

ST. MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
VESTRY MEETING
MINUTES
August 24, 2023

Present: Senior Warden-Marlo Pratt, Treasurer-David Brierley, Clerk-Mattie Gustafson, Cory Thurston, Richard Updegrave, Rita Verespy, Anne Wood, John Corbishley, and the Revs. Meaghan Brower and Jennifer Pedrick.

Absent: Junior Warden-George LeBlanc, Lee Ferreira, Lauren Lema, and Alex Simmons.

The Vestry, too, indulged in a little “Rest and Play” – we had a lovely reception (thanks to Marlo Pratt) and a rousing – and rather competitive – game of corn hole. Then we got down to business.

Jennifer opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. with a prayer.

Rector's Time – Jennifer Pedrick

Gibbs House Update

It's time for John C. to call the realtor and list Gibbs House as available for rent.

Choir School of Newport County

The Choir School, under the direction of Peter Bergen, will begin rehearsing in our Choir Room beginning September 1st. Meaghan is working on sorting out what furniture, etc., is now in the Choir Room and what might be used or offered to other churches.

We have a 6-month agreement in place with the choir school, with the option for renewal, if agreeable to all parties. They will need to use the Choir Room, some storage space, and the kitchen.

Service on Saturday

We are going to offer a 5:00 p.m. Saturday Evening service beginning Saturday, October 7th. The content and mood of this service is still in formation. We hope to offer a Wine and Cheese Reception after the service on the first Saturday of each month.

Clothes Shed Delivered – Marlo

The shed for clothes donations is here, next to the barn. Thus far we have 2 volunteers who have agreed to look after the shed and keep it need. We need 3 more people. This need will be communicated to the congregation in the ENews.

Associate Rector's Time – Meaghan Brower

Fall Children's Programs

Meaghan met with the teachers for Creation Care Kids, and Meaghan and Jennifer have done much talking and praying about what might be next for families and children at St. Mary's. The decision was made, for now, to try to incorporate children and families in the services and events that are already planned. Launching the 5 p.m. Saturday service, which is often more convenient for families, might impact what we offer and when. We need to find a better way to engage people of all ages in church. Ann mentioned that children need to be valued – not tolerated – and we can do this without having “Sunday School.”

Special Events at St. Mary's

Meaghan is exploring options for offering St. Mary's as a site for various events. Nothing concrete has been decided yet.

Historic Church Funding Update – David B.

David made a motion to designate \$58,312 of the prior years' surplus for use in closing the funding gap on the historic church fund raising effort. John C. seconded the motion. David informed us that this perceived “gap” is getting smaller every time he calculates it, and final figures will not be available until 2024. After more discussion it was decided that it would be better to wait until all pledges are in, and we have a final funding assessment. David B withdrew his motion. This issue will be revisited in the future.

2024 Budget – David

David presented the first iteration of a proposed 2024 budget. He said the two biggest challenges in the coming year will be personnel expenses and pledges. (Pledge giving has been at a plateau for the past 2-3 years, and we will need a significant increase to support our mission and ministries as they grow.)

David's plan is to present the proposed budget to the Vestry in October. It will be voted on in December.

The Vestry discussed how best to communicate to our members why an increase is needed. It was felt that if we make a good case for the money we need to make our ministries flourish, they will respond. We've been here before – faced with a huge financial goal. If we are open and transparent about this need and trust in God, good things will happen.

Jennifer expressed thanks to David for digging deep into our finances and having next year's budget started.

Stewardship – Rita

September 17th will be this year's Stewardship Kickoff. The theme this year is *Rooted in Abundance*. We will be having speakers and creating some videos (for online use). She has also ordered a banner and flags. She will be attending a seminar about "Breaking the plateau" in the near future.

Consent Agenda

Richard made a motion, seconded by Dave, that we pass the Consent Agenda, consisting of the Minutes and Treasurer's Report for July 2023, and the Jr Wardens' Report for August 2023. The motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mattie E. Gustafson
Clerk