

St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Vestry Retreat  
Official Meeting Minutes  
March 9, 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), Scott Sheble (Treasurer), Rhonda Stroud, Leon Tillery, Brad Van Amberg, Frank Wolf

**ABSENT:** Cecelia Peers

**OPENING PRAYER:** Fr. Lee called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm and noted that he is aware of the heightened anxiety at church due to current events. He reminded the vestry that the role of the church is to restore all people to Christ and one another, and as church leaders we are called to provide a community where hope in Christ is preached and modeled. Fr. Lee shared two prayers: the first for those in the Armed Forces and the second for our Country.

**APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES:** Frank Wolf made a motion, seconded by Steve Bucci, to approve February's meeting minutes dated February 21, 2026. The minutes were unanimously approved as written.

**RECTOR'S REPORT:** Fr. Lee began by clarifying the role of the Vestry Person of the Day (VPOD). The VPOD duties have changed over the years. S/he is no longer required to open and close the church building on Sunday mornings. Instead, the VPOD is asked to arrive at church about 9:15 am, check in with the rector, and remain through most of the reception following the 10:30 service. The VPOD acts as a resource, assisting the rector as needed and fielding questions/comments from parishioners. VPOD duties may continue to evolve, especially during construction and the rector's upcoming sabbatical (timing TBD).

Attendance at worship has been down marginally since the start of Lent. The reason is unclear and most likely is attributable to factors outside our control. Fr. Lee assured the vestry that there is no cause for alarm; he is simply reporting what he and others at St. Paul's have observed. Attendance numbers are recorded consistently, and the vestry will continue to receive monthly updates. The question was asked: were the absent individuals possibly watching the livestream? Our Sunday service typically attracts around 150 views by week's end, but we cannot determine precisely who is watching.

There is a Choral Evensong on March 22 at 5:00 pm. Fr. Lee's sermon will focus on preparing for Holy Week. The schedule for Holy Week and Easter services is in the bulletin and on the website. There will be a reception in memory of Lynne VanStory (Barbara O'Rourke's sister) on Saturday afternoon, March 28. Lynne was not churched and did not want a religious service on her death. With the assistance of Patsy Perhala, Barbara will host a reception for family and friends in the Parish Hall.

Jeanne Fitzpatrick and Lynne Rooks will have their year-end reviews next week. Fr. Lee, Barbara Banks, and Tori Cannon, the new vestry liaison for Human Resources, will be present during the reviews. We have done a lot of work over the past year, focused on hiring and retaining quality employees. These reviews are part of that newly refined process.

Isaac McDowell just returned from a weekend at Trinity Center. Four of our young people participated in *Happening*, and two had significant leadership roles, one as Observing Rector and the other as Observing Chaplain. Isaac's ministry is bearing fruit not just at St. Paul's but also in the diocese.

Thanks to all the new vestry members who have submitted the necessary information for their background checks and completed the safeguarding classes. Door codes will be forthcoming as will the associated training.

Fr. Lee continued to report on building related matters in cooperation with People's Warden, Mait DuBois. The exterior fire escape stairs are under repair. Work will continue this week. The Market Street doors are expected to be installed after Easter.

The vestry was presented with concept drawings for a metal canopy to be installed over the Market Street doors. The purpose of the canopy is to help protect the doors from the elements and extend their useful life. The preliminary design, which is sleek and unobtrusive, was drafted by Area 51 Powder Coating. Mait DuBois will present the concept drawings to the city's Historic Preservation Commission in early April as part of the permitting process. After a detailed discussion, Karen Day made a motion to approve the concept drawings for the canopy over the Market Street doors. The motion was seconded by Tori Cannon and unanimously approved by the vestry.

Flores & Foley will be on the premises tomorrow with a drone to inspect the church and parish house roofs, after a detached slate was discovered in the gutter above the church entrance closest to the Andrews parking lot. Flores & Foley will also investigate an old exterior conduit that is in a difficult-to-reach location between the church and parish house. The conduit poses a potential threat to the Agnus Dei window and needs to be removed. The hope is that the crane used for roof repairs can also be used to remove the conduit.

We continue to have issues with the lights in the sanctuary. The executive committee is exploring the idea of hiring a company and/or a lighting engineer that specializes in church lighting to address the problems in conjunction with the upcoming construction project. The capital campaign may be a possible source for funding.

Fr. Lee shared an update on the search for an Associate Priest. The search committee met yesterday and identified four candidates from the applicant pool to interview via Zoom. The interviews will occur next week after which time the search committee will reconvene to narrow the pool to two. The two finalists will be invited to Wilmington to interview in person. Fr. Lee noted that the Associate Priest position is full-time and therefore could not be filled by a bi-vocational priest.

Work on the logo and website is ongoing. The design process for the logo continues to evolve, but at present the team is not ready to share design ideas with the vestry. Jonathan Graves, our website consultant, has developed a survey, which, when finalized, will be distributed to the vestry. Input from leadership will help inform the future direction of the website.

As part of the sound system upgrades, four new lapel microphones were ordered last week. The technology team is also considering the addition of an audio mixer to be used exclusively for the livestream. This will allow for a more consistent sound experience during services throughout the week.

On a final note, Fr. Lee cancelled his trip to Israel due to the war in the Middle East.

**PEOPLE'S WARDEN REPORT – FEBRUARY 2026** *(Submitted in writing prior to the meeting.)*

Parish Hall & Church

- Paid Stein & Stevens a \$9,000 (50% deposit) for the front doors.
- Continue getting bids for a front door canopy and to 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.
- Replace burned out electric bulbs in the church
- Vestry approved repairing the Fire Escape (need before Capital Campaign).
- Disconnected power from water fountain (run continuously & wasting electricity).

Ormond Center

- No Update

Grant Update

- Catherine Kennedy Home Foundation Grant - \$10K (accessibility) has been submitted

Looking Ahead

- Market St doors are being built. Expect doors will be installed in March.
- Stein & Stevens \$11,000 cost estimate to replace 16<sup>th</sup> Street narthex double doors has been put on hold. GNP trying to repair doors to extend life.
- Sentinel will replace 2 fire detectors in Church (parts ordered).
- Expect to have completed fire exit repair before Easter
- Requesting Vestry approval to build Market St Canopy.
- Expect to submit Canopy application to Historical Preservation Dept April approval.
- Vestry needs to consider repainting all exterior red doors to extend the life of the doors.

Mait DuBois added that the fire protection system was updated.

**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 two months ending February 28, 2026, St. Paul's reported total income of \$217,932 which is 20.4% of the total annual income budgeted for 2026 (\$1,068,275). Total expenses for the same period amounted to \$159,460, which is 14.9% of the total annual expenses budgeted for 2026 (\$1,068,275). Net income for the two months ending February 28, 2026, was \$58,473.

Other account balances as of February 28, 2026, were reported as follows:

Wells Fargo Investments (Endowment Fund)	\$1,072,864
First Carolina Reserves	\$101,212

Wells Fargo Special Gifts \$59,160

Pledge payments were \$204,385 at February 28, 2026, up in a year-over-year comparison as a larger number of parishioners elected to prepay their 2026 pledges. Facilities expenses are tracking higher, given that the electric bill for February was elevated due to unseasonably cold weather.

Scott also reviewed the status of the capital campaign as of February 28, 2026:

Total Pledges (2024-2027+)	\$1,649,691
Total Gifts	\$651,243
Total Pledges & Gifts	\$2,300,934
\$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; \$18,788 for 2025; \$333,589 for 2026; and \$166,667 for 2027+. Efforts continue to collect outstanding pledges for 2025; the anticipated collection rate is 98%. 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 February 28, 2026, the capital campaign has collected gifts, pledges and interest totaling \$1,862,763; total expenses amount to \$226,629 for net income of \$1,636,134. The bulk of this money is kept in a money market account at Wells Fargo.

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.

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

**Capital Campaign/Building Process:** Mona Clites

1. The asbestos survey will be completed next Monday and there will be a report by Wednesday. The cost of the survey is \$5600.
2. Gray says that the engineers and contractors have had discussions and plans have been adjusted for the elevator and the nursery/men's bathroom area to keep an existing wall so we will be receiving updated plans to review. They are also working on the narthex bathroom plans. He says the plans will be completed this month.
3. Once the plans are completed, then the contractor will do a final cost estimate for the Vestry's review.
4. Mona is planning a meeting of everyone (Gray, Construction Committee and Contractors) so that we can start finalizing a timeline.

Once the timeline is finalized and before construction begins, Fr. Lee discussed the idea of conducting building tours to show parishioners the details of the planned renovations.

**Membership:** Nothing significant to report.

**Community Ministries:** Steve Bucci

1. Sent \$2000.00 to 2Share as a part of our yearly commitment to their operations budget.
2. Contacted by Foster Pantry to find out if St. Paul's wanted to once again participate in making Easter Baskets for Foster kids. This will be our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual participation in this program as our Lenten Project. Cecelia Peers and Michael Jonik will once again head up this project.

**Human Resources:** Barbara Banks

The HR Committee has added a new Vestry member as of March 2026, Ms. Tori Cannon. Additionally, the current HR Chair will participate with the Rector in end-of-year staff reviews before the end of March. The next quarterly HR meeting will take place when the new Chair assumes the position. The HR Committee is made up of the Wardens, the Treasurer and a Vestry member who serves as Chair.

**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

Upcoming Events:

- April 17th-19th "New Beginnings 59" 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

March events for Youth Group include:

- March 1st: Nerf Battle @ St. Paul's 5-7pm -Dinner Provided
- March 5th-8th: "Happening 84" at Trinity Center (NO COFFEE & CONVERSATIONS)
- March 15th: Bowling at Cardinal Lanes Beach Bowl at 3-5pm
- March 29th: "Capture the Flag" a Wilmington Episcopal Youth event held on the grounds of Mount Lebanon Chapel at Airlie Gardens 5-6:30pm- Free & Food provided!

March events for Children's Ministry include:

- March 15th: 3-5pm Bowling at Cardinal Lanes Beach Bowl
- "Touch & See" is offered to Preschool and Kindergarten children.
- Children's Sunday School from 9:30-10:15am in the Children's Wing.

"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 March is as follows:

1st: The Judeans Turn Against Jesus

8th: The Man Born Blind

15th: Jesus Brings His Friend Lazarus Back to Life

22nd: Last Supper

29th: Palm Sunday (no class) Procession of the Palms at 10:00am

*Please note that on Easter Sunday we will be Flowering the Cross prior to the Choral Eucharist and the Easter Egg Hunt will be held following the 10:30am service.*

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Concept Drawings for Market Street Canopy:** As stated in the Rector's Report, the vestry was presented with concept drawings for a metal canopy to be installed over the Market Street doors. The purpose of the canopy is to help protect the doors from the elements and extend their useful life. The preliminary design, which is sleek and unobtrusive, was drafted by Area 51 Powder Coating. Mait DuBois will present the concept drawings to the city's Historic Preservation Commission in early April as part of the permitting process. After a detailed discussion, Karen Day made a motion to approve the concept drawings for the canopy over the Market Street doors. The motion was seconded by Tori Cannon and unanimously approved by the vestry.

**Church Picnic:** The annual church picnic at Long Leaf Park is scheduled for Sunday, May 3 in the afternoon. More details to follow.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None.

With no additional business before the vestry, the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne O'Dell,  
Clerk of the Vestry