

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Minutes of the Regular Vestry Meeting
April 20, 2009

There was a regular meeting of the Vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Chestnut Hill, on Monday, April 20, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in Dixon House.

Those present were: The Rev. Cliff Cutler, presiding, also Rev. Nancy Dilliplane, Dean Ennis, Pam Gagne, Sarah Heckscher, Cathy Glazer, Matt Hyde, Alix Jones, Barbie Kimberly, James Pope, Jake Roak, Tim Sager, Ann Stevens, Van Williams.

Roberta Barsotti and John Rollins were absent.

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Short Form of Evening Prayer

Reverend Cliff Cutler called the meeting to order and led the Vestry in a short form of evening prayer.

B. Listening Hearts Guidelines

Members of the Vestry shared instances of being drawn closer to Christ and the Listening Hearts Guidelines were reviewed. The Rector and the Vestry offered prayers for John Rollins, who was ill. They also gave thanks for the spectacular Easter services and the Easter Vigil service, our first combined service with the Church of the Advocate of North Philadelphia

C. Approval of the March 16, 2009 Minutes

The March 16, 2009 Minutes were not available for review.

D. Review of new members

The Rector reported new faces at St. Paul's include Mary Loveland and friend and Rich Genga. It was noted that Kim Sivick took video of the Easter Service and the Sivick's younger son will be joining the youth choir. Cathy Glazer reported that name tags for the 9:00 service have been moved nearer the altar to encourage use. Cathy noted that there is still work to be done on organizing the name tags for optimal use. The Rector reminded the Vestry to introduce themselves to visitors, or anyone standing around alone after church and at fellowship time.

E. Right of the Floor

There were no guests.

II. Coordinating Committee

A. Rector's Report

Departing Vestry Members – The Rector reported that Tom Keels resigned from the Vestry for personal reasons; he thanked Tom for his two years of service and participation on the Vestry. The Rector expressed his appreciation for the contributions, dedication and service from departing Vestry members, Dean Ennis, Roberta Barsotti, Tim Sager and Ann Stevens. The Rector noted that the Nominating Committee was awaiting responses to fill out the slate for the five open Vestry positions. He thanked the Nominating Committee for all their work.

Why Good Things Happen to Good People: How to Live a Longer, Healthier, Happier Life by the Simple Act of Giving by Stephen Post – The Rector reported that Dr. Post will be offering a workshop at the Church of the Redeemer on April 25 at 3:00 p.m.

Parish Picnic – The Rector has suggested June 14 as the date for the annual picnic. The Vestry will plan and host the event.

B. Stewardship

Transitioning from spring to fall ingathering – The Rector reported for John Rollins that plans are underway for the Spring Ingathering on Pentecost, a short pledging period (from July 1 to Dec. 31, 2009) and then a Fall Ingathering for the full calendar year (Jan 1 – Dec. 31, 2010). The Rector noted that our median pledge is fairly low - \$750 compared to St. Martin's (median pledge is \$1800) and St. Thomas' (median pledge is \$2500). We need to raise our median pledge as we are revitalizing the church and it is a very exciting time to be a part of St. Paul's. James noted that out of the 240 pledge units of St. Paul's, a handful of donors (10-15) give significantly higher amounts than the median and the Vestry, as a whole, has a median pledge of approximately \$2600. However, the low number of pledging units and the very low median pledge amount are causes for concern.

C. Accounting Warden's Report

Financial Report for March/2009 Budget -- James distributed the Financial Statements for March and asked the Vestry present to focus on the Vestry Summary Report. There is a deficit of \$158,000.00. The Finance Committee has done its best to come up with a budget in terms of expenses at an irreducible minimum if we are to operate as a parish. James noted that there is virtually nothing in the budget in way of programs – funding programs, curriculum materials and even music has been cut to the bone. This makes it very hard to continue to revitalize the church – you can't shrink/cut your way to growth.

The deficit is the result of revenue not sufficient to supporting the church we want to be and not enough pledge units and/or uncollected pledges. James noted that the Stewardship Committee is doing an outstanding job of leading us on a thoughtful journey and providing clarity to what can be done in terms of giving and pledging.

James reported that the Finance Committee recommended that the Vestry adopt the budget with a deficit and would authorize an additional draw (for one year only) on the endowment if the deficit is not brought under control. Some of the deficit could be resolved if pledging increases during the short pledge cycle (June through December) but given the economy, that is not likely the case and in fact, the deficit could increase.

There was a great deal of discussion on the accepting the recommendations of the Finance Committee and the proposed budget. The Rector noted that the congregation has a responsibility to support the parish, including the staff and programs. Several Vestry members noted that the amounts needed from every pledging unit and new members in order to reduce the deficit are unlikely to be realized in a short period of time. James noted that an additional drawdown of the endowment will significantly reduce future resources and should be viewed only as a last-ditch option. Many ideas were discussed regarding the budget including developing a 5-year strategic plan to balance the budget and increase pledge units/families; developing fund-raising campaigns, parish canvassing, charging for using church property, etc. All agreed that the congregation needs to step up giving in order to support St. Paul's and reduce the deficit. The problem was how to do this in a thoughtful, kind and positive way to make everyone accept their responsibility and not drive anyone away. It was also suggested that the proceeds from the Rummage Sale go to reducing the deficit instead of community outreach – again, this would be a last-resort effort. Other suggestions to increase awareness of the urgency of the problem were explored. James noted that all meetings, especially the Stewardship and Finance Committee meetings are open to everyone and all are encouraged to attend. The date of the next Stewardship Committee meeting is Sunday, May 10 at 8:45 a.m. in the Parish Hall.

Several proposals were discussed: 1) The Vestry could adopt the budget as recommended by the Finance Committee with an additional authorized one-time drawdown from the endowment; 2) we could continue to operate without a budget in place but would have to be very careful not to exceed expenses; 3) the Vestry would not approve the budget at this time but would like to open the discussion to the congregation at the Annual Meeting, due to the extreme urgency of the situation. There again was a great deal of discussion for all three options – several Vestry members felt that we have a fiduciary duty to present an approved budget in place; others were vehemently against using Outreach funds for the deficit and the remainder felt that we could not approve a budget built on pledging not likely to be realized in future cycles, especially in the economic downturn. There was on-going dialogue concerning the value of St. Paul's to the Chestnut Hill/Philadelphia community, the Rector's vision of growing the church and what it will take from all of us to support the journey.

III. Decisions Needed

A. Budget to be presented at the Annual meeting.

In an unprecedented action, The Vestry passed a motion to not adopt the budget at this meeting, but to instead open the discussion to the entire congregation at the Annual Meeting. Cathy, Dean, James and John will meet with the Rector to present the budget and lead the discussion at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 17. Based on the feedback from

the Annual meeting, the Vestry will try to resolve the budget issues at the next meeting on May 18.

B. Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee will present the slate of candidates for the Parish through Happenings, iContact and Tidings. The By-laws require a three-week notice. The Rector again thanked Steve Pearson and all of the Nominating Committee for their hard work in this endeavor.

IV. Discussion Needed

A. Spiritual Nourishment

Report from the Spiritual Nourishment Team – Tim Sager reported the Spiritual Nourishment team is working on a proposal for a Confirmation program based on consistent expectations for both adults and young people. The proposed criteria would favor commitment over the currently centered requirements of knowledge. Tim distributed a draft of the proposed program. The Rector and Assistant Rector thanked the Committee for their fine work and noted that commitment is right-on target for Confirmation criteria and pastoral dynamics. Nancy reminded the group that the dinner scheduled for May 3 will discuss the Confirmation criteria issue in depth.

B. Service in Jesus Name

Restoration Committee Grant proposal to Partners for Sacred Places – The Rector noted that we may apply for a 2-for-1 grant, i.e., if approved, they would give us \$65,000 but we would have to raise \$130,000 for a specific project.

Property Committee -- Barbie reported that projects are continuing and new leaks have been discovered.

Interfaith Hospitality Committee – Ann Stevens reported that our IHN guests have arrived and will be here until May 10. We have 3 families. Ann noted that so far this year, IHN has housed 18 families.

V. Other Committee Reports and Business

Due to the late hour, no other business was reported.

VIII. Dismissal

Reverend Cutler led a closing prayer and dismissed the Vestry. The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cyndi Anderson
Secretary

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Vestry will be held Monday, May 18 at 7:00 p.m.
in Dixon House