

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Wilmington, NC
Vestry Meeting
December 13, 2021**

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

Absent: Matthew Langley, Judy Wilson (Treasurer), Merry Ann Wright

Guest: Laura Padgett

Father Lee led the vestry in a prayer from the Canterbury Book of New Prayers. He then called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

Approval of the November 2021 Minutes: After a motion by Rhonda Stroud, and a second by Joan Rosko Miller, the minutes were approved.

Rector's Report

Father Lee reported that Cheryl Wagoner has been accepted as a postulant for the vocational diaconate. He is talking to the bishop about her status at St. Paul's during this transitional period.

He reported that he is feeling well after his recent surgery. As far as the Reverend Powell's health, he asked for continued prayers. Her surgery is scheduled for December 29. In the meantime, he thanked Father Singer for volunteering to serve at the 5:30pm Christmas service.

Concerts, worship services etc have brought the average attendance to 182. He thanked the music ministry for their hard work and excellent collaboration during Advent season.

Father Lee asked for prayers and guidance from the Holy Spirit as we enter this new era in leadership at St. Paul's. There is a "regime change" coming, as several vestry members' terms are ending. Who will be called into leadership? He asked for vestry input.

Meaghan Thomas asked about the requirements and time commitment for the position of Senior Warden. Father Lee talked about the canon-vague duties: Faithful in worship; willing to serve. The role of the Senior Warden does not have to be what was before. There are organizational meetings and they must work with the rector.

Sally Pope asked what other meetings the Senior Warden must attend. Endowment, finance, stewardship, plus monthly vestry meetings were mentioned.

The discussion then continued about the current state of the COVID virus. With the new Omicron variant, St Paul's will be prepared for whatever appropriate response is needed.

Father Lee asked the vestry to begin to prepare their annual reports. He asked that they be ready for distribution by the annual meeting in January. These will be handed out in a book form; they are not oral reports. These are not only a great resource for parish members, but newcomers as well.

Sr. Warden's Report - Teresa Singer

Teresa began by acknowledging the contributions of Herb Gant, Head Verger, Ronnie Wise and Richard Rhoads to St. Paul's worship and music. Herb Gant sees to it that there are servers and lectors for each service. When someone doesn't show up for their appointed time, (like a particular Sr. Warden who was preparing Wednesday lunch instead of reading the Old and New Testament lessons), no one is the wiser, because Herb carries on seamlessly. Ronnie Wise chooses the perfect anthems each week to support the readings and we can count on the choir to present their best offering once the bell for service rings. Richard Rhoads, with his rousing postlude, will send worshippers out into the world stirred up for action. Add to that a hardworking rector who delivers a powerful sermon and chants like an angel, and who, with the hiring of Catherine Powell as Priest Associate, seems to have provided us a bit of heaven on earth during our liturgies. Teresa singled out St. Paul's Blue Christmas service as an excellent example of this.

Teresa reported that nearly 450 tickets were sold over two nights of the Messiah. She reminded us that Taize, evensong and monthly organ recitals provide wonderful opportunities to invite friends and neighbors to attend St. Paul's. Invitations to friends and neighbors for Lessons and Carols on December 19th or the 5:30 or 8:30 Eucharist on Christmas Eve are opportunities to evangelize.

Sharing social media is also very successful in informing people about St. Paul's. Which may help explain the crowd at the Advent Wreath event on November 28th when more than 50 people made Advent wreaths for their homes. The newly formed EYC group that met in early December was full of joy and laughter.

Ushers and greeters continue to welcome visitors to St Paul's each week, securing names and contact information and then passing that information on to Karen Day who generates a weekly spreadsheet of prospective and new members. When the membership committee meets this week to plan the next Membership Social, if St. Paul's invited the prospective and new members who were unable to attend the event in October (about half) with the visitors we have had since, more than 50 invitations would be sent. That would bring numbers to 100, not including clergy and vestry. And there are still a few months to go before setting up that event. With numbers like these, the Membership Committee needs help. Teresa challenged the vestry to a three minute rule: for the first three minutes after every church function, find someone you don't know and speak with them instead of chatting with your circle of friends

Church security is a concern. There have been several instances where exterior doors were left unlocked, the interior church door left unlocked, lights left on or the alarm not set. These kinds of issues are unnerving for April, the Parish Administrator, to enter the building when it is obvious that it has not been properly secured. This is not only on Sundays when serving as Vestry Person of the Day, all need to do their part to make sure our facilities are secure.

We should not be unlocking a door with our access pin on Sundays. When that is done, we override an automated system that unlocks the kitchen and ramp doors at a particular time and then locks them at a predetermined time as well. If a door is unlocked with an access pin, please be responsible for seeing that it is locked. If you are VPOD or even if you aren't, please be sure the glass door near the pulpit is closed securely. Do not assume that someone else will turn off the lights and lock the interior church door, or even see that the building is secured. Speak to a responsible person and make sure they will take care of every detail. We can pay the electric bill but God forbid that someone would enter our unsecured building with ill intentions

Finally, Teresa reminded those who are remaining on Vestry to discard the old version of the Opening and Closing Procedures for Vestry Person of the Day, and use the updated document. (Copies were available at the meeting)

Teresa praised the Holy Spirit for the good news to be shared at the meeting. The second PPP loan through Live Oak Bank has been forgiven. She is abundantly grateful for the willing hands, loving hearts and generosity in all matters of stewardship.

Junior Warden's Report – Tom Sramek

Joe Farri wrote a thankful text for the installation of bars in his shower. Karen and Bill Smith have joined the Gentlemen of Noble Poverty and are learning a lot. Father Lee has also been joining the group on Thursday mornings.

The pressure washing has been completed and things look good. There is still a problem with fungus on the shady side of the roof. Solutions are being investigated and advice is being sought to correct the problem.

Bob Belaustegui and David Tousignant are working on fixing the lift near the red doors. If the lift cannot be fixed, it may have to be replaced.

David Tousignant and Bob Belaustegui also gave Judy Wilson information on future repairs that will be needed for 2022's budget. Direct donations may be requested for smaller projects around the church.

Facilities – Angela Green

After many meetings, on Zoom and in-person, and many emails, questions and suggestions, the committee and the architect, Grason Hudson, have developed a vision

for renovations at St. Paul's. The committee and architect will meet once again on December 16.

On January 6, Mr. Hudson will attend a special Executive vestry meeting to present the plan. Angela reported that Mr. Hudson has a multi-phased, schematic, color-coded and visual presentation. If the Facilities Team recommendation is approved by the vestry, Mr. Hudson will attend the annual meeting in January to present the plan to the congregation.

Stewardship - Rhonda Stroud

It was reported that there have been no changes to the strategic stewardship plan since last month.

As of December 5, the amount raised in pledges is \$467,668. The total number of pledges received is 131. In 2021, the amount raised by December 5th was \$428,374, with a total number of pledges at 131. This year's amount represents a 12% increase over last year.

Human Resources – Joan Rosko Miller

The new ministries directory will be printed and distributed in visitors' bags, and on tables throughout the church. As information becomes obsolete, the updated information will be placed in the bulletins.

Joan reported that 30 invitations were sent out to new members asking them to take the spiritual gifts assessment. From those 30, five responded. Two had already found a ministry to contribute to, one called Joan and said she/he was not able to be involved at this time, and two requested a paper copy, responded, but are now away for three months.

The Member Spotlight articles in the E-newsletter have been well received. Sally Pope will be highlighted in the next issue, then Angela Green, and for the first week in January, Rhonda Stroud.

The vestry was complimented on their personal notes to those who had pledged to St. Paul's during the stewardship campaign.

New Business

Endowment - Laura Padgett

Laura reported on the revised Endowment policies and procedures (report attached)

There are some major changes in these policies that require vestry approval. There is no evidence of vestry approval for the procedures and policies document in 2019.

Briefly, the major changes are:

1. Clarification of what the endowment fund is
2. Clarification of distribution from those funds. It is now required that any distribution request be in writing from the vestry.
3. In terms of the use of unrestricted funds, this decision should be a significant, serious decision by the vestry.
(The goal is to raise \$1 million for the unrestricted fund. As of 2022 there is \$500,000 in restricted funds and there are very specific items for which these funds can be used.)
4. There are new gift acceptance policies
5. There is clarification in the forms of the type of gifts that the church will accept.

The Endowment committee also removed confusing wording, especially regarding gifts of real estate.

A motion to approve these new policies and procedures was made by Teresa Singer and seconded by Sally Pope. The vestry approved these revisions and discussed ways to get this information out to the congregation.

Model Policies from the National Church – Teresa Singer

The vestry was sent the Model Policies documents earlier, in order to give them time to read and consider them. These policies were sent by the National Church and distributed by the diocese. They were introduced at General Convention in 2015 and adopted under a consent agenda in 2018. It is a complicated document, but simply put, it addresses liability and protection issues, and each church must adopt these new procedures.

Teresa stated that the policies are necessary and doable. It is an opportunity for St. Paul's to tighten up procedures and introduce background checks for a broader range of people.

Most of the discussion revolved around the background checks

Rhonda Stroud asked what would happen if you couldn't pass a background check? There may be some from outside groups that use the church facilities who may have issues in their past. Father Lee stated that these checks are not pass/fail, but provide the rector with knowledge. Information would be kept confidential. The requirements may be burdensome, but must be adopted. A third party vendor would conduct the checks.

While St Paul's has a year to comply with the policies, the vestry decided to adopt them at this meeting. With a motion to adopt by Steve Martin, and a second by Meaghan Thomas, the motion was carried.

Nominating Committee – Joan Rosko Miller

The Nominating Committee has until December 23 to present a slate to the congregation before the nominations are open. As of today, there are three people who have accepted.

Delegates to the diocesan convention

There are two open spots for delegates to the diocesan convention. Two vestry members, Steve Martin and Rhonda Stroud, each volunteered to fill a one-year term. They will join Ruth Gates and Cheryl Wagoner as delegates.

After discussion, Teresa Singer made a motion for the vestry to approve Steve Martin and Rhonda Stroud to one year terms. The first alternate will be Don Brainard and the second alternate will be Chip Carter. Layne Dupree seconded, and the vestry approved these appointments

Rector's Housing Allowance

Whereas The Reverend Caleb J. Lee is compensated by St. Paul's exclusively for services as a minister of the gospel; and whereas St. Paul's does not provide Fr. Lee with a rectory, therefore, it is hereby Resolved, that the \$37,000 out Fr. Lee's total compensation is hereby designated to be a housing allowance; and it is further Resolved, that the designation of \$37,000 as a housing allowance shall apply to calendar year 2022 and all future years unless otherwise provided.

Treasurer's Report

The report and stewardship update was entered into the minutes.

Other Business

Meaghan Thomas asked if there would be a vestry retreat in 2022, and offered to help organize. Tom Sramek also said he would help organize the retreat.

Joan Rosko Miller moved to adjourn the meeting and there was a second by Sally Pope. Tom Sramek lead the vestry in a closing prayer.