

Episcopal Church of the Nativity
Vestry Meeting Minutes
July 15, 2025
Joffrion Library

I. Attendance

Vestry present: Minda Alexander, Gary Anglin, Gail Brown, Tommy Cantey, Erin Elliott, Jay Epps, Elizabeth Fleming, David Hardy, Elizabeth Knight, Tommy Lotz, Caroline Mauldin, Mark Purvis, Charles Ray, Carter Wells, and Ward Wilson

Vestry absent: Pamela Briggs, Mary Coral Murphree, and Rhonwyn Watson

Clergy present: The Rev. Michael Goldsmith and The Rev. Dr. Melissa Hartley

Clergy absent: The Rev. Rosie Veal Eby, and The Rev. Dr. Bob Serio

Staff present: Austin Cook

II. Tommy Lotz offered a devotional. Father Michael Goldsmith called the meeting to order.

III. Minutes

No additions or changes to the June vestry meeting minutes. Tommy Lotz made a motion to accept the June vestry minutes, Erin Elliott seconded. **Motion carried.**

IV. Ministry Reports

Father Michael asked the Vestry to review the ministry reports included in their packet and asked for any additional ministry reports. Father Michael highlighted VBS noting that we had more kids than ever before and thanked Emily Cantrell for all her work. Charles Ray reported that we are still waiting for the contract from Fite.

V. Treasurer's Report

Gary Anglin reviewed the June financials noting that the financials look ok and that income and expenses are on track. He noted that the Finance Committee is waiting on the pay schedule from Fite in order to plan for payments and moving money as needed. Father Michael gave an update on Stewardship Committee explaining that this committee has two new members and they will begin working on a stewardship campaign in a few weeks. Nativity is currently planning to continue to have our stewardship campaign in the fall as has been the tradition.

VI. Senior Warden Report

Carter Wells thanked the people who came to the workday that was recently hosted at Nativity and asked the vestry to sign up to help with NativityFest that will be August 24th from 4-6pm.

VII. Junior Warden Report

Minda Alexander also thanked everyone for helping with the Nativity workday.

VIII. Clergy Reports

Deacon Bob is currently in a planning meeting with the Men's Group to work on programming and scheduling for the year.

Mother Rosie is with family this evening and did not have a report to submit.

Mother Melissa announced that Aaron Tan starts in 17 days! He has been working over the summer to get ready to start in August and has been in regular communication with Mother Melissa and other members of the staff. Mother Melissa reminded the vestry that Christian formation kicks off September 7th. In the month of August, there will be breakfast every Sunday and different ministry groups will be highlighted throughout the month. There will be a full ministry fair on August 10th.

Father Michael reported that there will be additional inspections of the Nave done by our attorneys and Terminix over the next few months. Father Michael also explained that we are still waiting for the final contract from Fite but expect to have that in the next week.

Father Michael highlighted that this summer we have had an average attendance of 350 people per Sunday which is a sign that things are going really well at Nativity. He thanked the vestry and staff for all their work.

Father Michael shared the list of vestry liaisons and reviewed the responsibilities of each liaison. Father Michael reviewed the letter from the Presiding Bishop that was recently published and included in the vestry packet.

After reciting the Lord's Prayer, the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Austin Cook.

Parish & Community Engagement Vestry Report

July 2025

Kayela Allen

Parish & Community Outreach

- Last month update:
 - June 22nd
 - Becoming One Body Groundbreaking Ceremony
 - Went well and was very well attended
 - Thank you to those who helped with it and who have been involved in campaign!
 - June 24th
 - Volunteer opportunity at The Caring Link
 - New Beginnings Hygiene Kit Packing
 - This turned out to be a great opportunity for Club56 during VBS to serve.
 - June 29th
 - New Comers/Members Pancake breakfast
 - Very well attended and was a great opportunity to meet and connect with new people.
 - Pride Parade
 - Had multiple volunteers and staff out at the table and met lots of people.
 - Nativity has some Parishioners who really love and enjoy serving the community!
- Looking forward to:
 - Kids to Love scholarship luncheon
 - July 24th
 - August Formation Hour
 - Ministry Fair
 - Each Sunday, there will be tables set up that have information to promote all of our groups, ministries, and volunteer opportunities, so that our Parishioners can look forward to getting involved when regular formation begins in September.
 - Nativity Fest!
 - August 24th in the courtyard from 4-6 pm

- We're excited to welcome the band Milltowne back to play for us again this year.
- Yummy food, games, and a fun time will be had by all!
- If you're interested in helping out in any way (set up/tear down, hospitality, games, etc.), please feel free to reach out @ kallen@nativity-hsu.org
- Women's Retreat
 - September 6-7
 - Sewanee

Membership

We continue to welcome in new comers and members. The New Comers Pancake Breakfast was a huge success! We served about 100 plates, and had the chance to meet and get to know a lot of new people. Everyone I talked to said they have felt so welcomed into Nativity and is excited to get more involved.

Kayela Allen

Director of Parish Engagement

CHILDREN'S FORMATION VESTRY REPORT

June 2025

Intergenerational Summer Formation has been running smoothly. A kids table is set up each week with an activity that correlates with the weekly intergenerational question based on a verse from the lectionary. The kids have really enjoyed this time and their own table to participate!

VBS kick-off took place on June 22 after the Groundbreaking Ceremony. We had a balloon artist, face painting, Kona Ice, and a hot dog cookout! The kids enjoyed this and it got them excited for the week ahead.

VBS followed from June 23-25. We had a record number of 112 kids and 60 volunteers! A good time was had by all. With the increase in numbers, I plan to increase my VBS budget for next year to provide materials accordingly. The Sensory Room was open this year for VBS and it was used by many. It was nice to have this safe space for children as they needed a break. I have sent out a volunteer survey to get feedback and will use this to make next year even better!

Cleanup from VBS has begun as well as reorganization and preparation for the new formation year. A yearly inventory has begun to ensure we have enough supplies for the upcoming year.

Planning is underway for Sunday School Teacher Training on August 17 which will coincide with Blessing of the Backpacks and Keys.

Emily Cantrell
Director of Christian Formation

Nativity Youth & Young Adults – July 2025

What we have been doing recently:

- Summer camp!!!!
- Clean up with/ Stewardship of Creation
- Volunteering with VBS

What's coming up:

- Rafting trip, partnered with St. Thomas
- Sunday School Kick-off
- EYC Kick-off

Happy Summer! Summer is moving right along, and EYC & Sunday school planning is in full swing! We leave on July 27th for our rafting trip with St. Thomas.

Sunday school and EYC begin on September 7th! Come to class that morning and grab a donut on your way in!

AGAPE! And thank you all for your support!

-Madeleine Bell-Colpack

Church of the Nativity
Buildings and Grounds Report
July 2025
Submitted by Emily Rodgers

Franklin Street Building

Summit Roofing will repair the roof in July. The leaks have caused damage throughout the building and will need to be address.

Grounds

*Memorial Plaques have been installed.

*Landscape Management Consultants have treated the crepe myrtles and dogwoods.

Nave

*Pro Electric installed an outlet in the Bell Tower to charge the hearing assist devises.

*Received a letter from the Alabama Historical Commission advising of a visit by Colliers Engineering & Design to “perform monitoring activities on historic properties subject to conservation easements and/or protective covenants held by AHC.” The last time the AHC performed an inspection was 2013 or 2014. I shared the letter with John Runkle who has been advising Nativity in regards to the Nave.

*Richard Hamner and Glen Sommer plan to repair the damaged (Exterior side) door to the Nave by the Baptismal Font. They will do the work during the week, replacing the door at the end of each day.

* Terminix’s experts need to complete their inspection of the property. They would like to perform inspections on September 9-12 and reserve October 7-9 in case they need additional inspections. (From Lance Gould)

*Buzzy Ribbeck, Ribbeck Companies, will be in the Nave the week of July 13 for another inspection.

Ridley Hall

Dixie Mechanical has come twice this month to work on the 2nd floor Ridley HVAC. Michael Christian recalls installing the unit about 15 years ago.

New Business

*Volunteer Work Day on June 28, 2025 report: 13 volunteers worked approximately 5 hours and completed the following tasks:

- *Cleaned the Franklin Street parking lot and grounds and spread 92 bags of pine bark nuggets

- * Pressure washed sidewalks and the Memorial Garden,

- * Cleaned the teak benches.

*Jimmy Farrar has agreed to clean, stain and apply tung oil to the Bell Tower double doors, Nave double doors and Ridley Hall double doors.

Episcopal Church of the Nativity
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday July 14, 2025
Joffrion Library

I. Attendance

Committee members present: Minda Alexander, Gary Anglin, Allen Daniels, Patrick Robbins, Rhonwyn Watson (zoom) and Carter Wells (zoom)

Clergy present: Rev. Michael Goldsmith, Rev. Rosie Veal Eby, and Rev. Dr. Melissa Hartley

Staff present: Austin Cook

II. Minutes

Mother Rosie opened the meeting with a prayer.

Gary reviewed the June financials noting that income and expenses look fine. There was a question about the VBS budget being over budget. Father Michael explained that we had about 112 kids at VBS this year, which was significantly more than last year. He commented that Emily Cantrell is doing an amazing job with children's ministry. Everyone agreed that this was a good use of church funds.

Father Michael reported that he is still waiting for pricing from Fite but is hoping to have that next week. He also explained that inspectors are back in the building collecting more information for the Terminix case.

Austin Cook gave an update on annual pledges for 2025 and noted that pledges are close to what we budgeted for the year. Father Michael noted that we recently met with Richard Rogers and are working on updating our quarterly financial statements to parishioners at his recommendation. He also explained that Richard did not have a preference on what time of year we should have our annual stewardship campaign, so the Finance Committee agreed to continue to have stewardship in the fall.

Father Michael noted that Patrick Robbins is rolling off as chair of the Stewardship Committee and announced that he has asked Hayden Rathel and Joel Boyce to join this committee. We are still looking for a new chair for Stewardship Committee.

No further discussion. Minutes submitted by Austin Cook.

<u>Account</u>	<u>YTD</u> <u>Current</u>
Current Assets	
Cash/Checking - First Commercial (General)	\$65,786.95
Cash/Checking - Synovus Venmo Transfers	\$100.00
Cash/MM (Synovus) General Fund	\$1,087,048.01
Morgan Stanley MM	\$1,518,875.43
Rector's Discretionary Fund	\$72.63
Curate Discretionary Fund	\$105.95
Outreach Missioner Discretionary Fund	\$260.91
Deacon Discretionary Fund	\$193.04
Flower Guild Checking (Regions)	\$10,921.28
Flower Guild CD's (Regions)	\$8,160.37
Total Current Assets	\$2,691,524.57
Fixed Assets	
Building & Improvements	\$6,000,000.00
333 Franklin St. Property	\$900,000.00
Greene Street Property	\$392,776.25
Highland Ave Rectory	\$619,542.41
Total Fixed Assets	\$7,912,318.66
Restricted Assets	
Endowment Funds - Episc Diocese of AL	\$1,070,245.74
Custodial Funds - Episc Diocese of AL	\$122,302.94
Total Restricted Assets	\$1,192,548.68
ASSETS	\$11,796,391.91
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities & Designated Funds	
LOANS	\$0.00
Withholdings	
Withholdings	(\$1,561.22)
Total Withholdings	(\$1,561.22)
Designated Funds	
Special Funds	(\$2,447,837.29)
Total Designated Funds	(\$2,447,837.29)

<u>Account</u>	<u>YTD</u> <u>Current</u>
Temp. Restricted Checking Accounts	
Miscellaneous Liabilities	\$0.00
Rector's Discretionary Fund	(\$72.63)
Curate Discretionary Fund	(\$105.95)
Deacon Discretionary Fund	(\$193.04)
Daughters of the King (Regions)	\$0.00
Flower Guild Checking (Regions)	(\$10,921.28)
Flower Guild CD's (Regions)	(\$8,160.37)
Outreach Missioner Discretionary Fund	(\$260.91)
Total Temp. Restricted Checking Accounts	(\$19,714.18)
Total Liabilities & Designated Funds	
	(\$2,469,112.69)
Equity	
Special Ministry Events	\$0.00
Food Services	(\$3,723.38)
Retained Earnings	(\$9,323,555.84)
Total Equity	(\$9,327,279.22)
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	(\$11,796,391.91)

Budgeted Financial Statement for Period 6 - June
Company#: 1 Name: Church of the Nativity
Fiscal Year Beginning 1/1/2025
Fund Name: 0 General Fund / Department Name: 0 General Operating

Acct # Description NET INC/(EXP)	Budget Annual	Budget for Period	Actual for Period	Budget YTD	Actual YTD	Actual for Period Last Year	Actual YTD Last Year	Actual Annual Last Year
INCOME								
Pledges and Plate	\$1,778,965.00	\$148,247.09	\$124,019.78	\$889,482.46	\$912,417.88	\$140,336.27	\$849,060.43	\$1,700,388.30
Misc. Income	\$146,704.00	\$12,225.34	\$8,143.81	\$73,351.96	\$58,888.85	\$8,117.23	\$58,024.55	\$219,164.25
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,925,669.00	\$160,472.43	\$132,163.59	\$962,834.42	\$971,306.73	\$148,453.50	\$907,084.98	\$1,919,552.55
EXPENSES								
Diocese & Missions	\$213,476.00	\$17,789.67	\$13,389.54	\$106,737.98	\$107,757.88	\$16,837.95	\$101,735.76	\$204,059.54
Outreach	\$177,896.50	\$14,824.80	\$14,626.30	\$88,947.70	\$95,732.70	\$12,890.96	\$86,669.66	\$169,533.71
Salaries and Benefits	\$1,060,540.33	\$88,378.38	\$88,088.11	\$530,270.05	\$502,016.14	\$75,978.85	\$462,394.08	\$992,972.09
PARISH OPERATIONS								
Supplies	\$31,750.00	\$2,645.85	\$2,783.82	\$15,874.90	\$24,602.05	\$3,682.89	\$18,862.06	\$34,433.28
Computer Expenses	\$16,000.00	\$1,333.34	\$1,227.03	\$7,999.96	\$8,462.65	\$1,193.51	\$7,696.56	\$16,054.23
- Parish Expenses	\$26,825.00	\$2,235.45	\$2,538.64	\$13,412.30	\$18,059.67	\$1,800.34	\$15,101.78	\$30,639.71
Clergy Expenses	\$13,200.00	\$1,100.02	\$1,157.97	\$6,599.88	\$4,450.95	\$732.90	\$3,804.83	\$6,593.43
TOTAL PARISH OPERATIONS	\$87,775.00	\$7,314.66	\$7,707.46	\$43,887.04	\$55,575.32	\$7,409.64	\$45,465.23	\$87,720.65
- PARISH FORMATION PROGRAMS								
CHRISTIAN FORMATION - CHILDREN	\$17,500.00	\$1,458.37	\$4,861.81	\$8,749.78	\$14,592.08	\$3,845.34	\$7,064.21	\$15,739.40
CHRISTIAN FORMATION - ADULT	\$9,495.00	\$791.27	\$160.06	\$4,747.38	\$2,049.48	\$722.47	\$3,156.66	\$6,331.35
- CHRISTIAN FORMATION - YOUTH	\$23,300.00	\$1,941.69	\$1,153.24	\$11,649.86	\$8,925.53	\$1,728.20	\$9,999.97	\$21,076.25
TOTAL - PARISH FORMATION PROG	\$50,295.00	\$4,191.33	\$6,175.11	\$25,147.02	\$25,567.09	\$6,296.01	\$20,220.84	\$43,147.00
PARISH PROGRAM								
- WORSHIP	\$1,800.00	\$150.01	\$87.20	\$899.94	\$328.73	\$0.00	\$146.52	\$996.02
- ALTAR GUILD	\$2,800.00	\$233.36	\$0.00	\$1,399.84	\$1,038.42	\$317.67	\$1,486.50	\$2,334.25
- PARISH & COMMUNITY ENGAGEM	\$19,750.00	\$1,645.87	\$2,123.26	\$9,874.78	\$8,755.37	\$324.66	\$6,660.97	\$19,491.05
- PASTORAL CARE	\$300.00	\$25.01	\$0.00	\$149.94	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$77.71
- MUSIC	\$55,775.00	\$4,647.93	\$2,723.00	\$27,887.42	\$21,511.78	\$2,900.39	\$24,572.68	\$44,383.97
- STEWARDSHIP	\$4,500.00	\$375.01	\$0.00	\$2,249.94	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,991.91
- PILGRIMAGE & RECONCILIATION	\$500.00	\$41.67	\$0.00	\$249.98	\$72.87	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$342.83
TOTAL PARISH PROGRAM	\$85,425.00	\$7,118.86	\$4,933.46	\$42,711.84	\$31,707.17	\$3,542.72	\$32,866.67	\$71,617.74
PHYSICAL PLANT								

Budgeted Financial Statement for Period 6 - June
Company#: 1 Name: Church of the Nativity
Fiscal Year Beginning 1/1/2025
Fund Name: 0 General Fund / Department Name: 0 General Operating

Acct. # Description	Budget Annual	Budget for Period	Actual for Period	Budget YTD	Actual YTD	Actual for Period Last Year	Actual YTD Last Year	Actual Annual Last Year
- BUILDING & GROUNDS	\$213,061.00	\$17,755.12	\$20,130.31	\$106,530.28	\$97,682.95	\$20,559.79	\$103,384.30	\$212,059.73
- LAWN & GARDEN	\$15,700.00	\$1,308.35	\$1,900.50	\$7,849.90	\$7,366.44	\$740.00	\$7,757.49	\$12,757.02
- NON-CORE FACILITY EXP	\$21,500.00	\$1,791.69	\$1,055.27	\$10,749.86	\$6,379.08	\$947.92	\$10,219.12	\$26,130.13
TOTAL PHYSICAL PLANT	\$250,261.00	\$20,855.16	\$23,086.08	\$125,130.04	\$111,428.47	\$22,247.71	\$121,360.91	\$250,946.88
- CAPITAL RESERVES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,925,668.83	\$160,472.86	\$158,006.06	\$962,831.67	\$929,784.77	\$145,203.84	\$870,713.15	\$1,819,997.61
TOTAL NET INC/(EXP)	\$0.17	(\$0.43)	(\$25,842.47)	\$2.75	\$41,521.96	\$3,249.66	\$36,371.83	\$99,554.94

	<u>Beg. Balance</u>	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Disbursements</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Ending Balance</u>
Designated Funds					
21000 *Capital Improvement Re	\$201,519.00	\$0.00	\$655.00	(\$655.00)	\$200,864.00
21001 Cap Reserve/Surplus Prio	\$40,748.11	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$40,748.11
21025 *Elevator Fund	\$1,880,631.17	\$89,913.65	\$31,444.05	\$58,469.60	\$1,939,100.77
21030 Staff Bonus Pool	\$22,435.74	\$3,282.50	\$0.00	\$3,282.50	\$25,718.24
21077 Outreach Special Funds	\$5,136.63	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$10,136.63
21080 *Outreach - Greene St. M	\$1,192.12	\$0.00	\$130.00	(\$130.00)	\$1,062.12
21093 Outreach Missioner	\$3,612.97	\$0.00	\$600.00	(\$600.00)	\$3,012.97
21200 Rob McCown Acolyte Trus	\$878.12	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$878.12
21300 Frances Jones	\$2,442.26	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,442.26
21350 Sophye Lowe Young Fund	\$3,630.28	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,630.28
21400 Ann Daly Reynolds	\$1,140.14	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,140.14
21650 Sue Fleming Memorial Tr	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
21750 Weller Memorial	\$2,513.99	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,513.99
21800 Legacy Society	\$675.08	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$675.08
21999 Children's Christian Form	\$4,268.89	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,268.89
22006 Preventive Maintenance	\$7,360.61	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$7,510.61
22007 Organ Maintenance/Repa	\$20,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$20,000.00
22030 The Bazaar Fund	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$300.00
22033 Bazaar - Greenery	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
22050 Nativity Cookbook	\$1,590.00	\$14,848.00	\$35,000.00	(\$20,152.00)	(\$18,562.00)
22099 Memorial Funds (Undesig	\$92,369.88	\$3,440.00	\$40,820.78	(\$37,380.78)	\$54,989.10
22100 Needlepoint Guild	\$4,206.42	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,206.42
22115 Daughters of the King	\$3,272.49	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,272.49
22130 Altar Guild Special Fund	\$10,426.83	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,426.83
22150 Garden Guild	\$2,904.38	\$35.00	\$0.00	\$35.00	\$2,939.38
22160 Flower Guild	\$120.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$120.00
22175 Memorial Garden Fund	\$3,951.64	\$400.00	\$0.00	\$400.00	\$4,351.64
22190 Hymnals/Prayer Books -	\$592.29	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$592.29
22200 Cursillo Special Fund	\$1,894.88	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,894.88
22225 Centering Prayer	\$378.37	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$25.00	\$403.37
22300 Jennings Library Fund	\$4,485.09	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,485.09
22325 Discretionary Fund	\$100.00	\$10,949.75	\$11,247.81	(\$298.06)	(\$198.06)
22425 Parish Event Scholarships	\$178.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$178.00
22500 Nativity Friends of Music	\$1,052.26	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,052.26
22501 Choir England Trip	\$20,231.96	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$20,231.96
22502 Choir Fundraiser	\$3,448.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,448.00
22510 Music Department Specia	\$13,280.95	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$13,380.95
22520 Children's Choir	\$869.64	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$869.64
22700 Event Fees & Expenses	\$6,199.80	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$6,199.80
22750 EYC Funds	\$4,344.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,344.00
22760 EYC Fundraiser	\$2,532.23	\$24.43	\$0.00	\$24.43	\$2,556.66
22775 Van Rental Fund	\$7,133.67	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,133.67
22825 Harry Townes Residuals	\$1,014.33	\$1.14	\$0.00	\$1.14	\$1,015.47
23100 Women's Retreat	\$282.38	\$900.00	\$0.00	\$900.00	\$1,182.38
23200 Men's Ministry	\$85.57	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$85.57
23400 Spritual Development	\$16,129.35	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$16,129.35
25500 Franklin St. Deposits/Fee	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$6,000.00
25600 Rectory Expenses	\$10,427.19	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,427.19
25700 Clergy Sabbatical Fund	\$8,541.62	\$208.34	\$0.00	\$208.34	\$8,749.96
26004 Computer Capital Reserv	\$505.71	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$505.71
26006 Stephen Ministry Training	\$293.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$293.00
26008 AV Upgrade Project	\$448.95	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$448.95
26010 Senior Ministry	\$8,304.70	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$8,304.70
26065 Church Merchandise	\$1,023.27	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,023.27
26070 Parish Weekend	\$753.16	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$753.16
Total Designated Funds	\$2,438,457.12	\$129,277.81	\$119,897.64	\$9,380.17	\$2,447,837.29

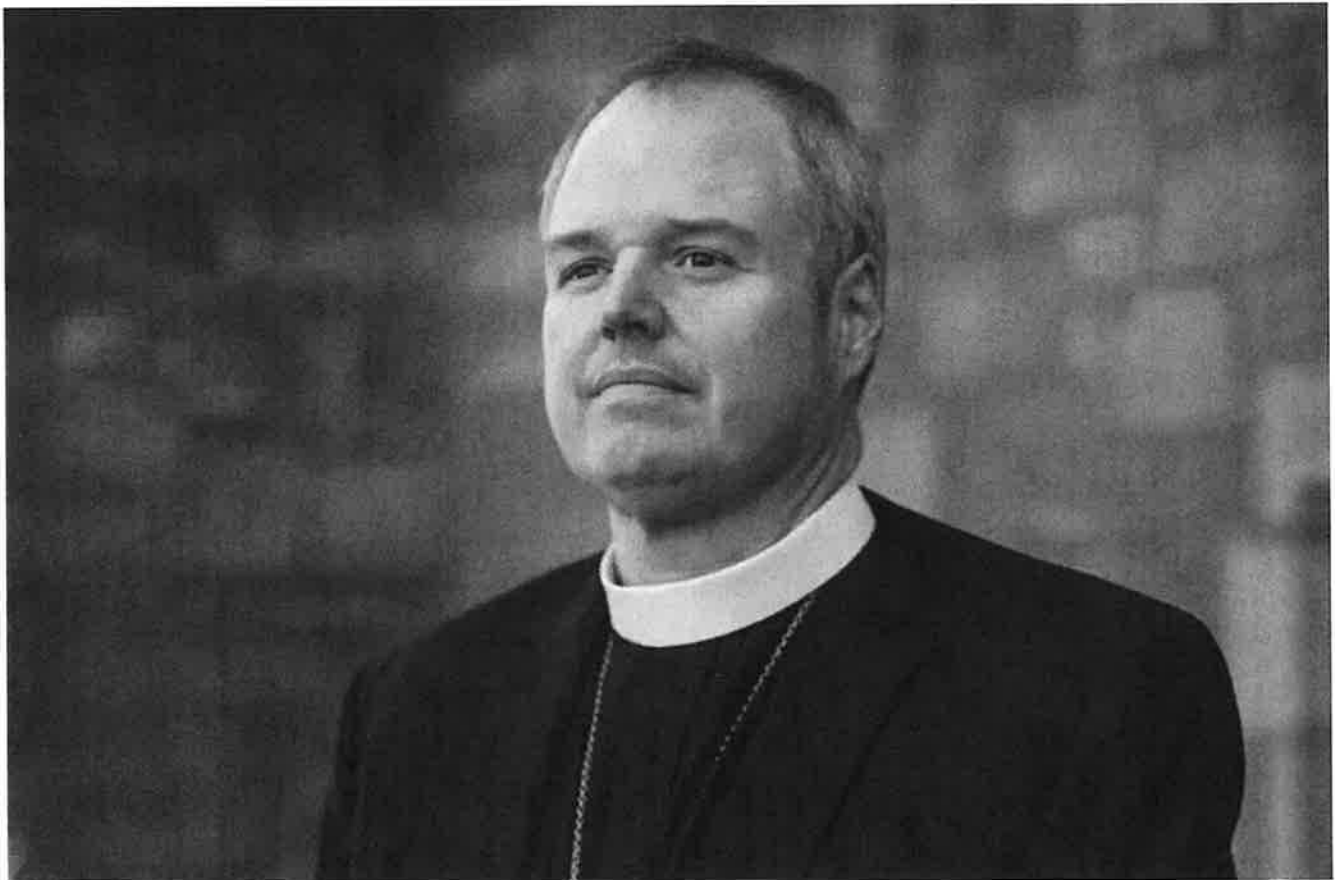


Presiding bishop: 'Once the church of presidents, The Episcopal Church must now be an engine of resistance'

'The reckoning, if we are honest, is long overdue.'

By Sean Rowe

Posted Jul 3, 2025



Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe.

[Episcopal News Service] In an opinion piece originally published July 3 in Religion News Service, Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe reflected on The Episcopal Church's history as it has emerged as an institutional leader in "resisting" the Trump administration's "overreach and recklessness" since President Donald Trump took office in January.

Rowe's op-ed follows.

It is shaping up to be a complicated Independence Day for The Episcopal Church. We were once the church of the Founding Fathers and presidents – 34 of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were members of what became our church after the Revolution, and 11 presidents, including George Washington, have professed our faith. Today, however, we are known less for the powerful people in our pews than for our resistance to the rising tide of authoritarianism and Christian nationalism emanating from Washington, D.C.

When religious institutions like ours enjoy easy coexistence with earthly power, our traditions and inherited systems can become useless for interpreting what is happening around us. But our recent reckoning with the federal government has allowed us to see clearly the ease with which the Protestant tradition of patriotism can lead Christians to regard our faith more as a tool of dominion than a promise of liberation.

We have had an eventful few months. In February, we joined a coalition of interfaith partners to sue the federal government on the grounds that the threat of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in houses of worship is a violation of our religious freedom. In May, we ended our four-decade participation in the federal refugee resettlement program over the current administration's demand that we resettle white Afrikaners designated as refugees. We are now assessing how to respond to the travel ban, which prevents us from gathering and worshipping freely with the people of our churches in Venezuela, Haiti and Cuba, and may limit entry for our members in several other of the 22 countries and territories where The Episcopal Church is found. These challenges to our ability to practice our faith have strained the comfortable intermingling of church and state that our institution has enjoyed for nearly 250 years.

The reckoning, if we are honest, is long overdue. Every July 4, our prayer book reminds us of our failure to stand against the enslavement of Black Americans with a prayer for Independence Day claiming that "the founders of this country won liberty for themselves and for us." But not all of us. The Episcopal Church did not make a moral stand against slavery, and some of our eminent leaders were pillars of the transatlantic slave trade. Our church ran residential schools for Indigenous children at which they were denied their culture and God-given humanity. And in the mid-20th century, our foreign missions aligned with U.S. foreign policy in Asia and the Pacific, and in Central America and the Caribbean.

The history of the church in Nazi Germany is a cautionary tale about how Christians can falter in perilous times. Some Christians in that time and place sided with the Reich based on their theological tradition of nationalism and loyalty to the state. Others, who came to be called the Confessing Church, became determined that they needed to oppose the

government's interference in religion. They resisted the Nazi regime — some, like Lutheran theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to the death.

But the Confessing Church's resistance was not primarily based in resistance to the Nazis' deadly and dehumanizing antisemitism, but rather in its belief in the autonomy of the institutional church and its resulting desire to block state interference in church affairs. The last six months has heightened my understanding of that impulse, and I do not intend to diminish the witness of the Confessing Church — especially that of Bonhoeffer, who was brutally executed by the Nazi regime less than a month before the end of the war in Europe. Its history, however, teaches us that when we are awash in propaganda, even our resistance can be bound by its definitions and incline us to see the world in the same categories — foreigner and neighbor, cisgender and transgender, white and people of color, Christian and Muslim — that we seek to transcend.

These historical lessons are urgent. Churches like ours, protected by the First Amendment and practiced in galvanizing people of goodwill, may be some of the last institutions capable of resisting this administration's overreach and recklessness. To do so faithfully, we must see beyond the limitations of our tradition and respond not in partisan terms, but as Christians who seek to practice our faith fully in a free and fair democracy.

We did not seek this predicament, but God calls us to place the most vulnerable and marginalized at the center of our common life, and we must follow that command regardless of the dictates of any political party or earthly power. We are now being faced with a series of choices between the demands of the federal government and the teachings of Jesus, and that is no choice at all.

This is not the same kind of patriotism that has guided our church since its founding in 1785, but this July Fourth, it may be the most faithful service we can render — both to the country we love and the God we serve.

– The Most Rev. Sean W. Rowe is presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church. The views expressed in this commentary do not necessarily reflect those of Religion News Service.

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