

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Vestry Retreat at Church of the Servant
Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2025

Present: The Rev. Caleb Lee (Rector), Barbara Ellington Banks, Steve Bucci, Tori Cannon, Karen Day, Carol Field (Rector's Warden), Steve Haughey (People's Warden), Anne O'Dell (Clerk), Cecelia Peers, Scott Sheble (Treasurer), Denise Sheehan, David Tousignant, Phillip Weiss, Frank Wolf

Fr. Lee called the meeting to order at 9:32 am and offered a prayer for this group and the work being done today and in the upcoming year.

Phillip Weiss introduced a fun ice-breaker exercise, designed to lighten the mood, help us get to know each other better, and build energy for a productive workday.

Following the ice breaker, Fr. Lee outlined the plan for the day: the retreat would operate like a vestry meeting with extended time allotted for review and discussion of topics set forth in the agenda.

Approval of January Meeting Minutes: Fr. Lee asked for approval of the January 13, 2025, meeting minutes. A motion was made by Denise Sheehan, seconded by Scott Sheble, and unanimously approved. Fr. Lee made a second request to approve the January 22, 2025, special meeting minutes. A motion was made by Steve Haughey, seconded by Tori Cannon, and unanimously approved.

Official Paperwork: Several items were presented by the clerk for review and discussion:

- 2025 Vestry Contact List
- 2025 Reflections Schedule
- 2025 Vestry Person of the Day (VPOD) Schedule

The Reflection Schedule lists the vestry member responsible for sharing a closing prayer/reflection at each monthly meeting. Minor errors in the schedule were noted and corrections made following Saturday's retreat. The updated schedule is in the Vestry Google Drive. Discussion then focused on the VPOD duties. At present vestry members are asked to be at the church by 9:15 am on their assigned Sunday to assist the rector as needed. With the hiring of part-time sexton Christian Bridges, vestry members are no longer required to open and close the church building on Sunday mornings. This duty is performed consistently by Christian and Don Bobo. However, there may be occasions when a vestry member will need to step in if either Christian or Don is absent. Learning the opening and closing procedures is therefore recommended for all vestry members.

Prior to receiving a personal code to enter the building and arm/disarm the security system, new vestry members need to undergo a background check. With a satisfactory outcome, Fr. Lee will help with code setup through Sentinel. VPOD training will be provided with the support of the wardens and/or Don Bobo. New vestry members are also required to complete Safe Church Training. Meaghan Thomas, Children's Ministry Coordinator, will reach out via email to new members with instructions.

In addition, the clerk asked new vestry members to review, sign and return to her *Section 5.3.1 of St. Paul's By-Laws: Vestry Declaration and Promise*. All vestry members were asked to review, sign and return the *Conflict-of-Interest Statement*.

The Vestry Google Drive is a resource for vestry members. With the exception of the rector, the wardens, and the clerk, vestry members have 'read only' capabilities. The Drive contains all vestry meeting files since 2022, a folder with various church policies, and several other miscellaneous folders. Prior to every vestry meeting, all reports and documents specific to that meetings will be placed in the Drive in a folder with the meeting date. It is the responsibility of each vestry member to review and print (if necessary) the materials prior to the meeting. Phillip Weiss and Anne O'Dell are available to help anyone who needs a brief Google Drive tutorial.

State of the Church – Rector's Report: Fr. Lee presented a brief overview of his first four years at St. Paul's. He officially joined St. Paul's in August 2021. At his first annual meeting on February 6, 2022, Fr. Lee shared his vision: *Building Up the People of God on A Solid Foundation with A Better Campus*, which he described as realistic with manageable goals for steady growth. Since 2021, pledge income has increased:

2021	\$425K
2022	\$507K
2023	\$555K
2024	\$607
2025	Goal of \$630K

Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) has increased:

2021	182
2022	193
2023	202
2024	210

The staff has grown:

2021	1 full-time rector, 1 part-time administrator, 1 part-time bookkeeper, 2 part-time organists
2025	1 full-time rector, 1 part-time priest associate, 1 full-time organist/music director, 1 full-time finance manager, 1 full-time youth associate, 1 part-time administrator (TBD)

Fr. Lee announced that St. Paul's has hired a new Finance Manager, Lynne Rooks. Her official start date is February 10. Lynne brings broad experience in executive leadership from PPD, General Electric, and Deloitte. She will replace Judy Wilson, our volunteer CFO for the past 5 years. Scott Sheble will remain Treasurer, but his role will be more titular. In her upcoming report, Barbara Banks will share an update on the search for a new church administrator.

St. Paul's has been on an upward trajectory, but concerns remain: what would happen to St. Paul's if something were to happen to the rector? Fr. Lee reassured the vestry that he is healthy and has no intentions of leaving, but he underscored the need for the church to be able to function as the church with or without him as its leader.

When Fr. Lee's mentor, The Very Reverend J. Michael A. Wright of Grace Church Cathedral, Charleston, SC, visited St. Paul's on February 2, Fr. Lee asked him what he saw. Dean Wright's answer: he saw great energy and great things all built around the rector. The takeaway: change is needed for both the rector's and the church's well-being. A rector-centered model, which is more typical of a pastoral-size church, is not practical nor sustainable for a church the size of St. Paul's. As we move from a transitional to a program size church, reorganization is needed to help ease the rector's load and shift more responsibilities to the vestry, committee chairs, and other active parishioners. Volunteer engagement is also critical in the effort to build a deeper bench of faithful volunteers.

Fr. Lee acknowledged that his role must also evolve to support St. Paul's continued growth. He compared this change to transitioning from the position of quarterback to that of head coach. He realizes he cannot be responsible for everything and acknowledged the need to delegate more. In the long run, this change will allow him to be more present as the church's spiritual leader, preacher and teacher.

When describing the state of the church, Fr. Lee said it is strong yet fragile. He identified St. Paul's strengths, or charisms, as liturgical worship and hospitality. When asked how St. Paul's is fragile, Fr. Lee responded that the church is inherently fragile. We fight for funding annually; resources consistently lag behind growing needs; and we rely heavily on volunteers to ensure that our ministries thrive and serve those in need. It's a delicate balance.

At a planning session in late January, the executive team identified three top priorities for 2025: Human Resources, Stewardship/Finance, and Facilities. These priorities are similar to those identified during the strategic planning exercise in 2020, but the specifics are updated to reflect the current state of the church.

- Human Resources: How do we reorganize systems and engage (or re-engage) volunteers to support growth?
- Stewardship/Finance: How will we raise funds to meet growing budgetary needs through stewardship, special gifts and grants? How will we reignite enthusiasm for the Long-Range Plan and the capital campaign?
- Facilities: How will we prepare the congregation for upcoming changes to the physical plant and disruptions to our traditional way of doing business?

Information Awareness: Vestry Direction in 2025

1. *Organization Development/Staffing/Volunteer - Fr. Lee and Barbara Banks*

The Human Resources Committee, consisting of the rector, wardens, treasurer, and one vestry member, reconvened last year to initiate job searches for a Finance Manager and a Church Administrator. Anne O'Dell, Steve Haughey, and Barbara Banks met separately to review and revise the church's human resources policies specific to employees not subject to a Letter of Agreement. The revised policy was approved by the vestry at a special meeting on January 22, 2025.

Barbara Banks reviewed the status of the church administrator job search. Over 60 applicants applied either via Indeed or directly to the rector. Approximately 12 were shortlisted, 7 were for invited to a Zoom interview, and then 3 were recommended to Fr. Lee and Rector's Warden, Carol Field, for an in-person interview. At the time of the retreat, the 3 finalists had been interviewed, but no hiring decision had been made.

Fr. Lee stressed the need to re-establish committees, many of which fell by the way during the implementation of the strategic plan in 2020-2021. To adequately staff committees and build a deeper bench of volunteers, we need to consider how best to engage new members and re-engage existing members. Karen Day and Lisa Sanders-Park are doing a fine job as Membership Co-Chairs, but it may be possible to improve upon their model. Several ideas were discussed, including ministry orientation for new members, reviving the spiritual gifts assessment, a parish-wide ministry fair, an updated ministry brochure, and ministry minutes shared during the service. It was also pointed out that very often the best recruitment tool is a personal invitation.

2. Financial State of the Church and Future Funding – Scott Sheble and Carol Field

Scott Sheble presented for review and discussion the following financial statements:

- 2024 Operating Fund Budget to Actual & 2025 Proposed Budget
- Summary – 2025 Operating Fund Budget Changes 1/20/2025
- 2024 Fund Balances

Scott began with a comparison of the 2024 budget (revised and approved 10/9/2024) to the actual year-end figures. The total operating income/expense balances were projected to be \$862,000, but the actual figures came in under budget at \$845,012.52. There were cost savings across the board.

The proposed budget for 2025 which was presented to and approved by the vestry at a special meeting on January 22, 2025, projects total operating income/expenses of \$979,000. The Summary document highlights the areas of increased expenses:

- Salary & Benefits: + 18% => COLA increases for staff and the addition of a full-time finance manager
- Business Operations: + 11% => increase in the Diocesan Pledge and other small changes
- Facilities: + 23% => increase in property insurance
- Ministry Programs: + 17% => increases to Community Ministries/ Pastoral Care/Youth Ministries

To offset increased expenses, gift and pledge income is projected to increase 4% in 2025. In addition, St. Paul's has received a one-time IRS Employee Tax Credit of \$54,476 and will receive approximately \$25,000 from the Endowment Fund and \$38,100 from the Special Gifts Fund for operations.

Also reported were the 2024 year- end balances for the following accounts:

- Endowment – Investment Account: \$978,703.76
- First Carolina Reserve Account: \$97,042.83
- Wells Fargo Special Gifts Account: \$91,145.78

3. Plant Changes with Cultural Implications – Steve Haughey

Steve Haughey provided a brief history of the Ormond Center and outlined recent projects completed in preparation for staff relocation. Completed tasks include cleaning gutters, trimming trees, power washing, replacing the front deck, updating phone and internet connections, remediating asbestos in the mechanical room, repainting the front door, and installing a new sign identifying the building as the PARISH OFFICE. The plan is to relocate Fr. Lee and the staff to the Ormond Center at the end of March 2025. Before this move, several more projects need to be completed, including painting interior walls and relocating the copier.

The relocation of the Parish offices will be a culture change for all involved. From an organizational perspective, it was designed to facilitate better staff cooperation and communication through co-location. It is also a change in the way the we do business and will introduce anxiety into the system. Part of the vestry's role is to help manage and address the fear and anxiety created by the relocation. Effective communication is crucial. We will need regular, clear updates on key priorities and actions.

A discussion ensued regarding the relocation and ideas for effective communication .

1. Highlight the Ormond Center's new exterior sign in the bulletin and E-news.
2. Produce large poster board images (similar to those created for the capital campaign) for display in the Parish Hall. Suggested images to include: the new signage, updated floor plan, completed interior office space. Add these same images to the website.
3. Create a video that discusses and describes the renovations and includes a virtual tour. Share with the parish and on the website.
4. Appoint Ambassadors to take parishioners from the Parish Hall to the Ormond Center and give tours during Sunday morning breakfast and coffee hour.
5. Invite Bishop Skirving to bless the Ormond Center during his visit on April 5.
6. Have an Open House all of Holy Week.

The general consensus is that we need to celebrate the relocation and reopening of the Ormond Center. It is the first tangible evidence that we are moving forward with the planned renovations to renew and restore St. Paul's. It provides an opportunity to draw attention back to the capital campaign and reinvigorate fundraising initiatives. We still need to raise money to meet our goal of \$2.5 million for the first two phases of construction. At present WKWW Architects is in the Design Development Phase of the project. Over the next several weeks, various engineers will be visiting the campus to assess the specifics of their particular pieces of the project. The Long-Range Planning Committee is preparing to interview contractors. The pace of this project will shift into high gear in the near future.

4. *Children and Youth*

Fr. Lee reported that our Children and Youth Ministries are energized and growing. It is a natural and important focus for St. Paul's; we need to be ministering to our children. The investment in these ministries, specifically the addition of Isaac McDowell, should pay for itself as we see increased involvement from young families. As the demographics of the church change, we may need to consider adding another service.

Vestry Roles and Responsibilities: Fr. Lee reviewed individual roles and responsibilities. Some new vestry members have yet to receive specific assignments, pending a conversation with the rector.

Carol Field, Rector's Warden
Steve Haughey, People's Warden
Barbara Banks: Human Resources
Steve Bucci: Community Ministries
Tori Cannon: TBD
Karen Day: Membership
Cecelia Peers: TBD

Scott Sheble: Treasurer
Denise Sheehan: Stewardship
David Tousignant: Buildings & Grounds/GNP
Phillip Weiss: Strategic Leadership
Frank Wolf: Finance

Anne O'Dell, Clerk (non-voting)

The vestry meets on the second Monday of every month at 6pm in the parish hall unless otherwise specified. Meetings may occasionally occur via Zoom, and additional meetings may become necessary to accomplish time-sensitive business. Vestry members should regularly check emails and text to stay updated on vestry matters.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:43 pm.

Supplemental Reports Submitted for the Vestry Retreat:

People's Warden Report – Steve Haughey

1. Parish Hall And Church

- Flores and Foley has been contacted for additional details regarding their quote for the Parish Hall roof.
- The light switches in the foyer area were replaced.
- Met with Salt Rock Builders (Jimmie Spivey) on Monday January 20 to get input on some GNP projects.
- Both Backflow Prevention Assemblies were tested by Coastline Plumbing on Tuesday January 28.
- SEHVAC submitted their report on the maintenance of the Church/Parish Hall HVAC units. Compressor #4 is shorting out and will need to be replaced. AHU#1 has been shut down until the failed pulley tensioner is installed. Total cost of repair is about \$3,000. Still waiting on the report for the OC units.

2. Ormond Center

- OC Cabling/Wiring has been completed. Phone/internet testing has been completed.
- WIFI thermostats have been installed, replacing the manual units.
- Southern Sign installed the new OC sign (“PARISH OFFICE”) on Tuesday January 28.
- SENTINEL has added 6 additional codes to the OC access list. This will allow workers and volunteers (GNP/First Responders) entry as needed.
- Interior room colors have been selected and sent to the contractor. Painting to start early March.
- New door for Conference Room/New Finance Room is on order.
- Outside Motion Detectors/Lights have been inspected and will be replaced as needed.

3. Parish Activities

- “FILM AND FALAFEL” shown on Saturday January 11.
- Lenten Reflections Writing Workshop held on Saturday January 18.
- Parish Annual Meeting and Vestry Elections held on Sunday January 26. The following parishioners were elected to the Vestry for a 3-year term: Tori Cannon, Cecilia Peers, Frank Wolf, Karen Day.
- Youth Ice Skating on Sunday January 26 at Polar Ice Arena.
- EYC Ski Trip to Winterplace West Virginia Thursday January 30 to Sunday February 2.

4. Grant Update

- No Grant activity during the month.

5. Looking Ahead

- 1858 CIRCLE Service (Evensong and Reception) on Sunday February 2 at 4 PM.
- Red Cross Blood Drive on Thursday February 13 from 12 Noon to 6 PM.
- Due to a scheduling conflict, the EYC Valentine's Dinner Fundraiser has been postponed.

Human Resources Report – Barbara Banks

The HR Policy document was approved by the Vestry at the January special meeting. This approved policy is timely for the new Parish Administrator position.

Two new positions are in process, the Parish Administrator, which falls under the HR Policy as a contract, and the Finance Director, which as a Letter of Agreement, does not fall under the HR Policy.

The Administrator process included the review of over a dozen resumes submitted through Indeed. Seven Zoom interviews were conducted and 3 individuals submitted to the Rector and Rector's Warden for in-person interviews.

The Financial Director position was conducted by a separate committee including the Treasurer, former Treasurer and an outside adviser. The final selection was made by the Rector and Wardens.

Stewardship Report – Denise Sheehan

The January report from the Finance Committee shows that this year, the stewardship campaign raised \$612,868 from 149 households.** Last year, the numbers through January showed \$581,862 raised from 141 households.

In the period between February and June 2024, an additional \$26,000 was raised. If this pattern holds true in 2025, we will surpass our budget goal of \$630,000. To that end, the Stewardship Committee has followed up with the 6 households who pledged last year but have not yet pledged for 2025.

** Fr. Lee updated the 2025 campaign results at the retreat: \$616,000 raised from 150 pledges.