

Church of the Holy Comforter, Vienna, Virginia

Minutes of the Vestry Meeting

December 11, 2025

The meeting opened at 7 p.m. with a prayer led by Jon Strand.

Kathy welcomed the group and thanked those finishing their vestry term with her: Sherryl Dorch, Linda Lee Malone, and Jon Collom.

Linda Lee shared a spiritual reflection by Richard Rohr, "Responding to God's Yes." God makes us worthy by choosing us, and we can echo God's "yes" through our actions.

Clergy Report:

Jon Strand reported that, in addition to Melissa's ordination, there were pastoral visits and two funerals, including one this Saturday.

The youth group fundraiser mystery dinner, Blackthorne Manor, had 81 attendees.

There was a gathering of those going on the May 2026 Camino trip.

Two refugee families hosted a dinner for 50 members of the refugee ministry at Thanksgiving, in gratitude for this ministry.

There was a gathering at Ashby Pond.

There was a staff Christmas lunch for 12.

The Puerto Rico Mission trip is in the planning stage.

Melissa gave thanks for her ordination.

Kathy recognized David and Gini for organizing the ordination reception, featuring a Creole meal and Mardi Gras color theme.

Warden's Report:

Kathy and Kim thanked the new vestry members: Kate Nider, Winifred Conkling, Jane O'Connell, and Bob Dorch. They were encouraged to approach their vestry service as a pilgrimage and to grow in their understanding of what makes Holy Comforter thrive by attending church events and coffee hour as much as they are able. It is helpful to keep a binder with committee reports by month.

Outgoing vestry members will check the shared Google Drive to ensure their committee and VPOM reports are on file.

2026 Vestry activities: The first Vestry meeting is on Thursday, January 8.

Vestry members will attend a dinner with their spouses or partners on

Friday, January 9, at 6 pm, hosted by Sherryl and Bob Dorch. On Saturday, January 10, the vestry retreat will take place from 9 am-1 pm in the Community Hall. Kim will announce committee assignments by Christmas.

Treasurer's report:

Due to high income in November, there is a surplus for the month. The building fund continues to receive pledge payments. The balance of the remaining funds from the IRA Inflation Reduction Act credit (solar panel project) and the ERC credit (Employee Retention Credit) is held in the building fund.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept the treasurer's November report.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept the minutes of the November vestry meeting.

Parochial Report:

David reported on both October and November church attendance, showing an average weekly attendance of 350 total, online and in person.

Online viewers comprise $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total attendance. Melissa's ordination received 246 YouTube hits. Streaming services support our powerful ministry.

The standard service capacity measurement is 30" per person in the pews. Studies show that attendance stops growing at 80% capacity. At that point, we will consider adding another Sunday service.

Vestry Person of the Month, VPOM:

Jon Collom noted that attendance at funeral receptions provides a chance to provide a listening ear to families who are grieving.

Executive Report:

A motion was made, seconded, and approved for the clergy housing allowance.

Marion Enterprises provided a competitive proposal and will begin work on the security door for the preschool after December 19. The project is underwritten by a donor.

The front door and back porch electrical upgrades will be completed before Christmas Eve.

It was requested that a notation be made in the financial report as to when

donated funds are received and paid out, for full transparency.

Next Tuesday through Thursday, the upgrades to the Lillian Croy HVAC zone will be completed.

Peter Eareckson volunteers full-time as our HVAC system expert; the vestry was encouraged to thank him.

There will be two enhancements to the new music room, providing 50 new chairs and music storage units, through a memorial contribution by a donor who was a former choir member.

Committee Reports:

Stewardship:

As of today, we have received over \$900,000 in pledges versus our goal of \$1.25M for 2026. There are about eighty people who pledged last year who haven't pledged yet. The office will follow up with those who need to update their banking information, and the stewardship chair will contact former pledgers who have not pledged for 2026.

Budget:

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept the 2026 budget.

Communications:

On January 15 at 7 pm on Zoom, a communications focus group will meet to discuss ways to increase our communication to age groups in their 20s, 30s and 40s. A plan will be put in place in time for Lent

Laurie will follow up on putting the Vestry Corner content on our new web page.

David encouraged us to send photos taken at church to photos@holycomforter.com, using the “large” size for the best photo resolution.

Outreach:

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to restore 2025 Outreach grant funds, contingent upon the year-end financial reports indicating a

sufficient operating budget surplus. Outreach grants are made at the end of January.

In 2026, a Share the Plate model will be implemented to increase parish

awareness of the Outreach grants through monthly profiles of charities that receive grants. Parishioners will be encouraged to use the green envelopes or the Giving QR code to make gifts to support Outreach grants.

A motion was made and seconded to fund Outreach grants in 2026 as follows:

50% of weekly in-plate cash donations plus 100% of electronic or “green envelope” donations that the donor has specified as being for Outreach grants.

If, for the full year, the sum of those funds does not equal the expected budget

and there is a year-end operating fund financial surplus, the Vestry

Outreach representative and the Finance committee chair may request that the vestry approve additional funds to be applied to the Outreach grant budget.

The motion passed with one abstention and two opposed.

In addition, Outreach Grants will continue to receive the special offerings for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, and Easter. The special offerings on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are designated for Episcopal Relief and Development and the Anglican Church in Jerusalem,

respectively.

Buildings and Grounds Report:

There will be an upcoming boiler flue repair. Funds will be requested to be moved to the building fund once the amount is known.

Children and Family, Youth, HCEP (preschool), and Iona Fund reports:

Fifty people attended the wreath-making activity.

Forty were involved at the Second Sunday family service, making “power packs” of food donations for Food for Others.

Ryan Huber, HCEP Director, and the preschool are thriving.

Signs will be provided designating the labyrinth as a place of worship.

The preschool Christmas program will take place on December 19.

Teachers have contacted all the parents to ensure strong communication.

The HCEP+K board is revising the bylaws, which will come to the Vestry for approval.

The Iona fund, for youth program grants for mission trips, is growing

through earned income and appreciation. This fund is run by the Episcopal Church Foundation.

The preschool will address its deficit by increasing tuition, restoring the auction activity, starting a golf tournament, and offering special programs after the 1-2 pm dismissal.

Adult Faith Formation:

Coffee hour service through the pass-through window from the kitchen was successful and will continue through December.

There will be an Advent Quiet Day on Saturday, December 13, in the chapel, in partnership with Contemplative Outreach of Northern Virginia.

On Sunday, December 21, Mt Carmel House will be provided with dinner, bingo, prizes, and gift bags, which is the only Christmas for these residents.

No one has signed up so far and donations and sign-ups are encouraged.

Linda Lee has provided tables for four so people can sit at coffee hour in the narthex.

Fellowship, Pennywise, and ECW, Newcomers:

These committees referred the Vestry to their submitted reports, in the

interest of time.

It was noted that if there is less than 2 inches, all our surfaces will be treated with sand and salt.

For 2 inches or more recorded at Dulles Airport, our service will also shovel the snow.

Jon Strand acknowledged the outgoing vestry:

Jon Collom, who completed an unexpired term, for his thoughtful, clear, and passionate participation in raising the bar for the Outreach Grant process.

Sherryl Dorch, for her two years of hospitality, wisdom, love, and opening her home to the vestry, and for taking on a new leadership role as Chair of Pennywise.

Linda Lee, for tackling unsolvable problems and providing a sustainable coffee hour, and for creativity in adult faith formation.

Kathy Desanti-Paulini, for improving many systems, and patient and compassion toward the church's needs and timelines.

Kathy responded that she could only accomplish her vestry work through others.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Stager, Registrar