

St. Stephen's Vestry Minutes

Regular [Zoom] Meeting June 9, 2020

Attendees: Mo. Sharon Voelker, Kathy DeCiantis, Dave Eldon, Corinne Fragnoli, Ken Fuhr, Don Ingersoll, Sheryl Schmidt, Miranda Spates, Dave Stein, Gretchen Waters and Patrick Wojas, Phil Pierce, Treasurer. **Absent:** Joan Morgan, Amy Redmer

Call to Order and Opening Prayer:

Dave Stein called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. with all attendees participating via Zoom. Gretchen Waters lead us in an opening prayer.

Parish Housekeeping:

Without dissent, Dave Stein added an agenda item to New Business regarding the appointment of a liaison to the Diocesan Technology Committee.

The consent calendar that included the minutes of the May 12, 2020 Vestry meeting and the May Financial Report was approved without dissent.

Rector's Report: Mo. Sharon reported that the pandemic has brought many frustrations. It forced the end of visitations to hospitals and homes. Thankfully, there were no pastoral emergencies! The pandemic also requires that our church be shuttered with no services or special events allowed until the bishops of the state of Michigan approve doing so.

Sunday worship services have continued to be recorded and made available via our YouTube page, thanks to the very professional help of Phil Pierce who recorded and edited our Morning Prayer services, and Linda Pierce assisting with the readings. Compline is livestreamed every weeknight on Facebook from her home. "Attendance" has been consistent, with many younger adult viewers (who don't normally attend Sunday services) as well as a loyal contingent of our "regular" congregants. She believes that the steady viewership of the younger adults is a statement that this is a potential ministry that we need to address when the church is re-opened.

Through our period of isolation, Wednesday morning Bible Study has continued using Zoom as our connection. Not only has this been a productive study time, but also a good time for social interaction during our isolation.

This period of isolation has given our members the opportunity to think about what St. Stephen's means to them. Yes, we do miss seeing each other every Sunday, but what effect will this period have on our individual spirituality? Will our expectations for St. Stephen's change? Will we change?

Old Business: [Further refinement of Covid Reentry Planning] was moved to New Business.

New Business:

SOS Changes for 2020: Corinne Fragnoli and Miranda Spates [SOS co-chairs] informed the Vestry that due to the pandemic, SOS is housing and feeding its clients in hotels because hosting them in churches is unsafe for clients and volunteers. SOS does not know how long this situation will continue. Even if they do begin using churches in September, we may not be able to ensure the safety of our volunteers, many of whom are at high risk. Thus, it seems reasonable to decide now that we will not host SOS during September as we have been doing. Doing so enables SOS and us to plan for how best to meet our obligations to the people SOS serves. Thus, the co-chairs recommend that the Vestry approves donating money to SOS's for its support of its clients.

Corinne Fragnoli moved, seconded by Gretchen Waters, that the Vestry hereby approves informing SOS that we will not host clients in our facility in September 2020; and does instead direct contributions toward the cost of SOS's client hosting as follows:

- **As soon as practical, donate the \$1,500 in our SOS Restricted Fund.**
- **Solicit donations for SOS from the congregation and provide all we collect to SOS on or about September 20 [when we would have started our hosting].**
- **Donations collected thereafter until the end of 2020 will also be given to SOS in reasonable increments.**

Motion passed without dissent.

New Furnace Purchase: Dave Eldon and Patrick Wojas presented information related to replacement of two rooftop furnaces. One needs replacement now and another very soon. Substantial labor and crane cost savings are possible if we replace both now.

Dave Stein moved, seconded by Sheryl Schmidt, that we replace both furnaces now at a cost not to exceed \$16,500. The motion passed without dissent.

Social Media Guidelines: Dave Stein informed the Vestry that the Communications Committee believes St. Stephen's is missing important opportunities to reach beyond its walls with information about who we are and what we do. Improving this is especially important to our efforts to reach younger generations, which is one of our top parish goals. Therefore, the committee has two recommendations for Vestry approval: First, it has drafted social media content guidelines that will help us maintain the integrity of our Christian messaging on our social media platforms that are open to the public, such as Facebook or Instagram. Some of the proposed rules are identified as being applicable to internal communications as well; as they protect the privacy of individuals using or being represented via the media.

In addition to the guidelines, the committee is proposing that we convert our current

closed Facebook group to a publicly accessible group. This means some of the things we currently post there [such as funeral announcements] will need to be provided by other means, such as our email and phone chains.

Discussion covered both topics as they were interrelated. It focused on the pros and cons of eliminating the popular closed Facebook group and how the most attractive features could be preserved. Under the proposed arrangement, posting and removal of content on publicly accessible platforms would be limited to members. This will also enable members to share content with nonmembers, which is not currently possible from the private group page.

The Vestry was assured that we would move slowly and listen to users so as to do the best we can to add maximum value all around. Current users will also be kept informed as guidelines are implemented and other changes are made.

Sheryl moved, seconded by Kathy DeCiantis, that the recommended Social Media Content Guidelines be approved. Motion carried with one abstention.

Kathy moved, seconded by Ken Fuhr, that the private Facebook group be made open to public access, and that content will be in accordance with the approved St. Stephen's Social Media Content Guidelines. Motion carried with one abstention.

Planning for Re-Entry Phases 1 & 2: Dave Stein had taken the Vestry's input from our last meeting and prepared a draft plan and checklists. Dave also expanded on what we had previously discussed to include how to conduct a service [both indoor and outdoor]. The purpose of these documents was not to prescribe how to proceed, but to help us decide together how to do it.

After a line-by-line review of the documents, Sheryl Schmidt moved, seconded by Ken Fuhr that these documents be approved as amended. The motion was approved without dissent. Dave agreed to modify the drafts accordingly.

Liaison for Diocesan Technology Committee: Dave Stein informed the Vestry that a Committee has been established under the leadership of Pastor Manisha Dostert. Its purpose is to identify best practices for using technology to support our parishes [including worship], and to more effectively reach out into the community to make connections. Pastor Manisha has invited us to identify a liaison to connect us to the committee's work and results. **Phil Pierce volunteered to serve in that role. He was appointed by acclamation.**

Adjournment

After a closing prayer the meeting was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Don Ingersoll - Acting Clerk

Action Taken Between Meetings: On June 19, the Bishop issued updated guidance that set June 29th as the date parishes could enter Phase II and begin opening up and holding in-person services. Her guidance was more permissive than her earlier guidance. As a result, the Wardens and Priest revised the documents discussed at the June 12 Vestry meeting to reflect both the Vestry's input and the new guidance issued by the Bishop.

The Bishop required each parish to submit, for Diocesan approval, their plan for following her new guidance. The Wardens and Priest prepared the St. Stephen's implementation plan for Diocesan approval. The revised implementation documents and our plan for Diocesan approval were sent via email to the Vestry on June 23 for its review and approval [or discussion if necessary].

Via email, Dave Stein moved, seconded by Ken Fuhr, that the Vestry approve the adoption and use of the revised implementation documents, and our plan to be submitted for Diocesan approval. The motion passed via email vote without dissent.