

# THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS

## MINUTES OF THE VESTRY MEETING JANUARY 27, 2024

The January Vestry meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Fr. Josh Stephens. Those attending included: Senior Warden, Jerry Holt, Junior Warden, Will Rodriguez, Patrice German, Jim Gibbs, E.R. Haire, Jill Owen, Marisa Pharr, Sandy Skelton, and Laura Meherg Teel. Absent were Clint Adams, Jon Fitzpatrick, and Kim Sanders.

E.R. led the opening devotion by reading a portion of *Prayers from the Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a` Kempis.

**Acceptance of Consent Agenda for January:** Will made a motion to accept all committee reports as well as the minutes of the December Vestry meeting; Sandy seconded the motion, and it was passed by the Vestry.

**Rector's Report:** Fr. Josh welcomed new vestry members Jon Fitzpatrick, Jim Gibbs, Jill Owen, and Sandy Skelton. He announced a Vestry Installation for new members during the worship services on February 11. Fr. Josh also announced the Vestry Training Session offered by our Diocese on February 24 at the Cathedral in Asheville. He urged Vestry Members to register for this meeting. Next Fr. Josh discussed the purchase and installation of a new AV and sound system in the Wilderness Room. This new system would make live streaming for special events such as Christian Formation, Lenten Study, Summer Scholars, and other special events possible. Estimates for the installation and equipment were discussed. Marisa made a motion to allot up to \$12,000 for the new system; Patrice seconded the motion, and it was passed by the Vestry. Additionally, plans for the Stone Foundation Gift as well as the upcoming Pilgrimage to Charleston were mentioned with more discussion to take place at the next Vestry meeting.

Lastly, Fr. Josh discussed the Vestry Covenant as follows: As a Vestry, we enter into a covenant with God, one another, and our parish community to function as outlined below – by God's grace – in the year ahead.

We take joy in the fact that the Vestry of St. John is a Christian small group. We will support one another, pray for each other, study the scriptures together, grow, laugh, and cry together – allowing ourselves to have fun and enjoy this ministry!

We will listen in love and respect one another's opinions even if they are different from our own.

We will hold our Vestry meetings in confidence and respect "off the record" conversations that are necessary for our processes of discernment and decision-making.

We will maintain openness with the congregation by sharing our Vestry Minutes online, on the bulletin board, and by email to keep others informed on our work.

We will also listen to the concerns and ideas of the congregation and share these with the Vestry when it is helpful and in a helpful way.

We will be fully engaged in the worship and programs of the parish by attending services, formation offerings, fellowship events, and more.

We will be transparent, open, and honest with others.

We will joyfully support the church and one another by sharing one's gifts, talents, and time.

We will strive to be Christ's loving presence in the church, community, and in the world.

We will address concerns directly with those involved and encourage others to do so as well.

We will be on the lookout for where the Spirit is working to celebrate and share in that life-giving work.

We will address major or emotional issues face-to-face rather than by email or text, and we will encourage others to do the same.

We are willing to forgive and to ask for forgiveness.

We will listen and speak respectfully to others and only speak for ourselves.

Following the reading of the covenant and subsequent discussion, E.R. made a motion to accept the Vestry Covenant for 2024; Will seconded the motion, and it was passed by the Vestry.

**Treasurer's Report:** Tom reported that during 2023, pledge income represented 103% of the budget with expenses accounting for 93% of the budget. As a result, the year ended with a surplus and with transfers to the Operating Reserve Fund, the Capital Replacement Fund, the Outreach Unrestricted and Gifts Fund, and the Vestry Special Projects Fund.

Through December 31, 2023, Outreach disbursements totaled more than \$163,000 which is a record as compared to a full-year total of \$143,345 in 2022, \$133,268 in 2021, and \$82,668 in 2020. This total does not include Outreach expenses related to the Diocesan Pledge, Outreach volunteer hours, or materials and goods donated for Outreach.

Tom continued with a discussion of the 2024 Budget that was presented at the 2023 Annual Meeting in December. Since that time, some changes have taken place including hiring new Choir Section Leaders and salary increases all of which were approved by the Vestry. Noting that the goal of 175 Pledging Units has been reached and promised pledges for 2024 exceed the budget goal, Tom reported that the 2024 Budget is balanced. After a discussion, Will made a motion to accept the 2024 Budget; it was seconded by E.R. and it was passed by the Vestry.

In other business, Tom reported that new signatories for 2024 had to be appointed. Marisa read the following motion: It is resolved that St. John in the Wilderness Episcopal Church reaffirms Will Rodriguez, Jr. Warden, and Thomas H. Griswold, Treasurer, as signatories, removes John Barker as a signatory, and adds Jerry Holt, the new Senior Warden, as a signatory for the following PNC and Wells Fargo accounts: PNC Checking Account, PNC Money Market Account, PNC Investment Account, Wells Fargo General Endowment Temporary Account, Wells Fargo General Endowment Permanent Account, Wells Fargo Historical Churchyard Fund, Wells Fargo Historic Churchyard Restricted Trust, Wells Fargo Trust B, and Wells Fargo Brokerage Account. Sandy seconded the motion, and it was passed by the Vestry.

Will made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report; it was seconded by E.R. and was passed by the Vestry.

**Senior Warden Report:** Jerry reported that he had met with John Barker the previous Senior Warden, Fr. Josh, and Tom Griswold to discuss the role of Senior Warden. He also attended the Executive Committee, Finance Committee, and Appointments Committee monthly meetings as well as worked on the Vestry Retreat Agenda and updated the Vestry Member and Family worksheet to reflect current membership.

**Jr. Warden's Report** – Will reported that several projects are in the planning stages for work around the Church, the grounds, and the Education Building. He is working with the Building and Grounds Committee to collaborate and prioritize projects. Will also mentioned that the Parsonage needs attention and repair. More details and plans will be discussed at the next meeting.

## **Old Business**

The Education for Ministry Program, a four-year learning certificate program in theological education based on small-group study and practice, will begin in September. Don Stine will lead the class. More information as well as registration details will be forthcoming.

Parish Survey: As a member of the Appointments Committee, Jerry reported recent meetings with committee chairs to discuss their programs and needs. According to Jerry, there are openings in some committees that need to be filled. After he mentioned the Parish Survey, Laura discussed the data that had been collected. Using the collected information will assist the Appointments Committee in filling openings.

## **New Business**

E. R. Haire Seminary: Jerry along with Fr. Josh reported that E.R., an aspirant for the priesthood, has been accepted into postulancy. Although E.R. has advanced theological training, Bishop Jose is requiring him to take additional classes in Anglican studies. After a discussion of the costs involved and the practice of parishes to provide financial support for postulants, Marisa made a motion for the church to pay 80% of the costs of E.R.'s classes up to \$5,280. Patrice seconded the motion, and it was passed by the Vestry.

Following a closing prayer led by Fr. Josh, the January Vestry meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret A. Barker  
Clerk of the Vestry