

**St. Mark's Vestry Meeting**  
**January 22, 2024**

**Present:**

Rev. Aileen DiBenedetto, Rector  
James Normington, Senior Warden  
Stuart Paul, Junior Warden  
Rebecca Ethier, Clerk  
Brenda Cole-Milner  
Dayna Hume  
Brenda Matthews

**Absent:**

Frank Ruggiero, Treasurer  
Jean Robertson  
Stephanie Powers  
Laurie Voedisch  
Cathy Chipolone-Collins  
John Mentzer

**Learning**

Rev. Aileen shared a video about the Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and his theme, "If it's not about love, it's not about God." How do we share with people God's love and develop Christians? He came up with a program called "The Way of Love". It includes practices for a Jesus-Centered life. A Rule of Life is a pattern within monastic life. Traditionally the morning and evening prayer comes from Rule of Life. However, that's not all it is, there are also rules of simplicity and obedience to help order their lives and keep them centered on Christ. Invite people to make their own rule of life. We need to do that as the entire church rather than as individuals which is The Way of Love. Imagine what our community might be if we can get into "The Way of Love". Our Lenten program will be based on it, called "Life Transformed: the Way of Love through Lent." We will see how we do with it in Lent and then see if we want to spend more time on it. There are other programs throughout the church year that we could use. All the programs are free and include video and handouts. This program will be part of the Ash Wednesday service heading into Eucharist.

**Information**

*Review of December Vestry Minutes*

James raised a point in the minutes about the ads in bulletin line which will be clarified. A motion was made by Dayna to accept the December Vestry minutes as amended; Brenda Matthews seconded. All voted in favor.

*Senior Warden's Report*

2024 has been busy so far. We got in the funds for the Bulletin ads in as some were late. \$2200 came in the last week of December/first week of January. There is some additional money that is owed and more will be collected than budgeted for. If anyone knows anyone who is interested in putting in an ad, they cost \$300/quarter. There is a discounted rate of \$1000 for the entire year. James and Rev. Aileen met to discuss the steps that they can take as executives to reduce costs. The 2024 budget does not need to be held for it. Following the budget discussion, if the bottom line can be reduced, it will help the top line.

James met with someone who would agree to be a stand-in organist should we need one. The person has been here and visited.

James and Brenda Cole-Milner discussed using some of the stock for Sunday coffee hour for the Leominster schools food collection project. There is an opportunity to say that the community café is supporting it. Laurie and James have been

talking about what is needed to stock the kitchen and the community café. To pay for it, James will apply for grants with LCU, Enterprise Bank, and Workers Credit Union for community support grants. They don't give to churches but give to community programs, arts, food, etc. Dayna will check with I-C Credit Union to see if they have a grant program.

MDI grants are due March 15 (through diocese). \$70,000 is being released for this year. We need to word it correctly to get what we need. They won't pay for salary or building repairs, but will pay for first few years of new programs. For example, the new community café would be eligible. Last year we got some funding for the Johnny Appleseed fest and Playground. The maximum is \$10,000 per grant. In the past, we've done better when we submit 3-4 applications. Suggestions for funding were blessing bags, Linus Project and Food program for the Leominster school vacations. The Mile of pennies program you can get every second year such as for the Sunday school books and library materials. We also can use for Lenten materials or bible studies.

Regarding purchases made for the church, we have multiple suppliers that we pay on 20 days' net. We can get a bigger discount for using credit card or paying up front. We usually use Staples online or Amazon. Rather than Terry running out on work and have work time lost to the parish maybe we should consider getting a credit card for the Rector to use so we can save money. We can also pay for postage online and get discount for that. A question was asked about leaving deliveries at the church. Deliveries can be made to Rev. Aileen's house so that aren't left at the church when no one is here.

### *Buildings & Grounds*

Nothing dire has happened in the last month. Nothing much has changed since last month. Stu still has the same to-do list. The lift is still out. Stu is waiting for 101 Mobility to get back to him with an estimate for repairs. We transitioned to the new worship space this past Sunday to save heat and allow for those who can't get up to the sanctuary. The Property Committee should be meeting soon. The heat at St. Mark's House wasn't working at all per the Beacon. A plumber was called who got it up and running. The furnace needed cleaning. It should be scheduled for regular cleaning going forward. Stu tried to change filters in the hallway but they have to be fabricated. Bud used to make them. Brenda Cole-Milner suggested a checklist be developed so everyone knows what needs to be checked regularly. Stu checked the safety lighting as well. Rev. Aileen mentioned in a prior parish they created a parish administration book to keep track of these things.

### *Rector's Report*

Gratitude: Thanks to:

- Joan and Stu for new worship space.
- John helped set up and move Church school to Rectory with Stu.
- Altar Guild for adjusting to new worship space.
- Stu for continuing to work on the lift.
- Stu and James for leading worship while Rev. Aileen was sick.
- Laurie for the pageant on Christmas Eve. Dayna also wanted to thank the congregation for being flexible regarding the timing on Christmas Eve service.

Rev. Aileen is meeting with Vicky tomorrow about a lease agreement for St. Mark's House with the Beacon of Hope. She will discuss raising rent to \$2500/year. They are good community partners and worth it to keep them. Vicky updated her office with the Beacon's own funds and it looks amazing. It's important to keep them as tenants as St. Mark's is known for Beacon of Hope.

Lent starts February 14. There will be a Wednesday night worship for the Lenten series. Starting Thursday mornings at 10am (to be finalized) a new program called "Heavenly Mugs" is starting in Lent for those who want to join and don't want to go out on Wednesday nights. During Lent it will be the Lenten program. It will create pastoral space for people.

Rev. Aileen will bring star words to those who missed church. Lay Eucharistic Visitors have been doing communion visits. Rev. Aileen is working with other churches in "North Worcester" churches to support one another. She is considering more Evensongs with Christ Church.

There are 2 things that came up over the weekend: 1) Can the blocks that hold the toys be moved over to the Thrift Shop to display items for sale? The toys can then be stored in the storage bins to help declutter and make a smoother space. 2) Would Vestry meetings work better at a different time? Days vs. nights? Could we meet on Sundays after coffee hour? Or maybe a mix of Zoom vs. in person meetings? Maybe over winter when it's dark we can do evening meetings online and meet virtually?

### *Treasurer's Report*

In Frank's absence, Rebecca discussed the 2023 Treasurer's report at a high level. It was noted that Christmas collection was down particularly based on what we got in for Easter. Our cash situation is dire. James asked whether it was considered to ask for a reduction in the diocese assessment in the budget based on the amount of deficit. James stated the Treasurer must make the request.

### **Discussion**

#### *Vestry Resignation*

Jean Robertson resigned from the Vestry via email January 15, 2024 effective immediately.

#### *Licenses*

Rev. Aileen reviewed the list of those currently licensed that was provided by the Diocese:

#### **Currently Licensed:**

Eucharistic Ministers - Diana Anctil, Christine Downing, Linda Dupuis, Ed Dupuis, Rebecca Carpenito, Stu Paul, and Cathy Chipolone-Collins

Lay Eucharistic Visitors – Barbara Divoll, Linda Dupuis, and Stu Paul

Worship Leaders – Stu Paul, James Normington, Diana Anctil, Barbara Divoll, Rebecca Carpenito, Christine Downing, and Ed Dupuis

Lay Preacher – Stu Paul and James Normington

#### **Who should stay licensed:**

It was decided not to make any changes for 2024 Advent year/church school year.

Motion made by Brenda Cole-Milner; Dayna seconded. All voted in favor.

### *2024 Budget*

Budget as drafted will be presented to Annual meeting. The official vote will be in February Vestry meeting. Rebecca will speak to Frank about the Diocese assessment line.

### *Nominating Committee*

James agreed to stay on for 1 more year as Sr. Warden.

Dayna will not seek another term.

Brenda Matthews will stay on for a second term.

We need to form a nominating committee for the open slot to fill Dayna's position and for Jean's resigned position. Some ideas were discussed and then people will be approached.

The Convention 2024 is November 9, 2024; Dayna agreed to serve as convention delegate.

Rebecca, Dayna and Stu will circle back as the nominating committee to discuss and finalize ballot.

### *Annual Awards*

Nominations were discussed for the awards and annual meeting. Executive Committee will meet and decide the final awardees.

### **Decision**

#### *Treasurer's Report Vote*

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

### **Closing Prayer**

Rev. Aileen offered a closing prayer.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

James made a motion to adjourn and Stu seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:54 pm.

### **Next Meeting**

The next Vestry meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 19, 2024 at 7:00pm.