

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Vestry of The Chapel of the Cross  
16 November 2023**

The Vestry of the Chapel of the Cross met in the Overlook Room and via Zoom on Thursday, November 16, 2023. The following Vestry Members were present: Jessica Aylor, Brian Coggins, Woody Coley, Anita Howell, Katherine Lavine, Caren Parker, Harriet Pegram (Jr. Warden), Roman Perun (Sr. Warden), Alan Rimer (via Zoom), Brad Ross, Faith Turchi.

The following clergy were present: The Rev. Elizabeth Marie Melchionna (Rector), The Rev. Mary Catherine Young (Associate Rector for University Ministry, via Zoom), 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 Coordinator), Sabrina Olsen (Treasurer), and Alice Cotten (Clerk).

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

**Devotion/Prayer**

Woody Coley offered an opening prayer.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

The following items were on the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes and Summary from October Vestry Meeting
- Rector's report
- Campus Ministry Associate Rector's report
- Curate's report
- Curate for Family and Youth report
- Christian Formation report
- Communications report
- Parish Life & Worship report
- Finance Committee minutes –October
- Building & Grounds Committee minutes—October
- Stewardship Committee report—November
- Faith in Action report—November
- Church Organ Committee minutes (4): October 23; November 6, 13, and 15

Upon motion by Anita Howell, seconded by Jess Aylor, *the consent agenda was approved* unanimously, with no abstentions.

### **Rector's Update**

Ms. Melchionna reported that annual staff *performance reviews* were almost finished and that our parish has a “really, really great team” with lots of positive energy. Consistent feedback has been that staff are stretched beyond capacity even now, as the parish is on the eve of installation of a new roof and a major construction project. The Rector has suggested to staff that they step back, focus on their primary missions, and, when possible, allow lay leaders to assume more responsibility. Mr. Ross commented that he also hoped that staff would not be afraid to come to the Vestry to say what tasks they thought consumed too much of their time. The Rector pointed out that our staff team trends younger and that in the current national denominational climate, it is a priest's choice of where to go, as there are 7 openings for each cleric looking for a position. Having the staff team that we do, she said, is “wonderful and unusual.” In order not to overload staff, the parish may need to cut back on the number of things it does and focus on its primary mission--forming disciples of Jesus through worship.

After the 4 p.m. service of Lessons and Carols on December 3 *worship services will move to the Parish Hall during construction in the church*. In preparation, the Parish Hall will be painted, windows cleaned, and movers hired. Ms. Melchionna emphasized the importance of being positive about this temporary relocation and added that staff are working creatively to make the place in which we worship a lovely, welcoming, holy space.

She also noted the recent death and funeral service of *Ms. Doris Horton Cotton*, an outstanding community leader and active member of St. Paul AME Church, who was instrumental in developing the St. Paul and Chapel of the Cross sister-parish relationship. Ms. Cotton worked at COTC for almost forty years, and the parish is grateful for her ministry.

The Rector noted that the parish may soon need to look at its *student resident program* to see whether it needs changes or adjustments. There are challenges involved with managing the program.

Ms. Melchionna brought to the attention of the Vestry that former student resident *Zach Rugen* will be ordained on December 9, the same day that parish Curate for Family and Youth, *The Rev. Dr. Karen Connor McGugan*, will be ordained.

She also mentioned that the day's email brought shoutouts to the parish from both Habitat and the IFC.

### **Discussion of Vestry Election process**

Sr. Warden Roman Perun reviewed the Vestry election process, explaining that the outgoing Vestry class acts as the election committee. The diocese made some changes to the Vestry election process during Covid, and last year Ann Craver looked at our parish process and made suggestions to streamline it. The elections committee recommended adapting those suggestions.

After discussion, Mr. Perun, on behalf of the Vestry elections committee, moved that the Vestry approve the following Vestry Policy wording related to Vestry elections:

*If we have 4 candidates, we send out a missive with candidate bios and explain that we will vote by acclamation at the Parish Annual Meeting. No advisory ballot.*

*If we have 5 or more candidates, we send out the bios with an advisory ballot, explaining that members should vote for "up to 4," and that it will be moved at the Annual Meeting to elect the top four vote-getters on the advisory ballot.*

Faith Turchi seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously, with no abstentions.

The Rector commented that eventually the parish may want to move to a skills-based slate system for Vestry elections. Mr. Rimer observed that in the past, outgoing Vestry members were asked to bring the names of one or two people that they might like to invite to be nominated.

### **Standing Committee Updates**

#### *Building and Grounds*

Faith Turchi, Chair of Building and Grounds, reported that the committee has been busy. It (B & G) had passed a motion to recommend that Resolute modify their permit if necessary and perform both the dimmer demolition and the installation of the new electrical panel. No Vestry action was needed.

The B & G committee had also passed a motion to move forward with the replacement of the top membrane of the Yates roof, using Pickard Roofing's proposal of \$53,462. Mr. Coggins suggested that the Vestry be sent copies of the proposal to read before voting on it, which he suggested could be done by email. Ms. Turchi will send the information to the Vestry.

Ms. Turchi also said that Mr. Rimer continues to meet with 8M and the Town of Chapel Hill to modify the solar panel design so that it satisfies the town's requirements. By the time the roof replacement has been completed, we should be ready to install the solar panels, which itself takes only 1 ½ days. These delays are not expected to affect the grants the parish is to receive for the solar panels.

#### *Finance*

Treasurer Sabrina Olsen reported that the parish is a little behind in contributions and at the end of October was running a deficit, some of which is related to timing, though insurance premiums did increase, as well as some administrative expenses. She expects the parish will end the year in a strong position. Cash is coming in for the new organ. She anticipates significant disbursements beginning in January. Ms. Olsen added that we have not had stellar investment performance this year. The Organ and Light Fund had a balance of \$946,419 available at the end of October. The Capital Fund balance was \$732,774, of which \$421,338 was committed for specific projects. The Yates roof replacement will take \$59K. Ms. Olsen noted that there is a significant amount of money in outstanding pledges to the Organ and Light Fund.

Mr. Coggins commented that the Organ Committee will be contacting donors to encourage payment of pledges and added that, though we are in a good position in regard to the organ fund-raising goal, that goal will have to be revised upward.

Mr. Ross, Chair of the Finance Committee, brought a request from the committee that the Vestry approve having Treasurer Sabrina Olsen and Finance Committee member John Pegram negotiate with financial institutions for a \$1.5M construction loan for the parish, to cover the organ project and the tower remediation. The parish would draw funds from the loan only as needed. Ms. Olsen explained that the strategy was to “ask for more than we think we need but don’t spend more than we need to.” In addition, the committee recommended a temporary suspension of the parish undesignated gifts policy during which time all undesignated gifts would be put into the organ and bell tower remediation project. After discussion, Brian Coggins called the question, and the motion for Vestry approval of Ms. Olsen and Mr. Pegram negotiating a \$1.5M loan and the temporary suspension of the undesignated gifts policy was approved unanimously, with no abstentions.

*Personnel:*

Committee Chair Jess Aylor reported that insurance costs rose this past year. There is currently a task force to advise the Episcopal Church about health insurance, and it held a listening session recently. The Rector added that the task force will present its findings in 2024 but that implementation of any possible changes will come later, perhaps in 2027.

*Stewardship*

Committee Co-Chair Katherine Lavine reported that as of Tuesday, November 14, there were 445 pledges totaling \$1,562,950 for the annual campaign.

*Other*

In response to a question, the Rector and Jr. Warden Harriet Pegram reported that the ABC Sale will be on Saturday, March 16, 2024.

*Organ Construction Update*

Organ Committee Chair Brian Coggins remarked that his report this month was more positive than last month’s report. The construction permit application has been submitted to the Town of Chapel Hill and is being followed carefully. There has also been progress with Casavant Organ Company in finalizing details for their drawings. Jeff Crawford has made a video of photographs from Mr. Coggins’s recent visit to Casavant, with audio voiceover, and this video will soon be shared with the parish.

*Other*

The Rector reminded everyone that the Diocesan Convention in Winston-Salem would start the next day.

The Rector noted that COTC Curate for Family and Youth, *Dr. Karen Connor McGugan*, will be ordained to the priesthood on Saturday, December 9, at 11:00 A.M. at Christ Church, Raleigh.

*Closing Prayer and Adjourn*

Katherine Lavine offered the closing prayer, after which the Rector adjourned the meeting at 7:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice R. Cotten  
Clerk of the Vestry

**The next meeting of the Vestry of The Chapel of the Cross will be on Thursday, December 21, 2023, at 6:00 P.M.**