The Chapel of the Cross

Vestry Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2026
Time: 6:00–7:15 p.m.

Attendees

Elizabeth Marie Melchionna, Sally Goodnight, Gentry Hodnett, MC Ragsdale, Stephanie Perun (substitute clerk), Perri Kersh, Lucy Falk, Strother Murray-Ndinga, Diane McOmie, Kevin Trapani, and Emma Griffith

Via Zoom: Mary Kent Hill, Scott Beddingfield, Carl Wilke, Mary Cat Young, Keith Esposito and Karen Connor McGugan

Call to Order

Elizabeth Marie Melchonnia called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Elizabeth Marie thanked those responsible for the new TV screen and iPad configuration for video calls.

Devotion

MC Ragsdale provided the devotion, prayer, and snacks. She read the mission statement and shared a reflection about seeking and spreading joy; including a story involving her neighbor, and Maya Angelo. The devotion closed with prayer and gratitude for joy in God's creation.

Announcements

Elizabeth noted that Diane McOmie has one more Vestry meeting before her retirement.

New staff updates included:

- Elizabeth Smith has been hired as the new childcare coordinator, a 6-hour-per-week position beginning this week.
- Frank Boyles will begin as interim music director in August. Christy Lee has offered her home for the interim director's use.
- Carlee Baldwin and the Rector continue to attend listening sessions with the youth and adult choirs.
- The search for Diane's replacement is underway, with a candidate scheduled to come to campus Tuesday for additional interviews and staff meetings.

The Rector also shared reflections from attending the Fitzgerald Cemetery event related to the installation of the Robert Fitzgerald (Pauli Murray's Grandfather) headstone. She emphasized the importance of COTC showing up as reliable and consistent partners in the community.

Planned Giving / 1842 Legacy Circle

Stephanie Perun, serving as 1842 Legacy Circle Chair, presented updates on planned giving for the year. She prayerfully reminded the Vestry that, as leaders of the Church, they are encouraged to make a commitment to the Legacy Circle.

Stephanie noted that the endowment can help offset future expenses and support parish needs. One goal of the Legacy Circle Committee is to encourage more regular conversations about participation in planned giving.

Kevin Trapani asked about charitable gift annuities through ECF. Diane added that more communication will be coming regarding the ECF option.

Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was approved.
Motion: Sally Goodnight
Second: Kevin Trapani

A correction was noted to the April meeting minutes: Scott Beddingfield stated that the estimated cost for the Yates window project is **$550,000–$600,000**.

Rector's Report

Elizabeth Marie led a discussion regarding Vestry discretion over excess ABC Sale revenue. The sale generated approximately **$18,000 more than budgeted**. The Vestry discussed how best to discern a strategic use for these funds, including possible alignment with the SEED Fund process, Social Ministry Fund, or other parish priorities.

No vote was taken. The topic will be revisited for a vote in June.

Discussion points included:

- Keith noted that SEED Fund money may run out and raised the possibility of directing funds to the endowment.
- Strother noted that there were 23 SEED Fund applications this year.
- Sally asked whether the community needs these funds now versus directing them toward endowment funding.

The discussion was tabled for further discernment.

Building and Grounds

Scott Beddingfield reported that the Chapel Lighting Project is expected to begin in July.

A fire safety reminder was shared: Parish Hall doors should not be blocked during events in order to meet fire code requirements.

Scott also reported that on Friday, May 15, there were issues involving fire alarms, the elevator, and water. Vendors responded and addressed the issues.

Finance Report

Emma Griffith reported:

- Plate offerings were up in April.
- Pledges were down in April, though still ahead for the year.
- Expenses remain under budget for the year.
- Some May meetings were canceled, and a vote was conducted by email regarding an expense line for the Coordinator for Worship, Liturgy and Music. It was approved (up to $500) and set up for the 2026 budget.
- Timing around open positions will allow for budget differential.

Personnel Report

MC Ragsdale gave a brief update, noting that interviews are ongoing and that more information will be shared later. She reported that the process is moving forward and that there are good candidates for open positions.

Elizabeth Marie thanked those involved in hiring for the new positions.

Stewardship / Planned Giving Updates

Eliza was out of town, and the Vestry was directed to review the written minutes.

Gentry provided updates on the **On the Way Annual Fund Campaign** for 2027. Stories have been collected through the Stewardship Committee.

A planned giving event was held at the Wollman's home on April 22. Approximately half of the 51 attendees were not current Legacy Circle members.

Perri expressed appreciation for the diversified attendee list, noting representation from many services and age groups.

An interview with Alison and Ford Worthy regarding stewardship will be shared soon in parish communications.

Continued Discussion: ABC Funds / SEED Fund / Endowment

The Vestry continued discussing potential uses for the excess ABC Sale funds, including whether funds should support the SEED Fund, be directed toward an endowment, or be used in another strategic way.

Key points included:

- The SEED Fund has sufficient funds for the next 4–5 years.
- Scott asked whether loans should be considered.
- Margaret Gifford was referenced from Trinity Church -fund used to make loans to nonprofits.

- Kevin discussed the concept of venture philanthropy, comparing grants, loans, and investments. He also referenced the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys as an example.
- Several members discussed the possibility of creating a revolving fund or challenge fund.
- Strother suggested considering a more unified future vision across Faith in Action, SEED Fund, and ABC Sale funds.
- Sally noted that COTC is experiencing a lot of change and asked whether the existing structure should be used to fund SEED Fund applicants.
- Perri reminded the group that no vote would be taken that evening and noted that small amounts can still have significant impact.
- Carl cautioned against spending funds too quickly and expressed support for the concept of endowment.
- Emma noted that the funding amount required to establish a new endowment has not been set yet, but for recent gifts, it has been a $50,000 minimum to create a new endowment.
- Kevin emphasized that the SEED Fund's value is not only financial, but also relational, through connection and social capital.
- Strother noted that some SEED applicants could potentially be a good fit for other churches in Orange County.

Elizabeth Marie reiterated that Vestry would not vote that evening.

Closing Prayer

Karen closed the meeting in prayer.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.