

St. Mark's Vestry Meeting

May 15, 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
Jean Robertson
Brenda Cole-Milner

Absent:

Cathy Chipolone-Collins
Libby Moore
Stephanie Powers

Rev. Aileen opened the meeting with a prayer.

Lesson

Rev. Aileen led us through a PowerPoint Presentation regarding Church Changes using excerpts from the Small Church Summit in 2019. Regarding changes, the larger church is going through it now and smaller parishes were feeling it first. Change in church takes a lot longer than we think it does. Church attendance peaked in the 1960s.

Church communications through the ages were discussed. Originally Christian services were in Latin and priests read to the people. Then, the printing press made the Bible and materials available to everyone. Currently information is passed instantaneously.

The sanctuary changed as people could read and then books were available while worshipping. We are seeing more changes as technology comes in. However, we are still sitting down with one person providing information.

Various approaches to endowments: 1) save for rainy day, 2) spend it all so we aren't living off the wealth of ancestors, or 3) use it to support operating expenses (non-profit approach) by drawing off a little less than you are making in interest.

The struggle with rainy day approach is how would ancestors determine what a "rainy day" is? Approach #2 was taken in the 1980s.

New Englanders tend to be savers.

There are generational changes as well – rise of the "nones" have been raised with no faith, not necessarily rejecting Christianity. Financial insecurity and uncomfortable about donating to church. Aileen asked for feedback about younger generations. Discussed ensued.

Review of Minutes

Dayna made a motion to accept the April minutes as amended; Frank seconded. All voted in favor.

Senior Warden's Report

There was an article in Sentinel last week which was great publicity.

Estate issues: 1) The Building Committee received the lead paint report. Lead paint is all over the Rectory and received the highest rating possible. The doors and windows are the most urgent matter. Brenda Cole-Milner hasn't been getting responses from local contractors, so she is reaching out to Boston area contractors to get estimates.

2) We are exploring the idea to move office space to St. Mark's House and use the current office space as meeting rooms. The flooring is to be done over at St. Mark's House which might encourage rentals of it. The flooring has been donated but labor will be needed to put it in. Frank suggested that we do a 10 minute walk through at the next meeting to see where the office space would be planned.

3) The dumpster to be picked up. James is working on a Peace Garden proposal to be discussed in next meeting.

Deficit reduction – The letter James wrote went out so money should be coming in.

Technology: there are concerns around the data needed to be kept for parishioners and how we retain it. Our mailing list and phone numbers are not up to date. All of the parishioner data is on the computer so if the computer goes down then we lose that information. James and Rev. Aileen will discuss church records management system to be put up on the cloud. Frank can only do the financial books when Terry is not using the computer. Frank did look into having QuickBooks in the cloud and it was pricey but he said he is good with the current setup.

Buildings & Grounds Report

Property Committee – Brenda Cole-Milner asked if anyone on the Vestry wants to be updated on Property Committee and she will keep them apprised.

Stuart Paul, Terry Downing and Bob Young took down the storm windows.

The Yard Sale raised \$722 which is a huge success. A special thanks to John Lucas and Dave Shaw for moving the chairs out so they could be sold. The barn is starting to look better inside. All of the furniture went.

A new light was put in for the Rectory bathroom as well as a new outlet.

Rector's Report

We have a baptism coming up.

Both the Clean up day and yard sale had a lot of parishioners attending.

When we received grants from diocese one of them is for family events during the Johnny Appleseed festival. If anyone would like to share some ideas for the festival, please let Rev. Aileen know.

There are camperships and scholarships to decide upon. James recused himself from the campership conversation. Camperships are traditionally given for Christian-based camp for our church families. We received 4 applications for 2 families. 2 are for 1 week each for Olivia and Joshua Normington. 2 were for 2 weeks for Mia Moore. Grotonwood is \$425 per week for day camp. Campership is funded by 10% of proceeds from thrift shop so money is continually going into the fund. The application process is just to fill out the form and nothing else is required. A motion to award 1 week campership for each child made by Laurie, which was seconded by Brenda Cole-Milner. The motion passed unanimously. It was noted there is a \$30 sibling discount which would apply to the Normingtons so that is \$30 less the church would have to pay.

There is also a college scholarship fund so let's develop a program for it.

Rebecca recused herself since she has child who may be a possible recipient of a scholarship.

There was discussion on the process by which a college student can apply. There was agreement that the applicant should submit something such as an essay, presentation, etc., explaining what learned experiences they shared at St Mark's and their plans for the future.

Laurie volunteered to draft a policy for submission and awarding of the scholarships. For next year and going forward, the deadline would be April 1st in order that the scholarship can be awarded prior to and recognized at the applicant's graduation if they are a high school senior. Given the late start for this year, that deadline will be waived for this year.

The consensus was that the scholarship should be \$1000 per student. Frank pointed out while there is \$8,700 currently in the Higher Education Fund, it is not being replenished as is the Summer Campership Fund. There was some discussion about developing an income stream for the Higher Education Fund but given the other financial priorities, that will have to wait.

The draft policy will be presented at the next Vestry Meeting and possibly adopted.

Treasurer's Report

Deficit reduction: as of end of April we collected \$3,125 towards deficit reduction vs. \$2,000 budgeted for that line so that will reduce our deficit by \$1,000. Laurie asked if we knew who the deficit reduction funds came from but James hasn't gotten any money back yet from his letter.

The Easter collection went well as we collected \$2,300. Usually the Christmas collection is higher so this is a good sign. Pledges are doing well and plate and other offerings are doing well too. However, we need to start targeting the fundraising lines to meet those budgeted amounts. Heating costs are above budget but should be less over the summer. Rental income is doing well due to the quilters.

Against 2022 expenses are down and income is up (2022 expenses had a big hit due to St. Mark's House).

However, we need to make an effort to reduce the deficit.

Rebecca asked about the diocese assessment, Benefits line and Miscellaneous (line 61605) lines. Frank will check on those and report back.

Frank will defer the vote on the Treasurer's report until the next meeting after he has time to research these items.

Discussion

Fundraising

Historic Building Open Day on Saturday, June 24 – Dayna has a flyer that she sent to other churches who have been invited to participate. Mayor Mazarella is on board so City Hall will be open as well as the library. Mark Bodanza will lead the tour and he may want to go into the Historical Society. Dayna put her email as the contact for the churches but will be away for 2 weeks in June. Jean who has been assisting will also be away during that time. Will Mark need an amplifier or microphone? Tickets can be purchased in advance or at the door. Dayna will get paper bracelets. Refreshments will be served and other churches may want to sell refreshments. The walk will start at St. Mark's. James moved that proceeds from this event go to the fundraising line and Dayna seconded. All voted in favor.

Organ Concert Volunteers – We need help to rearrange tables and also we need donations of snacks stuff as well as volunteers to help out. The Concert is at 3pm on Sunday, May 21. Frank made a motion to put the proceeds from the concert to the Fundraising line and Jean seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The organist funding has been donated through a sponsorship fee of \$500. We will try to

set up right after the church on Sunday. \$10 is the suggested donation. James will print out a QR code for donations. James will be at the door to collect money. The concert will be 45 minutes of play time and 15-20 minutes for refreshments after. James is printing the bulletins.

Yard Sale – James thanked everyone for their efforts on the yard sale and the dumpster will be picked up this week.

Thrift Shop - John asked if there is interest to set up food service for the Thrift Shop. If so, we can set up Committee to work on that.

Stewardship Campaign

We need to start talking about Stewardship and create a theme. There are prepared materials available through diocese. Letters can go out to fit the theme. Suggestions are welcome. Brenda Cole-Milner would like to talk about tithing. However, how do you do that without offending anyone? Just tell the story about gradually getting there, and personal witness will help with this.

Parish Debt

Frank asked that everyone read the handout and come to him if there are questions.

Good News Garden 2023

In 2022 after July 4th we started collecting vegetables from individual garden donations. Frank will collect them on Sundays and bring to Ginny's on Tuesdays. There will be no planting at the church this year. All agreed and Frank will get the word out.

Exterminator

Health inspector wants us to get an exterminator. We've had 2 come out to give us pricing. Only 1 actually gave us an estimate which came to \$470 for the year. Laurie asked if it included St. Mark's house as she found mouse droppings there. The rectory does not appear to have an issue. Rev. Aileen will ask for an estimate for St. Mark's House and get clarity around the \$85 monthly fee. Is it a monthly fee if \$85/month that is \$1,020 for the year? Rev. Aileen will get clarity on that fee.

Formation: Church School

Laurie has been subsidizing the church school through the materials. We have had 17 children who stop in every now and then. We've been getting 6-12 children weekly on a regular basis. We were looking for a program that works for a one classroom Sunday School but as we grow to be able to add a second classroom. We want to use this program to advertise the church and get excitement about Church School. Laurie has been using a resource called Bible Now to read to the children. The lesson plans are designed for someone who is not a teacher or a theologian. We are trying to make it easier for other people to volunteer to help out so it isn't always just Laurie doing everything. Brenda Cole-Milner asked if we can get volunteers from camp counselors or home schooling volunteers. We do have a youth who is going to start volunteering and but starting her in the Thrift Shop. For Church School we need to make sure we have a safe space for children. We need to have adults who have been in the church at least 6 months and have a CORI check before they can work with the kids. Frank mentioned that the Church School proposal was discussed at the recent Finance Committee meeting. The current budget line for it is \$300 so we need to cover more. We can move \$500 from administration line to church school. Then we can use the church school special fund for the Bibles as those would be retained.

Two motions on the table made by James and seconded by John:

Motion 1 is to move \$500 from administration line to church school budget line; and

Motion 2 use the Church School special fund for the Bibles and if we get a grant we will pay those funds back.

The Motions passed unanimously.

Decision

Treasurer's Report Vote – Deferred to next month to give Frank time to research the identified lines.

Closing Prayer

Rev. Aileen offered a closing prayer.

Meeting Adjourned

Dayna made a motion to adjourn Brenda M seconded. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Next Meeting

The next Vestry meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 19, 2023.