

Minutes of the St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church Vestry Meeting

May 18, 2021

Present: Rector S. David Cox, Sr. Warden Addrienne Conway, Jr. Warden Dick LeClaire, Clerk Susan Wilcox, Dan Bednarczyk, Linda Campbell, Kate Gasper, Crystal Danko, Rustin Dutcher, Rolland Exon, Cathy Jackson, Julie Parmenter, Dan Wancura

Absent: Erin Metters, Art Menke, Amy Moore

The meeting was called to order by Sr. Warden Conway as a hybrid event, on Zoom and in person, at 7:38 PM.

Devotions were presented by Mr. Exon, using the Evening Prayer service and a reflection on John 21:4-6. Prayers of intercession were offered.

DISCUSSION

Rethinking Justice Workshop

Ms. Jackson reported on the Rethinking Justice Workshop which was presented online May 11 with about 400 attendees. The first talk was by Methodist Bishop Ruben Saenz and was based on *Deuteronomy*. Three aspects of justice were identified: value systems, political systems, and economic systems. The Rev. Jason Thompson next spoke of how failures in justice affect community. Fr. Greg Hammes of JUMP (Justice, Unity, and Ministry Project) described this organization's three-step process of ministry: Listening, Requirements, and Outcome. From her experience as a project manager, Ms. Jackson recognized this approach to addressing projects. Bishop Cathleen Bascom of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas cited the injustices she sees right outside her office window: unfair banking practices, inadequate housing, drug addiction, mental health issues. She urged that congregations summon the power of people as well as money to exert pressure to move closer to justice. Ms. Jackson would like to volunteer to take part in the organization.

Fr. Cox added context. He meets monthly with the local branch, the Johnson County Interfaith Justice Organization. Participation would begin in August with house meetings of ten to twelve people coming together to talk about which justice issues bother them. An administrator from JCIJO would serve as facilitator at each house meeting. Each of these administrators is responsible for ten or so churches. The issues raised at house meetings are compared and winnowed to yield two issues for member congregations to unite behind. From November to May, these two issues are thoroughly researched in order to determine feasible solutions to be advocated. The process culminates in a mass meeting of the member congregations, called a Nehemiah Assembly, to submit findings and recommended actions to the appropriate authorities or officials, exerting the power of the people to get results. A commitment by St. Michael's to participate in JCIJO would mean promoting attendance at the house meetings and the Nehemiah Assembly. Also, there is a pledge of financial support, between \$3500 and \$5000 in the case of St. Michael's. (See "Decisions" below.)

Parish Calls

After conversation about what time of day is best for making parish calls, the consensus was that calling during the day and leaving a message is acceptable and may not be as intrusive as evening calls. Ms. Conway asked how often Vestry members invite others to share their faith stories. Mr. Exon suggested asking for the story of how they came to attend St. Michael's. Fr. Cox noted that sharing meaningful stories and beliefs makes connections between people. Mr. LeClaire mentioned considering the spiritual aspect of environmental issues. Ms. Conway challenged Vestry members to think of ways to talk about their faith more comfortably. Fr. Cox connected the difficulties in this area with cognitive therapy. A certain vocabulary becomes fossilized in a negative light, associated with manipulation and immature spirituality. Consequently, language with which to talk about faith is lost and must be won back and restored. Fr. Cox is mulling how to include these issues in the Bigger Bible School, related to the Invite Welcome Connect initiative. Ms. Conway referred to the book *Transforming Evangelism* with its redefinition of evangelism as an expression of delight and wonder at God's works, emerging from gratitude.

Signage Audit

Ms. Conway brought up the need to consider signage inside and outside the church under the guidance of the Invite Welcome Connect initiative. Fr. Cox explained that he hopes to discover a way that St. Michael's can "overwhelm" people with the sense of being welcome. Amid conversation about various signage options, Fr. Cox identified two objectives: 1. Welcome and hospitality; 2. Sharing information. Ms. Campbell related the instance of a visitor to the front garden recognizing it as a place for prayer. The parish participates in the Quiet Garden Movement with the objective of offering a beautiful space for meditation to the broader community. Fr. Cox hopes to redesign the courtyard so it can host gatherings. Ms. Gasper suggested producing attractive yard signs for parishioners to display. Fr. Cox requested that a subcommittee form to research signage options, including materials and costs. Ms. Campbell, Ms. Parmenter, Mr. Exon, and Ms. Conway volunteered to work with Mr. LeClaire on this issue. Ms. Conway noted that a special 75th Anniversary logo design should be ready by the next Vestry meeting.

Day School Contract

Ms. Gasper, Fr. David, and Sue Thayer of the Day School met today to talk about the lease agreement, particularly about requiring the Day School to hire a commercial cleaning crew, defining which areas may be used by the Day School, and setting the rent amount so as to be fair to both parties. Ms. Gasper will prepare a lease document and submit it to Vestry members for comment before presenting it to the Day School. The lease should be finalized by the end of summer. Ms. Gasper noted the importance of tracking snow removal expenses accurately in case this expense must be negotiated with the Day School in the future. Ms. Gasper assured Ms. Thayer that St. Michael's considers the Day School to be an important service among the ministries of the church.

Service Times

Fr. Cox expects to discontinue the Rite 1 Eucharist service that has taken place early Sunday mornings, due to the lack of available celebrants. He has not reached a decision concerning the Saturday Evening Eucharist. Several Vestry members expressed thoughts regarding the importance of that service, though it generally accounts for only 5% of weekly attendance. Ms. Zoellner suggested that the resumption of services after COVID concerns ease, offers a convenient opportunity to make schedule changes. Asked by Ms. Conway how the Vestry can help with this decision, Fr. Cox responded that he would appreciate the backing of the Vestry when he reaches his decision, which he will do by June.

Financial Report

Treasurer Zoellner presented the March and April financial reports. As expected, revenue is falling behind, however, expenses are being managed carefully. The unfavorable balance in April was not offset by Easter giving, but there has been improvement in May which will show up on next month's report.

Fr. Cox requested a letter from the Vestry to parishioners in mid-year, accompanying the mid-year giving report. The letter would thank parishioners for their faithfulness during this difficult year, as well as anticipating up-coming opportunities to re-connect. Ms. Conway will prepare a draft letter and put it on the Google Drive so other Vestry members can comment or make additions.

DECISIONS

Ms. Jackson moved that St. Michael's commit to participating in the Johnson County Interfaith Justice Organization. Mr. Exon seconded the motion. Mr. Exon asked whether such participation might cause divisions in the church. Fr. Cox commented that the fact that the justice issues "bubble up" from house meetings minimizes controversy, according to the experience of other area clergy. He added that some controversy is unavoidable. The motion passed.

Ms. Parmenter moved that the financial report be approved. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion, and it passed.

Regarding the minutes of the April meeting, Mr. Exon asked that the spelling of his name be corrected. With that change, Ms. Campbell moved and Ms. Jackson seconded the motion to approve the minutes, which passed.

Note: On May 31, Vestry members were emailed a proposal from the subcommittee on the Day School lease that King's Cleaning be hired immediately at \$1155.00 per month, the lowest of three bids on Day School cleaning. The email vote concluded on June 1. The Vestry approved the hire, so King's Cleaning can begin work by June 7.

CLOSING

Mr. Exon led the Vestry in the prayer of General Thanksgiving.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Wilcox
Clerk of the Vestry

ADDENDUM

On June 28, Jr. Warden Dick LeClaire emailed the Vestry explaining that the air conditioning system in St. Michael's office area had failed the previous week. As replacing the system was not a budgeted item, Mr. LeClaire requested that the Vestry approve the required expense via an email vote. Anthony Plumbing had made an acceptable bid to replace the system with delivery by July 2, operational by July 5. Mr. LeClaire noted that sufficient funds were available to cover the \$15,750 expense. Erin Metters moved, via email, that the Vestry accept Anthony's bid to replace the office air conditioning with delivery by July 2, 2021, and operational by July 5, 2021. Linda Campbell seconded the motion. By email vote, the motion carried with eleven "yes" votes and zero "no" votes on June 29, 2021.