

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Wilmington, NC
Vestry Meeting
November 8, 2021**

Present: Teresa Singer (Sr. Warden), The Rev. Caleb Lee (Rector), Tom Sramek (Jr. Warden), Judy Wilson (Treasurer), Steve Martin, Merry Ann Wright, Ruth Gates, Sally Pope, Angela Green, Meaghan Thomas, Matthew Langley, Rhonda Stroud, Layne Dupree, Joan Rosko Miller, and Denise Sheehan (Vestry Clerk).

Father Lee led the vestry in a prayer for guidance and clear vision. He then called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm.

Approval of the October 2021 Minutes: Joan Rosko Miller asked for a correction in the minutes under the section, Nominating Committee. The correction was made, and after a motion by Meaghan Thomas, and a second by Teresa Singer, the minutes were approved.

Rector's Report

Father Lee reported that attendance through October continues to increase. Attendance was also up for the Feast of All Saints. He is encouraged and happy where things are, as attendance is now the same as pre-pandemic numbers.

Father Lee expressed his gratitude for the wonderful celebration of his new ministry. The service was drenched in the Holy Spirit. He is also grateful for a "working" vestry, with members full of giving "working bees".

Father Lee has appointed the Reverend Catherine Powell as a new, part-time priest associate. Her first Sunday will be November 14. She will work about 10 to 12 hours a week, assisting in liturgies. He anticipates that she will preach/celebrate one or two times a month as well as throughout the week. She will also teach a Sunday school class, and occasionally speak on children's spirituality. Rev. Powell will also be an on-call pastoral presence to the congregation. Father Lee anticipates other creative ways of adding clergy, keeping the budget in mind.

Saint Paul's is waiting for New Hanover County to lift the mask mandate, hopefully as soon as November 12. He asked for the vestry's input on the best way to follow the lifting of this mandate. The next move for St. Paul's might be to follow the bishop's directive – "all may, none must, some should". Much will depend on the percentage of COVID cases in the county, as well as an increase in those who have received vaccines.

If lifted, services and receptions will return to the parish hall, but the use of pre-packaged foods will continue for large gatherings

Thomas Sramek asked about the mask rules for the choir. The mandate will include everybody, including the choir. Meaghan Thomas asked about Sunday school, especially the teachers and nursery workers. With the availability of vaccines for children five through 11, would we continue to ask that everyone be masked? . Her opinion was that we should continue to follow the New Hanover County school directives. As far as attending services, parents will have to make the decision whether their children should attend or not.

The vestry continued the discussion, bringing up the time period needed for eligible children to be vaccinated, and various options on how to safely include children in the service and other parish activities.

Senior Warden's Report – Teresa Singer

Grant Applications

Last Monday morning, (November 1), Bob Belaustegui and Mona Clites joined the Sr. Warden for a meeting with Merry Ann Wright and Tom Warren, Diocesan Foundation Board members, to review a grant application prepared and submitted by Julie Martin. Mr. Warren was very complimentary of the thorough, detailed proposal provided in the grant application and supporting materials. Mr. Warren informed the group that there are over \$300,000 in grant applications, with the Foundation having less than \$80,000 to disburse. Mr. Warren will advocate for St. Paul's to the Foundation Board, so there is hope that St. Paul's will receive at least a portion of the \$20,000 in our proposal. Teresa thanked Judy Wilson, Merry Ann Wright, Julie Martin, Bob Belaustegui and Mona Clites for their work on our behalf to secure grant money

New Member Event - October 13 at HiWire Brewing

Invitations were sent to 32 prospective and new members, as well as vestry and Membership Committee members. At least 40 people were in attendance, with 21 of them being new/prospective members. HiWire was chosen because it provided a large outdoor space, as well as an indoor option in case of inclement weather. Churasco food truck was on site with three meal choices for the evening. Teresa expressed appreciation for the vestry's support of this event. People were welcomed....they were fed....they were engaged in conversation. God provided an absolutely perfect evening

Stewardship

Teresa has obligated the vestry to write personal thank you notes to pledgers for 2022. She will be putting together packets of St. Paul's thank you notes and stamps for each vestry person. Vestry members may write their own personal, genuine, specific note of gratitude on behalf of St. Paul's. If needed, a template will be provided for inspiration. Vestry members will be notified by email when and where the packets may be picked up. In addition, the Stewardship Committee will send out preprinted cards with a brief message of thanks added.

Christian Formation

On November 28, there will be an intergenerational Advent Wreath Making during Christian Formation at 9:30 in the parish hall.

Teresa asked the vestry to help get the word out that nursery hours are expanding to include Sunday school time. The nursery is going to be available beginning at 9:15 each Sunday until noon. There will also be a staffed nursery for Lessons and Carols on December 19 and Christmas Eve.

She also reported that the Children's Formation teachers are planning a talk/walk through of the Safety and Emergency Plan before Christmas.

Speaking of Safety: Model Policies

St. Paul's has been following protocol for Safeguarding God's Children with Sunday school staff doing training modules every three years, nursery workers having background checks, etc. for many years. As in many things, these practices need to be reviewed and improved periodically. Based on a decision made at General Convention, the diocese distributed Model Policies last week for parishes to adopt by mid- January. It is a large document- around 60 pages, with a lot to digest. In the next few weeks, a group will be formed to sift through the information and develop a plan which we feel will be appropriate for St. Paul's to be presented to the vestry at the December meeting.

Diocesan Mission Priorities

Bishop Skirving and the Executive Council invite input as they enter the next stage of their discernment process regarding Mission Priorities. They welcome feedback through a special email address as well as three Zoom meetings offered during the week of November 14th. Please check out the diocesan website for information regarding the Mission priorities, as well as links for the Zoom meetings.

Grillin' and Chillin' at Long Leaf Park

When that phrase was coined for our parish picnic, we didn't expect God to be so literal about the weather. We forgot to pray over the grill before we used it for the first time, but the Holy Spirit certainly blew through it, extinguishing the flame multiple times. Despite these challenges everyone was able to eat. Meaghan Thomas and Michael Singer led attendees in some fun games with prizes and ribbons. Royster Hedgepeth served as Grillmaster with Al Cannon and Lisa Sanders-Park. Fr. Lee served as strolling troubadour taking requests for songs like Amazing Grace and You are my Sunshine, to name a few.

Fr. Lee's Installation and Reception

We were pleased to have Bp. Skirving join us for Fr. Lee's Installation on October 28th. It was a sacred and Spirit-filled liturgy. It was one of those experiences you hate to see end, but when it did and we entered the parish hall, we enjoyed a taste of what heaven will surely be like, thanks to the efforts of Layne Dupree and Anne O'Dell. No detail was overlooked- the harpist strumming in the entryway, the glorious floral arrangements, divine food offerings, a multitude of saints helping to serve, set up and clean up, and of

course, the candle light. We hope that Fr. Lee, his family and all in attendance felt the love, welcome and excitement of that evening. Teresa's prayer is that this vestry will power up from the energy generated that night to accomplish the ministry to which God has called us.

Junior Warden – Tom Sramek

Tom reported that the Gentlemen of Noble Poverty (GNP), especially Bob Beaustegui and David Tousignant have done a lot of work for congregation members. The GNP recently installed shower bars in Joe Farri's house. Pat Scherer has also asked the GNP to assist her on the third Thursday of every month in cleaning and upkeep of St. Paul's gardens.

David Tousignant has secured a contractor to pressure wash the concrete around the church. And the GNP is trying to figure out the best way to address the cracks in the stucco and leaks in some windows.

The upgrading of the basketball court seems to have fixed the flooding problem. After 10" of rain, there was no water on the court.

The issue of the silt in the sprinkler system is still being investigated. There are two options:

1. Use city water (silt-free)
2. Drill a new well on the east side of the church

Ruth Gates brought up the poor drainage in the sacristy sink. Tom assured her it would be taken care of.

Facilities – Angela Green

Angela reported that the Facilities' strategic plan is right on track. The Committee is continuing to meet with the architect to discuss different plans and options. Meetings are scheduled for November 4, November 7 and November 15.

Sally Pope requested that, in the future, the Committee put the date updated at the top of the page, so that the vestry can tell which plan is the most current.

Stewardship – Rhonda Stroud

Rhonda reported that nothing has changed on the strategic plan. The in-gathering was held on November 7. These are the results of the campaign so far, supplied by Judy Wilson:

In the **two weeks** since the beginning of the 2021 stewardship campaign, St. Paul's has received 89 pledges that total \$347, 230. In 2020, pledges totaled \$340,000 in the first **three weeks**. So, at this point, we are ahead.

Human Resources – Joan Rosko Miller

The Human Resources Committee has been focusing on membership and congregational involvement.

1. While holding a Ministry Fair was not possible during COVID, the committee created information sheets to be placed in welcome and newcomers' bags. In response to a question, Joan reported that, for safety and privacy reasons, ministry contact information was not included on the sheet. Instead, a note was added at the bottom "Please pick up a directory, or call the church office to access the protected directory" online.

The information sheet does not include information on St. Paul's website, FaceBook page and Instagram, but there is a separate card that has a QR code that takes the visitor to the St. Paul's website.

2. The successful New Member event at HiWire brewery was well-planned, well-executed, well-attended and received.

3. There is a new initiative: a Member Spotlight that will be published in each week's E-News. This is a way for members to get to know other attendees of St. Paul's. The first articles will feature members of the vestry. Matt Langley has volunteered to be the first member "spotlighted".

The short article (5-7 sentences) will include the name, a photo, an "unknown" fact about the subject, and what drew them to St. Paul's or a particular ministry.

Matt showed his article to the vestry and gave some words of advice – pick a photo that shows personality, use examples in the descriptions, highlight other areas at St. Paul's or the community that you are involved in.

Teresa asked if the spotlight would be put on the FB page. At this point, the article will only be in the E-news and the website.

Father Lee asked the status of the Spiritual Gift Assessment after the New Member event. Sally Pope asked what happened to those who filled the assessment out. Teresa reported that each welcome bag contained a card with a QR code that sent the person to the assessment. Phone calls and follow up are still ongoing for the first group of 76 people. Meaghan Thomas is monitoring the online assessments – last month there were 4 new assessments. They have not been contacted yet.

New Business

Joan Rosko Miller reported that the first meeting of the Nominating Committee will be held on November 7, in the church library. The Nominating Committee will consist of Teresa Singer, Angela Green, Joan Miller and Ruth Gates.

Treasurer - Judy Wilson

To date, St. Paul's has received \$498,753 (84% of the budget) and spent \$451,829 for a balance of \$46,924. The endowment fund shows \$1,050,203.

Judy reported that the reserve fund of \$93,978 has now been switched to Live Oak Bank

St. Paul's was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Lehto Foundation towards architectural fees.

In November, the ministry leaders will submit their budget for 2022. It will be presented to the Finance Committee in December. The vestry will see it prior to the Annual Meeting in January.

Before adjournment, Father Lee added that he will be undergoing minor, outpatient surgery the week of December 7. He also reminded the vestry of the art show on November 13 to benefit the Wilmington Boys' Choir from 12-5pm in the parish hall.

A motion to adjourn was put forward by Joan Miller and seconded by Sally Pope. The motion was approved.

Steve Martin read a poem he had written, inspired by his retreat at Valley Cruces, North Carolina. The meeting concluded at 7:08pm

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Sheehan
Clerk of the Vestry
St. Paul's Episcopal Church