

Vestry Meeting December 16, 2025

6:30pm

Minutes prepared by Win Shafer (in place of Hope Knight)

Attendees: Charlie Merwin, Rev. Peter Vanderveen, Rev. Jo Ann Jones, Rev. Jeremy O'Neill, John Black, Joshua Castaño, Tiffany O'Neill, Cheryl Masterman, Lisa Raymond, Joe Spadaro, Edwin Shafer, Jim Jordan, David Woods

Absent: Hope Knight, Danielle Trucksess, Daniel Wesley, Joe Spadaro

Opening Prayer: Rev. Jo Ann Jones

Approval of Consent Agenda: Moved to accept unanimously

Approval Minutes of November 2025 Meeting: Approved without objection. Vestry requested that minutes not be printed in the Edit mode for inclusion in the monthly packet. Peter and Joshua agreed they will mention to Roseann.

Administrative Reports

Rector's Report given by Rev. Peter Vanderveen

- Review of troubled relations with former tenant/squatter in Youth Cottage
 - Former parishioner occupied the Cottage in years past. Had been invited to stay there by Rector during time of personal crisis, then didn't leave until forcefully evicted (2023 timeframe).
 - Individual caused approximately \$10k in damage to property during his stay.
 - COTR secured a legal restriction designed to prevent him from re-entering property.
 - Rector and Parish Administrator recently discovered individual returned. They immediately notified law enforcement who removed him peacefully.
 - Individual in custody. Vestry advised that parish has authority to press charges and may do so to protect property and insure individual has care.
 - Rev. O'Neill asked to be on record that he is uncomfortable with COTR pressing charges against a person experiencing homelessness who was seeking shelter.

- Blessings and Carols service 12/14 very successful. Contribution and excellence of Youth Choir noted.
- Discussion of significant uptick in funeral services putting strain on clergy. Also has impact on future pledge revenues, somewhat offset by corresponding Lycette bequests. (see Stewardship note in Rector's Warden Report). Funeral services a moving and important part of parish activity.

Parish Administrator Report given by Joshua Castaño

- Status of repairs on roof, masonry in main building
 - 2 bids received, both delayed.
 - Some masonry repairs will have to wait until Spring due to weather, delays on bids. Vendor feels the building is in good enough condition to make it through winter before other repairs done.
 - Can/will do some tower repairs (internal sealing) during winter. Same with mold repair in residential property.
 - Suggest COTR think about long term landscape plan. Drop off in skilled volunteers from the parish to do landscape and grounds design and implementation.

Accounting Warden's Report given by John Black

- Finances – in overall strong position
 - Strong investment returns in Endowment funds making up for inflation in the budget.
 - Stewardship continues to be strong – seeing growth over last year.
 - Movement of any additional funds to Church Foundation currently on hold.

Rector's Warden's Report given by Charles Merwin

- Vestry will consider policies and practices for accommodating Vestry members who need to attend irregularly or remotely due to life/work changes during terms. This will be an agenda item at one of our 2026 retreats.
 - Remote access to meetings; flexibility to term lengths
 - Daniel Wesley interested in taking part in creation of solutions

- This could make Vestry service more attractive to a wider group of parishioners
- Stewardship Update
 - Slightly ahead of last year's results at this point – slightly more pledges returned and more money pledged
 - Generally pledge amounts are up 8-9% for those who have responded. Last year the growth rate was over 10%. Note that these high year-over-year growth rates may be unsustainable.
 - Vestry members currently engaged in follow-up contacts to those who haven't pledged yet.
 - Comments:
 - Lisa R – Stewardship should gather data on the below-40 age group to determine what % of that group pledges, and how to educate them on pledging to raise that rate.
 - Cheryl M – note that offering plate was uncollected after recent afternoon service. She secured the cash and put in Roseann's inbox. Unclear if there is a better process when this happens.

New Business

2026 Budget Draft Review

Castaño

Parish Administrator and Accounting Warden provided a draft copy of 2026 budget for Vestry to review.

- Pledge revenues budgeted for less than preliminary pledges indicate – conservative approach to revenue.
- “Investment Income” (Endowment Draw) remains at 4.2%
- Diocesan Pledge budgeted for \$120k. This is under review and is not a commitment at this point. Rector believes COTR is 3rd largest pledger to Diocese after St David's and Good Samaritan.
- Finance Committee will review 2026 Budget again prior to next Vestry meeting.
- “Vestry Transfer” funded each year by any cash surplus from current year budget.
- Vestry will vote on the 2026 Budget at January meeting.
- Comments/Questions:
 - Tiffany – should we budget \$ for the 175th Anniversary? Discussion of use of Vestry funds, occasions for fundraising/self-funded events (charging for events). Generally the plan is for 175th events to be low key and not budget intensive.

Vestry Sub-Committee Observations/Plans**Vanderveen**

- Volunteer, Grants and Anchor Institution Sub-Committees met since last Vestry meeting
- Bullish on what we can accomplish in these committees. Rector: “Faithfull conversations between leaders.” Unifying Idea: Love, and do as you will (St. Augustine)
- Volunteer Committee – shift in parish culture and capacity for in-person volunteering; volunteering activity is down; exploring new ways to invite people to commit.
- Grants Committee – asking WHY we are doing things and WHAT we want to accomplish through giving; explore COTR as a place for people to learn philanthropy.
- Anchor Institution Committee – looking at broader community engagement; COTR as a “Gift to the Community,” our job to figure out how to deliver that gift.

Old Business**Nomination Committee – Vestry 2026****T. O’Neill**

- Committee continues to meet regularly.
- Considering 9 new names; 3 additional names who served before
- 2 candidates would need to be remote; 1 much younger than any current Vestry member
- At least 2 very interested at this point; need to identify candidate with strong finance background to add to Vestry’s skill mix.

175th Anniversary Planning**Merwin**

- 15-20 possible candidates identified for committee
- Rector will invite group to event in January to introduce idea and set stage for forming a committee
- Generally the tone of planning is for low-key events, similar to existing parish dinners, picnics, parties, etc. rather than a major new event during the year.
- Thank you to Vestry for submitting both names and event ideas.

Cadence of Vestry Activity 2026**Merwin**

- Charlie Merwin made motion to adopt calendar of 2026 Vestry Meetings. Seconded.
- Discussion
 - 7 normal months with meetings on 3rd Tuesday at 6:30pm
 - 1 Sunday post-service meeting
 - 3 Retreats (March, June, September)
 - 1 Recess month – August
 - Draft calendar attached to minutes
- Discussion and Motion shelved for Vestry to consider calendar, will bring up for vote at January meeting

Closing Prayer: Rev. Jeremy O'Neill***Meeting adjourned: 8:25***