Minutes of the Meeting of the Vestry of The Chapel of the Cross
18 December 2025

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

Vestry members present were as follows: Anita Howell, Eliza McAllister, Alan Rimer, Sally Goodnight (Zoom), 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), and The Reverend Mary Catherine Young (Associate Rector for University Ministry).

Also present were Diane McOmie (Director of Operations and Finance), Alistair Nevius (Treasurer), and Alice Cotten (Clerk).

Call to Order: The Rector, The Reverend Elizabeth Marie Melchionna, called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Devotion/Prayer: Emma Griffith offered the devotional, which focused on looking for the light during Advent, avoiding busyness and commercialism as much as possible, and instead perhaps choosing to light a candle and read poetry. She read Madeleine L'Engle's poem, "First Coming," which tells how God did not wait until everything was perfect to send Jesus, instead sending him when the need was great.

Consent Agenda: The following items were on the Consent Agenda: Vestry Meeting minutes and summary – November 2025, Rector's report, Associate Rector for University Ministry's report, Associate Rector's report, Associate Rector/Youth and Family Ministry report, Music report, Christian Formation report, Communications report, Parish Life and Worship report, Faith in Action December summary, Finance Committee minutes—Nov., Investment Committee Minutes—Nov., Building & Grounds Dec. report with Facility Mgr. update, and Stewardship Committee Dec. report.

Upon motion by Alan Rimer, seconded by Kevin Trapani, the Consent Agenda was approved unanimously, with no abstentions.

Rector's Update: The Rector was invited to represent the parish at the Kehillah Hanukah celebration. She attended and reported that there was much joy at the event, and that it mattered that clergy from other faiths were present.

She noted that the parish is ready for Christmas: the bulletins are at the printer; clergy have done liturgical walk-throughs; and we hope to have a festive, safe, and joyful series of services. Overflow crowds are expected and will be seated in the Parish Hall, where they will have as full an experience as possible, with livestreaming, candles, and communion, and a cleric present. Some will be disappointed not to get a seat in the church. The Rev. Mary Cat Young asked anyone wanting to assist in welcoming overflow worshippers to get in touch with her.

The Rector said that she was at a lunch with the Executive Director of the IFC and realized that the staffing needs and heavy workloads we are experiencing in our parish are not particular to us. Others also need to "add to maintain." On the Human Resources front, she continued, the internship for communications position has been posted, interviews have taken place, and a finalist will be met with very soon. The Childcare Coordinator role is posted. The Worship, Liturgy, and Music Coordinator position is posted, and several applicants look promising. The Director of Parish Giving job is posted. She emphasized the importance of personal referrals, especially for Director of Giving position. Ms. McOmie noted that there have been a few changes in the job description for that position, and that it needs a person with some background in donor annual giving operations

The Rector thanked those who had attended the diocesan convention and noted that the diocese has a new website and a new logo.

Because some people needed to leave the meeting early, the Rector next moved to the report from the Finance Committee.

Standing Committee Updates

Finance Committee: Chair Emma Griffith first called on Treasurer Alistair Nevius for his report. Mr. Nevius reported that total operating revenues for the year through November were $2,106,451, which was $45,850 ahead of the straight-line budget. Revenue was $157,941, which was $29,387 under budget for the month. Total operating expenses for November were $169,846, which was $17,481 under budget for the month. Except for outreach and social justice, all major expense categories remain below or close to budget, and expenses through November were $47,975 under budget. The parish operating surplus through November was $93,824.

Ms. Griffith reported that the Investment Committee and the Finance Committee had approved a 2026 Spending Policy reflecting a reserved endowment draw of 5% in 2026, the percentage to be reviewed annually. After brief discussion, Mr. Trapani called the question, and. the new Spending Policy was approved unanimously by the Vestry, with no abstentions.

She then moved to the topic of the Organ Loan, which is $450,000. Currently the parish is paying $2600 per month in interest on the loan. We have $345,500 in cash pledges that we have received, and the Vestry had previously committed up to $153,000 in special reserve funds to pay off that loan. Outstanding pledges of $323,000 are expected to come in. The Finance Committee recommended paying off the loan early, in January 2026, using a mix of the cash pledges received ($345,500) and the special reserve funds ($153,000) that the Vestry had already approved using. Then, as the outstanding organ pledges come in, the parish will use them to repay the special reserve funds used. There was discussion about the agreed-upon wisdom of this procedure and the need for both transparency and care in explaining the decision to pay off the loan early, as its success depends on payment of outstanding pledges to the Organ Fund. *Mr. Trapani called the question, and the motion from the Finance Committee to pay off the $450,000 Organ Loan in January 2026, using a mix of cash pledges received and $153,000 in special*

reserve funds previously approved by the Vestry (which funds are to be repaid as outstanding pledges come in) was approved unanimously, with no abstentions.

Ms. Griffith reported that the Finance Committee voted to approve the budget for the Chapel Lighting Project ($60,000).

Ms. Griffith also reported that the Finance and Investment Committees want to create a more comprehensive communication plan for financial matters.

Financial Plan for 2026
Ms. Griffith then asked Treasurer Alistair Nevius to present the proposed financial plan for 2026. Mr. Nevius explained that the plan was developed by the Budget Committee, consulting with the Compensation Committee, and is based on spending requests from various programs, ministries, and clergy and staff's best estimates of what they need to spend in 2026, and best estimates of what revenue will be next year. The plan had been reviewed and amended by the Finance Committee, which recommended its adoption by the Vestry. It is a balanced budget, with $2,549,318 of revenue and expenses. Anticipated revenue includes $2.15M in parishioner contributions (pledges, unpledged contributions, and plate offering), a 5% draw from restricted endowment funds (without invading the principal), and $36,580 from the Vestry's Program Fund to invest in growing the staff.

Mr. Nevius went through the financial plan, explaining the process and priorities, anticipated revenues, expense highlights, and a summary of the total budget. Expenses are anticipated to grow 13%, mostly due to adding three new staff positions, part of the parish's human capital initiative. Budgeted amounts for these positions (salary and benefits) represent the highest possible cost, though the timing of hiring and the benefits selections by new hires could reduce these costs.

Mr. Nevius then reviewed the 2026 capital budget from the Building & Grounds Committee. Parish policy is to approve a pool of money that can be used for projects that are less than $50K each. For 2026, a $100,000 transfer from the operating budget will take place in June, there is a gift of $8000, and a $13,200 carryover from 2025, for a total of $121,200 for the 2026 capital budget for projects under $50,000.

Building & Grounds had provided a five-year plan for anticipated capital projects over $50,000 each for the next five years, recognizing that needs will likely change, especially after the capital needs assessment that will be done early in 2026. This five-year total was $2,354,314. The proposed budget for these larger projects in 2026 is $220,000. The Rector commended the Vestry for moving toward being pro-active on the capital funds front. Mr. Rimer commented that he regrets that the replacing the windows in the Yates/Battle wing keeps getting moved down the list—that it needs to be done and can't be done piecemeal. Several possibilities were suggested as a way of funding this need, including borrowing, a special campaign, an endowment opportunity.

Funding for the position of Communications Intern and for a possible website redesign were not included in this budget, as both expenses would be funded from the Program Fund rather than the operating budget.

In response to a question about funding for refurbishing the playground, which the Preschool plans for 2027, several people responded that the Preschool and the parish will split that cost 80/20.

There was a round of applause after Mr. Nevius's report.

Ms. Griffith, for the Finance Committee, offered a motion that the Vestry approve the 2026 Annual Financial Plan. Michael Reeves seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously, with no abstentions.

Information about this Vestry-approved 2026 financial plan will be communicated to staff and appropriate committees in January, and to parishioners at the Parish Finance meeting on February 15, 2026.

Building & Grounds: Alan Rimer, Committee Chair, reported that the capital needs assessment agreement had arrived, Ms. McOmie had signed it, and the work will begin in February. The lighting in the chapel will be replaced in July, and Mr. Rimer plans to program the new lights himself. (Mentioned, only partly in jest, was that the Celebrant in the Chapel might need to wear a headlamp until the new lights have been installed.) Mr. Rimer pointed out that the Chapel itself needs refurbishment, and that is on the capital needs list for later.

Personnel: Chair Kevin Trapani noted that last year's personnel theme was "add to maintain." The parish is now in the process of adding. He suggested that the theme for 2026 might be "treading water while waiting for reinforcements." After new staff begin work, there will be a period of adjustment, including some redistribution of work. He noted three points. First, that we need to size our program to match our resources, deciding what is possible with the staffing available, and prioritizing the programming we offer. Second, he continued, we need to manage staff transitions. And third, we need to fund the work. On this third point, Mr. Trapani said that, compared with peer parishes, the COTC is not yet adequately endowed as a parish. Endowments help moderate volatility, he noted, and we should begin thinking about an endowment campaign. Several components of this endowment campaign that were mentioned are the Stewardship Committee, the person who is hired for parish Director of Parish Giving, and the more comprehensive communications plans emerging from the Investment and Finance Committees.

Mr. Trapani noted that the committee is now assessing all volunteer positions. One of their goals is to figure out what all volunteers need to know and to be trained for, such as where things are in the building, emergency procedures, "safe church" training, and similar necessities. More specific training will follow. All job descriptions should be finished by February 1. Training will be completed by the Annual Meeting on February 22. The Rector commented that this is a

reminder to everyone that laity are the ministry of the church also. There may be some realignments as new staff and volunteers are added.

Stewardship: Eliza McAllister reported for the committee. She noted that most of the committee's news was included in its report in the Vestry Packet. Ryan Huckabee has joined the committee. He has previously been on Building & Grounds, serves as an usher, and has a sales background. She asked Ms. McOmie whether she had anything to report, and Ms. McOmie added that the search committee for the Director of Parish Giving position is coming together and that, as of December 18, we are only $102,000 from the 2026 annual campaign goal of $2.05M.

On the subject of stewardship, the Rector added that the staff team has a Bishop Curry bobblehead that they pass around when someone has done something deserving of commendation. The bobblehead's current location is unknown, so as a substitute the Rector awarded the recently acquired chocolate hammer to Perri Kersh for her diligence and faithfulness in making about 85 phone calls on behalf of the 2026 annual pledge campaign. The presentation was followed by hearty applause.

Other reports/updates as needed:
Anita Howell for Faith in Action reported that the previous night's Seasonal Service Event at SECU House was "stupendous and wonderful," with delicious food, beautiful music, creative and impressive chalk art, and even had a much-appreciated separate cleanup crew. She described it as a "smashing success on every front."

Closing Prayer and Adjourn: The Reverend Mary Cat Young offered a closing prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice R. Cotten
Clerk of the Vestry