

APPROVED

Minutes

Vestry Meeting – October 9, 2019

Present: Fr. Richard, John Grant, Susan Howland, Diane Nichols, Lynn Garland, Lorraine Brumskine, Lana Pieczynski, Tamsin Lucey, Nancy Waugh, Rose Reith, Peg Nelson.

Fr. Richard opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. with prayer and bible study: Matthew 11:25=30.

Business

A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the September 2019 vestry meeting minutes as amended.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the September 2019 Treasurer's report.

- Employee reviews – Tamsin and John will do Greg's on a Saturday in November. Susan, John and Fr. Richard will do Chris's. Fr. Richard, Lana and Susan will do Anne's.
- Prior to our building inspection, which will occur after October 31, a few matters will be taken care of—fix concrete step chip, test fire alarms, and have fire extinguishers inspected.
- Following the Health Department inspection, Lynn will go with Tamsin before the Board of Health to seek a waiver of the church's \$200 fee since we are not in the business of selling food. Tamsin's ServeSafe certification was renewed in July.

Rector's Items

- For the October 16 Bible Study, Rose will unlock the church in case Fr. Richard cannot make it. The curriculum is a look at the Lutheran Church's Reconciling in Christ—a program for congregations committed to welcoming the LGBTQ community.
- Lorraine is prayerfully considering offering her perspectives as a bible study leader, perhaps one night a week. There will be a sign-up sheet at the back of the church if she decides to go forward.
- Diane and Susan would like to lead a book club throughout the liturgical year with Things Seen and Unseen: A Year Lived in Faith by Nora Gallagher.

Review of Last Month's Events

- John thanked Susan for reminding him to be prepared for his Small Church Summit 2.0 presentation, Tamsin for the Pecha Kucha, Nancy for answering questions, and Rose for bringing her computer. Attached to and made a part of these minutes is a copy of Rose's report of the summit. Following this meeting, Pam Mott inquired as to whether our leaders would be willing to meet with the Church of Reconciliation in Webster. They are beginning the process of deciding what is next for their congregation now that Rev. Ford is leaving. John will communicate our willingness to Pam.

Upcoming Events

- Daughters of the King will conduct a retreat on October 12. Lorraine explained that they will share stories of their spiritual journeys in small and large group discussions. This retreat is open to any woman.
- The Blessing of the Animals will occur on October 13.
- Diocesan Convention is on November 9.
- The International Dinner will be on November 16.
- The Stewardship breakfast will follow the service on November 24. The vestry is asked to bring a dish to share.

Building & Grounds

- New batteries have been put into the thermostats, and Jean will reprogram each unit.
- The sign post for the Episcopal Church sign will be relocated to the turn in the ramp.
- By email Susan provided a summary of the architect's preliminary report on making the undercroft handicap accessible. A copy is attached to and made a part of these minutes. Tamsin stated that, if nothing else can be done downstairs, at least the bathrooms should be renovated.

Lawn Mowing

- Tamsin stated that we need a volunteer to coordinate the lawn mowing schedule in 2020.
- John received approval from the vestry to have the lawn mower looked at to determine the extent of damage caused when it hit a pipe. Lynn provided John with a name of a person who will come to the church to look it over.
- Greg will take care of snowblowing again. Only sand will be used on the foyer steps.

Covenant Update (from the MMR)

- Susan and Diane have completed their review of the Rector's LOA and will submit it to the editors by the end of October.
- John and Lana are tweaking some of the wording in the Vestry Responsibilities section.
- Tamsin and Nancy are working on a complete rewrite of the Congregants' Responsibilities section.
- Richard and Lorraine will work on the Rector's Responsibilities portion.

Two remaining benches have been poured and will be set in place in the memorial garden.

Closing prayer – Prayer for the Parish

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM

Next Vestry Meeting November 13, 2019 @ 7:00 PM

Update on Dixon Salo Architects

The architects are working with P&P Construction who will give bids for the possible uses of the classroom wing.

We are waiting for the full written report, but in advance of the report I met with Neil Dixon and Bob from P&P last week at the church and can “unofficially” report the following:

The major issue for **changing the use** of the space: handicap accessibility

#1 Access into the Classroom Wing

- Not possible:
 - a driveway at the left hand side (Undercroft entrance) of the church to the back of the church and parking; grade is too steep and would go off the bank.
 - a handicap accessible walkway on the left side (Undercroft entrance) of the church around to the back: grade is too steep; according to Bob we would be over the bank.
- Possible:
 - an exterior elevator on the right side of the parish hall (Dr. Stagias side) going down to the classroom wing exterior door near the fire escape. Although this might be a possible solution I think this is probably not affordable.
 - I brought Bob and Neil into the foyer, a space they are not looking at, and offered an alternate handicap entrance solution. The foyer could become a common space with all the doors locking off the foyer. Install a stair chair in the stairwell leading to the classroom wing. The staircase is wide enough to do this. Neil thought this would pass code; Bob was not sure.

#2 Inside the Classroom Wing

- To **change the use** of the classroom wing it would have to be brought up to code. At a minimum:
 - Bathrooms
 - ALL of the doors (and there are 12) would have to be widened at a cost of about \$2,500 per door

The possible good news:

- I asked Neil for a “candid” verbal report from his meeting with Casey Burlingame (The building inspector) and Bill Cantell (The code enforcement officer). Neil said the meeting went very well and was cordial. He specifically asked them about having a food pantry in the classroom wing. They said they would consider that an extension of our mission and **not** a “Change of Use”. He asked if that would still be the case if another “entity” actually ran the food pantry and they said that would still be in keeping with our mission. If this is the case, we could rent to FoodShare making any necessary modifications to accommodate their use, but the space would not need to be brought to code. At least the way I understand it today. We will have to see once the report is submitted.

There you have it for now.

Susan

10.1.19

Small Church Summit 2.0: Going Deeper, Moving forward

Information • Conversation • Inspiration • Action • Openness to God's transformation

Welcome to the Small Church Summit 2.0! Based on conversations and suggestion cards from the first Small Church Summit, we are continuing the conversation in hopes of you being able to offer inspiration to each other. No quick fixes, no magic bullets, only deeper conversation and developing relationships. The idea is to leave you wanting to explore more, converse more, pray more, experiment more as we begin to see new models of church emerging. Through the day, our coaches will be available to ask: what did you hear that you want to follow up on? What will be your next steps? What further information do you need?

9-9:30

Opening – get your coffee and find a small group! Feel free to write or draw on the newsprint as the day emerges.

Luke 8:4-15: What's the soil like at your church?

²When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, ³"A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁴Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. ⁵Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁶Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

¹¹"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy, but these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. ¹⁴As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

9:30-10 Introduction, Movement and song ←

Take breaks as you need them!

10-12

Videos/presentations:

10-10:45: Video: what makes your parish "sing"? What is your "why". Unpack "what how why" briefly. If you were to tell someone what your "why" is, what would you say? (You Tube Amazing Grace Break Time: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZe5y2D60YU>)

11-12 Beth Ringdal: What rings true? What are some of the challenging things we are being called to address? (Bethany Ringdal <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-9G-IJTGA0>)

12-12:45

Lunch

"Finding your why"

12:45-3

Afternoon videos and presentations

12:45 - 1:45: Part time pastor; full time ministry in the small church: Ashfield and Southbridge

1:45 - 2:30 What is needed that we have not tried before? Are there things you keep assuming or trying that really are no longer working? How might you do something differently to keep the "plant" growing? What more do you want to know?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfwOM84J48>

2:30-3 Coaching in parish teams – finding focus and movement forward (with lingering if anyone wants further conversation)

What is the soil like at our churches? This was the opening exploration question at the second small church summit held on September 28th at All Saints Episcopal Church, in South Hadley. Is it fertile? Is it more like the rocky soil where seeds fall but cannot root? In the discussion, I heard people say that the soil of their parish is fertile, others said that theirs could be fertile with help, or that it has been fertile in the past but lacks something now. It certainly is something we can and should think about. We also heard from people who said that they have been successful at turning their parishes around. At one parish, a labyrinth was built, very small and plain, but the parish and community have rallied around it, planting flowers and causing interest in the parish and new growth. This story reminded me of the response Chiro got to his empty house lot garden on Worcester Street. On the other hand, I got the impression that some parishes are looking for ways to loosen the soil of their parish, to allow roots to dig in and spread. One suggestion we did hear several times throughout the day was to make an effort to include people who need to be invited to church and to repeat invitations more than once. Several participants repeatedly shared the fact that they observed that congregations (not necessarily Episcopal ones) seemed to grow because they went out of their way to ask others to come to services; they made a great effort to go outside and beyond their comfort zones.

The next part of the meeting, was an “Introduction in movement and song” led by The Reverend Jenny Gregg (who leads the outdoor ministry, Cathedral of the Beloved in Pittsfield), which I found quite inspirational. Jenny had us stand and move and stretch, an exercise which culminated in having us all reach skyward like the branches of trees, while our feet were planted firmly on the floor like the roots we had previously been discussing. This was another thing that emphasized to me that growth can only take root when the soil is willing to let it. If the ground is unyielding and refuses to let new roots penetrate, plants have no option but to wither and die. Jenny led us in song at the end of this process, a song which was taught using a call & response technique. Sadly I was participating and not able to take notes. Now of course I cannot remember it, so I plan to send an email to her to get the words, or at least the title of the song.

The next segment of the program, was “What Makes Your Parish ‘Sing’? What is your ‘Why’?” consisting of a *You Tube* video entitled “Know Your Why,” by the comedian, Michael Jr., who interrupts his acts with a segment called “[Break Time](#)”. If you have time look this/him up you will learn that while Michael J is in Winston-Salem, NC to perform, he meets “a high school music director with a voice that steals the show”

[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZe5y2D60YU\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZe5y2D60YU). It is enlightening and amazing, and clearly illustrates the difference between knowing what you want to do and feeling why you want to do it.

After the big group presentation we once again broke up into smaller groups for a discussion of our personal whys? Why are we attending a meeting about growing our parishes? Why are we here? ... as individuals and as parish representatives? **At one time we stated that our why was to be the “hands and feet of Jesus on Hamilton Street.”** Nancy expressed the thought that **maybe we need to rethink that. [what did you say Nancy? I cannot remember.]** Mainly we went around the group trying to narrow down our personal whys. It was eye opening and provocative, being caused to think about things that are complicated in many respects. Again we gathered as a large group, this time to view a You Tube video of a presentation, “Insights for the New Reformation” | Bethany Ringdal | TEDxGustavusAdolphusCollege.

[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-9G-IJTGA0\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-9G-IJTGA0). Ringdal began by using a story of her grandfather’s life to describing the issue of parishes that are still reliving their glory days, and hoping those days of monetary and population prosperity will return. She provided some statements and statistics that might be seen as cruel, but expresses the hope that we might see past them to the opportunity they are hiding – an opportunity to get back to the path that Jesus himself might want us to tread. She reminds us that Christianity began as a subversive message in a tiny corner of an empire that was ultimately adopted by the powerful and became equally powerful, wealthy, and mainstream. Today with that power and dominance dying, where do we turn next?

This was a good presentation, even though it is also a very painful message to hear. I agree with her, but at the same time I liked how her basic premise is that the church should remember

that following Christ is not the path of dominance, wealth, and social prestige. She sees the church losing this dominance and social prestige as an opportunity for us to reclaim the original message of Christ: wholeness is the most desirable state, the broken can be healed, we are invited into the restoration of the world to wholeness, we are invited to walk the countercultural way of Jesus, and we are free to fail because God's promise comes with the message of unconditional love. We are free from judging ourselves and others. We can love our neighbors because they are loveable. We can live deep and wide. We can learn to trust God to lead us on the path to a new and different vision of church.

After this video we again broke into discussion groups which were a bit more controversial. I think the presentation was more distressing and we had all been affected by different points Ringdal made. [John and Nancy if you can remember any specific comments or ideas that came out of this discussion I would appreciate it – I know that in our group my feminist ideas kind of took over, and I remember that one of the men in our group had quite a bit to say – I believe he was also clergy – it was almost like he was chastising us for previous ideas in the earlier discussions – I didn't quite understand all he said, but it seemed to put a damper on the rest of the talk]

After lunch came the two presentations, Holy Trinity's presentation by John of Tamsin's Pecha Kucha slides, and the presentation by the group from Ashfield who have a 10 hour a week pastor, Vicki Ix (who also works for the diocese). Vicki only deals with clergy/liturgical tasks with some oversight of Buildings and Grounds. The rest of the parish needs are handled by teams of parishioners. (This seemed a useful way to handle parish responsibilities).

Parishioners should be the ones who deal with day to day needs, and it seemed like an excellent idea that they do it as "teams," not as an individual who has to shoulder a responsibility until he/she is burned out and someone else has to take over.

Finally the last exercise of the day was a video about keeping a potted plant growing. What might we do differently to keep the plant that is our parish alive and growing? Water. Pot size, nutrients, etc. Is it always the same answer or should it always be the same answer to promote growth as we move through the stages of parish life and growth? How can we balance the

different needs of the parish through the different stages of life? As always discussion often seemed to revolve around buildings and service styles. Some think stepping away from traditions is a good start, some think lost buildings and traditions will be the end. Change might bring growth... change might kill us. Overall fear seems to be a real factor. One thing that Pam said, that struck me as true (and her as well I think) was that people tend to think if something worked in the past we should stick with it, so if it really were a plant, and water worked last time, we should stick with water, because of totally unrelated but on the surface related ideas such as "Jesus baptized with water ergo, water is the answer" and other not exactly true connections like that.

I wish I could have found the video again, but I have not managed to do so. The URL on the agenda does not resolve to a video. [Video unavailable].