report*

Deferred due to James's absence.

*Buildings & Grounds*

Stu stated there is not much to report. There has been slight progress on the elevator. Stu got through to a 2<sup>nd</sup> company who agreed to contact the Architectural Access Bureau for permission to put in a smaller lift. We are waiting after hitting brick walls. The flats for the downstairs worship space are complete. Stu will bring them down before it snows. So far the

only expenses are only about \$20 as wood was re-used from wreath stand and there was upholstery fabric hanging around. There is a new person on the Property Committee (Gary Courtemanche).

### *Rector's Report*

Christmas is coming. Laurie and Dayna have done a great job getting pageant together. It will be part of the Christmas Eve service at 5pm. It will be child led with adults welcome to join in. 11pm will be the typical Christmas service. We will start at 10:30pm for Carol singing. Christmas morning there will be a service at 10am. It usually is low attended. There will be one Sunday of Christmas after that and then Epiphany Sunday follows for singing carols.

### *Treasurer's Report*

We took in more money in November than we spent. Pledges perked up a bit. We do have people who pledge irregularly. Also the bazaar raised \$4500 which was a good success. There was a request from John to have a separate line item for community café thrift shop which has been added. Expenses are pretty much in line but we are expecting a large water bill due to a leak. December should be OK because there are 5 Sundays, plus Christmas offerings and we received payment from Beacon of Hope. Our cash is up to approximately \$18,000, so it is up from last month.

As a follow-up to the pledge email that Frank sent to the Vestry, we need to track down individuals who have not returned a pledge and we also need to find out if pledges will come back or not. Frank didn't mean to call anyone out. Rev. Aileen indicated that James has reached out to pretty much everyone on the list. If anyone is comfortable speaking to those who haven't pledged, feel free to have a casual conversation with them.

### **Discussion**

*Frances Drake School* – Brenda Cole-Milner presented a problem that she heard about. Frances Drake elementary school used to get food for needy students over school breaks from Kylee's Kare Kits. Frances Drake is asking how they can provide food for 47 kids during school vacations? A \$400 donation has been received towards it. What would be expected? They need foods that are quick like Granola bars and fruit cups with spoons. Would we put the kits together? Are we trying to get the kits together? Can we say we have a parish hall available on Thursday to put some kits together? We can reach out to the parish if there is availability on Thursday. There currently are no logistics for it to happen. Brenda Cole-Milner will find out if there is a coordinator. Some people volunteered to be at the church on Thursday to help out if needed.

### *Licenses*

Deferred to January as diocese hasn't provided necessary information.

### *Fundraising Calendar*

It looks like the raffle was the largest fundraiser over the past few years but the diocese doesn't really like gambling fundraisers along with possible issues with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Another decent fund raiser are the Yard sales in spring and fall. Where would we store the items for sale if the garage is not available? The week of the yard sale we can keep things in the parish hall. Can we rent table space? Or a spring bazaar? The last craft fair wasn't successful for the vendors as not a lot of people attended. Yard sales in the spring and fall were suggested. \$800 is a

good estimate for yard sales. We could also sell food along with yard sales. For a fall Yard sale, September and October are too busy

Schedule:

Pancake Breakfast – Sunday, March 17. St. Patrick’s Day breakfast with basket raffle. Estimate making around \$500.

Rebecca to coordinate.

Pasta Dinner – Saturday, April 27. Estimate making around \$700 with basket raffle.

John to coordinate

Yard Sale Date – Saturday, May 18 to coincide with the City-Wide yard sale. We can get on the yard sale calendar. Estimate about \$800 from this event.

Laurie to coordinate

Johnny Appleseed Festival – September 14 – We can use popcorn machine (Stu and Aileen each have them), and maybe soft pretzels. We will have to put in a request with the city so no duplicate offerings. We could also hand out balloons. Estimate about \$400 from this event.

Laurie to coordinate

Parish Dinner – Saturday, October 5 (maybe Ham and Bean?) Estimate making \$700 with basket raffle.

John to coordinate

Christmas Bazaar – Put a \$4500 budget line for this based on 2023 number. Scheduled for November 22 & 23.

Dayna, Stephanie, Brenda Matthews with coordinate (and try to recruit someone)

*Lenten series* – During Lent, Brenda Cole-Milner suggested we do a Lenten series on Wednesday nights at 6pm with Soup and Bread. She will coordinate.

### *2024 Budget*

Frank entered in the actual pledges so far. He will drop in the fund raising figure of \$3,100 from the above discussion. He will leave the bulletin ads at \$0 because we haven’t seen the full amount of money from it (as of end of November it was \$150 collected in so far in 2023). If this changes before the end of the year, it will be adjusted.

The Salary line will increase slightly from 2023 as we have a rector for full year along with pension and benefits. However, the Diocese did cut our assessment for 2024.

The Administration was line cut by \$2,000 due to bookkeeping money saved but other subscriptions were added that partially offset.

The Christian Education budget figure was provided by Laurie.

The Insurance line increased by \$1,200 from 2023 but we had under-budgeted last year. Frank spoke to the insurance company to try to get better rates.

We are hoping to move the Rectory Building & Grounds line to a rental expense line.

The Maintenance line went up from 2023 due to the exterminator contract.

The Water and electric for utilities aren't too bad. Heating is always a guess. We are trying to be conservative so we aren't in a bad place, but Frank knocked down the figure a bit due to services being held downstairs in January and February so there should be some heat savings.

Rentals line: The use of the building has gone up now that COVID restrictions are over. The quilters are good contributors so we raised the line by \$2,000. We get \$2,000/year from the Beacon which is only \$150/month, so should think about charging more. Or do we think of it as a ministry?

New lines will be added related to rental of rectory such as Real Estate Tax, Maintenance set aside (2% of value based on previous discussion), and listing fee (may be negotiable?)

A line will be made for the repayment of de-leading to trust funds but how much depends upon how long we want to take to pay it back. More will need to be added to pay for the window project. It was suggested to do the minimum payment to pay back over 15 years and then reassess for the 2025 budget.

Do we need to reach out to people to ask them to up their pledges? Should we do a mailing for people who used to come here years ago and try to get them to come back? We can try after Christmas. Rev. Aileen wants to make sure we are inviting them back versus ask for them to pledge.

#### *Nominating Committee*

Dayna and Brenda Matthews are rolling off the Vestry after January 2024 and Libby's spot needs to be filled. Rebecca asked if there is anyone who else wants to resign. Everything will think about and come to the January prepared and will then create a nominating committee as we have more time with the Annual Meeting in February.

The Annual meeting will be Sunday, February 11 at 9:30am. The typical format is to interweave service with meeting with a potluck lunch afterwards.

#### *Annual Awards*

Defer to January meeting

#### **Decision**

##### *Treasurer's Report Vote*

Dayna moved to accept the Treasurer's report, Brenda Matthews seconded. All voted in favor.

#### **Closing Prayer**

Rev. Aileen offered a closing prayer.

#### **Meeting Adjourned**

Jean made a motion to adjourn and Brenda Matthews seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:59 pm.

**Next Meeting**

The next Vestry meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 15, 2024 at 7:00pm.