

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Wilmington, NC
Vestry Retreat, March 5-6, 2021 – ZOOM

MINUTES

Present: Jim Hanisian, consultant, Teresa Singer, Senior Warden, Tom Sramek, Junior Warden, the Rev. Raymond Hanna, Interim Rector, Adam Pierce, Assistant Rector, Ruth Gates, Angela Green, Joan Rosko Miller, Rhonda Stroud, Meaghan Thomas, Merry Ann Wright, Sally Pope, Layne Dupree, Steve Martin, Judy Wilson, Treasurer, and Brenda Cunningham, Clerk

Not in attendance: Matt Langley

The meeting started at 6:30 pm with opening remarks from Jim Hanisian:

- Silence is assent.
- Prefer not to have people on mute for zoom call.
- He defined what a vestry is and is not. It is a ministry with specific duties and responsibilities. The work of this weekend's retreat is to become an efficient and effective vestry.
- He requested members suggest what they are praying for this evening. The sentiment was prayer for the church, the rector search, the strategic plan and authenticity and candor among the vestry members. Each member repeated the prayer of the preceding member.

The Four Corners Exercise

The training session began with the "Four Corners Exercise". Jim began by defining four types of individuals and each member self-selected their type.

First type: V a person who lives at 50,000 feet, thinks outside the box. They are visionaries, not interested in details.

Adam, Tom, Ruth, Layne

Second type: L a person who lives at 20,000 feet, they understand the V people. They can put plans into action, they don't like details either. L stands for leader

Ray, Meghan, Merry Ann, Teresa

Third type: M a person that can follow the ideas of the L type, not the V. They put flesh on the bones. They are the Managers.

Judy, Steve, Sally

Fourth type: D People who live on the ground. They don't think, they just follow the plan and they can get things done. Stands for Doer.

Rhonda, Joan, Angela

The purpose of the exercise was for the Vestry members to see the composition of their membership and to determine who would best serve each function and how decisions should be made. One possible method for making decisions is to allow the person closest to the problem to be the decision maker.

The only decisions that a Vestry has to make are:

- Pass a budget
- Sign off on Annual Report
- In some cases, hiring decisions
- Manage the Strategic Plan

In terms of decision making, he suggested that Vestries that are too controlling are ineffective. They need to trust others to make decisions and not have to continually go back to Vestry for further instruction and permissions.

The Polity of the Episcopal Church

The next topic that Jim discussed was what the Canons have to say about the structure of the church and the role of the Vestry.

A polity is how the church is structured, organized by some form of institutionalized hierarchy. Bishop William White established the Episcopal Church's structure.

Five kinds of Bishops

1. Diocesan Bishop
2. Bishop Coadjutor
3. Bishop Suffragan
4. Assistant Bishop
5. Bishop Provisional

Three types of Congregations

1. Parish – in union with the Diocese of East Carolina
 - a. Use Book of Common Prayer
 - b. Acknowledge its bishop
 - c. Admitted by the Convention
2. Mission – a congregation not yet admitted to the convention
3. Other ministries, such as Campus Ministry

It is vital that the Vestry understands the structure of the church so it can communicate to the parishioners why and how decisions are made. For example, if St. Paul's wanted to make structural changes to the building, it is important to know that the Diocese of East Carolina owns the property.

THE POLITY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

D.F.M.S.

CONGREGATION

Annual Meeting

Vestry

Wardens

RECTOR/VICAR

(Trustees)

Rector/Vicar Staff

DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA

Annual Convention

Executive Council

Standing Committee

BISHOP

Trustees of Church
Foundation

Bishop's Staff

Committees & Commissions

First session on March 5, 2021 adjourned at 8:37 pm.

Second session on March 6, 2021 began at 9:00 am.

Present: Jim Hanisian, consultant, Teresa Singer, Senior Warden, Tom Sramek, Junior Warden, the Rev. Raymond Hanna, Interim Rector, Adam Pierce, Assistant Rector, Ruth Gates, Angela Green, Joan Rosko Miller, Rhonda Stroud, Meaghan Thomas, Merry Ann Wright, Sally Pope, Layne Dupree, Steve Martin, Tom Sramek, Matt Langley, Judy Wilson, Treasurer, and Brenda Cunningham, Clerk

The meeting started with opening remarks from Jim Hanisian asking for any feedback from last evening. The feedback was very positive about the first session. Concepts on how a vestry should function and desire to be a responsible but not controlling body was discussed. Matt Langley characterized his type as a Doer. Joan relayed that she thought praying other's prayers last evening was particularly effective and moving.

Jim said the members of the vestry are responsible for the spiritual life of each other. He asked each person to think about how close they are to God. Silent prayer for God to be in the same room with us. Use silence as an opportunity to be closer to God and each other.

Jim circled back to last evening's discussion about Bishop White and decision making. He believed in a "bizarre" way of making decisions. In the Episcopal Church, it is possible for particularly weighty issue to not pass even if 75% of the vote is in the affirmative. This means that the majority doesn't always mean a yes and a tie is a no vote. According to Bishop White, wisdom comes from struggle and the conversation is more important than the decision. The gist of Jim's point is that "we can have any conversation as long as God will be glorified".

Bible Study

The following scripture was read and the vestry members were divided into separate zoom rooms to discuss the reading based on their self-defined types.

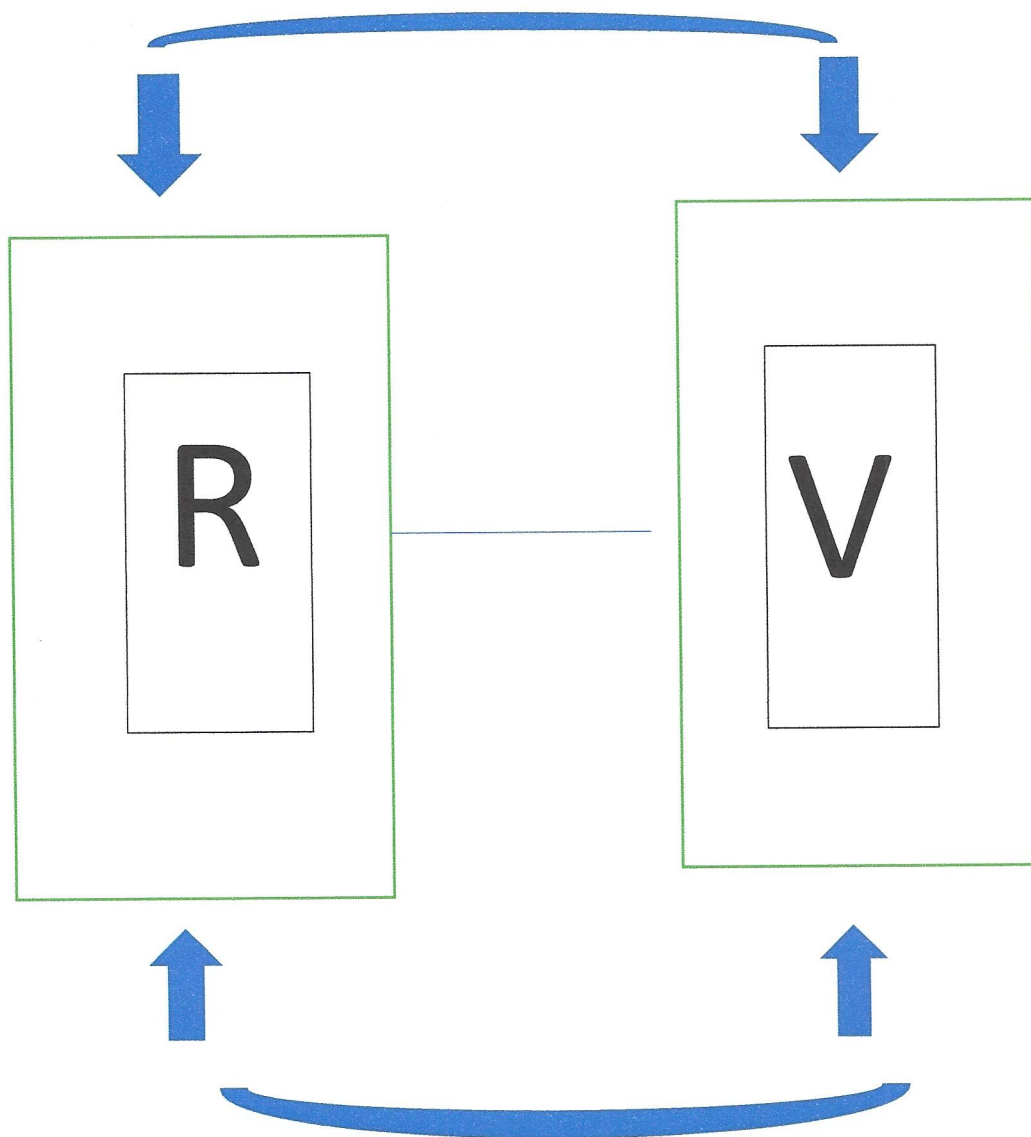
Ephesians 4: 11-16

11The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. 14We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. 15But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Each group discussed the reading for 15 minutes and were charged with coming back with one sentence to summarize the scripture. In summary, each group stressed the importance of speaking the truth in love, using the gifts God has provided, and provide opportunities for all members of the church. Jim emphasized that the vestry's mission is to use their skills and talents to build the kingdom of God.

Rector/Vestry Model

RECTOR/VESTRY MODEL



The most functional congregation has a strong bond between the two groups. Each has specific roles and responsibilities. In an effective parish, the rector supports the strength and power of the vestry and the vestry supports the rector in kind. Mutual respect for each other is key to success and prevents the congregation from putting a wedge between them.

Rhonda said she refers to Ray as John the Baptist. Members of the vestry expressed gratitude for his leadership during interim period. Ray “gave a shout out” to Adam thanking him for his valuable help.

Model for Program-size Church

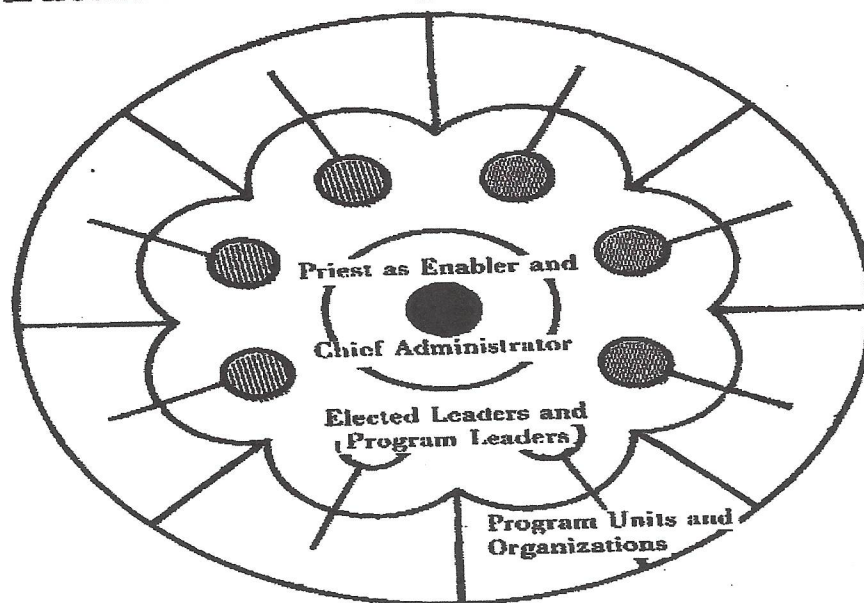
For the next exercise, Ray asked vestry members to talk about the Church in which they were formed, how many people were in that church, what was the denomination and their relationship with spiritual leader. Each of the vestry members shared their experience. The common thread in each of the stories was that past experiences would ideally be duplicated. Jim stated that expectations of vestry members cannot be met by any church; specifically, expectations include wanting the church to be as life giving as the church that formed members and now people have the ability to see multiple churches on line and are comparing their home church to a multitude of churches. For example, the National Cathedral now has “a ton” of virtual members.

The traditional model for being a rector and a vestry is no longer viable. Jim suggested vestry members go online and read “Sizing up the Congregation” by Arlin J. Rothauge. The booklet is only 37 pages and provides insights on organizing a church based on the ASA (average Sunday attendance) of the congregation.

The Five Categories of Size

1. Family size (50 people or less) – run by matriarchal or patriarchal vestry, not the pastor
2. Pastoral size (60-150 people) – most prevalent for Episcopal churches. The presumption in rector training is that most priests will go to this size parish.
3. Transitional (150-250 people) – most difficult to run. St. Paul’s is a transitional church. It has the option to shrink and become a Pastoral church or grow and become a Program church.
4. Program size (3250-800 people) – no pastoral care in this size church.
5. Resource size (>800 people) – no pastoral care in this size church.

1. The Structure of the Program Church



For the Program Church, the priest is at the center and is supported by the vestry and lay leadership. A pastor cannot be effective for more than 150 people. There is no line connecting the leaders of the church and the ministries, groups or day-to-day congregation. The vestry and clergy must be able to come to terms with this and realize that they are responsible "for driving the car while others look out the windows." The clergy and vestry provide the vision required and must trust the other groups to provide pastoral care.

Trust is the cornerstone of the Program Church model. Two things are needed to create trust:

1. Transparency – must be clear and truthful, does not mean full disclosure of every detail
2. Accountability – keeping promises that are made within agreed parameters (such as the budget, Strategic Plan). Not every decision needs to be run by the vestry. It is not the vestry's job to micro-manage every aspect of the church.

An example for St. Paul's is the music program. Rarely is anything ever discussed with the vestry about the music program. This is based on trust. The vestry trusts Ronnie. At the same time, other committees are expected to seek approval from the vestry. A recent example is the Community Outreach groups plan to install a Blessing Box, which did require vestry approval.

Ray asked vestry members to discuss how they feel they are currently operating as a vestry. After discussion, the vestry was beginning to understand the paradigm shift that is necessary in a Program size church.

Noon Day Prayer

Adam led noon day prayer.

Visioning Exercise

Vestry members were given an hour and fifteen minutes to privately leave zoom meeting and write a letter to themselves from God. The assignment is to determine "What is God calling you to be and do." According to Ray, the V and D types will have no problem with this exercise but the M and L types will have a more difficult time. As part of the exercise, one member of the vestry will be tasked with reading all the letters and collating common themes into a single letter. At the next vestry meeting, letter should be read and discussed.

Sample format of letter:

Dear Ray,

My vision for St. Paul's Episcopal Church is

Love and kisses,

God

Are we really getting messages from God? According to Jim, it is not possible to tell but we need to be able to count on each other to be truth tellers.

The volunteers to collate the letters are Sally Pope and Teresa Singer. Everyone is to transfer their letters to electronic format and forward them to Sally and Teresa. They will collate letters and provide for next vestry meeting in March.

Vestry Meetings – Structuring Meetings

1/3, 1/3, 1/3

Meetings could be structured as follows:

30 minutes on faith life (such as spiritual exercises)

30 minutes on review/edit of Strategic Plan

30 minutes on visioning and problem solving

Note: This model allows no time for review of reports. They are reviewed in advance and any questions are already discussed with the report preparer.

Vestry Spiritual Growth

Vestry members should learn to be a witness, share how God has been real in their life.

Strategic Plan

The strategic plan forms are where and how accountability takes place. Every year, usually after Easter, the Vestry should meet once annually to review and edit or adopt the Strategic Plan.

Visioning and/or problem-solving

The vestry needs to develop a way to go forward after review of Strategic Plan. This is where you ensure you are allowing time to let God change your plans.

And finally, Jim stated "anything else is out of order."

Vestry Meeting – Using New Program Model

Meeting called to order and Ray opened this session with prayer.

1. Approval of Minutes from February 8th Vestry Meeting

The Minutes of the February 8, 2021 Vestry Meeting were accepted on motion, second (Merry Ann Wright and Meaghan Thomas)

2. Approval of 2020 Parochial Report

The Approval of the 2020 Parochial Report was accepted on motion, second (Merry Ann Wright and Meaghan Thomas)

3. Approval of Architectural Firm

A Facilities Committee Report was prepared and presented to the vestry by Mona Cites. Also in attendance from the committee was Steve Haughey. Members of the committee include Mona Cites, Layne Dupree, Ruth Gates, Angela Green, Steve Haughey and Teresa Green. The report detailed the process and need for selection of an architectural firm to address ADA, safety and other facilities issues of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church. After review of proposals, interviews and reference checks, WKWW was selected by the Facilities Committee to be named as architect. WKWW's area of expertise is exclusively religious architecture. The firm has been in business since 1956 and the references for the firm were glowing. The initial phase will cost approximately \$50-60,000 and firm will provide initial pre-construction plans and drawings for presentation to the vestry. The firm will review and assess facility, prepare cost estimates and prepare an analysis of relocation costs and benefits. Time frame will be dependent on approval of firm, contract negotiation and submission of blue prints and documents.

Steve Haughey has asked Ellen and Spencer Weig to start pulling documents and blue prints for the architects. The Grants Committee is working on possible funding sources for the renovations. Spencer conducted a tour of the facility for vestry members to show them what kind and type of repairs are needed.

The vestry affirmed the work of the Facilities Committee.

By consensus, the vestry gave the Facilities Committee permission to proceed and hire the WKWW as the architectural firm.

Communication is key to success with the Program Church model. There are a number of vehicles for communicating information, including making everyone responsible for communicating the work of their own ministry.

Jim said effectively adopting the Program Church model is 3-5 years. There will be mistakes but important to keep in mind to stop inhibiting the lay ministry. The question was raised about what to do if the new rector does not agree with the Program Church model. Jim said you will do what the new rector wants and address issues through collaboration with the new rector.

The name for the model could be Program Church or Ramona. The name does not matter, the focus needs to be on empowering committees and groups.

4. Facilities Committee Funding

Motion to have vestry speak to the Endowment Committee on funding for Facilities Committee work made by Sally Pope, second by Merry Ann Wright. Motion approved.

Next Steps

If asked, Jim can provide support to the new rector. He has worked with St. Paul's Strategic Plan and various other leadership training.

Closing Prayer and Adjournment

Adam closed the meeting with prayer and again asked that everyone pray the preceding person's prayer. Meeting was adjourned at 3:20 pm.