

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

Present:

Rev. Aileen DiBenedetto
James Normington, Senior Warden
Frank Ruggiero, Treasurer
Rebecca Ethier, Clerk
Libby Moore
Laurie Voedisch
Dayna Hume
Brenda Matthews
John Mentzer
Cathy Chipolone-Collins

Absent:

Jean Robertson
Stephanie Powers
Stuart Paul, Junior Warden
Brenda Cole-Milner

Rev. Aileen opened the meeting with a prayer.

Learning

We should stop and take a moment to recognize what happened over the last week with the flooding in the city. This is a trauma and we live through trauma as we lived through COVID. We try to go back to normal very quickly. In many ways this is good as you can't just dwell on it. We are a religious community and we can offer something else to the community. We can recognize that people are hurting. What is trauma? It is an emotional response to an awful event. The short-term response usually is to get moving and take care of it. The Long-term effects can be mental symptoms such as that it will happen again and anxiety. There can be physical responses to trauma such as headaches and stomach aches. Longer term there can be concentration problems, memory problems, relationship problems, social withdrawal, irritability, anger, nervousness, invasive thoughts, and trouble feeling positive emotions. When these occur over a long period of time, that is when it is time to go for professional help. Not everyone will have these symptoms but some will. We can take care of ourselves, turn to loved ones, and perform self-care and seek help if needed. As a community we can recognize that something big has happened.

Rev. Aileen has reached out to Margaret Bullitt-Jonas and she is the minister for creation care. City-wide prayer has been suggested for October 8 or 22. There is not currently an interfaith group in Leominster so Rev. Aileen is reaching out. She has 2 churches on board and needs to get at least 2 more. If it works into the Bishop's calendar he will join too. Communities are becoming hubs of resilience in the face of climate change that can be turned to during these events. We should try to be present and offer a place where people can get clothes, food and hot shower. The long-term needs will still be here even though the Red Cross handled short-term needs. Methadone clinics were closed for 2 days. People were trying to get to doctor with doctor offices and clinics closed. We will likely be hearing about longer term issues regarding medical, etc. Can we look into this to help? Some perishable foods were ruined due to power outages at Sunset Towers, for example. Some schools were used as shelters. Some people were moved into hotels as they could not stay in their homes. We can take up a collection for food pantry and provide the items to Ginny's. Laurie will call Ginny's and see what they need in addition to food, or if there is a specific need for anything. Rev. Aileen can let other parishes know if there are specific needs. Could the Healing Team have special prayers for those impacted by the flooding during Wednesday service?

Information

Review of August Vestry Minutes

Rebecca thanked Laurie for taking the minutes at the August meeting. Frank made some suggested changes. Frank moved that we approve the minutes as amended and Brenda Matthews seconded. All voted in favor.

Senior Warden's Report

James and Stu have been working on elevator issues. It may be a case of installing the limiters if it can be done. It might require a retrofit to see if it can pass inspection.

We had a pianist for the 10am service last week and will for this coming week. He is willing to fill in when needed.

We just dampness in the Rectory from the Leominster flooding. No water came in from the tower. James is working on things for the Johnny Appleseed Festival and stewardship. The next organ concert is coming up and we may get some sponsors for it. James has an application with Worker's Credit Union for sponsorship. Mark Montaquila has sponsored our organ concerts so far.

The transition of parish offices to St. Mark's House is in progress. Frank asked if there will be costs associated with the move and identify them so they can be budgeted. The new flooring for St. Mark's House was donated and some people have volunteered to install it.

John asked if there was a further inspection of the kitchen by the Leominster Health Department. It was indicated that we just need the paperwork from the exterminator.

Buildings & Grounds

Deferred due to Stu's absence

Rector's Report

Gratitude: Thank you to Laurie for covering the minutes for last month's meeting. Thanks to Gary for gathering a team to make apple crisp last Sunday. Thanks to Mike Coughlin for checking in on the church following the flooding. Thanks to James for organizing the concert yesterday. Thanks to John for returning the Books of Common Prayer to the nave. Thank you to Sheila for inviting her neighbor to play the piano for services. Thank you to the Altar Guild for its work in relocating our worship again. Thanks to Dayna for always showing up for Sunday School for the kids.

There is a new church management software called Amplify. There are lots of components to it. Rev. Aileen would like to have a few people trained on it who can also train others. The Vestry will receive an email soon inviting them to the online giving portal. Frank and Bob Young have been working with it. The communications from last week from Rev. Aileen were from the new online system.

Rev. Aileen is still waiting to hear if the organist is willing to leave her parish to come here. In the meantime, we have John Hansen who will play piano from time to time.

October 15 is the Celebration of New Ministry in the afternoon at 2:30. If we are worshipping in the afternoon, what are we doing for earlier service? Should it be morning prayer and then eucharist in afternoon?

The November 19 organ concert will be a Thanksgiving celebration with Evensong with Christ Church joining.

Church school has started, but we need more volunteers. Bible Study continues on Sundays at 9am. Flood response prayer service will be October 8 or 22.

Treasurer's Report

Frank reviewed the Treasurer's Report. There was an impact from the parishioners who left due to the Safe Church issue. We are down approximately \$3000 in pledges due to that matter.

Fundraising is behind schedule. Frank has not received the check for the May concert sponsorship yet, nor the advertising revenue listed on the budget line. It was noted that the Vestry members are not showing up to fund raising activities and if they don't show support how to do we expect the others to support them? Should we have more discussion during services to announce where the budget stands and communicate more about activities at least once a month? Rev. Aileen noted that we have to be careful with messaging so it is not off-putting and depressing to say people aren't giving enough. The stewardship campaign is a chance to get that message across. Frank noted that some of the letter campaigns have worked. It was noted that our fundraising events are also community events and not just about money but also about making a connection to the community. James noted that as a Vestry member there is an expectation that you will participate and make a commitment to be part of the community. We need better participation from our own parish community.

Frank noted that we will need to have a deeper conversation about how to go forward financially. We are tapping into all of our ready cash. At the end of August the checking account balance was approximately \$5000 so money needs to be moved into the checking account as with automatic electronic withdrawals we need to have sufficient cash on hand. Frank will ask later for a motion to be made so he can move up to \$5000 to move from the rainy day fund to the checking account.

Discussion

Johnny Appleseed Fair

We are having a table downtown for informational purposes that will include flyers and a craft for children. The Prayer team/Cathy Chipolone-Collins will be there to offer prayers. We need to have volunteers signed up to staff the table. Setup starts at 6:30am as we have to be done with setup by 8am as cars are not allowed after that time. We will also need help at the bounce house which will be at the church.

Bank Account Signers

Last year we had a motion to change the signers on the LCU accounts. However LCU requires very specific wording in the motions to authorize changes. There are subaccounts but Frank only has his name on the checking account rather than all subaccounts.

The following motion was made by Frank and seconded by James. All voted in favor:

Motion: The allowed signers for the St. Mark's Episcopal Church banking accounts at Leominster Credit Union, Account 1000011247, are to be modified as follows:

For General Fund Unrest Fund ID 0000. Scholarship Fund ID 0010, Rainy Day Fund ID 0011, Children's Fund ID 0012, and Healing Class/Mission Fund ID 0013 delete all current owners/ signers and replace with the following individuals: Frank H. Ruggiero, James Normington, and Rebecca Ethier.

For General Fund Checking ID 1000 delete: James O. Craig, Terry Downing, and Diana M. Anctil as owners/signers and replace with: James Normington and Rebecca Ethier. Frank H. Ruggiero is to remain as an owner/signer.

The following motion was made by Frank and seconded by Dayna. All voted in favor:

Motion: to authorize the Treasurer to move up to \$5000 from the rainy day fund to the general funds checking account.

Christmas Bazaar

Laurie indicated that the planning committee is Dayna, Libby, Laurie and Joy Cohen. Laurie reminded everyone that the weekend of the bazaar has changed to November 17 & 18. There is a new fundraiser idea to sell wreaths. There will be a wreath-making event on November 4 at 10am out in the garage area. We are asking people to bring materials to make wreaths and we will sell them for \$15 at the bazaar. During the bazaar we will set up in the garage area to sell wreaths and sell cocoa and other goodies. Dayna is going to reach out to ask Mark Bodanza if he wants to sell his book at the bazaar along with the other book sales. Laurie suggested a change to some of the menu on Saturday morning to sell more breakfast foods such as blueberry oatmeal. Also the committee is thinking about relocating some of the tables to put focus on baked goods and the country store. At last month's meeting it was suggested to engage crafters and locate them in the center of the hall. People have reached out in the past to have a table at the bazaar and we can approach those folks. Terry has the list. In mid-October we should start asking people about donating theme baskets for the raffle. If people are making jams/jellies over the next month, we can ask them to make some for the bazaar. Also, the committee is thinking about having the baked goods table have standard pricing for items. Laurie provided Terry with a letter to go out this week to ask local businesses for donations of gift cards. The Thrift Shop will not be open that day. Laurie is trying to locate the sandwich board sign that Laurie and Eric created last year. Publicity in the local news was discussed. Laurie will ask Stu for the Coffee News and Rebecca will ask Lisa Hays for other publicity. Rebecca will contact LATV. Gail Bagshaw-Cunningham has connections for top quality crafters. A suggestion was made that the clothing from thrift shop be consigned at Cutiques or sold on ebay. However, people donating clothing to thrift shop may do so to provide to people in need. There likely will be an upcoming planning meeting for the bazaar.

Profile/Website

Bob Young noted to Rebecca that the profile is out of date on the website. Should we take it down? It was agreed to take it down, but if there are parts that can be repurposed for other sections of website, we should do that. Rebecca will report back to Bob Young.

Decision

Treasurer's Report Vote

James moved to accept the Treasurer's report, Laurie seconded. All voted in favor.

Closing Prayer

Rev. Aileen offered a closing prayer.

Meeting Adjourned

Frank made a motion to adjourn and Brenda Matthews seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Next Meeting

The next Vestry meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 16, 2023.