St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church

Vestry Meeting Minutes

Meeting of Thursday, November 16, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. by the Rector, George Arceneaux IV.

In attendance were: Senior Warden Deb Maue, Junior Warden Mark Schneider, Paul Clark, Kelly Clissold, Peter Curtin, Blaise Denton, Jules Dulski, Thomas Gary, and Gretchen Straw. Also in attendance were: Treasurer Johnathan White, Clerk of the Vestry John Hillman, and Rector George Arceneaux IV.

1. Opening prayer and reflection: Julie Dulski
   * 1. Julie’s presentation focused on thankfulness.
     2. God is gracious and provides everything we need; therefore giving thanks puts our needs and wants in perspective.
     3. Julie provided many examples of the thankfulness that she and we all express. It was a thoroughly well-prepared and written out offering.
2. Administration
   1. Changes to the Agenda—None.
   2. Approval of the October minutes
      1. Moved by Paul
      2. Seconded by Deb
      3. The motion was approved without opposition.
   3. Treasurer’s/Financial Committee Report
      1. Jonathan reported a “trivial deficit” for the month.
      2. October was the fourth highest giving month of the 2023 year. Pledge + Non Pledge Income totaled $24,743.26.
      3. The value of the investment account dropped 2.8% for the month and stood at $481,386.07 on 10/31/23.
   4. Stewardship Committee
      1. A pledge letter and a physical pledge card are under development for use in the stewardship campaign which will focus on three Sundays in the month of December.
      2. There will be three statements from parishioners printed in the service bulletins, one per week during the campaign.
      3. After Thanksgiving, George will be preaching on giving.
      4. Deb commented that at the beginning of this year, the Vestry anticipated running a deficit of $72,000 for the 2023 year. It now appears that deficit may end up at about $10,000 or so.
      5. We are determined to keep in mind all three forms of pledging: time, talent and treasure.
      6. Question: How does this church touch each parishioner? Money? Time? What’s on the pledge card?
3. Rector’s Report
   1. Worship
      1. 8am:
         1. Now using a freestanding altar at the foot of the chancel stairs.
         2. The Willis-es, a young couple with daughter Eliana attend regularly, alternating between the 8 and 11 services.
         3. A recent highlight was the attendance of Andrew Keeney and his mother Andrea, and Andrew’s subsequent baptism, the latter of which attracted 18 folks.
      2. “The 9:30 service continues to be spectacular.”
         1. The sermon is one of George’s favorite Sunday moments. The Elizabethan Compromise seemed to have landed. Another on baptism.
         2. Shenanigans, wiggling and reverence seem to be approaching appropriate balance, although George is working on messaging around the topic of wiggling sometimes morphing into rumpus-ing.
         3. Some Rite Two features: Torches, Candles.
      3. “The 11am is pretty close to where I think it needs to be as a baseline.”
         1. Big hope = holding it to 60 minutes. We’re averaging 65, which George considers a “win”. [Just for the record, your Clerk understands that, if necessary, the choir has offered to walk out at the 60th minute!]
         2. “We are achieving both better and better structure for the service without losing its identity.”
         3. “I do, however, want to encourage silence during some period ahead of the worship itself.”
         4. Young people: we have kids, tweens, and teens.
            1. The kids are very well provided for through Wiggle Worship.
            2. The teens have their own community.
            3. The tween question: How do we make space for those between the ages of about 9-13?
            4. Perhaps periodically a youth group during the 11am service led by Chloe and/or others, with an invitation to participate in communion once we get there in the service.
   2. Formation
      1. Wiggle Worship is effectively a combo worship and formation space. George is experimenting with preaching the Gospel as a means of formation, but also segueing into church history and ritual (baptism). Activities after WW have also been fun. These activities always connect with some theme from the service.
      2. Adult formation has caused more restlessness for George. He’s had it most Sundays, but attendance has been generally between 1 and 3.
      3. Should it be on site? Is it more popular seasonally? Christmas? Lent? Would a book club work—after the 11 am service?
      4. He’s wondering about a Zoom study offering and he thinks he’ll try this in a couple of weeks.
   3. Outreach: Outreach feels spectacular to George, largely due to the efforts of Emily and Paul.
      1. St. C’s Community Migrant Closet
         1. Emily spearheaded this effort, now named St. C’s Community Migrant Closet.
         2. It’s been both helpful and needed. The closet has been GREAT.
         3. Parents, kids, and parishioners from St. C’s and beyond have helped sort, gather, and distribute supplies to the migrant population (George is looking at Mark and Eileen).
         4. George has been asked if we were willing to host someone at our church after the crisis declaration ends in December. George’s understanding from most is that this is not the ministry St. C’s should be focusing on
      2. Long-term
         1. Meanwhile, Paul organized a great event with Dan Doody of St. Catherine’s/St. Lucy’s, which drew our attention back to perennial issues of inequity between Oak Park and Austin.
         2. George expressed an interest in having the parish continue to cultivate its relationships with St. Catherine’s/St. Lucy’s and with our long-standing partners, Housing Forward and Beyond Hunger.
   4. Staffing Update
      1. We hired Ann Vikstrom this week officially. She’ll start on December 4th.
      2. George wants to do something for Uziel; he has been a huge help.
   5. What I’m Working On
      1. George has been pulled in a number of different directions; that is,
         1. The migrant ministry,
         2. Attending Fresh Start meetings
         3. Various events:
            1. The Episcopal Charities Gala
            2. The Community of Congregations meeting
            3. One-on-one meetings with parishioners from all three services and meeting with community leaders
            4. Working on the website so that we have consistent, relatable, and accessible events.
            5. Updating the website, newsletter and social media presence is the best way to incorporate new people using digital communications in addition to our welcome procedure at the physical church, according to a presentation George attended at the cathedral.
      2. Coming up, George believes his biggest focus needs to be on:
         1. Annual Meeting (1/21?) and Vestry Nomination Committee
         2. Assisting Stewardship (Kick-off on Christ the King)
         3. Advent and Christmas
         4. Preliminary planning for Lent and Holy Week
         5. Training and orienting Ann
      3. What George is doing, about which you don’t have to worry.
4. Other upcoming events and Closing
   * 1. 11/23 Thursday – Thanksgiving Day Morning Prayer service (9 am Zoom)
     2. 11/26 Sunday – Christ the King Sunday
     3. 12/3 Sunday – Advent Craft Night
     4. 12/17 Sunday – Lessons and Carols (5 pm)
     5. 12/21 Thursday – Blue Christmas (7 pm)
     6. 12/24 Sunday– Christmas Eve 4 pm family service; 10:30 pm midnight mass
     7. 12/25 – Christmas Day (Monday – How Many Services? Thinking 1-2) 10 am only?
     8. 1/7 – Epiphany Pageant with Baptism for Baptism of our Lord & First St. C’s café of 2024
     9. Late Feb/Early March — Chili cook off.
     10. More fellowship dinners?
     11. Newcomers’ dinner?
     12. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm, following prayer led by George.

Respectfully submitted,

John Hillman

Clerk of the Vestry