

St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Vestry Retreat  
Official Meeting Minutes  
February 21, 2026

PRESENT: The Rev. Caleb Lee (Rector), Barbara Ellington Banks (Rector's Warden), Steve Bucci, Tori Cannon, Karen Day, Mait DuBois (People's Warden), Shelley Jonik, Anne O'Dell (Clerk), Cecelia Peers, Scott Sheble (Treasurer), Rhonda Stroud, Brad Van Amberg, Frank Wolf

ABSENT: Leon Tillery

OPENING PRAYER: Fr. Lee called the meeting to order at 9:37 am and offered an opening prayer. He then invited vestry members to join him on a tour of the church and the parish house to review planned renovations.

Following the tour, Fr. Lee outlined the schedule 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 AND SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES: Frank Wolf made a motion, seconded by Karen Day, to approve (1) January's meeting minutes dated January 12, 2026, and (2) the special meeting minutes dated January 21, 2026. Both sets of minutes were unanimously approved as written.

OFFICIAL PAPERWORK: Several items were presented by Barbara Banks for review and discussion:

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

The VPOD is asked to be at church by 9:15 am on his/her assigned Sunday and stay through the reception following the 10:30 service. Vestry members are no longer required to open and close the church building but are asked to be present to assist the rector as needed and address questions from parishioners. The VPOD's name will be published in the bulletin.

The Reflection Schedule lists the vestry member responsible for sharing a closing prayer/reflection at each monthly meeting.

Vestry Contact List includes contact information for the rector, all vestry members, and the clerk. Please review for accuracy and advise Anne O'Dell if any changes are needed.

Anne O'Dell 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. Vestry members were also asked to review, sign and return the Conflict-of-Interest Statement.

Background checks and Safe Church Training are required of all new vestry members. Fr. Lee

alerted new members to be on the lookout for an email from Jeanne Fitzpatrick, Parish Administrator. She will initiate both processes. Once background checks are successfully completed, new vestry members will receive building entrance codes along with the appropriate

training. Learning the opening and closing procedures, while not required, is recommended. See the wardens and/or Don Bobo for assistance. Safe Church Training is a multi-module online course designed to equip volunteers with the knowledge to prevent abuse and create a healthy and safe environment. The deadline for completion of these classes is May 21, 2026.

RECTOR'S REPORT: Worship has been slightly down during the past month, likely due to illness and bad weather. Attendance at the 12:10 pm Ash Wednesday service was 86. Attendance at the 6:00 pm service was also good, but it is historically lower than the noonday service. Fr. Lee is considering the addition of a 7:00 am service next year.

Recent History of St. Paul's: The church almost shut down in 2008, plagued by internal conflict and the departure of a large group of parishioners wanting more contemporary worship. The Reverend Randy Green was sent to St. Paul's in 2010 with a directive from the bishop: build it up or close it down. Under Fr. Green's leadership, parishioners chose to revitalize St. Paul's.

St. Paul's is a unique parish: despite its long history in Wilmington, most parishioners (and their families) have not been at the church more than 15-20 years. The rebirth of St. Paul's started with Fr. Green in 2010, and it has continued, first, with the Reverend Dena Whelan (2013-2019), and now with Fr. Lee. ASA was approximately 60 in 2013; it was 180 in 2019, and it grew to 230 in 2025. The important takeaway is that God is present, working in and through St. Paul's.

When asked about our growth relative to other churches in the diocese, Fr. Lee responded that St. Paul's is one of the five largest churches. Our growth has earned us one additional delegate to the diocesan convention, bringing our total to five.

St. Paul's staff has also grown and, at present, includes:

Dr. Brendan Conner, Organist and Director of Music. Brendan is the first to hold this position full-time. He is doing a great job, especially given the demands placed on him and the choir, which includes volunteers and paid choral singers. To honor the time commitment of our volunteers, there will be some Sundays going forward when the full choir is not present and instead, we have a smaller group of paid choral singers.

Lynne Rooks, Finance Manager. Lynne is the first to hold this position full-time. She joined St. Paul's following the planned retirements of volunteer treasurer Judy Wilson and part-time bookkeeper Diane Matz-Kane. Lynne has done a fabulous job and will take a prominent role in managing the finances of our capital construction project.

Jeanne Fitzpatrick, Parish Administrator. Jeanne has been a great full-time addition to St. Paul's. Her responsibilities include providing administrative support to the rector and managing the day-to-day operations of the church office. She is a wonderful welcoming presence for parishioners and visitors.

Isaac McDowell, Associate for Youth & Parish Life. Isaac is in his last year at St. Paul's. He is set to complete his master's degree at the end of 2026 and will seek secular employment. The plan is for him to overlap with the soon-to-be-hired priest associate who will take over some of Isaac's responsibilities.

Meaghan Thomas, Children's Ministry Coordinator. Meaghan is a member of St. Paul's. She and Isaac work together, ministering to our children, youth and families. Meaghan also oversees the nursery, which includes a paid nursery coordinator and paid nursery staff.

Christian Bridges, Sunday Sexton. Christian grew up in this parish. He works on Sundays, assisting Don Bobo with opening/closing the church and other duties as assigned.

St. Paul's is in transition, moving from a transitional size to a program size parish. (Details of Church Size Theory can be found in the drive.) Construction, which is set to begin this year, will complicate this transition, upending the normal rhythm of the church and, to a degree, changing who we are as a parish. Once the renovations are done, we will be able to more fully transition to a program size church and all that it entails.

Our website needs an overhaul, and we have contracted Jonathan Graves to do this work. Jonathan has done similar work with St. James, Holy Cross and St. Andrews On-the-Sound. Jonathan is also our technology consultant, most recently working to fix our sound system. The plan is to update the website to create a more user-friendly platform and to better reflect who St. Paul's is today.

Fr. James Green continues to learn and grow as a priest. As a part-time, bi-vocational priest, James is with us 2-3 Sundays per month. He also helps on Wednesdays and is doing some pastoral care. As previously noted, Fr. Lee is very pleased with James as is the parish, but Fr. Lee needs a full-time priest associate who is on the ground daily to help him run the parish. A job search is underway. Fr. Lee has created a search committee (Barbara Banks, Leon Tillery, Rhonda Stroud & Meaghan Thomas) to help him discern who to interview and who to hire. Fr. Lee will accept the committee's recommendation, but he will make the final decision. At present applications are being accepted; the deadline is February 28. The goal is to have someone in place by June.

Fr. Lee continued with a brief overview of the vestry. Fr. Lee meets weekly with his wardens; the Rector's Warden is Barbara Banks, and the People's Warden is Mait DuBois. The terms senior and junior warden are not used as both have equal standing, just different roles and responsibilities. The Executive Leadership Team includes the rector, the wardens, the treasurer, and the clerk. This group meets monthly to review and prepare for the monthly meetings. Scott Sheble is our treasurer; he is a member of the vestry and works closely with Lynne Rooks and Judy Wilson. Anne O'Dell is the clerk; she is not an official member of the vestry and has no vote. Her job is to record the minutes and share her institutional knowledge when appropriate.

Vestry members serve as liaisons to different ministries. If some members do not yet have a role or wish to transition to something else that is perfectly normal. Fr. Lee's view is that vestry members are called to serve, and with God's help each person will find a fitting place. Fr. Lee also stressed the importance of bringing concerns to him and to the vestry so they can be

properly addressed: if it's mentionable, it's manageable.

Fr. Lee shared that he will be on vacation with his family next week and again for a week in June. He also advised the vestry that he recently received an invitation to go to Israel for 5 days in mid-March; he is excited about the opportunity and planning to make the trip provided it is possible.

PEOPLE'S WARDEN REPORT-January 2025: (Submitted in writing prior to the meeting.) Parish Hall & Church

- Backwater Assemblies were tested for both the OC and Parish Hall/Church by Coastline Plumbing on Friday January 9 and the reports were sent to City of Wilmington. ● Meetings were set up during the month to introduce the new People's Warden to key personnel at companies/contractors we use regularly.
- Sikes Cleaning will now clean on Tuesdays and Fridays and will also start to clean the Chapel. The Chapel cleaning is due to its use by the Pentecostal Church. There will be no additional charge for the Chapel cleaning.
- Met with metal-working company on Thursday January 8 to discuss potential canopy designs for the Market Street Doors and rehabbing the Parish Hall external stairway. ● Met with SILKWOOD on Monday January 19 to get a quote for painting the stairs after rehab.
- SENTINEL was on-site on Monday January 19 to get measurements for replacement fire sensors in the NAVE. They were also asked to investigate a malfunctioning inside camera on the main floor of the South Wing. Due to it being a holiday, a second appointment will be scheduled to investigate why the camera isn't working.
- Stein & Stevens were on site Wednesday January 28 for final measurements of the Market Street doors. Doors are estimated to be available for install 4-5 weeks from deposit.
- Met with WINDOW NINJA's on Friday January 23 regarding power washing issues from December work on the Church.

Ormond Center

- Scanner has been identified for the Finance Office.

Grant Update

- Exploring new grant opportunities with Catherine Kennedy Home Foundation. Grant application is due February 28.

PEOPLE'S WARDEN REPORT – February 2026

Parish Hall & Church

- Paid Stein & Stevens a \$9,000 (50% deposit) for the front doors. Est. installed in early March. Stein & Stevens written cost estimate of \$11,000 to replace 16<sup>th</sup> Street nave double doors.
- Continue getting bids for a front door canopy and repair interior stucco of south wall of church. Earlier stucco repair used incorrect paint and caused moisture to build up behind stucco.
- Moved TV from Parish Hall to Church for Annual Meeting and returned to Parish Hall.
- Salted sidewalks twice for major snow events and shoveled sidewalks. ● Sentinel Co repaired camera outside Administration office.
- Replaced thermostat in Parish Hall.
- Organized 3 storage areas and put unused material in Assistant Rector's Office for

groups to decide to keep or discard. Hung white board for Issac. Disposed of unusable paint in basement.

- Window Ninjas removed stains from church columns.

#### Ormond Center

- No Update

#### Grant Update

- No Update

#### Looking Ahead

- Replace burned out electric bulbs in the church on 2/19/26. Continue to investigate solutions to improve bulb life. Lighting/wiring is an issue in the church and not a simple fix.
- Sentinel will replace 2 fire detectors in Church (parts ordered).
- Request Vestry approval on repairing the Fire Escape (need before Capital Campaign).
- Consider source of funding to replace rotted 16<sup>th</sup> St doors. GNP will repair to attempt delaying replacement
- Request Canopy approval from the Historical Preservation Dept.
- Disconnected power from water fountain (running continuously & wasting electricity).

Mait added that all 16 exterior red doors need paint. The preliminary estimate to do this work is \$7,000. Additional information to follow.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Scott Sheble presented the Monthly Treasurer's Report, which compares the proposed annual budget for 2026 to actual year-to-date figures.

For the month ending January 31, 2026, St. Paul's reported total income of \$177,449 which is 16.6% of the total annual income budgeted for 2026 (\$1,068,275). Total expenses for the same month amounted to \$86,619, which is 8.1% of the total annual expenses budgeted for 2026 (\$1,068,275). Net income for the month ending January 31, 2026, was \$90,831.

Other account balances as of January 31, 2026, were reported as follows:

Wells Fargo Investments (Endowment Fund) \$1,061,240 First Carolina Reserves \$100,955 Wells Fargo Special Gifts \$83,901

Pledges to the 2026 stewardship campaign currently stand at \$630,000. We are optimistic that this number will increase to \$650,000. The special gifts balance is projected to be fully utilized in 2026.

Scott also reviewed the status of the capital campaign as of January 31, 2026:

Total Pledges (2024-2027+) \$1,650,616 Total Gifts \$650,593 Total Pledges & Gifts \$2,301,209 \$2.5M 92%

We have raised approximately 92% of the \$2.5 million needed for Phase 1 & Phase 2 renovations. Outstanding pledge payments were as follows: \$0 for 2024; \$26,227 for 2025; \$347,256 for 2026; and \$166,667 for 2027+. Efforts continue to collect outstanding pledges for 2025. Confidence is high that these pledges will be paid. We are considering a mini campaign to reach out to new members and people who made one-time gifts in 2024.

Since its inception in 2023 through January 31, 2026, the capital campaign has collected gifts, pledges and interest totaling \$1,837,595; total expenses amount to \$226,629 for net income of \$1,610,966. The bulk of this money is kept in a money market account.

Proposed withdrawals from the Endowment Fund in 2026 are as follows:

- \$25,000 from the Unrestricted Fund for the youth minister position.
- \$15,000 from the Unrestricted Fund for the Endowment Board's capital campaign pledge.
- \$600 from the Unrestricted Fund for ½ of audit cost.
- \$6,000 from the Hazel Savage Fund for the music ministry.
- \$12,000 from the Isabel Lehto Fund for annual organ maintenance.
- \$6,000 from the Kauno Lehto Fund for annual scholarships.
- \$1,800 from the Smithwick Nursery Fund to pay nursery workers.

Requests must be made to and approved by the Endowment Board before funds are released. These requests will be made throughout the year as funds are needed.

With no further discussion, a motion was presented to approve the Monthly Treasurer's Report. With no second required, the vestry voted unanimously to accept the Report.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE: At noon Fr. Lee welcomed Mona Clites, Chair of the Construction Committee. Mona proceeded to update the vestry, reporting that we have received a proposal for an asbestos survey as required. Chambliss & Rabil identified the environmental firm; the committee and architect Gray Hudson were pleased with the proposal. The committee is recommending a full evaluation of the church and parish house, including areas that are not currently slated for construction. The report can be used in the future if construction plans change. Once approved, the survey can begin within a week and will take approximately two weeks to complete.

Gray Hudson, Chambliss & Rabil (general contractor), and several subcontractors recently met to discuss the project in its entirety. The general contractor and the subs then met at church to specifically address plans to move the basement HVAC unit that is impeding the path of the ramp. They submitted a report to Gray Hudson, who anticipates completion of construction drawings by mid-March. Shortly thereafter, the contractor will give us a final cost estimate and, if satisfied, we can give the "go ahead."

Following a brief Q&A session, the vestry thanked Mona and she left the meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: (submitted in writing prior to the meeting)

Membership: Karen Day

Period: 1/1/2026 to 2/21/2026

The Membership Committee is co-chaired by Karen Day and Lisa Sanders-Park, working closely with Head Usher and Head Greeter. We welcome newcomers and guide them through the process to membership. As well, Membership plans events to help old-timers forge new connections and to embrace newcomers into the church family.

- Transfers in since January 1, 2026: 1
- Prospects

Definition: Newcomers or visitors who have signed guest book or filled out a visitor card  
# of Current Prospects: 50, needs to be culled based on usher/greeter input about attendance

- Events

Monthly dinner groups: Lisa Sanders-Park and I will be emailing everyone who participated last year as well as newcomers about participating in the March 2026-February 2027 dinner groups. Last year 40 participated in four groups.

Community Ministries: Steve Bucci

- Worked with Finance Manager, Lynne Rooks, to finalize the 2026 budget for Community Ministries.
- On January 7<sup>th</sup> approximately 45 parishioners gathered at the Nourish NC facility on Market St. to participate in a packing event to benefit the Backpack Buddies program. We were able to pack 800 bags to be used by the kids for food on weekends. Each bag we packed contained 8 meals: 2 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners. So, in all we provided 6400 meals for the kids in the program! It took us only about an hour and a half!

Human Resources: Nothing significant to report.

Children, Youth & Family: Tori Cannon

Ongoing Events:

- Coffee & Conversations: Sundays from 9:30-10:15am in the Gym Conference Room for students in grades 6-12. This is an opportunity to study God's word and to explore ways to apply it to our lives.
- Children's Sunday School from 9:30-10:15am in the Children's Wing. ● Children's Choir 11:45am-12:30pm. This choir is open to children of all ages and experiences
- EYC for Middle & High School youth on Sundays from 4-5:30pm in the Parish Hall

February events for Youth Group include:

- February 1st: Lower Cape Fear Youth Gathering @ St. Mark's
- February 8th: Wilmington Area Youth Event from 4-5:30pm at St. James ●
- February 15th: Ice Skating 12:30-2:45pm at Polar Ice for all ages
- February 17th: Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
- February 22nd: EYC @ Green Light Escape Room + Bible Study 4:30-7pm

Upcoming Events:

- March 1st: Nerf Battle @ St. Paul's
- March 6th-8th: "Happening 84" at Trinity Center
- April 17th-19th "New Beginnings" at Trinity Center for Middle Schoolers ● June 22th-26th: Summer Arts Camp at St. Andrews-on-the-Sound due to anticipated renovation of St. Paul's
- June 28th -July 3rd: Glory Ridge Annual Mission Trip

February events for Children's Ministry include:

Children's Sunday School from 9:30-10:15am in the Children's Wing.

- "Touch & See" is offered to Preschool and Kindergarten children.  
The Lesson focus for February is as follows:  
1st: Church cancelled due to weather  
8th: The Man Who Was Too Little

15th: The Wind That Obeyed  
22nd: The Boy Who Shared His Lunch

- “Weaving Together the Family of God” is available to students in 1st through 5th grades. All lessons begin with a gathering (welcoming) activity, a shared story from the Bible, prayer time together and a sharing/craft/activity time. These lessons are based on Episcopal theology and history.

The Lesson focus for February is as follows:

1st: Church cancelled due to weather

8th: Jesus Heals the Sick

15th: The Woman at the Well / People See Signs and Miracles

22nd: Who Did Jesus Say He Is?

**VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGMENT:** A thank you note was circulated for vestry members to sign acknowledging Spencer Weig’s continued dedication to St. Paul’s and the recent completion of his months-long project to organize and inventory the library.

**MISSION, VISION, LOGO EXERCISE:** Under Fr. Lee’s direction, the vestry engaged in a creative exercise designed to explore St. Paul’s identity. Brainstorming led to conversation focused on worship, hospitality, and outreach, confirming that our DNA has not changed. We are the church with open doors, open hearts and open hands. Yet given our growth and the change that will come post-construction, how can we update our mission statement and logo and clearly convey our strengths? Ideas were shared; no decisions were made. The work will continue.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Parochial Report:** Fr. Lee presented the Parochial Report to the vestry. Tori Cannon moved for its approval, Steve Bucci seconded the motion, and the vestry voted unanimously in favor.

**Fire Escape Stairs:** The fire escape stairs need to be repaired prior to the start of construction. Mait DuBois has sought bids for several different options:

1. Replace entire fire escape - \$39,000 (Estimate Only)
2. Sandblast, weld rusted, and paint entire fire escape- \$18,160 (Estimate Only)
3. Sandblast, repair and paint 1<sup>st</sup>flight of stairs & 1<sup>st</sup> platform – \$8,860 (Estimate Only)
4. Turnkey Sandblast, Repair and Paint 1<sup>st</sup>flight of stairs & 1<sup>st</sup> platform - \$9,400

The executive leadership team recommended option 4. The contractor is Silkwood who has a proven history with St. Paul’s. Steve Bucci made a motion to approve the selection of Silkwood to complete the restoration of the first flight and first platform of the fire escape at a cost of \$9400. The motion was seconded by Scott Sheble and unanimously approved by the vestry.

#### **Request Funds from Endowment Board:**

Barbara Banks made a motion to request from the Endowment Board:

- \$600 for half the cost of the annual audit, and
- \$15,000 for Endowment Board’s 2026 pledge to the capital campaign. The motion was seconded by Mait DuBois and unanimously approved by the vestry.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

None.

With no additional business before the vestry, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne O'Dell,  
Clerk of the Vestry