

Minutes of the Meeting of the Vestry
Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr, PA
Tuesday, December 13, 2022
7:00-9:00 PM in Rm 125 and via Zoom

Vestry members present: Paul Adkins, Catherine Caruthers, Chris Chojnacki, Elisabeth Cooke, Jennifer Copas, Al Greenough, Kevin Leahy, Melanie LeBoeuf, Susan Rushing, Tracy Steele, and Chris Zafiriou

Absent: Harry Miller

Redeemer Staff present: Jen Leith, Francesca Merritt, The Rev. Jo Ann Jones, The Rev. Winnie Smith and The Rev. Peter Vanderveen

Recorder: Francesca Merritt

The meeting of the Vestry was called to order at 7:04 pm. Winnie Smith gave the opening prayer.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The consent agenda consisted of the November 2022 vestry minutes and committee reports. Melanie made a motion to approve, and Paul seconded. The consent agenda was unanimously approved.

New Business

Budget – Chris Zafiriou reported that coming out of a Covid year we anticipated ending up with small surplus or small deficit. Pledging and giving remains strong. Though totals are not complete for December 2022, we are close to budget in terms of our revenues and expenses. Due to losses in the stock market, the value of the endowment dropped in 2022 from \$14.2 million to \$12 million. Progress was made toward paying off the capital campaign liabilities and Legacy into Promise pledging continues to be strong.

The current draft budget for 2023 shows a small deficit, with a conservative revenue line. An item of concern in the 2023 budget is the probable major increase in the cost of energy.

Chris Chojnacki reported that current pledge results for 2023 show a 7.4% increase over the same pledges in 2022. We have collected \$1.1 million in total pledges, and there are 79 families who pledged last year who have yet to pledge for 2023. Chris Z. commented that while on paper things look good, the top quartile of pledgers is increasingly older. The younger people are entering the system at a much lower pledging amount. We need to continue to think about growth and building our base.

Chris Zafiriou noted that the pledge line item for 2023 is a conservative number. The draw from our endowment will draw for our endowment will be increased to 4.25% from 4%. Of the total \$1.9 million dollar budget, \$1.1 million is spent for staff compensation. The budget adds a 6.5% cost of living adjustment into the salaries. Funds were also earmarked for marketing and growth costs. The finance committee has gone through the budget line by line, and prior to that Peter and Jen went through each line item to make sure that they were all still relevant.

Adult Forum Breakfast (1/8/23) – Catherine reported that the theme for Epiphany will be feasting; for Lent, it will be fasting. There will be an adult forum breakfast on the Jan 8th. She asked if vestry could support the breakfast by assisting in the cooking, serving, and cleaning up. Chris Z. suggested that RYG could assist. Fran will work on a Sign Up Genius posting. Catherine asked if a Saturday (1/7/23) email could be sent out to the parish about the breakfast.

Name tags – Tracy raised another’s idea of reintroducing name tags as part of our growth initiatives. Peter noted that a concerted effort had been made in the past to supply and manage name tags for all members, but this proved to be a lot of work that showed little effect. A recommendation was made for Peter to consider that, during pre-service announcements individuals new to the church introduce themselves.

Adult forum location – Al asked if moving the forums to Burns Hall was getting more people in the room. Winnie responded definitely, and the room is more energetic. Peter said people like the coffee hour set up right outside the kitchen. Holding the forums in Burns Hall will continue through January.

Data project – Al asked if the click rate for the morning meditations is recorded. Peter said that the open rate remains very high and that weekly data on this could be documented. Al asked that these be added to the data tracking sheet. Paul suggested that a selection of meditations could be published and booklets could be made available for gifts or for newcomers. Jennifer Copas suggested the meditations could be posted weekly on the website.

Old Business

Nominating Committee Update – Al reported on the careful and detailed process of the Nominating Committee. Fifteen candidates were approached, and four nominees were chosen. They are: Lisa Raymond, John Black, Win Shafer, and Joe Spadaro. The vestry thanked Al and the committee for creating a strong and balanced slate of candidates.

Strategic Planning Group Updates – Peter said the Community Awareness Task Force is meeting this coming Thursday (12/15/22).

Debrief on Christmas Village – Elisabeth reported that the Christmas village was a good community building event. Some problematic issues identified last year were worked out, and the event flowed well. The event raised less money than in 2021. While the number of benefactors increased, the funds raised by benefactor gifts decreased nearly \$10K. The amount raised this year will net \$50-55K. The Christmas Village leaders held a meeting to discuss areas that can be improved, and the current leadership team agreed to stay in place for one more year. Some new ideas include having a luncheon inside on Saturday for those who don’t like to be outside in the cold, moving the children’s activities inside, a name change to “Christmas Shopping Village”, and rotating the vendors. Peter commented that the average age of the attendees dropped about 20 years and that this is a huge factor for the potential growth of the church. Peter also recommended the committee start to recruit volunteers in the spring.

Rector’s Report – Peter reported the new playground has been installed and feedback has been very upbeat. The Legacy into Promise budget had reserved \$10K for the equipment. The actual cost came to \$30K. There will be an appeal sent out at the beginning of 2023 asking for donors to help the church cover this overage. The appeal will request a \$500 gift. Ken and Peter are working on what the best form of recognition for these gifts might be. The Operating Committee met last Friday to close out the expenditure side of the Legacy into Promise project. There are remaining, planned expenditures of \$20K, which will be used for a Heritage Wall to recognize all the donors and to get a security camera that will cover the playground.

Some pledgers have one more year of payments, and there is still a loan outstanding, with a balance of \$675K. Tad Sperry and Peter are seeking some additional contributions to reduce or pay off this loan.

Attendance at services has increased in the last month. We started the Fall at approximately 65% of normal attendance. This percentage has steadily increased from September into December.

About 65 clergy attended a luncheon at the parish house sponsored by the Bishop. Most attendees had not seen or been on the church campus. In speaking with other clergy, everyone said that they are in a continual rebuilding process after Covid.

Peter is having breakfast invitations made up to support his discussions on growth, with breakfasts starting in January.

Peter said that he has been writing many letters, including thank you notes for pledges received, for payments made, and for memorial gifts received.

Rector's Warden Report – Tracy thanked Sophie Tachna for completing her Eagle Scout project, which consists of a fire pit and benches near the youth cottage. A summary of the vestry survey will be made available to the parish very soon. There are some next steps in the survey report for Ken and Jo Ann. The Community Awareness Task Force will be meeting Thursday at 5 pm. The traditional Shrove Tuesday pancake supper will be held on Feb 21st.

Administrative Report – Jen gave an update on building issues. One of the dehumidifiers in the Parish House was defective and replaced. There is a continuing leak in the narthex roof, and Russell Roofing believes it is under warranty. There are moss issues with the roofs at the properties of 205 and 211. The elevator is currently not functioning, due to the doors being improperly held open.

Starting the beginning of January, Jen will join Kyle Lissack on a monthly call to get his advice and assistance on building issues. Jen is also looking into potential grant opportunities that may help the church. Jen is also reviewing the church's sustainability practices. She will also be reviewing the church's Safe Church policies, making sure that we are doing the proper training. This will include the vestry.

Jo Ann gave the closing prayer. The meeting concluded at 9:05 pm.
An executive session was held following the meeting.