

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2026

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

OPENING PRAYER: Fr. Lee called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm, welcomed Fr. James Green, and offered an opening prayer and reflection on the Epiphany season.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER MEETING MINUTES: Karen Day made a motion, seconded by Tori Cannon, to approve the vestry meeting minutes from December 8, 2025. Barbara Banks suggested clarifying edits to indicate that the Construction Committee was not present during the entire meeting. After these edits were incorporated, the minutes were unanimously approved.

RECTOR'S REPORT: We had a wonderful Christmas. Attendance at both Christmas Eve services was strong, with numbers comparable to last year's. The Christmas Day service continues to grow in popularity, with 73 in attendance this year.

The schedule does not ease up during Epiphany tide with the Annual Meeting on January 25, Choral Evensong honoring the 1858 Circle on February 1, and Kirkin' o' the Tartan on February 8. This last service, which is new to St. Paul's, is a nod to the Scottish tradition in the Episcopal Church and will include a bagpiper and Scottish music.

Ash Wednesday is February 18. Royster Hedgepeth, Lisa Sanders-Park, and David Frederiksen are once again compiling a booklet of Lenten meditations by and for parishioners. It will be available on Sunday, February 15. Fr. Lee and Fr. Green are in the process of selecting a theme and developing adult programming for Lent.

The vestry retreat, which was tentatively scheduled for February 7, needs to be rescheduled. The Rev. Canon Stephanie Allen asked St. Paul's to host a diocesan meeting for new wardens and vestry members on the same day. After a brief discussion, the vestry decided to move the retreat to February 21. The location is TBD.

Fr. Lee has a meeting with Bishop Skirving on Wednesday, January 14 to address several matters including the appointment of Fr. Green through June and the approval of his Letter of Agreement. The Executive Committee and Fr. Green have reviewed and approved the LOA. Fr. Lee also plans to speak with the bishop about the addition of a full-time clergy person to the staff of St. Paul's. The vestry supports the staffing request as well as the job description drafted by Fr. Lee.

At the upcoming annual meeting, Fr. Lee plans to include the following topics in his address to the congregation:

- SPEC reached program size church status with an ASA of 227 in 2025.
- The Lehto Foundation awarded SPEC a grant in October of \$250K (to be paid in increments of \$50K over 5 years) for the capital campaign.

- Over the next 2-3 years, we will need to replace the organ console and have received a preliminary cost estimate of \$300K – \$500K.
- The Reverend James Green will officially join SPEC as a part-time associate priest through June. The search for a full-time associate priest is in process.
- Mona Clites and the Construction Committee will present an update on renovation plans.
- This year we will be “Under Construction” in more ways than one.
- Plans are under consideration to update our logo, vision statement, and website.

Don Bobo has moved to The Davis Community in Porter’s Neck and can no longer serve as the primary point person for our alarm company. An announcement seeking Don’s replacement has gone unanswered. At present, Fr. Lee is the primary contact, but this is not ideal or sustainable. Hopefully a volunteer will step forward, but we may need to consider other options, such as paying someone for this specific purpose or hiring a facilities manager when the budget permits.

PEOPLE’S WARDEN REPORT-DECEMBER 2025: *(Submitted in writing prior to the meeting.*

Parish Hall and Church

- Units #1 and #10 have had multiple issues during the month of December. Both units have had trouble maintaining heat levels during cold spells. SEHVAC has been on site almost weekly.
- SIKES cleaned the NAVE Floor on Thursday December 18.
- DUKELECTRIC installed incandescent bulbs in the center aisle and choir lighting fixtures on Thursday December 18.
- WINDOW NINJA’S power washed the Church on Tuesday December 23. The Parish Hall will be power washed after the New Year.
- A smoke/fire detector in the NAVE has gone off more than once during the month. SENTINEL has not been able to identify the cause. The unit has been disarmed, and SENTINEL has been asked to provide a quote for replacement.

Ormond Center

- A new scanner for the Finance Office will be ordered.

Grant Update

- Received notice from the Diocese on Sunday December 7 that our Grant request was denied.

Looking Ahead

- NOURISHNC on Wednesday January 7 at 5 PM.

Steve Haughey added that plans are underway to replace the Market Street doors, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor. Stein & Stevens, the carpenters selected for this project, are ready to move forward but warned of the need to protect the doors from the elements. Steve, Fr. Lee and Mait DuBois met with Area 51 Metal Fabricators to discuss the design and fabrication of a canopy to be installed above the doors. The structure will be made from hard material, not fabric. Fr. Lee noted that the design will need the approval of the vestry and most likely the approval of Wilmington’s Historic Preservation Committee. Steve and Mait are also in the process of seeking bids to repair or replace the exterior metal stairs on the northeast corner of the Parish Hall.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Scott Sheble presented the Monthly Treasurer’s Report, which compares the proposed annual budget for 2025 to actual year-to-date figures.

For the year ending December 31, 2025, St. Paul’s reported total income of \$947,818, which is 96.8% of the total annual income budgeted for 2025 (\$979,000). Total expenses for the same twelve months amounted to \$908,668, which is 92.8% of the total annual expenses budgeted for 2025 (\$979,000). Net income for the year ending December 31, 2025, was \$39,150.

The year-end surplus can be attributed, in large part, to several items: The Rev. Michael Singer left in July, the caregivers’ event was under budget, and several facilities expenditures were pushed into the new year. Overall, it was a good year.

Other account balances as of December 31, 2025, were reported as follows:

Wells Fargo Investments (Endowment Fund)	\$1,051,073
First Carolina Reserves	\$100,692
Wells Fargo Special Gifts	\$83,694

Scott also reviewed the status of the capital campaign as of December 31, 2025:

Total Pledges (2024-2027+)	\$1,657,166
Total Gifts	\$649,053
Total Pledges & Gifts	\$2,306,219
\$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; \$42,101 for 2025; \$402,553 for 2026; and \$166,667 for 2027+. Efforts continue to collect outstanding pledges for 2025. 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 December 31, 2025, the capital campaign has collected gifts, pledges and interest totaling \$1,766,974; total expenses amount to \$226,629 for net income of \$1,540,345. The bulk of this money is kept in a money market account which earned approximately \$75K in interest in 2025.

With no further discussion, the Monthly Treasurer’s Report was unanimously accepted.

Scott presented the preliminary 2026 operating budget for a second time. No major changes were made since it was first presented to the vestry at the December meeting.

Total income for 2026 is projected to be \$1,068,275 and assumes the following:

- \$31K increase in pledges & gifts
- No IRS Employee Retention tax credit
- \$121K additional funding from special gifts/reserves
- Utilizing remaining balance of Special Gifts
- \$10K funding for Capital Campaign project manager (portion of Finance Manager salary)
- Evaluating other funding based on need and use of funds.
- Portion of Reserve Account (\$100,692) may be used to help bridge gap

Fr. Lee reminded the vestry of the importance of the 1858 Circle; this budget wouldn't be possible without the generosity of people like Mark Tedesco, Richard Rhoads, David Heath and others.

Total expenses for 2026 are projected to be \$1,068,275 and assume the following:

- Salary & Benefit increases driven by addition of a new priest associate, benefits for all staff & associated annual increases, COLA increases, initial funding of rector's sabbatical
- Increase in business operations related to inflation and higher diocesan pledge
- Increase in facilities expenses related to inflation and higher property and liability insurance

As a result of the administrative offices moving from the Parish House to the Ormond Center, insurance coverage amounts were reallocated. Church Insurance increased coverage by \$100,000 at the Ormond Center and reduced it by the same amount at the Parish House.

We anticipate seeking funding from The Endowment in 2026 as follows: \$25,000 for the youth minister and \$600 for ½ of audit cost from the Unrestricted Fund; \$6,000 from the Hazel Savage Fund for the music ministry; \$12,000 from the Lehto Fund for annual organ maintenance; \$6,000 from the Kauno Lehto Fund for annual scholarships; and \$1,800 from the Smithwick Nursery Fund.

It is expected that we will be paying more for our annual audit beginning in the first quarter of 2027 because our total budget is over \$1 million, which requires us to have a full audit.

With no further discussion, Karen Day presented a motion to approve the 2026 operating budget. No second was required as it came from the Finance Committee. The vestry voted unanimously to approve the 2026 operating budget.

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

Membership: Karen Day

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, 2025: 29
- Monthly dinner groups: 40 signed up and assigned to 4 dinner groups.
- Occasional pop-up dinners

Capital Campaign/Building Update: Mona Clites

1. Gray Hudson is working with the engineers on the construction documents.
2. The team (architect, construction committee and general contractor) is meeting on Wednesday, January 14 to discuss next steps/timeline and to work on the asbestos contract.

Stewardship: Denise Sheehan

The latest numbers for the annual stewardship campaign: 140 pledges totaling \$625,000. We are well on our way to meeting the budgeted number of \$660,000.

Community Ministries: Steve Bucci

We have re-connected with Episcopal Farm Workers, and we sent them a check for \$500.00 for 2 mattress sets for their Mattress Program to provide proper beds to the workers.

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

January events for **Youth Group** include

- January 7th: Nourish NC Packing Event 5pm
- January 11th: Jungle Rapids 5-7pm – Laser Tag & Putt Putt with Saint Andrews On-the-Sound
- January 18th: EYC @ St. Paul's
- January 22nd-25th: Winter Ski Trip at Winterplace Ski Resort in West Virginia. Total cost is \$590.00 per person for transportation, cabins, lift tickets, rentals and meals.

Upcoming **Youth Group** Events in 2026:

- February 1st: Lower Cape Fear Youth Gathering @ St. Mark's
- February 8th: Wilmington Area Youth Event from 5-7pm 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 @ St. Paul's
- March 6th-8th: "Happening 84" at Trinity Center
- 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

January 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 January is as follows:
4th: Baby Jesus and the Good News
11th: Epiphany
18th: The Man Who Helped
25th: Annual Meeting–Combined Class from 9-10: The Woman at the Well
- "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 January lessons begin our transition to the New Testament exploring the life of Jesus.
The Lesson focus for January is as follows:
4th: Happy New Year/ Epiphany
11th: The First People in Jesus' Ministry
18th: Jesus shows his Power in Cana in the Temple
25th: Annual Meeting–Combined Class from 9-10 The Woman at the Well

*Please note that Sunday School will be available for children at 9am on Sunday, January 25th during the Annual Meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Market Street Doors

Denise Sheehan made a motion to approve the replacement of the Market Street doors as proposed by Stein & Stevens for a cost of \$25,000 to be paid for with funds given by an anonymous donor. The motion was seconded by David Tousignant and unanimously approved by the vestry.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

With no additional business before the vestry, the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne O'Dell,
Clerk of the Vestry