

St. Mark's Vestry Meeting
March 20, 2023

Present:

Rev. Aileen DiBenedetto
James Normington, Senior Warden
Stuart Paul, Junior Warden
Frank Ruggiero, Treasurer
Rebecca Ethier, Clerk
Cathy Chipolone-Collins (via phone)
Laurie Voedisch
Dayna Hume
Brenda Matthews
John Mentzer
Stephanie Powers
Jean Robertson
Brenda Cole-Milner
Libby Moore (via phone)

Absent:

Rev. Aileen opened the meeting with a prayer.

Lesson

James started with a lesson about the "Visitor who Does not Return" from Beyond Business as Usual. We need to look at our church in the eyes of a visitor. What is the first thing they see? Discussion ensued. Some things mentioned were the torn up lawn, St. Mark's house looking shabby, and the red door. Does a visitor know where to come in? The parking lot looks bad. The driveway entry is not illuminated. Parking area is not assumed as there are no signs. Regarding nursery and nursery care such as diaper changing tables, how would a young family know? Should we have Family restrooms? Should there be signs showing how to get up to worship? What about ushers? Do visitors know what to do for worshipping? Should we make an explicit coffee hour invitation for each 10am service?

Review of Minutes

Brenda Cole-Milner moved to accept the February Vestry minutes. Jean seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Senior Warden's Report

The walking tour/fundraiser will be Saturday, June 24, tentatively at 11am, to coincide with World Heritage Day. It will be \$10 for a bracelet. We will be inviting other parishes to be involved and Mark Bodanza has offered to host at no charge. The Mayor is aware and is on board. Mark will have a table selling his books, etc. We can also sell our cookbook at the time. Should we ask Rebecca Carpenito to play the organ? Michael is unavailable.

The Organ concert has been moved to May 21 so as not to conflict with Mother's Day.

The Barn roof progress will be updated in Solar Project section of meeting.

EV update later in meeting.

Buildings & Grounds Report

Tower work is finished!! The contractor wanted to thank John Kendrick for his work on the cross.

The electrician will be here on March 22 to fix the outlets upstairs, circuits, signage and work on rectory.

There was a hot water, toilets and kitchen water problem in Thrift Shop. Stu looked at it and part of it was due to a shut off valve. Stu traced pipes and discovered some caps on the plumbing which will require another pipe to be installed. Stu will contact Mike to look at it.

The bathrooms at the Thrift Shop should be cleaned at least once a week. Stu will ask Mike to clean them.

Regarding the rental of rectory: Joan did some digging on internet and if the money goes back to church then no real estate taxes are due. James said that was not true as long as rented out for profit. James and Stu will talk offline about it.

The Church Dinner is coming up on April 22 at 5:30pm. The food inspection did not happen yet due to the storm. The meal will consist of spaghetti and meatballs, Italian bread, and salad. Dayna mocked up a flyer and will send to Terry for the magazine and to Rebecca E. for Facebook and Instagram. We will ask people to call in to church office for numbers so we know how many meals to prepare but calling is not required. There will be no charge for dinner but will donations will be accepted.

A parishioner wants to donate a very good piano, including having it tuned and tuned every year. Stu will tell the owner it is fine with the Vestry. The parishioner will take care of moving the piano to the church. The existing piano in the church hall will be junked.

Rector's Report

Aileen's Star word for 2023 is commit and she received that Star Word the same week she committed to St. Mark's.

She has been asked "What is the program to grow St. Mark's?" There is no set program or silver bullet. The priority for Aileen is to getting to know us and the community. Our Goal as Vestry is to make sure that we can achieve the goal of growing.

Google for non-profits: Aileen will get a set email address as a St. Mark's specific address. If anyone else wants a St. Mark's address, let Aileen know. She will also create a Vestry shared folder on Google drive.

Mailboxes: Will be added and should be used instead of dropping things on Terry's desk. If anyone wants a mailbox, please let Aileen know.

Communication with Terry: Aileen asks that whatever you send to Terry to send out to the parish, please send to both Terry and Aileen so Aileen knows what's going on.

Worship Music: Aileen is looking into Rite Planning to identify music for worship service. We may need new hymnals and this would give us 6 digital copies of the hymnals. We could get clip art to add to power points. The service music choices have been music that the parish does not know so Aileen will work on figuring out what the parish knows and what to expand.

Licenses: Aileen will run through the list of worship licenses later in the meeting.

Community: Aileen has been starting with pastoral visits. She will add the Tusias to the list.

Outreach to parishioners: Aileen will reach out to people who attended regularly pre-COVID to inform we have a new rector and to invite them back. The list of people was discussed. We should have a letter from the rector and someone else can follow-up with a call and then a Facebook message.

Treasurer's Report

Frank presented the Treasurer's report for discussion. He did check the numbers against the budget even they were not presented. We are currently aligned with the budget. We are at a \$4300 deficit after 2 months which tracks with budget.

Frank added other income and expenses to the report. On the Balance Sheet not much has changed but Frank broke out the individual trustee funds. Those with "(R)" are those where income is reinvested into the fund. Frank will add a budget column for later month's reports. Discussion ensued.

Discussion

Name Tags

Brenda Cole-Milner suggested that all of us have preprinted name tags so we can save and reuse them. The name tags will be put on a display board. It could be a project for the kids to decorate the display board. Brenda will put them in plastic covers with a clip that can be clipped on to clothing. People are still signing in so we can create a new name tags for those who want one. The name tags would be optional for those who don't want to wear them. John suggested revising the church photo directory.

2023 Operating Budget Deficit

Frank reminded everyone that we have a projected budget deficit of \$18,718 so we need to address it. There are several items that we budgeted just to keep that deficit.

For example, there is a fundraising budget line of \$5,000 – the spring yard sale, church dinner and walking tour are all fundraisers

Heating donations – in envelope box, there is a heating donation envelope with September's envelopes but we need to promote it, so that people make donations in this envelope or separately. We should get this done before pledge drive so don't conflict with stewardship campaign.

Deficit reduction line – We should address this now so we can try to close the deficit. If we do a collection now it won't conflict with other combination of mailings to pledgers and the extended mailing list. Frank would be willing to write up the letter. Frank will also write an article for the magazine. James will write a letter to target those who haven't pledged. Aileen suggested we wait until after Easter for the letters but can be put into the next magazine.

Aileen is working on an Easter letter and will include an Easter envelope.

We will also need a tower repayment plan.

Motion to change signatories on RDF

We need to change signatories on the Rector's Discretionary Fund to remove Will and add Aileen. Leominster Credit Union is a stickler with the wording of the motion.

Rebecca read the motion:

"The signatories on the St Mark's Episcopal Church account number 18931952000, Basic Business Checking, held at Leominster Credit shall be changed from William C. Bergmann and Frank H. Ruggiero to Aileen E. DiBenedetto and Frank H. Ruggiero."

James made a motion to accept it and then seconded by Stephanie. All voted in favor.

Spring Worship

Aileen asked about the Palm Sunday procession of the palms. We will start in parish hall and process around the church at the 10am service for procession of Palms. For 8am we will start in the back of the church. Maybe in future years we can start down the street.

Maundy Thursday service will be held at 7pm and be a foot washing service. After that service, there will be an overnight vigil and people can sign up for a shift.

Aileen asked Pilgrim Congregation Church to join us on Good Friday. We will do stations of the cross at noon, and a service at 7pm.

The Easter Vigil will be held at 7:30pm on Saturday.

Is there interest in an Easter sunrise service? The Congregational church and Methodist church invited us to attend at Sholan Farms. It will be held at 6am. An invitation will be offered out to our parishioners, but Aileen will not attend or participate.

There are other opportunities to worship such as Earth Day on Saturday April 22. We can coordinate with the Church dinner.

Aileen asked if we have any traditions for Mother's Day or Father's Day? Aileen will include special prayers of the people for Mother's and Father's Days to honor them.

Rogation Day is on May 14. James explained the Beating of the Bounds. We go out into the world as a congregation and the Wardens would beat their staffs at significant parts of the town to the edges/bounds of the parish. This year it is the same day as Mothers' Day. Rogation Day symbolizes that we are taking care of this community and are inclusive. We can move it to another day to not compete with Mother's Day. But we will keep thinking about it.

Offline motion for supply organists during Holy Week: On March 30, 2023, Rev. Aileen distributed the following motion via email:

"Move to allocate funds to pay for supply organists for Holy Week. These funds can come from the Music fund."

8 Vestry members voted in favor via email so the motion passed.

Update: An anonymous donor came forth to cover most of the funding for the supply organists during Holy Week. Only \$175 needs to be taken from the music fund to pay for the supply organists.

Prayground

Children like the prayground. Information was distributed and can be discussed further next month. A grant was submitted for the prayground so hopefully we will have money to fund it. Please read through the information.

Solar Project Outline

James met with the company for a solar project to combine our electricity usage from all 3 buildings to cover our current bill. The church building fund will allow for lending to pay for the project as well as leasing option. The church building fund is facilitating due to there being no ability previously for churches to get federal funds. James has been speaking to a few different companies for proposals. We need to figure out which roofs would be best to put on solar panels. They cannot be mounted to a slate roof. Would we re-roof the back part of church in order to accommodate? It would be too expensive to do that. If we propose to put them on St. Mark's House barn or front part of it, we can get quotes and massive amounts of power.

Frank asked that we get the numbers for cost, reimbursements and break-even points. Also he pointed out that there is a lot going on for building projects that need to be done. We need a master plan of where we are going with the properties. Discussion ensued. We will talk about this moving forward and let it sit for a bit.

Spring Clean Up

Typically we do a spring clean up before Easter but there is still snow on the ground. We should try to do it between Easter and Pentecost as well as clean up/declutter the inside of the church. We can then use spaces for other purposes.

Proposed date: Saturday May 20 9am – 1pm

Fundraising: Spring Yard Sale

The date of Saturday May 13 8am – noon was proposed for a Spring Yard Sale. We will plan to keep the Thrift Shop open that day.

We can have snack bar with closed food items such as chips and bottles of water and soda, etc. If we have Safe Serve certified people, then we can prepare foods in church kitchen and bring them over to the Thrift Shop for sale.

EV Charging Station

James distributed new materials for a proposal and walked through its terms.

A motion was proposed by James for the Vestry to authorize a funding application to be submitted to National Grid and the State Authorities for a fully funded 4port EV Charging Station. Laurie so moved and Dayna seconded. The motion passed.

Vestry meeting materials timing

The Vestry meeting agenda will be distributed out the weekend before the Monday before the Vestry meeting. Other materials will be made available in a google drive to be accessed by the members when available.

Decision

Licenses

Aileen went through the list of Licenses to update and added Stu as licensed Lay Eucharistic Minister, Lay Eucharistic Visitor, Worship Leader, and Lay Preacher. James will be added as a Worship Leader and Lay Preacher.

James made motion to accept these updates to the licenses and Dayna seconded. All voted in favor.

Minutes Policy

A motion was made by Dayna to accept the previously distributed minutes policy and Brenda Cole-Milner seconded. All approved.

Treasurer's Report Vote

Laurie made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report previously presented and Dayna seconded. All Approved.

Closing Prayer

Rev. Aileen offered a closing prayer.

Meeting Adjourned

Frank moved that we adjourn. Brenda Matthews seconded. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:32 pm.

Next Meeting

The next Vestry meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 17, 2023.