Minutes of the Meeting of the Vestry of The Chapel of the Cross

18 September 2025

The Vestry of The Chapel of the Cross met on Thursday, September 18, 2025, in the Overlook Room and via Zoom.

All Vestry members were present: Anita Howell, Katherine Lavine, Eliza McAllister, Alan Rimer, Sally Goodnight, Perri Kersh (Sr. Warden), Strother Murray-Ndinga (Jr. Warden), Kevin Trapani, Scott Beddingfield (Zoom), Emma Griffith, M.C. Ragsdale, and Michael Reeves.

The following Clergy were present: The Reverend Elizabeth Marie Melchionna (Rector), The Reverend Keith Esposito (Associate Rector), and The Reverend Dr. Karen Connor McGugan (Associate Rector).

Also present were Diane McOmie (Parish Administrator and Stewardship Manager), Alistair Nevius (Treasurer), and Alice Cotten (Clerk).

Call to Order: The Rector called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Devotion/Prayer: Anita Howell read from a book by former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of Christian Life* (2016). Ms. Howell commented that this series of reflections reminded her of the parish mission statement with its focus on following Christ and growing in our relationship with God and each other. Williams describes discipleship as something we live, not something we sometimes do. Ms. Howell offered a prayer from St. Teresa of Avila: "Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things pass away. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. They who have God lack nothing. God alone is enough." She ended with a prayer for our parish family (BCP, 817).

Approval of Consent Agenda: Upon motion by Sally Goodnight, seconded by Alan Rimer, the consent agenda was unanimously approved, with no abstentions.

Rector's report: The Rector noted that the program year has kicked off and we're in the midst of many things. She offered a shout-out to The Rev. Vince Kopp for his volunteer support in many ways, pointing out especially his ministry to parishioners in retirement homes.

Staff are stretched thin. The Rector stepped in to perform janitorial/housekeeping duties this past Sunday, preventing her planned presence at the Adult Formation program. She commented that we need to live into our human capital planning process. We also need to have conversations not only about money but also about interpersonal relationships, she continued, as there had been occasions recently when parishioners have been rude to staff. Discussion followed about ways to improve this situation. One way is to speak out if you observe such an occurrence. Other points made were to respect staff deadlines for requests

and projects; to make appointments with staff when possible, rather than simply dropping in; and to recognize and respect staff days off. (Generally, all staff are available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays; other days may vary.) As we consider our 2026 theme of "Rooted in Love," she added, we should think about what love looks like and how we treat each other.

Standing Committee Updates

Building & Grounds: Chair Alan Rimer reported. Joe Rosemond is out until September 26. In his absence Mr. Rimer continues to handle management responsibilities. The committee looked into having two people from housekeeping come in on Sundays to clean restrooms, help in the kitchen, and similar duties. Ms. McOmie added that this arrangement is now set to start on September 28. Mr. Rimer said that the committee plans to discuss the parish capital and operating budgets next.

Finance: Chair Emma Griffith asked Treasurer Alistair Nevius to report first. Mr. Nevius reported that August is always a down month, and this year was no exception. Both revenue and expenses declined. Revenue for August was $123,196 ($64,131 under budget). August expenses were $11,864 under budget. The August operating deficit was $52,267, but for the year to date the parish has an operating surplus of $79,867. The planned transfer of funds to Southern Bank is nearing completion, lacking only some signatures.

Ms. Griffith drew attention to the one-page document: "Spending Policy (Pertains to Distributions from ECF Endowment Account) Approved by Investment Committee (9/15), Finance Committee (9/16)," along with a "Distribution plan (Pertains to Investment Income and Distributions from the ECF Secondary Account), Reviewed by Investment Committee (9/15), Finance Committee (9/16)." The document was included on the Consent Agenda.
The policy for distributions from the ECF Endowment Account calls for quarterly distribution amounting to 3.5% of the principal amount in each fund annually, with two exceptions (if the principal drops below the original amount, or if the distributions are being held for a special purpose). The policy will be reviewed and updated annually. Income from the ECF Secondary Account will go in accordance with a distribution plan approved by the Finance Committee and the Vestry. It will be allocated to special funds according to current allocation formula (based on the size of each fund). Distributions from the Secondary Account will be based on the restricted purposes of the restricted funds and (for funds supporting the operating budget) on spending decisions made during the budgeting process.

Mr. Trapani asked whether a 4.5% distribution might be better. Ms. Griffith and Mr. Nevius replied that the parish has traditionally used a 3.5% distribution and that the policy will be reviewed and updated annually.

Personnel: Chair Kevin Trapani addressed three items: 1) First he asked Diane McOmie to report on the search for a Director of Parish Giving. Ms. McOmie announced that the parish has hired someone, a development professional working in the area, who will start on October 14. She thanked other members of the Search Committee (M.C. Ragsdale, Craig Smith, David Ross, and The Reverend Elizabeth Marie Melchionna).
2) Mr. Trapani said that the committee plans to add two staff positions in the first quarter of 2026—a part-time Nursery Coordinator and a full-time Coordinator of Music & Liturgy. Job descriptions have been written for these positions.
3) The committee is helping to develop more clearly defined descriptions of volunteer roles. The Rector created a template for volunteer jobs. Committee members are working with clergy and staff to find out what volunteers could do to help support their work and what the specifics of these responsibilities are, so that volunteer job descriptions can be written and agreed upon.

Discussion followed, including the importance of manuals for many volunteer positions, the need for more and higher pledges in order to be able to add needed staff positions, and ways to secure those pledges. One suggestion was to gather information about staffing and pledging in parishes comparable to ours, as well as comparisons with other downtown churches in Chapel Hill, and to share this information with parishioners. Ms. McOmie noted that the new Director of Parish Giving will help with these challenges, including the annual campaign (new pledges and increased pledges), planned giving, capital campaigns, and any future targeted requests.

Stewardship: Continuing from the discussion that had begun with considering adding needed personnel and how to encourage giving in order to pay for that, Stewardship Chair Katherine Lavine said that research shows that there are three things parents must do to transfer faith to their children: be a part of a faith community, put a high value on their faith and be united on this, and have casual conversations with their children about God and Jesus. Stewardship is related to these three things, she said. She requested that Vestry members be at church on Sundays as much as possible and have conversations with parishioners about church matters, and she emphasized the importance of pledging. She stated that we are all disciples of Jesus who are here to welcome, grow, and serve, as our new parish mission statement declares.

Ms. Lavine noted that Planned Giving is also part of the Stewardship Committee's charge. She thanked the Rector and her husband for hosting an upcoming event for the 1842 Society. A calendar of upcoming 1842 Society events was included in the Vestry Packets. Dave Ross has stepped down as Chair; Stephanie Perun is the new Chair.

Sr. Warden Perri Kersh announced that the parish annual campaign goal for 2026 is $2.05M, about a 10% increase from 2025. Discussion followed about whether the suggested pledge increases included at the bottom of letters to parishioners should be raised.

Other reports/updates, as needed: Jr. Warden Strother Murray-Ndinga displayed lovely Chapel of the Cross T-shirts that can be ordered at <cotc.printify.me> The parish will receive a percentage of sales.

Closing Prayer and Adjourn: The Rector offered a closing prayer, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice R. Cotten
Clerk of the Vestry