

THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS

MINUTES OF THE VESTRY MEETING SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

The September Virtual Vestry meeting (via *GotoMeeting*) was called to order at 5: 00 pm by Fr. Josh Stephens, our Rector. Attending were: Senior Warden, Carol Rector, Junior Warden, Jerry Tanner, Elizabeth Christenbury, Cynthia Easterling, Terry Enslin, Marie Hyder, Janet Johnson, Greg Newbold, Shelley Schiro, Gibson Sims and Dick Zecher. Michael Shannon was absent.

Devotional: The opening devotional including prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer* was led by Carol Rector.

Approval of Minutes: Greg Newbold made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2020, Vestry Meeting; it was seconded by Marie and was passed.

Finance Report: Carol Rector and Tom Griswold

Presenting the 2020 Financial Actuals + Forecast Summary as well as the 2021 Proposed Budget. Tom highlighted the following items:

- The current forecast for 2020 Budget shows a surplus of Income over Expenses of \$45,558 in the General Operating Fund.
- Although pledges remain on target, Contributions/Memorial Income is a concern with approximately one quarter of the amount budgeted being received which could result in a \$69K shortfall in income.
- While overall expenses are forecasted to be down by 4% from the budget, there are significant expenses forthcoming which include Outreach Contributions, Security (for doors and alarm system), Worship expenses for tent and chair rental, and additions to Capital and Operating Reserves.
- With the forecasted reduction of expenses, a surplus in our 2020 Budget, and lower than Budget Contributions/Memorials, there could be a shortfall at the end of the year of around \$9K which may be balanced by elimination or reduction of additions to the Operating Reserve and the Capital Reserve.
- The 2021 Operating Budget was introduced for General Operations and does not include capital expenditures or other funds; income for 2021 is budgeted at \$615,900, a 5% decrease from the 2020 Budget.
- Expenses are projected to increase 2% due to Coronavirus adjustments and insurance increases; continuing to add \$20K to Capital Reserve; and Building and Grounds Budget ongoing and continuing expenses.
- While Budgeted Outreach Contributions remain the same, there are other sources of International and Local Outreach Funds.
- Our Diocesan Pledge will decrease slightly, due to our reduction of income, to \$56,004 from \$60K; it remains at 10% of our Pledge and Contributions/Memorials.
- The proposed 2021 Budget is balanced with a very small surplus.

- Tom continued with the following: An analysis of DonorBox Contributions (St. John website) from April through August revealed that 4% of pledges received use DonorBox; 36% of Contributions and Memorials are using DonorBox.
- Tom discussed some aspects of The Diocese of Western North Carolina 2021 Budget which focuses on Missions, Programs and Grants, with reductions due to the Coronavirus being absorbed internally.
 - Revenue is projected to be down 2% due to a reduction in Parish Pledges and Endowment Income as many small churches are struggling.
 - Executive and Support budget will be reduced with a loss of one staff position. Office Administration has been continuously reduced since 2016 and is proposed to be flat for 2021.
 - Priority items include Programs, Missions and Grants such Ministry Development (Curacy Program), Youth and College Ministries, new generation clergy leaders (IONA Program), Blue Ridge Service Corps, Latino Ministry, and grants for Small Parish Support, Congregational Vitality and others.

Discussing aspects of the Proposed Budget, Carol reported that while some expenses have decreased, health benefits have increased by 6% according to the Diocese. As a result, there will be no staff or clergy raises in 2021.

Options for balancing the 2020 Budget include eliminating the annual \$5K contribution to reserves and the \$25K contribution to Capital Reserves. Others will continue to be explored as circumstances could change in the final quarter of this year.

A motion was made to accept the September Budget Reports by Cynthia with a second by Janet. The Vestry will vote on the 2021 Budget in October.

Vestry Nominating Committee Report:

Greg Newbold, chair of the Vestry Nominating Committee, began by reading the by-laws of the nominating process. Greg, along with the committee comprised of Carol, Fr. Josh, Jodi Sundeen, and Debby Staton, met to consider what the church needed going forward. As a result, they selected 11 candidates for consideration. Dick made a motion to accept the names; Gibson seconded the motion and it was approved. Carol will continue the process by contacting the first four candidates to seek their willingness to serve as a Vestry member; contacts will continue until 4 have agreed.

Committee Reports:

Communications Committee – Janet Johnson

This Committee continues to support church activities by providing information to the public via social media and news releases for regional coverage. See the following:

- The Bazaar at St. John in the Wilderness offered online shopping through September 15. To promote this event, social media messages were posted on the church's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts
- New releases regarding special events at the parish are sent to regional media.
- Committee member Eduard Wiescholak has continued to film behind the camera Sunday services for online viewing with editing by Committee Chair Joey Popp.

Stewardship – Fr. Josh

In the report on our Mission and Ministry Campaign for 2021, Fr. Josh highlighted the following items:

- Information was mailed to parishioners on September 10th, 2020 consisting of letter to those who are pledging and those who are not pledging.
- Along with expressing gratitude, the communication aimed to begin a conversation of our church's reliance on bequests and memorials in the budget process.
- Our 2021 goals: \$550,000 in pledges compared to \$500,000 last year and increase in number of pledging units (157 in 2020).
- Our UTO cycle, which celebrates gratitude each day, is currently available. All money offered benefits evangelism, poverty reduction, and seminary support in the Episcopal Church around the world.
- Ingathering for both Stewardship and UTO is scheduled for October 18.
- Our Time and Talent Survey, along with reminders of the Mission and Ministry Campaign have been sent by email.
- The Pharrs have invited our parish to Falling Creek for an outdoor service at 11:00 a.m. on October 18th. followed by a picnic as a culminating event for the Ingathering for Preparing the Way.

Fr. Josh also discussed a concern from a parishioner about the delays in reconvening in person. While the pandemic has resulted in many changes in gathering, the Clergy along with Bishop Jose continue to consult and plan for reconvening as well as communicating updates to parishioner.

Outreach Committee

Carol Rector reported on Outreach Committee Disbursements made during August to support multiple ministries in our community and abroad. Along with check, a letter of encouragement was sent to each of the ten organizations.

Junior Warden's Report - Jerry Tanner

Jerry reported the discussed the following:

- The new door for the office area has been installed, but a meeting with Southern Alarm to review installation of the alarm for the door and panic buttons, reveals a cost increase of \$876.15. New chairs for Parish Hall ordered in February have been received.

- In communication with John Pace regarding paving the parking areas. Planning for a multi-year project with the area around the church as the first project.
- Budget restraints have resulted in major capital expenditures being deferred. Due to several projects that have been completed in the last three years, there are no pending major capital expenditures.
- In 2021, updates are needed for office computers at an approximate cost of \$3,400.

Jerry also expressed his appreciation to Eduard Wiescholek who has been working on Building and Grounds projects around the church. A note will be published in the *Voice*.

Senior Warden Report - Carol Rector

Carol discussed the upcoming Diocesan Convention scheduled November 13 – 14 via *Zoom*. Shelley and Marie have agreed to be represent St. John in the Wilderness as delegates.

Continuing, Carol asked for a Vestry member to take over the responsibility of coordinating the Gatekeepers as Greg is rotating off Vestry. The Coordinator's role is to schedule gate keepers and educate new members who volunteer for this ministry.

Rector's Report

Fr. Josh included the following in his report:

- The Bonhoeffer Book Study, which has been well attending, is concluding
- Confirmation classes are beginning.
 - Youth class started Sunday, September 13. Adult class will start Sunday, September 20 at 3pm under the Tent.
 - On October 4th, we will initiate them into the class at the Sunday morning service.
- Holy Hikes, an opportunity for Morning Prayer with fellow parishioners on area hiking trails, has begun.
- Backpacks' Empty Bowls project has been redesigned and rescheduled for October 3.
- Bishop Jose has announced that the number participating in indoor worship will be increased to 25.
- There will be a special service on November 2, All Soul's Day at 3 pm in the churchyard. Names of those who have died will be read. Names may be submitted to Leslie.

Closing

After an evening prayer led by Fr. Josh, the meeting was adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Barker, Clerk

