

St. Mark's Vestry Meeting

April 17, 2023

Present:

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

Absent:

Cathy Chipolone-Collins
Libby Moore

Rev. Aileen opened the meeting with a prayer.

Lesson

Rev. Aileen began by addressing the last Vestry meeting as well as relaying that she had heard stories of difficulties on the Vestry before she even came here. The Church is working so where is the problem? Rev. Aileen left last month's meeting satisfied. It is her job is to observe and work with us. Vestries are supposed to have differences of opinion. There were arguments about budget and finances. There is pain on this Vestry and not about what is being discussed. Any arguments were not about the topic but about people not getting along. It may be because only 1 or 2 people carry a lot of the load on them. In the time during the interim, the Warden stepped up trying to work with Priest in Charge. Rev. Aileen heard that either James did everything or Fr. Will did everything. Some unkind words have been spoken and not just by people on Vestry. There is work to be done. When the Vestry is not working well together others in church can feel it. We need to try to work together as a community. The Episcopal Church is both hierarchical and communal at same time. We are going to be spending a lot of time on how to heal and some of the business will be put to the side in upcoming meetings. Until we are healthy as a Vestry, the parish will not be healthy. Rev. Aileen brought up the non-violent communication theory developed by Marshall Rosenberg in the 1960s and 1970s. How can we communicate with each other with sympathy and empathy?

There are 4 components to non-violent communications: 1) Observe, 2) be aware of our feelings, 3) share our needs and 4) make requests. Aileen provided an example and how to apply it to the Vestry's communications. We should provide a list of feelings rather than evaluative judgments.

"I" Statements exercise: 1) I feel... 2) When... 3) I need... 4) Would you...

Reflections on exercise: This communication method will take practice and it will feel awkward to some, especially the expressing the need part of it in a way where you are explicit without being forceful.

Review of Minutes

Laurie made a motion to accept the March minutes as amended; Brenda Matthews seconded. All voted in favor.

Senior Warden's Report

James asked if there were any questions about his report. Rebecca asked about the lead paint report and when it will be back. James indicated that it goes to the state who may provide recommendations.

Buildings & Grounds Report

Stu took out the medicine cabinet in the 2nd floor bathroom of Rectory. The electrician is coming next Tuesday to install a new one. Stu also snaked the bathroom drain.

Rector's Report

Aileen provided her written rector's report for review. Thanks to those who worked so hard over the last month: Altar Guild; Stu for building the cross; Brenda Cole-Milner for getting lead inspection in rectory; Stu for his rectory work, James for helping with lead paint inspection; James for starting to put together the playground; Joshua and Olivia Normington for pray and go bags; John Kendrick for playground work; Mike the organist for the Easter choir; Terry DellaSanta for her extra work during Holy Week; Laurie for all her work with the kids' education programs; and to Rev. Aileen and Brenda Matthews for scrambling to get Easter flowers when our order had issues. Brenda Cole-Milner asked if we want to do raffle baskets to raffle off at Pasta Dinner. If you want to contribute a basket, please let her know.

Bud's 97th birthday will be on the day of Pasta Dinner so we will recognize it.

\$419 collected was collected for Easter flower money but wasn't used towards the flowers due to the mix-up. Should we tell people what happened so they know why there were less flowers?

Cathy Chipolone-Collins would like to take a leave of absence from the Vestry but would like to remain on communications.

Treasurer's Report

Frank wanted to highlight that even with a \$5,000 line for fundraising and \$2,000 line for deficit reduction we still have an \$18,000 projected 2023 deficit. As of end of March we had \$170 only collected from fundraising. In April we did collect approximately \$550 for deficit reduction. Note that approximately 75% of the budget line for the heat in St. Mark's has been consumed while we are at about 50% for our other buildings. Is there something going on with the thermostat in that building?

We did get a final construction bill for the tower. After the allocated money from trust funds and the tower fundraising efforts, we are still about \$3,200 short on paying off the tower. We need to figure out where to get those funds. There will also be additional bills for engineering forthcoming.

Discussion

Building Committee

Brenda Cole-Milner described the Lead paint inspection. Lead is pretty much everywhere in the Rectory. Brenda was asked about the abatement plan but it is somewhat unknown now. It will likely cost between \$17,000-30,000 to clean it up. If we want to rent out the rectory, the lead paint needs to be remediated before doing so. Any child under the age of 6 cannot be in that building. There is also some chipping on deck, etc. The lead paint is under layers of other paint. An adult can rent it but not any families with children. There are some grants for it but the state may want something in return as far as low income rentals. Grant is called "Get the Lead Out". See the link below.

[Homeownership - Existing Homeowners \(masshousing.com\)](http://masshousing.com)

The National Episcopal church may have some programs for de-leading.

It might take around 6 months to get a contractor in the Rectory to do the actual work.

Fundraising

Egg My Yard fundraisers - \$215 was raised from this effort. There was good fellowship for putting the baskets together

Memorial Bricks –We’ve done two orders so far in 2021. Plans for 2023:

- **Double pronged approach:** 1) Expand it to be a Memory Garden and not just a memorial garden. We should reach out to family members of parishioners who have passed away. If they purchase a brick, we will have a special service on All Saints’ Day. 2) The Memory garden is to commemorate special times and we will have memory bricks for other occasions as well.
- **Where should proceeds for this fundraiser go?** We have a fundraising budget already so we should try to meet that and go towards our operating expenses. Discussion ensued.

It was noted that a supply organist proposal for paying organists needs to be made as well.

Community Guidelines

Rev. Aileen led a discussion about setting our guidelines as to how as a Vestry we are going to speak with one another.

1. Speak respectfully – take it slowly to control emotions so it is not interpreted in a way unintended. Make “I” statements; have empathy; and speak clearly. Try to address the problem and not the person. In email communications: these can be interpreted differently with tone. There is a suggested 24-hour response time among Vestry members.
2. Listen to hear not respond – let someone finish what they are saying
3. Timeliness – start meetings on time, end meetings on time within about 5 minutes either way; stay on topic; set time limits
4. Confidentiality

Any more ideas should be emailed to Aileen.

Decision

Treasurer’s Report Vote

James made a motion to accept the Treasurer’s report, Stephanie seconded. All voted in favor.

Closing Prayer

Rev. Aileen offered a closing prayer.

Meeting Adjourned

The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Next Meeting

The next Vestry meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 15, 2023.