

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Vestry of The Chapel of the Cross  
21 December 2023**

The Vestry of the Chapel of the Cross met in the Overlook Room and via Zoom on Thursday, December 21, 2023. The following Vestry Members were present: Brian Coggins, Woody Coley, Anita Howell, Katherine Lavine, Caren Parker, Harriet Pegram (Jr. Warden), Gail Perry, Roman Perun (Sr. Warden), Brad Ross, Faith Turchi (via Zoom).

The following clergy were present: The Reverend Elizabeth Marie Melchionna (Rector), The Reverend Keith Esposito (Curate), and the Reverend 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 6:02 P.M.**

**Devotion/Prayer**

Caren Parker read the Collect for the Third Sunday in Advent from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*. The Collect focused on God's sending John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

The following items were on the Consent Agenda:  
Minutes and Summary from November Vestry meeting  
Rector's report  
Weston Morris Candidacy Letter  
Curate's report  
Curate/Youth and Family Ministry report  
Christian Formation report  
Music report  
Communications report  
Parish Life and Worship report  
Finance Committee minutes—November  
Building & Grounds minutes--November  
Faith in Action report—December  
Stewardship Committee report—December  
Church Organ Committee minutes 11/27/23  
Church Organ Committee minutes 12/11/23  
Church Organ Project Status—12/19/23

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

### **Rector's Update**

The Rector, the Rev. Elizabeth Marie Melchionna, expressed appreciation to all those who helped transform the Parish Hall into a welcoming, functional, and lovely worship space. There is much happening now, including replacement of the Yates roof. She thanked those who had initiated conversations with parishioners about being nominated to the Vestry and those who had helped during a recent medical emergency during worship and during the recent hospitalization of her son. In addition, she thanked all who worked on the very successful annual campaign, resulting in more money pledged than ever before.

She then asked The Rev. Keith Esposito to say a few words about *The Seed Fund*. Mr. Esposito began by saying that the fund started from the "You are the Light" campaign, and an anonymous donor matched the original funds. The focus is on seeding early-stage initiatives "outside the walls of the church." Grants will be \$20,000 to \$40,000 per project. The hope is that the grants will have a broad impact felt throughout the community. The public launch of The Seed Fund is planned for the parish annual meeting on February 25, 2024, with an announcement of the initial grant to come when fall 2024 programming begins. Other members of the committee are Meg Flournoy, Tom Allin, Allison Worthy, and Virginia Carson. Jess Aylor was involved during the initial stages. Mr. Esposito asked that vestry members and other parishioners be thinking about organizations and non-profits within the community that may want to apply for a grant. In response to questions, Mr. Esposito responded that the total fund is now about \$200,000. He added that the question of whether to spend down the whole amount is open, and that the committee and donor recognize that some things will fail, but this is an opportunity to step out in faith and help solve a community problem. Vestry comments included not to make the process too complicated and to trust the charity making the request. Mr. Esposito added that this is an emerging process and some things will be decided project by project.

Ms. Melchionna said that, building on the theme of "Come and See" and prioritizing racial healing, she has invited *The Rev. Lindsey Ardrey* to lead the *Vestry retreat* on Sunday, March 10. Ms. Ardrey spoke at the 2023 Diocesan convention, and she accepted the invitation to lead the retreat. Those from standing committees of the Vestry and parish who want to join the retreat will also be invited.

Senior Warden Roman Perun spoke briefly about the upcoming *Vestry election*, saying that Jeff Crawford is working on a communication to go to the parish on this topic. He noted that last year Annie Craver had written a piece about what serving on the Vestry had meant to her, and her reflection was shared in a parish communication. He asked whether someone would be willing to write a similar piece this year. *Anita Howell volunteered.*

The Rector reviewed the *schedule for Christmas services* and noted that overflow seating will be available in the Chapel, where communion will also be offered.

## Standing Committee Updates

### *Building & Grounds*

Committee Chair Faith Turchi reported that the solar panels project is moving ahead. The committee decided to step back a little on the lighting in the nave project and reconsider the proposals. They will meet again in mid-January, and she will have more information at the January 18 Vestry meeting. Ms. Melchionna commented that it is okay to take time to consider this important project in order to get it right.

### *Finance*

Finance Committee Chair Brad Ross asked Treasurer Sabrina Olsen to provide an overview of the *Treasurer's Report* through November 2023.

Ms. Olsen reported more expenses than revenues, as expected, and commented that the parish always has a good December. If special reserve funds are not needed, she will have a suggestion for the fund's use when books are closed at the end of the year. She added that both the annual campaign (\$1.7M+ pledged for 2024, the highest total ever) and the organ fundraising (\$2.2M cash received, about \$930K in outstanding pledges) are in good shape.

Ms. Olsen next turned to a document distributed at the meeting, "*Chapel of the Cross/2024 Annual Financial Plan Discussion & Recommendation for Approval/Vestry Meeting/December 21, 2023.*" (Attached) Priorities for financial planning, identified in July 2022 and reaffirmed for 2024, are as follows: increasing engagement in parish life; fostering relationships with faith-based groups and ministry partners and strengthening lay pastoral care ministry; sustaining clergy and staff; and caring for (including allocating funds for maintenance) and using parish property in a way that encourages spiritual growth, fellowship, and community engagement. In addition to process and priorities, the financial plan includes sources of revenue, highlights of expenses, a summary of the total budget, a look at the capital budget 2024 and 5-year outlook, and next steps, all of which Ms. Olsen addressed. Total budgeted expenses for 2024 equal \$2,108,714, an increase of 3.8% over the 2023 total of \$2,031,506.

Mr. Ross thanked Ms. Olsen and asked whether there were *questions*. Ms. Levine asked whether there were items not funded because we haven't yet reached our 2024 pledge goal. Mr. Ross, Ms. Melchionna, and Mr. Perun all responded that there were very few changes from what was requested and that we may still reach our annual campaign goal. Ms. Perry commented that the finance presentation to the church should be from the heart, "not just transactional but transformational." Mr. Ross requested help from the Stewardship Committee in getting heart into the presentation. In response to a question about where any unexpected year-end income would be directed, Ms. Olsen replied that the Finance Committee might suggest an area of need, but that the Vestry would decide. Mr. Ross noted that there was currently a temporary change in policy in which undesignated bequests were going into the organ fund, but that he thinks such bequests should soon resume going into the capital fund.

There was discussion of the position of Family and Youth Minister--what might happen in the future with that position, whether it will remain full-time, and whether it's asking too much of a clergy person to fill that role as well as a priestly role. Dr. McGugan commented that most priests have shared roles as well as a "specialty role" and that while there is always more that could be done in any ministry role, she expects the parish Family and Youth ministry to remain strong. Mr. Ross suggested that the parish try to communicate this situation to the parish more effectively. Mr. Perun remarked that, echoing a comment by Mr. Ross at an earlier meeting, it is good that there is so much parish interest in youth ministry.

*Mr. Ross brought a recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the Chapel of the Cross 2024 Annual Financial Plan. The recommendation was approved unanimously, with no abstentions.*

Mr. Coley offered *congratulations to the Stewardship Committee* for their hard and very successful work over the past year. A brief conversation followed, focusing on how to thank the annual campaign chair and others and how to celebrate successes of the annual campaign at one of the upcoming parish meetings. Suggestions included passing a "courtesy resolution" and having different people speak for one minute at the financial presentation about what the funding will allow them to do, a way of "talking about fund-raising without talking about money."

### **Loan on Organ**

Treasurer Sabrina Olsen brought a *resolution (attached) that the parish borrow \$1,500,000 from Southern Bank and Trust Company under an unsecured promissory note at an interest rate of 6.75% per annum*. The loan will be used for purchasing the organ and for construction related to its installation and repairs to the bell tower that will contain some components of the organ. Ms. Olsen and John Pegram negotiated the loan on behalf of The Chapel of the Cross. Finance Chair Brad Ross expressed thanks for the role John Pegram played in helping secure this loan with very favorable terms.

Mr. Ross brought for a vote the Finance Committee's recommendation that the Vestry approve the resolution to move into a loan agreement with Southern Bank and Trust Company for \$1,500,000. The resolution was approved unanimously, with no abstentions. The Clerk of the Vestry then signed the document, certifying that the resolutions were adopted at the Vestry meeting on December 21, 2023. Ms. Olsen, on behalf of the wardens, will submit a copy of the resolution to the Diocese.

### *Personnel*

The Rector reported that all annual reviews have been completed.

### *Stewardship*

Katherine Lavine, Co-Chair of the Stewardship Committee, encouraged Vestry members to set an example by paying their organ pledges early if possible.

*Organ Construction update*

Organ Committee Chair Brian Coggins encouraged everyone to read the organ project status report included in the Vestry packet. He noted that the Town has issued the building permit and that the Resolute team has moved into an on-site office and is about to start construction. Everything is on track. The Casavant Organ Company has asked to move the arrival date for the organ from April to May 2024, which will work well with other related work.

**Closing Prayer and Adjourn**

The Rev. Dr. Karen McGugan offered a closing prayer.

**The Rector adjourned the meeting at 8:02 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, January 18, 2024, at 6:00 P.M.**