

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Vestry of the Chapel of the Cross**

**September 23, 2023**

The Vestry of the Chapel of the Cross met in the Overlook Room and via Zoom on Thursday, September 23, 2023. The following Vestry members were present: Jessica Aylor (Zoom), Brian Coggins, Woody Coley, Anita Howell, Katherine Lavine, Caren Parker, Harriet Pegram (Junior Warden), Gail Perry, Roman Perun (Senior Warden), Alan Rimer, Brad Ross, and Faith Turchi.

The following clergy were present: The Rev. Elizabeth Marie Melchionna (Rector), The Rev. Mary Catherine Young (Associate Rector for University Ministry), The Rev. Keith Esposito (Curate), and the Rev. Dr. Karen Connor McGugan (Curate for Family and Youth).

Also present were Diane McOmie (Parish Administrator and Stewardship Manager), Boykin Bell (Director of Christian Formation), Sally Goodnight (2024 Annual Campaign Chair) and Allison Worthy for Alice Cotton (Clerk).

**The Rector presided and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.**

### **Devotion and Prayer**

Alan Rimer offered a devotion on gratitude from *What Does It Mean to Be Grateful*, an article by Elaine Smookler, and followed with an inspirational prayer from an unknown author.

### **Approval of the Consent Agenda**

**The following items were placed on the Consent Agenda (attached):**

Minutes from the August 2023 Vestry Meeting  
Vestry Summary – August 2023 Vestry Meeting  
Rector’s Report  
Campus Ministry Associate Rector’s report  
Curate’s report  
Curate/Youth and Family Ministry report  
Christian Formation report  
Parish Life and Worship report  
Communications report  
Music report  
Buildings and Grounds report – August  
Faith in Action Final report  
Finance Committee meeting minutes – August  
Stewardship Committee meeting minutes – September

Alan Rimer moved approval of the Consent Agenda, and Faith Turchi seconded. **The consent Agenda was approved unanimously.**

## **2024 Annual Campaign Update**

Annual Campaign Chair Sally Goodnight provided an update on the upcoming campaign which will kick off on October 1<sup>st</sup>. She thanked Katherine, Gail, Diane, Elizabeth Marie and Jeff for assistance with best practices and wording for campaign materials as well as the caller training. All leadership segment letters have been signed and are ready to be mailed. Those who previously pledged in 2023 will receive handwritten notes from Ms. Goodnight. Parishioner Jenny Common designed campaign tee shirts (*Come and See*) for Clergy, Staff, Vestry and Stewardship Committee members. Ms. Goodnight encouraged Vestry members, clergy and staff to wear their tee shirts on Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup> so they will be easily identified for questions about the campaign. She thanked Vestry members for signing up to make calls which can be made any time after October 1<sup>st</sup> and asked that they remember to first and foremost establish rapport with parishioners. The staff and Vestry calling night will be held on Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup>. Callers will be asked to take lists of non-pledging parishioners with the hope that a call will make them feel remembered and appreciated. The goal of the campaign is to increase the feeling of fellowship in the parish and the number of pledges received. Ms. Goodnight emphasized that we would like to create a more inclusive environment in which new members of the parish get to know Vestry members and clergy.

Stewardship Co-Chair Gail Perry mentioned that in the past parishioners who pledged less than \$3K were not contacted but that callers at the recent campaign training were open to reaching out to this group. She emphasized that one of two strategies to achieve the annual fund increase this year is to get more pledges in and more calls made.

Ms. Goodnight spoke about the need to reach out to younger parishioners to show them how much the parish does with the funds received and to encourage them to make faithful financial commitments of any amount. Ms. Perry noted that most calls are renewals, not cold calls. Callers will be asking for renewals and prayerful consideration of an increase. Ms. Goodnight received profuse thanks for the work she is doing on the annual campaign.

## **Rector's Update**

The Rev. Elizabeth Marie Melchionna began her report with a Faith in Action update:

### *St. Paul AME*

The Rector attended a Town Council Meeting with a small group of parishioners in support of a conditional zoning permit for St. Paul Village, an affordable housing project that St. Paul AME has been working on for 17 years. A final vote on the project will be taken at the Town Council Meeting on October 11<sup>th</sup>.

### *Habitat for Humanity*

The Chapel of the Cross has made a pledge to Habitat's Weaver's Grove Project. There is an exciting opportunity for us to be together in community to build alongside prospective homeowners on Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>. The Rev. Keith Esposito mentioned that many volunteers have signed up for the morning shift and that there are many slots available in the afternoon. There will also be many volunteers at church in the morning participating in build

activities organized by Director of Christian Formation Boykin Bell. There is also a wonderful podcast about Weaver's Grove featuring Claire West and Betsy Blackwell.

### *Racial Healing Committee*

The Racial Healing Committee has done a lot of work using the ARC framework (Awareness, Relationship and Commitment) and is moving from thinking and framing to action. One parishioner will look at how it came to be that so many Episcopalians were involved in the Brown v Board of Education case now approaching its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Rector went on to speak about the importance of having a lens of racial healing in all we do, as has been the case with Creation Care and all of our committees. All standing committees will be asked to have someone who is applying the racial healing filter to all the work we do.

### *Stewardship*

Our faith in action is evident in all of the ways the Vestry and parishioners are showing up to make calls for stewardship. The kick-off is October 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Melchionna is looking forward to a slimmed down stewardship season this year (fewer weeks) and is hoping that the concentrated period will enable us to move forward with our prayerful and thoughtful planning, passing a budget in December.

### *Faith in Action Partners*

The Rector provided an update on building use and our faith in action partner, Johnson Service Corps. JSC was founded by the Chapel of the Cross in 2000 through a \$300K bequest from parishioner Margaret Johnson and became a 501(c)3 in 2009. Corps members live in intentional community and provide service to local non-profits. JSC will move their office from COTC to Durham as the nexus of their work and their house are in Durham. Although JSC will no longer be housed at COTC, our relationship remains strong.

### *Vestry Nominations*

Four vestry members will be completing their terms in six months. Leadership succession planning is very important. Ms. Melchionna asked the Vestry to think about people who have gifts and skills for leadership in the parish; people of all ages who have the appetite and gifts to serve. An invitation into serving in ministry may be all that they need. Senior Warden Roman Perun noted that some people say they don't have the time to serve or the capacity but he has found that it is important to make the time for what's important in our lives.

### *Pastoral note*

The Rector has been proactive about scheduling her visits to retirement communities and homes of parishioners who can no longer come to worship. In her visits with these individuals, she has found that church and faith very much matter to them. They like being able to attend church online and are grateful to the church for helping them stay connected. Ms. Melchionna thanked all of the volunteers who have been involved in making online services available.

## **Safe Church Training**

Director of Christian Formation Boykin Dunlap Bell spoke about *Safe Church, Safe Communities* guidelines. *Safe Church* is a program offered by the Diocese that protects both the church, our parishioners, leaders, teachers, lay eucharistic visitors, altar guild members – anyone who could find themselves in positions that might be awkward or dangerous. There are 12–15-hour online training modules. The Diocese has presented best practices which includes all Vestry members being trained in the universal module which takes 90 minutes. That said, the Wardens have made the decision that volunteers will not be required to do the training as we have good safeguards in place to prevent people from situations that would put them at risk. Beginning in 2024, the Diocese will require an annual audit of who has taken *Safe Church* and what we are doing to observe best practices. Other trainings such as the YMCA Darkness to Light or Guardian Ad Litem training do not count but can be included in our audit to demonstrate the importance COTC places on safety. Vestry members will receive an email from Praesidium Academy to set up an account. Ms Bell will include recommendations on other modules which would be most useful to Vestry members. Please direct any questions about *Safe Church* to Ms. Bell as she is the coordinator for COTC.

## **Standing Committee Updates**

### *Buildings & Grounds*

Faith Turchi, Chair of Buildings & Grounds, reported that there is an issue with the thermoplastic membrane (TPO) on the Yates roof which will be repaired before the solar panel installation. The Duke Energy grant requires that the solar installation be completed before next June which allows ample time for roof repairs. Work on the nave lighting project continues. A new technology using blue tooth connections instead of wired connections is being considered.

### *Finance*

Finance Chair Brad Ross shared four points with regard to the general financial statements:

1. August expenses were \$30K ahead of revenue, year-to-date was \$99K. From a budget expense standpoint, we are at 67% of spending for the year which is expected. From a revenue standpoint, some of our large pledges are behind. However, some pledges were received in September and are not reflected in the packet. Please encourage people to pay their pledges in your annual campaign calls. This will help the unpaid pledges line at the end of the year.
2. There was not a lot of activity in the organ fund last month. We have \$864K in cash in the capital fund, \$444K of which is committed to distant projects; \$350K for bell tower remediation.
3. Parishioner Michael Hardy, chair of the Special Funds Committee, along with Sabrina Olsen, Diane McOmie and Barney Varner are researching 20-30 years of history on 49 funds to enable us to eliminate the need for qualification on the Audit and bring us up to speed with current accounting standards.
4. The first Renew First Investment Committee meeting was held in August. We have a wealth of internal resources on the committee, many past treasurers along with outside resources. The Committee was divided into two sub-teams, one team looking at current

investments; the other team is looking at investment policy. There is a draft investment policy that was done in 2019 but not a final version. With assistance from the Rector, the committee currently has policy statements from Christ Church in Raleigh, St. Michael's, St. Paul's in Smithfield, St. Paul's in Winston-Salem, the NC Diocese and the national church which will be helpful in developing a concise policy for COTC. The Committee is looking at our largest investment with the NC Diocese and what the national church is doing in order to draw up a road map of how we invest. The objective is to present to the parish in February at the financial presentation.

#### *Personnel*

Personnel Chair Jess Aylor will report on health insurance coverage and other personnel related matters at the next meeting.

#### *Organ Project*

Organ Project Chair Brian Coggins reported that we are in a waiting period with the Town permit application. Resolute liaised with Town and due to a backlog, they expect to get to our project soon. With the Treasurer out of town, an updated report on the financial and fundraising front is not available. Quiet fundraising with larger donors continues. Mr. Coggins is transitioning with Terry Eason on final designs and updated pricing on the add-ons. The engineers are taking an inordinately long time to finalize plans. Mr. Coggins will work on moving the project forward. Cassavant is making progress, we have seen detailed drawings of the organ along with samples of the carving and the wood. Mr. Coggins will visit Cassavant in Quebec in mid-October to see progress in person.

#### **Closing Prayer and Adjourn**

Dr. Karen McGugan offered a closing prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Worthy  
for Alice R. Cotton, Clerk of the Vestry

**The next meeting of the Vestry of The Chapel of the Cross will be on Thursday, October 19, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**

### **Vestry Summary – September 2023**

At its meeting on September 21, 2023, the Vestry did the following:

1. Heard from Annual Campaign Chair Sally Goodnight about the upcoming campaign.
2. Heard from Boykin Dunlap Bell, Director of Christian Formation, about the *Safe Church, Safe Communities* guidelines.
3. Heard from Finance Committee Chair Brad Ross about work being done on the Special Funds Committee and the Investment Committee.
4. Heard from Brian Coggins about the status of the organ project.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Worthy  
for Alice R. Cotton, Clerk of the Vestry