

Minutes of Regular Vestry Meeting
Tuesday, February 18, 2014
Christ Episcopal Church
Woodbury, Minnesota

The meeting was called to order at 5:50 pm by Ernie Ashcroft.

Present: Rector Ernie Ashcroft; Senior Warden Shannon Erickson; Junior Warden Dan Shoemaker; Treasurer Dave Leick; Clerk Michelle Rebholz; elected vestry members Catherine Harrington, Mary Isely, Greg Guffey, Susan Vold, David Waletzko, Matt Stiles, Laura Niederhoffer, Jane Pederson, and Randy Pastorius.

Absent: None.

Webcast, Responsibilities of Vestry: The vestry reviewed the webcast, which touched on four main topics: 1) the role of the vestry; 2) key vestry responsibilities; 3) tools and resources for new vestry leaders; and 4) potential next steps.

- 1) Role of vestry: A vestry typically has 6-12 representatives on it with two Wardens. Some parishes allow youth to serve on the vestry. Vestries should listen deeply, establish mission and vision, identify new leaders, and steward resources. Common challenges include lack of change or resistance to change, communications, change in stewardship as generations change.
- 2) Key vestry responsibilities: Vestries must ensure standard business methods are observed, are the agents and legal representatives. Today's vestries are serving amidst many changes: 1 in 4 Americans do not identify themselves with any religion; the average Sunday attendance at Episcopal churches is 68, there are diminished financial resources and more part time clergy.
- 3) Tools and Resources for Vestry members: In addition to the canons of the church and diocese, vestry members can consult the mission statements of the diocese, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Bible. Other resources include The Vestry Resource Guide at www.forwardmovement.org, and the Vestry Papers at www.ecfvp.org. The Manual for Church Business Methods and the Episcopal Church Office of Research are also resources available (the latter offers free parish reports and community profiles for every congregation in the episcopal church).
- 4) Potential next steps: Vestries should think about the size of their vestry, whether youth should be allowed to serve, canonical requirements, mission and vision. During the Q&A session, one suggestion was to move toward a consent agenda model (reports are read in advance, voted on in one motion). This allows for more discussion of big picture issues. Vestries should also examine the diversity of revenue streams in the parish, effectiveness of annual stewardship campaigns, setting up a planned giving program in the congregation, and strengthening nomination and election processes for new vestry members.

Reflections on Webcast: After a moment of silence, vestry members discussed their observations. Members indicated they liked the consent agenda idea. The legal/finance committee is reviewing the bylaws next month. Members were also struck by the declining membership of churches; younger generations have other social outlets instead of membership in churches and other service organizations. The size of the vestry and focusing less on day to day items in meetings were also discussed. The issue of shoehorning people into volunteer roles based on their gifts versus their passion was also a topic. Some members noted the declining membership and closing buildings was a sad event, and others pointed out that Christ Church is not facing many of the challenges facing other congregations.

Approval of the agenda: Susan Vold moved to approve the agenda. Motion seconded and carried.

Approval of vestry minutes: Catherine Harrington voted to approve the minutes. Motion seconded and carried.

Preparing for Rector Transition: There appears to be anxiety from the congregation about the rector transition. Ernie asked that how can the vestry, as leaders, address that anxiety? Last time Christ Church's rector retired, it was a two year process and attendance declined. Step 1 of the transition process must be a data gathering committee, asking for input from all church members on where to we believe God is telling us to go. Then, the Data Gathering Group develops a Parish Profile which will include brief history of the church, an outline of its recent financial history, a description of what has been accomplished by Christ Church over the last few years, an explanation of where we believe God is leading us and therefore what gifts are needed in our new spiritual leader. Step 1 should be done while Ernie is still here. Then, Step 2 starts when Ernie leaves, letting the larger Episcopal community know we are looking for a new rector. Christ Church could have a new rector within 4-6 months if this is followed.

Vestry members discussed several reasons why the transition will proceed much better than in previous transitions:

- 1) Christ Church is solid financially, diverse, and is growing. It will be incredibly attractive to candidates for the rector position. This was not the case the last time the church was looking for a rector.
- 2) Christ Church has successfully continued on without Ernie for a period of several months, twice—once when Ernie was on sabbatical and once when he fell ill. We can draw on that experience (and on the experience of the Senior Wardens at those times, Phil VanderHaar and John Potter) to make this a successful transition.
- 3) Our current Bishop has many connections in the Episcopal Church and will ensure that the best candidates know about our vacancy. He is also sensitive to our concerns over having an interim priest and we plan to have a discussion with him about that topic.
- 4) The vestry (or a sub-group formed under the direction of the vestry) will need to gather data to: i) create church profile, ii) identify the type of rector we will want, and iii) determine where our church is going. We have a head start and can utilize the information on our website and the information gathered when applying for the grant for Ernie's sabbatical.

January Financial Statement: Treasurer Dave Leick presented the January financial statement. (The balance sheet was not presented due to technical issues.) There is a “bubble” of income in December and January, from those who pay their pledges at the end of the year and those who pay theirs at the beginning. Total income is \$36,000; insurance is paid quarterly, copying expenses are slightly behind last year’s. Maintenance, one of the biggest expenses, is related to plowing the parking lot. We will be reimbursed for half of that through Metro Transit. There is no street assessment this year. We are in good shape financially. Greg thanked Dave for the separate supply priest and technology line items.

Vestry Assignments: Tabled.

Final review:

- Vestry assignments was tabled.
- Ernie asked that we all think about the rector transition, the timeline, composition of the committees, and the tasks to be undertaken.

Adjournment: Ernie closed the meeting with prayer at 8:20 pm.

Michelle Rebholz, Clerk